

## CONTENTS

Theme: *Understanding and Applying the Bible  
Now and Then*

Unchanging 'truth' in Contextual Exegesis

MATTHEW A. COOK

*page 196*

The Bible: Classical and Contemporary Muslim  
Attitudes and Exegesis

JOSEPH M. MUTEI

*page 207*

Monastic Renewal in Australia: Holy  
Transfiguration Monastery

PAUL R. DEKAR

*page 221*

A Brief History of the Blood: The Story of the Blood of  
Christ in Transatlantic Evangelical Devotion

BENJAMIN A. PUGH

*page 239*

Will There be *New Work* in the New Creation?

JOHN JEFFERSON DAVIS

*page 256*

Book Reviews

*page 274*

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY VOLUME 31, NO 3, July 2007

# Evangelical Review of Theology

*Articles and book reviews reflecting  
global evangelical theology for the purpose  
of discerning the obedience of faith*



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# Evangelical Review of Theology

EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

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# Editorial

IN THIS ISSUE WE pay tribute to the life and ministry of our late Theological Commission member, Dr George Vandervelde, by presenting an extended review written by him not long before his untimely death on Jan. 19, 2007 (see pages 274-277). It is appropriate that his final piece in this journal should be on the topic of Evangelical-Roman Catholic relations because Dr Vandervelde, who served for 27 years at the Institute of Christian Studies, Toronto, Canada, made his greatest contribution to our work as a member, and from 1998 as convenor, of the Theological Commission Ecumenical Task Force. His main role was to lead the official World Evangelical Alliance-Roman Catholic dialogue, whose papers and reports have been published here. We remember him for his deep spirituality, integrity and theological skill, and join with others in thanking God for his presence among us.

We also present two more papers from our 2006 Consultation, both focusing on approaches to understanding the Bible. The first one deals with its meaning in the different cultures in which we read it; although this is angled for majority world context—in this case West Africa where its author, Matt Cook teaches—it is applicable to everyone because none of us can read the Bible in its original setting. (Matt Cook is heading up a TC Study Unit on

this topic.) The second, from Joseph Mutei in East Africa, opens up an increasingly important area of attention—the way the Bible is understood by Muslims and how its status, claims and exegesis are handled by protagonists of that faith.

Then we examine how our understanding of the Bible works out in the spiritual life of believers. Paul Dekar documents a new trend for evangelical Christians, describing a Baptist monastic community in Australia of which he is a member, and reflects upon its nature and relevance for mission and witness today. Benjamin Pugh's paper surveys the 'blood of Christ' in the history of evangelical piety, pointing out that it has been a fruitful and powerful idea, but is now being by-passed by other perspectives to the impoverishment of our faith.

Finally, John J. Davis returns to our pages with a practical topic, the nature of everyday work and its biblical understanding, but raises the possibility of there being '*new* work in the new creation'! If his biblical interpretation is on the right lines by suggesting an affirmative answer, then he concludes, 'Such a vision of the New Creation energizes and valorizes all forms of human work in the present that are done for the glory of God.'

**David Parker, Editor**

# Unchanging 'truth' in Contextual Exegesis

Matthew A. Cook

**KEYWORDS:** *Hermeneutics, hermeneutical spiral, plenary inspiration, praxis, propositions, authority, culture, communication*

AT THIS YEAR'S consultation of the WEA-TC,<sup>1</sup> I noted several papers being given on African Christologies. I am thankful that there are scholars tackling this very thorny and complex issue. My concern expressed in this paper on 'unchanging truth in contextual exegesis'<sup>2</sup> is not nearly so grand as

that. At FATEAC<sup>3</sup> in Abidjan we are also concerned that students reflect on contextualization in every part of the exegetical and theological process.<sup>4</sup>

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in personal communication, September 12, 2006). Rather, I refer to exegesis of the biblical text done to effect contextually sensitive communication.

**3** La Faculté Evangélique de l'Alliance Chrétienne is a university level program in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire offering a *matrise* in Theology, Religious Science, and Translation. We have trained theologians, Christian leaders, and translators working in 15 nations.

