

# Introduction

## *Why Emphasize the Holy Spirit and Imagination for Reconciliation Studies?*

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.<sup>1</sup>

In *Phantastes*, which C. S. Lewis credits with baptizing his imagination, George MacDonald tells the story of Anodos, who has just come of age and is about to receive his inheritance.<sup>2</sup> The framework with which Anodos approaches life is one of confident mastery, self-referent pragmatism, and enough curiosity to make him wonder if there is more to life than what he has experienced. Clearly a person of strong self-esteem, Anodos expresses his sense of mastery by placing things in convenient categories. When he first meets his fairy grandmother who appears to him in “tiny woman-form” wearing a Grecian dress, he patronizes her as quaint and as a trifle to be humored. When she enlarges herself so he will take her more seriously, he approaches her from the framework of her female sensuality and beauty, as something to be grasped.

Anodos’s encounter with his fairy godmother signals the beginning of a journey in which entire paradigms for him are transformed. Traveling

1. Isa 55:1.

2. Lewis, *George MacDonald*, 21.

through fairyland, beyond his sphere of comfort and control, takes him through a slow process of removing the veil of certainty and self-centered autonomy. He is exposed to a much larger world of wonder, terror, grace, and interdependency. Grace comes in many forms, but primarily through cleansing and refreshing waters, wise female guides, and compelling narratives. His entire journey is awash in the gentle and pervasive presence of the redeeming Spirit of love and forgiveness. C. S. Lewis writes that through reading this book he learned to love goodness and to feel the “sweet air blowing from ‘the land of righteousness.’”<sup>3</sup>

Though unnamed and diffuse, one senses the Spirit’s presence in various messengers who seek to guide Anodos through painful temptations and to heal him after repeated failures. He is often unwilling to listen and to learn, and is inattentive to what is going on inside himself or others. If he desires something, he grabs it, regardless of how this violates the other.<sup>4</sup> Gentle though the Presence may be, one senses also a powerful relentlessness to transform Anodos into a more whole person. His pilgrimage slowly moves him out of his solitary, self-referential ways into a new mode of existence. Growth depends profoundly on Anodos gaining an enriched imagination that connects him so deeply with others that he begins to feel their pain, and ultimately will sacrifice his life for his beloved.

Anodos provides a helpful analog of humanity, attempting to live according to the illusion of self-sufficiency or *sicut deus*, in Bonhoeffer’s terms.<sup>5</sup> More specifically Anodos offers a typology of the ideal “man” of dominant western culture that feeds on the illusion of autonomy, control, and conquest, yet does not seem to grasp the reason for his severe relational malnourishment.<sup>6</sup> MacDonald’s story offers a way to envision what happens when such a person is ushered into the place of God’s renewal—a place that includes refreshing waters, shared homely meals, and the truth of being one small part of the immense web of God’s creation. It explores the impact on one’s relationship with oneself, others, and with the Divine when the Holy Spirit cleanses, reforms, and baptizes one’s imagination again and again.

3. *Ibid.*, 21–22.

4. E.g., Anodos and the girl with the globe, the statue of the marble lady, etc. MacDonald, *Phantastes*, 62, 117.

5. Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall*, 111–114.

6. “The cognitive revolution demonstrated that human beings emerge out of relationships. The health of a society is determined by the health of those relationships, not by the extent to which it maximized individual choice.” Brooks, *Social Animal*, 320.

*Phantastes* provides a powerful narrative that exposes the radical changes needed to make true shalom possible. MacDonald offers an experience in which we *see* that the isolation, alienation, and dehumanization of others are not merely intellectual problems to be solved. Self-aggrandizing actions that fracture lives and communities are not merely moral failures that require forgiveness. Rather, radical transformation must happen through being steeped in grace, through the dramatic change of one's entire model of the way life is meant to be lived, and through growing in the ability to empathize with the other.<sup>7</sup>

*Phantastes* also reveals what Jungian psychologists will only identify many decades later. Anodos is haunted by a shadow that disavows grace and the dignity of the other, and that rises up continually to distort Anodos's understanding and experience of the world. It becomes obvious that shalom cannot be achieved unless shadows are acknowledged, identified, and addressed. Will and determination are not enough. MacDonald perceptively identifies the internal, shadowy resistance we have to grace and to the goodness of others, and he reveals the very long-term process necessary to bring healing, wholeness, and restoration.