**4** Hesselgrave indicates that what I am suggesting is not contextualization at all (p. 448). 'One might argue that in cases where the theologizer himself is a citizen of the third world (and the second and third horizons therefore coalesce) the case is completely different' (p. 454). Rather contextualization is when an exegete from one culture interprets a text for another culture. [David Hesselgrave, 'The Three Horizons: Culture, Integration And Communication' *JETS* 28/4 (December 1985), pp. 443-454.]

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**1** The World Evangelical Alliance—Theological Commission

**2** I do not refer to cultural exegesis, that by which one understands a culture. Nor do I refer to contextual exegesis as used by David Watson in a church-planting movement seminar in Dakar, Senegal, August 14-18, 2006 as the process by which one should 'de-cultivate the Gospel message and let the local people contextualize the message in their environment and culture' (as quoted by Stefan Hanger

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This is not really a report on what we are doing at FATEAC, but a call to discuss how we, in general, can do contextual exegesis better.

Therefore, motivated by plenary inspiration and contextual exigencies, I urge retaining an interpretive summary as the final step in exegesis (and that which is handed on to either homiletics or theology). Typically a spiritual principle is retained after exegesis, but I suggest that this approaches a 'kernel-husk' dichotomy at the pericope level,<sup>5</sup> loses some of the meaning of the text, and implies—against reality—that a supracultural proposition can be stated. I believe that this interpretive summary well communicates the contextual understanding of a passage in the exegete's culture and yet maintains fidelity to the nature of the Bible and the meaning of the passage.

### Scripture the authority

The easiest division in the Christian world is between the evangelical and the non-evangelical on the issue of the authority of scripture. This applies in hermeneutics and contextualization as well. Alan Thomson recently published an article in this journal in which he asserts that 'certain issues have come to dominate the missiological agenda, such as the Evangelical and Ecumenical divide on the authority of scripture,

and the relative merits of orthodoxy and orthopraxy'.<sup>6</sup>

In broadest terms, there are two fundamental approaches to contextual hermeneutics today. The first assigns the primary control of meaning to the contemporary context itself. Frequently the notion of 'praxis' serves as a kind of filter for interpreting Scripture. For example, some liberation theologians make the struggle against economic oppression a controlling grid which allows them then to redefine biblical concepts like 'salvation' in terms of liberation of the poor and 'sin' in terms of sociopolitical injustice. This context-driven model of contextualization is no doubt the dominant one in Asia and elsewhere in the Two Thirds World today. The product has often been a syncretistic version of the Christian message.<sup>7</sup> Those who advocate a broader understanding of the formation of theology (based on praxis or local sociopolitical realities) have jus-

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<sup>6</sup> Alan Thomson, 'Learning from the African Experience: Bediako and Critical Contextualisation', *ERT* 30:1 (2006): 31f. David Hesselgrave saw this distinction 20 years earlier: David Hesselgrave, 'The Three Horizons: Culture, Integration And Communication', *JETS* 28:4 (December 1985): 450.

<sup>7</sup> Dean Flemming, 'The Third Horizon: A Wesleyan Contribution to the Contextualization Debate,' [http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan\\_theology/theojrnl/26-30/30-2-07.htm](http://wesley.nnu.edu/wesleyan_theology/theojrnl/26-30/30-2-07.htm), consulted July 8, 2006 on the Wesley Center Online: Wesley Center for Applied Theology. Cf. K. E. Eitel, 'Contextualization: Contrasting African Voices', *Criswell Theological Review* 2:2 (Spring 1988): 324, as seen in Robert L. Thomas, 'Dynamic Equivalence: A Method of Translation or a System of Hermeneutics?', *The Master's Journal*, <http://www.tms.edu/tmsj/tmsj1g.pdf>, p.153, consulted August 12, 2006.

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<sup>5</sup> While it is impossible to comment on the whole of the kernel-husk debate in contextualization, I am using the larger debate (a gospel core stripped of its cultural husk in order to communicate the former elsewhere) as a model for what many exegetes do in the interpretation process.

tified it on the basis of the transformation of linguistic use of the Bible, or of a broader reading of the Bible. They, too, would say that they have based their conclusions on the Bible.

A second approach (although this oversimplifies the case), often advocated by evangelical contextualizers, gives principal control over the theological meaning to a grammatico-historical interpretation of the biblical text. This is not the place to argue that conclusion in full, but the presuppositions of the grammatico-historical method as opposed to those of the other methods (historico-critical, liberation, etc.) place the exegete under the authority of scripture rather than over the text, and they are in accordance with the historic use of the text and the evangelical perspective today.<sup>8</sup>

The argument for the authority of scripture may be sketched as follows: God is his own authority. This authority of which we speak is 'the right or power to command obedience or belief'.<sup>9</sup> God's authoritative communi-

cation is multiform, but definitively set forth in the Bible. 'We demonstrate our concern for biblical authority...by careful biblical interpretation...' and obedience.<sup>10</sup>

The first article in World Evangelical Alliance statement of faith reads: 'We believe...in the **Holy Scriptures** as originally given by God, divinely inspired, infallible, entirely trustworthy; and the supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct....'<sup>11</sup> David Dockery maintains this confession for the following reasons: '(1) The Scriptures are the result of divine inspiration. (2) They proclaim the saving acts of God. (3) They are historically proximate to the saving acts of God. (4) They are based on the prophetic-apostolic authority.'<sup>12</sup> Interestingly enough, this very understanding of the authority of scripture leads Dockery to look for the supracultural principles, which are normative and applicable for the church in every age.<sup>13</sup> It is this same authority of scripture which motivates me to avoid supracultural principles in the place of a supracultural authority.<sup>14</sup>

## A supracultural norm

Scripture can communicate with cul-

<sup>8</sup> For one evangelical perspective, cf. the three Chicago statements on the Bible: Inerrancy, <http://www.reformation.net/COR/cordocs/inerrancy.pdf#search=%22chicago%20statement%20on%20theology%22>, consulted September 12, 2006; Hermeneutics, [http://www.origins.org/articles/00site\\_chicago.html](http://www.origins.org/articles/00site_chicago.html), consulted September 12, 2006; and Application, [http://www.alliancenet.org/partner/Article\\_Display\\_Page/0,,PTID307086%7CCHID750054%7CCIID2094578,00.html](http://www.alliancenet.org/partner/Article_Display_Page/0,,PTID307086%7CCHID750054%7CCIID2094578,00.html), consulted September 12, 2006. They are a little dated, but present a coherent whole from the not-too-distant past.

<sup>9</sup> David Dockery, *Christian Scripture: An Evangelical Perspective on Inspiration, Authority, and Interpretation* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman. 1995), p. 70.

<sup>10</sup> Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, p. 72.

<sup>11</sup> The WEA statement of faith. <http://www.worldevangelicalalliance.com/wea/statement.htm>, consulted August 4, 2006 (emphasis theirs).

<sup>12</sup> Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, p. 62.

<sup>13</sup> Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, pp. 62f.

<sup>14</sup> It is not supracultural principles of hermeneutics which I wish to avoid. Rather the supracultural propositional summary of the text which I think is impossible.

tures far removed from its own. It was even intended to do so.<sup>15</sup> But scripture, and how we learn from it, has been over-simplified, over-distilled.

In the 1980s there was a great deal of discussion about the nature of scripture and revelation. At that point, Nash made a distinction between the propositions which are revealed and the sentences which carry them. Although he did not say that it was the case for him, it was clear that 'theoretically, a person could accept propositional revelation but reject verbal inspiration'.<sup>16</sup> Verbal inspiration makes explicit 'the extent to which God's revelation is conveyed in words, notably the written words of the Bible'.<sup>17</sup> Those who hold propositional revelation without verbal inspiration lean toward a quasi-Barthian view of scripture. 'By insisting that sentences convey propositions, they locate revelation outside the actual biblical texts, creating a log-