*Phantastes* offers a narrative rationale for focusing on the Holy Spirit's role in reconciliation, particularly through the vessel of the imagination. The long and arduous journey required for Anodos's transformation demonstrates the reality that living into the wholeness of God's reconciliation requires ongoing bathing, actually steeping in the presence of the Holy Spirit. And it demands an utter shift of the way one imagines the world. We will return to the issues of shadows later in the book, and the ways in which unaddressed shadows continually subvert the work of grace, but initially we will explore more carefully these other missing emphases in peace studies, and explore the reason lasting reconciliation depends on the Holy Spirit's work through the imagination.

The theme of reconciliation has become a reservoir attracting many thirsty visitors from throughout the global church in recent decades.<sup>8</sup> The

7. I have adopted the term "model" from David Brooks, who argues that a range of models is essential if one is to avoid the tendency to cling to one model and then "amputate reality to make it fit your model." He describes the ability to adopt more complex and integrative models as the "blending of neural patterns" or "the imagination." See *ibid.*, 260, 50.

8. The author acknowledges the contested nature of the term "reconciliation" (see De Gruchy, *Reconciliation*, 10–43). Its use in this book will be derived from its biblical and theological roots. Though reconciliation has been "*en vogue*" in many contexts outside of

rising heat of global competition for limited resources, along with national, ethnic, and racial tensions, has created extensive areas of relational drought and fearful mistrust. Thus people have come to the waters to discern the possibilities in God's invitation,

Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. . . . For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. (Isa 55:1, 10–12)

Some visitors have waded in deeply, and have gained a sense of the costly nature of reconciliation, along with its immense gifts of renewal and refreshment. Others have visited only briefly, attempting to use its resources to advance their own political or social agenda. Debates about the meaning, source, and, process of reconciliation pervade the global church today, but at times sadly obscure God's gracious invitation and provision rather than compellingly convey it.

Much clarity has come through theologians like Karl Barth, James Torrance, Jürgen Moltmann, Miroslav Volf, Leonardo Boff, Catherine LaCugna, and Greg Jones, who have affirmed God's work of reconciliation as central to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Church leaders, including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, John Perkins, Brenda Salter-McNeil, Chris Rice, and Emmanuel Katongole, have called on the church to participate with Christ in this central work of grace. Sociologists like Curtiss DeYoung and John Paul Lederach have described the wretched consequences of living as if reconciliation is an optional extra for Christians, and have cataloged both obstacles to reconciliation and ways to move forward in sharing in the costly privilege of God's work of reconciling genders, ethnicities, and classes.

Peace and justice programs, and centers for reconciliation, have sprung up on university and seminary campuses throughout the world. Never have

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the church and Christian theology, it is beyond the scope of this book to extensively engage the various meanings and attributions that have been offered in these other contexts to "reconciliation". See Schwöbel, "Reconciliation," 14.