ical gap between revelation and the Bible.'<sup>18</sup>

To avoid the position that the text is a witness to revelation, we need to shy away from the idea that any particular text can be effectively communicated through a single proposition or principle. Unfortunately, the goal of exegesis normally continues all the way to shaving off the valuable depth and detail of a text and arriving at a mere 'kernel' or principle or proposition taught by the text. In their exegetical method, George Guthrie and J. Scott Duvall<sup>19</sup> teach an exegetical process which includes step 10.2, involving the instruction to write an extended paraphrase of the passage in order

to expand your translation and emphasize explicitly what you see as significant in the text...[to provide] your own condensed commentary....[to] capture the passage's meaning in a way that connects with your audience. We predict that you will enjoy this as much as any

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**15** 2 Tim. 3:16, 'All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness'; 1 Cor. 10:11, 'These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfilment of the ages has come'; etc. cf. George Knight III, 'The Scriptures were Written for our Instruction', *JETS* 39:1 (March 1996): pp. 3-13.

**16** Ronald Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), p. 50, from Kevin Vanhoozer, 'The Semantics of Biblical Literature: Truth and Scripture's Diverse Literary Forms', in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), p. 57.

**17** Vanhoozer, 'Semantics of Biblical Literature', p. 57.

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**18** Vanhoozer, 'Semantics of Biblical Literature', p. 58f.

**19** For other examples, see Gordon Fee, *New Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), p. 37; 'take the point (or the several points) of the passage'; Douglas Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis: A Handbook for Students and Pastors* (3rd ed.) (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002) p. 28; 'decide what [the text's] central issues are'; and the source from which I learned this technique, Walter Kaiser, Jr., *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981) which lists 'principlization' in the index as being discussed on pages 92, 121, 150-163, 194, 197-98, 205, 206, 231, and 236.



part of the exegetical process.<sup>20</sup>

In this step, it is not a translation which is sought nor a paraphrase (I would differ with the label offered by the authors), but an interpretive summary. The exegete is enjoined to produce something that is faithful to the text (with all of its depth) and yet connects to his culture. Unfortunately, the authors continue, eventually arriving at step 11.2 which instructs the exegete to list the general principles communicated by the passage ('boiling down the truth'). In that section the following steps indicate that the nuances (depth) in the text are left out:

(1) Does the author state a general principle?... (2) Does the broader context reveal a general principle?... (3) Why was this specific command or instruction given?<sup>21</sup>

This extension is possible by assuming that there is a cultural carrier of meaning which can and should be discarded when the kernel is visible. While I will deal with the loss of meaning later, we turn now to the implications for our theology of scripture that is implied in this practice.

## Plenary Inspiration and the whole text

The concept of plenary inspiration means that all the words are inspired, not just a distilled meaning that is

derived from the words. This 'approach is careful to see the Spirit's influence...extending to all...portions of Holy Scripture, even beyond the direction of thoughts to the selection of words'.<sup>22</sup> The extensiveness of inspiration applies down to the very words, the tense of verbs, the form of pronouns.<sup>23</sup> While I do not want to swing the pendulum to the other side and say that we do not have the right or the responsibility to interpret and apply the text but only to retain the form given through inspiration,<sup>24</sup> I do want us to be careful not to abdicate the responsibility which we have been given to listen to the whole of the inspired text, to understand the depth, power, and complex character of each text.

A listing of the supracultural principles taught in the text or a propositional replacement for the text is not sufficient to communicate that which is inspired. Any bifurcation of the supracultural minimalist kernel (proposition) and the cultural (read, 'disposable') husk discards too much of the text at hand.<sup>25</sup> This desire to

<sup>20</sup> George H. Guthrie and J. Scott Duvall, *Biblical Greek Exegesis: A Graded Approach to Learning Intermediate and Advanced Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), p. 152.

<sup>21</sup> Guthrie and Duvall, *Biblical Greek Exegesis*, pp. 155f.

<sup>22</sup> Dockery, *Christian Scripture*, p. 55; cf. Donald Carson, 'Recent Developments in the Doctrine of Scripture', in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), p. 35.

<sup>23</sup> Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, Baker, 1998), p. 238.

<sup>24</sup> This would imply a dictation theory akin to that held by Muslims who insist that the Qu'ran is untranslated and untranslatable.

<sup>25</sup> 'Constant biblical theological message' vs. its 'contextual expression' is the way that Dean Flemming put it in his *The Third Horizon*, consulted September 1, 2006.

maintain the whole of the Bible together should be sufficient to encourage us toward another model.

Of course, the debate over the kernel-husk dichotomy is not over: On the one hand, a supracultural kernel is necessary to support 'a careful definition of "Christianity"'. And there is no way, in cross-cultural communication, to achieve any kind of a working definition without carefully distinguishing between its cultural, relative forms and expressions and its absolute, supracultural core—the elements of Christianity that are non-negotiable.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, Donald Carson asserts that

there is no core of gospel truth in the sense presupposed by von Allmen, no 'supracultural truth' in the sense demanded by Kraft.....[This core] reduces the locus of non-negotiable truth to one or two propositions such as 'Jesus is Lord' or 'Christ died and rose again', when in fact the corpus of non-negotiable truth embraces all of Scripture.<sup>27</sup>

Exegetes have not been failing in their work all these years to communicate a meaning of the text. Rather, they have been missing the last bit (perhaps 25% or 2.5%, depending on the amount of nuance unaccounted for). Vanhoozer's concerns for a 'whole person' response are certainly valid and should

be incorporated.<sup>28</sup> I care that we also complete the cognitive communication.

### Proposition not able to represent a text

When I say that a proposition is not capable of representing a passage, it does not matter whether the text in question is an epistolary, narrative, or poetic text. A text cannot be boiled down to a single proposition or principle that may be used in the process of application. There is a depth about a text that cannot be whittled down to this extent. It may be described; it may be put in another context; it may be paraphrased (though with difficulty).

That a single proposition is not capable of summarizing a passage is clear from the semantic parallel.

The linguistic problem is the easiest to formulate. We know that exact synonyms do not exist between languages; idioms are even more challenging to the translator and a literal word-for-word translation will often convey virtually nothing of the originally intended meaning.<sup>29</sup>

The problem is not limited to curses, puns, and rhymes. Linguists have long taught that there are no exact synonyms. Writers have experi-

26 James O. Buswell, III, 'Review Article: Conn on Functionalism and Presupposition in Missionary Anthropology', *Trinity Journal* 7 NS (1986): 90.

27 Donald Carson, 'Church and Mission: Contextualization and Third Horizon', in *The Church in the Bible and the World*, ed. Donald A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), p. 248.

28 Vanhoozer uses speech-act theory to approach the text's illocutionary and perlocutionary forces as well as the locutionary, 'Semantics of Biblical Literature', pp. 86-92.

29 Dick Davis, 'On Not Translating Hafez', <http://cat.middlebury.edu/~nereview/Davis.html>, consulted September 5, 2006.

enced the frustration of trying to paraphrase another author's work without changing the meaning.<sup>30</sup> It is often more faithful to the original text to merely cite the author. In our case, we do not want merely to cite the Bible, nor offer a paraphrase, nor, certainly, a proposition in an attempt to convey the text, but an interpretive summary—one that does not alter the cognitive meaning nor illocutionary force but alters both the genre in which it is written (if necessary) and certainly the target audience who will read it.

That a proposition is not capable of summarising a passage is clear from a mathematical analogy. Although language is not maths,<sup>31</sup> let us think about a set of independent equations that contain an equally large number of unknowns. Using all these equations, one can completely define this system and know the value of all of the variables. If one does not use all the equations, the value of the variables remains unknown. In the case of a text, if one looks not just to a final principle of the text, but to the nuances and force as well, then one is more likely to understand the meaning of the text.

Unfortunately, what is sometimes taught at the end of the exegetical

process is to eliminate equation after equation (nuances, influences from the literary context, structural or semantic repetition, etc.) that seem to be insignificant in order to have a single (or few) principle(s). Even though that gives a single meaning, it is not the same meaning as that which is in the text.<sup>32</sup> We need more information at the end of the exegetical process: we need an interpretive summary.