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people been more aware of the deep relational fractures around the world, and the immense cost of dignity, suffering, and lives where individuals or groups seek ascendancy over rather than community with their neighbors. Thus, there is an expanding bibliography of articles, books, and chapters on reconciliation, which seek both to define reconciliation and describe ways it can be achieved.<sup>9</sup>

There are also texts that examine ways in which Christian faith has been used to defend divisions, hatred, and slavery.<sup>10</sup> These texts highlight the obvious fact that churches have not lived up to their calling to engage as ambassadors of reconciliation. “While there were a few very exceptions, whites in the colonial and antebellum periods generally used the experience of joint worship not to dissolve worldly hierarchies but to explain and sanctify them.”<sup>11</sup> Similarly in the mid-twentieth century, Martin Luther King Jr. stated, “We must face the sad fact that at 11 o’clock on Sunday morning when we stand to sing ‘In Christ there is no East or West,’ we stand in the most segregated hour of America.”<sup>12</sup> More recently, Christian Smith and Michael Emerson have documented the ways in which white evangelicals in America continue to be entrenched in racially segregated churches and relationships.<sup>13</sup>

God’s people have been given many resources to share in the work of reconciliation and draw people to its healing waters, but often these resources have been resisted, even as Jonah resisted his call to reach out to the people of Nineveh. In particular, many Christians have resisted or overlooked the gift of living water in the Holy Spirit’s presence to apply the reconciling work of Christ to our parched lives and communities.<sup>14</sup> Often there has been neglect of Jesus’ fulfillment of Isaiah’s invitation, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’ Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive . . .” (John 7:37–39a).

9. Many of these texts are included in the bibliography.

10. See, for example, Irons, *The Origins of Proslavery Christianity*.

11. Irons, <http://www.spu.edu/depts/perkins/about/perspective/2009-autumn/BooksProslavery-Christianity.asp>.

12. King Jr., “Can a Christian Be a Communist?”

13. Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*.

14. See for example, Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*; Sider, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*; and Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism*.

Reconciliation, biblically and theologically defined, has been approached largely as framed by the work of God in Christ on the cross. As Paul writes, “in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Cor 5:19). While affirming the centrality of God’s work in Christ for understanding and experiencing reconciliation, this book focuses on the work of the Holy Spirit to teach and transform believers to share with Christ in this ministry. Jesus said, “But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you” (John 14:26).

In particular, this book explores one key aspect of the work of the Holy Spirit in equipping people for reconciliation, and that is in the transformation of the imagination.<sup>15</sup> Often, as Lederach has described, barriers to reconciliation exist where moral imagination is lacking. Bridges that overcome such barriers are found more often in transformed human hearts and vision than in cognitive theories or techniques.<sup>16</sup> “Understanding and deep insight [for peace building] are achieved through aesthetics and ways of knowing that see the whole rather than the parts, a capacity and pathway that rely on intuition more than cognition.”<sup>17</sup> The Holy Spirit’s work in recreation, pouring out new visions and dreams on young and old, prophetic insights and gifts for both male and female (Acts 2:17), connects deeply with the imagination. In fact, George MacDonald wrote that a wise imagination *is* the “presence of the Spirit of God.”<sup>18</sup>

In order to lay an appropriate foundation on which to explore the Holy Spirit’s transformation of the imagination toward participation in God’s work of reconciliation, this book first explores the three “moments” of salvation offered by the triune God, as conveyed by Karl Barth.<sup>19</sup> Though

15. It is vital to distinguish “imagination” from “imaginary” and fanciful. “Imagination” in this book will be used to refer to that center of human creativity, intuition, and vision, which offers an interpretive framework through which the world is perceived and approached. For further reading see Dearborn, *Baptized Imagination*, and Jennings, *Christian Imagination*.

16. Daniel Groody describes the impact of hearts that are opened by God’s presence: “No longer judging people by external appearances, they are able to see deeper into the heart of other people, as if to begin to behold others as God does (1 Sam 16:7), as if to see the glory that resides within each and every person.” Groody, *Globalization, Spirituality, and Justice*, 243.

17. Lederach, *Moral Imagination*, 69.

18. MacDonald, “Imagination,” 28.

19. Three moments of salvation was the way in which James Torrance described Barth’s Trinitarian framing of soteriology. He describes the three moments in *Worship*,

salvation and reconciliation are distinguishable, they are also interrelated in that salvation includes union with God and with others, and it is deeply rooted in the Hebrew idea of shalom.<sup>20</sup>

In the first chapter, reconciliation is affirmed as a gift of God, Father, Son, and Spirit before it is ever something in which we are called and equipped to participate. Questions such as the scope and nature of reconciliation will be addressed.