### The interpretive summary

This interpretive summary is not an innovation. Before detailing what it is, I want to be explicit about that which it is not. An interpretive summary is not a translation of the text. I agree that translation of the biblical text is very important. We train translators at FATEAC with the help of SIL.<sup>33</sup> It is an indispensable task for contextualization, but it is not the end of exegesis, merely a step. An interpretive summary is not dynamic equivalence in Nida's sense:

The three steps are reduction of the source text to its structurally simplest and most semantically evident kernels, transference of the meaning from the source language to the receptor language on a structurally simple level, and generation of the stylistically and semantically equivalent expression in the recep-

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30 Miguel Roig, Ph.D., 'Avoiding plagiarism, self-plagiarism, and other questionable writing practices: A guide to ethical writing', <http://facpub.stjohns.edu/~roigm/plagiarism/Paraphrasing%20highly%20technical.html>, consulted September 5, 2006

31 Ludwig Wittgenstein tried that once in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, only to reverse his position later in his *Philosophical Investigations*.

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32 Meaning is certainly not found in a simplistic manner, but it is there. Cf. Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is there a Meaning in this Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

33 The Summer Institute of Linguistics.

tor language.<sup>34</sup>

There is too much interpretive loss in such a method for it to serve as the interpretive summary. Nor are we discussing dynamic equivalence according to Kraft which demands dropping the text down into its equivalent cultural function.<sup>35</sup> It is not a paraphrase of the text in the traditional sense. Nor is it a commentary. Nor is it merely what the text meant.

An interpretive summary is a way to communicate the full meaning of the text (with its depth, power, and beauty) in its context (both literary and historical) with all that is comprehended by the exegete at that time. There may be more depth that has yet to be understood, using the hermeneutical spiral.<sup>36</sup>

This formulation offered at the end of the exegetical process must connect with the readers participating in the context of the exegete. There is no non-cultural step in the exegetical process.

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34 Robert L. Thomas, 'Dynamic Equivalence'. This article also makes a significant case for justifying my decision to include dynamic equivalence in this section on exegesis. In fact, dynamic equivalence is more about hermeneutics and exegesis than Nida would have proposed.

35 Vern Poythress, 'Presentation on Translation Techniques'. [http://www.framepoythress.org/Poythress\\_courses/WivesWeekendSeminary/W13Types.ppt](http://www.framepoythress.org/Poythress_courses/WivesWeekendSeminary/W13Types.ppt), consulted September 5, 2006. Kraft's own explanation appears excellent at times (even if a bit overwhelming). His version can be seen at C.H. Kraft, *Christianity in Culture* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1979), p. 135.

36 I agree with Grant Osborne that there is a spiralling toward the meaning that is to be communicated from the text. *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1991).

Since the interpretive summary will be written in the exegete's own words and, perhaps, mother tongue, it will make the crucial first step in contextualization by locating the understanding of the text in the exegete's own conceptual framework. The interpreter has no choice but to use her own social location in formulating her understanding of the text.<sup>37</sup>

My own students have found the production of an interpretive summary in their mother tongue to be a very helpful process. Many of them reflect theologically only in French (as, indeed, their submitted work must be in French) instead of doing this reflection in their mother tongue. There are expressions, words, and ideas that do not yet have a convenient way of being communicated. By preparing the interpretive summary in their mother tongue, they are raising the level of available theological interaction in that context, squeezing all of their exegetical reflection on this passage into that language, and shaping the language itself to express the truths of God for their people.

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37 While I do not advocate the New Hermeneutic with its strong view of social location, I think that Carson is right when he says that 'We human beings cannot escape either our sinfulness or our finiteness; and both are guaranteed to make the matrix out of which our questions emerge different from the matrix of every other human being....Pushed too far, of course, the new hermeneutic must result in the unqualified subjectivity of all knowledge.' Donald Carson, 'Church and Mission: Contextualization and Third Horizons', in *The Church in the Bible and the World*, ed. Donald Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), p. 217.

The end which I advocate would allow the text to draw us into its world (through exegesis) and still communicate that meaning fully in our language, using our concepts. There is no point where the naked supracultural proposition(s) are viewed in themselves. They are always clothed by some culture. The New Hermeneutic has taught us that these supracultural propositions are not even thought because each reading is done from a social location.<sup>38</sup> 'From God's point of view, of course, truth may be supracultural....[but] it cannot be communicated supraculturally....We would inevitably couch the principle we thus 'discovered' in some other cultural garb—ours!'<sup>39</sup>

[T]his summary may look different in each context, i.e. now or a year from now for the same translator and interpreter...as he faces a new context and it will look differently for another interpreter at the same time of the first exegete. So, we will never have two summaries that will be identical. Therefore, in order to come to the depth and width of the meaning of a biblical text we need one another in interpreting it.<sup>40</sup>

But that which is known is set forth in a form that is well understood by the receiving culture, using metaphors that may communicate not just the

truth but the power as well of that passage. Metaphors must be used with caution because they often carry connotations in the culture that far surpass the sense in the text at hand. For example, a student wished to discuss 'kephale' from 1 Corinthians 11: 3-13 but did so using the term 'chef' (en français).<sup>41</sup> That might not have been a bad idea if we had not been in the African context where 'chef' carries an enormous load of social, relational, and judicial connotations.

The difference this socially located presentation offers from reader response criticism is that the exegetical process can and should be discussed, understood, and justified across cultures or readers.<sup>42</sup> The end results are verifiable in conversation with other exegetes from other cultures.<sup>43</sup> The proposed result would not be something that is incommensurable

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41 Thomas Traoré, 'L'Homme et la Femme devant Dieu d'après 1 Cor 11.2-16. Une étude exégétique et ses implications théologique pour l'égalité entre l'Homme et la Femme dans le contexte africain aujourd'hui', *Mémoire* presented before the FATEAC on July 1, 2006.

42 Inherent in this assertion is the rejection of cultural incommensurability which is advocated by some in the New Hermeneutic and in Postmodernism. The most trenchant of these is Richard Rorty. On commensurability, see my other presentation at this meeting: 'Fundamentalism as voluntary Incommensurability'. Cultural incommensurability is seen in Africa as well in those who say that westerners cannot criticize African Theology because they don't understand the context.

43 '[T]here is no intrinsic reason why these two Christians should not sit down and, with patient probing, not only learn from each other but be corrected by each other.' Carson, 'Church and Mission', p. 256.

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38 Of course, Wittgenstein was onto this idea long ago by denying the possibility of non-linguistic thoughts.

39 Donald Carson, 'Church and Mission', pp. 249f.

40 Stefan Hanger, Dakar, Senegal, in personal communication, September 12, 2006.

with other cultures or social locations nor a lowest common denominator of meaning. Instead, it would provide a locus for discussing the interaction of words, images, and sentence structures that communicate the meaning of the text. It would also provide the locus for discussing the cultural fit for the reader. Either in the interpretive summary or the subsequent explanation, the exegete could indicate how the images and depth of the text would be effectively communicated to the target audience for which the exegete is doing this interpretation.<sup>44</sup>

Some may argue that this is really just another bifurcation of the text into a supracultural kernel and a cultural husk. Buswell's point is well taken; 'But, just because the supracultural core gospel must always be expressed on the human scene in cultural terms and in cultural forms should not necessitate any doubt of its existence or its reality.'<sup>45</sup> However, I have to respond with the question, 'If one can never formulate an expression of it, where or in what sense does this supracultural core exist?'<sup>46</sup> This is the case for the

meaning of the text. I would rather refer to understandings (represented in the interpretive summary) that are more or less faithful to the details of the text than to the meaning of the text. There will be variations in the expression but other cultures and contexts will be able to understand (after due explanation) how and why the interpreter has chosen those modes of expression (vocabulary, models, and metaphors).