The second chapter explores the nature of the Holy Spirit and the Spirit's invitation to and application of God's gift of reconciliation in Christ to our lives. As Christoph Schwöbel writes, "The plausibility of the notions of reconciliation and peace with God depends on explicating this largely implicit pneumatological element of the model of reconciliation."<sup>21</sup> After briefly surveying the nature of the Holy Spirit, corollary implications for the shape of reconciliation will be explored. What does it mean to honor the Holy Spirit as God and to live responsively to the Spirit's work of new creation and new communion?

The third chapter deals specifically with the gifts of the Holy Spirit of re-creation, hope, and love. As with the first creation, the recreating work of the Holy Spirit includes the separation of light from darkness, except now that which is life-giving is cut free from that which is destructive. Jesus promised that the Spirit would come and lead us into all truth. He encouraged his followers on the eve of his death that another Advocate would be with them revealing to them everything he had taught them. They need not live in fear, but rather can receive God's love and hope for them, be freed through confession and repentance, and move forward in radical communion even in the midst of great turmoil and tribulation.

The fourth chapter focuses specifically on the work of the imagination as a vessel into which the Holy Spirit pours new life to dissolve away false notions, recreate new visions, and catalyze transformed lives. As the truth of the Spirit reaches the heart through the imagination, the believer is empowered to deny herself, take up her cross, and follow Jesus. The Holy

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*Community and the Triune God of Grace*, and concludes, "There are three moments but only one act of salvation, just as we believe there are three persons in the Trinity, but only one God." Torrance, *Worship*, 76.

20. "I am positing reconciliation as both the *telos* of creation, including, therefore, rational and non-rational aspects of being, and as the process of salvation." Clegg, "Between Embrace and Exclusion," 128.

21. Schwöbel, "Reconciliation," 25.

Spirit's transformation of Peter in Acts 10 is discussed to provide instructive grounding for these ideas.

Chapter five explores the Holy Spirit's use of the imagination as both a bridge and a lofty vista. The imagination is a useful bridge with its bi-focal capacity to hold together numerous tensions without which the ministry of reconciliation can become irrelevant, exploitive, or escapist. As a lofty vista, the imagination can be used by the Holy Spirit to facilitate a larger perspective on life, on Scripture, and on the other, and to be a vehicle for seeing the kingdom of God in our midst. God's transforming influence through the Spirit's work on Paul's imagination is used to illustrate this.

Chapter six explores the challenges to reconciliation that arise from shadows within the realm of the unconscious and the imagination. Narratives by George MacDonald offer helpful ways to explore these shadows and to clarify that reconciliation is an ongoing process that requires vigilance, ongoing openness to the Holy Spirit, and specific skills of the imagination to address the distorting shadows that will arise. Deep-seated fears and self-aggrandizing pride do not die easily, but unless they are addressed by the Holy Spirit in the realm of the imagination, little progress can be made toward the relational healing that Christ's kingdom brings.

Chapter seven will conclude with three signposts that reflect the work of the Holy Spirit through the imagination and that point to oases of God's kingdom in our midst. A brief historical survey is offered of four periods of the church when the presence of the Holy Spirit was more wholeheartedly welcomed, obeyed, and allowed to guide the community of faith than at other times in history. These movements express greater openness to imaginative renewal (new moral imaginations) and in response a more profound expression of communities of reconciliation across racial, gender, class, and ethnic differences.

It is my prayer that this book can be a vehicle of the Holy Spirit to bring renewal, hope, and new openness to the work that God would do in our own contexts, that we might more effectively reflect the shalom for which we were created, and exalt our gracious God who extends loving communion to all.