There are certainly disadvantages to an interpretive summary: First, it is too much information. An interpretive summary is not easily packaged like a proposition or principle. It is not conveniently preached in western-modernist propositional preaching style. There is not a neat transfer of the exegetical data to the homiletic gristmill. Second, it is not enough information. This is not sufficient for a contextual theology. Of course, this is *only* the exegesis. More work with other texts will be necessary. But this will allow a good exegetical basis for contextual theology; a lacuna in some theological proposals.

Exegetes have been making extended paraphrases for years. Why are we suggesting something so similar? Because exegetes, preachers, and theologians typically leave the interpretive summary on the cutting room floor in order to progress to the principle—thereby over-distilling scripture.

### An example:

#### Matthew 3:13-17

In order to demonstrate that about which I have been writing, allow me to offer an interpretive summary of

<sup>44</sup> The literature on the fusion of the two horizons is now immense following the ground breaking work of Anthony C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

<sup>45</sup> James O. Buswell, III, 'Review Article: Conn on Functionalism', p. 90.

<sup>46</sup> This interchange reminds me of Kant's noumenon (in this case, equal to 'the meaning in itself') and the phenomenon (here taken as 'the cultural expression of that meaning'). To complete the analogy: what we are referring to is one phenomenon representing another phenomenon without any access to the noumenon—should it exist at all.

Matthew 3:13-17, the baptism of Jesus. I will not, at this point, justify my conclusions because that would require an exegetical analysis. The point here is to give simply the summary that can convey the meaning with some hoped-for depth. I propose the following:

Many Christians obey when they can or if it seems appropriate to their level of dignity. John was not qualified to baptize Jesus and they both knew it. Nonetheless, Jesus obeyed in having John baptize him in order to prepare himself. It is in that preparation that the Father was pleased in the Son. This delight of the father (εὐδοκέω) is mostly seen through salvation passages. This son was willing to become man in order to bring salvation to all. The Father was not just happy that Jesus was simply baptized but that Jesus obeyed in fulfilling all that God had asked and was, thereby, prepared with

the presence of the Holy Spirit, first, to face overwhelming temptation and, second, to accomplish the salvation of the world. We understand more of the willing love of the son, the difficulty of his time on earth, purposeful obedience, as well as an example for us to follow in order to prepare for the mission of the father in our lives.

Knowing that no interpretive summary is perfect, the point is that an interpretive summary can offer a place for (1) broader explanations of the text than is possible in the supracultural principle, (2) more rapid summary than a full exegetical analysis, (3) incorporation of some theological and contextual insights, and (4) set the stage for the transition for further theological or homiletical reflection.

Let us not boil down the text too far. Let us seek contextual formulation at every stage of the exegetical and theological process for more faithful results.

## **Christology in Dialogue with Muslims**

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# The Bible: Classical And Contemporary Muslim Attitudes And Exegesis

Joseph M. Mutei

**KEYWORDS:** *Qur'ān, paradise, Hadith, revelation, inspiration, Word of God, falsification, abrogation, worship, Mihadhara*

## 1. Introduction

There are many references to biblical texts in the *Qur'ān*. From the beginning of Islam, Muslims were aware of both the book and the teachings of the Bible. Through their contacts with Christians and Jews or through reading the Bible themselves, Muslims have become aware of many key biblical stories. They are neither ignorant of its teaching or of its content. But they look at the Bible from a *Qur'ānic* standpoint, seeking to understand it, but approaching it from the *Qur'ānic* perspective.

It is therefore logical that a Muslim should use the scriptural understanding in the *Qur'ān* to judge the Bible. However, as we will soon realize, this

has its own drawbacks, often leading to conclusions, which do not necessarily take into account the biblical standpoint. To understand why the Bible and the *Qur'ān* cannot be judged fairly, using the other's standpoint, we will start by looking at the nature of the *Qur'ān*.

## 2. The Nature of the Qur'ān and the Bible

### The Nature of the Qur'ān

The majority of *Sunni* Muslims (who are the majority) believe that the *Qur'ān* is the eternal, uncreated word of God (the Shia'ite Muslims believe that it is created). The *Qur'ān* itself attests to this fact in the teaching that it is a copy of the original Book, *Umm-ul-Kitab*. This book is preserved in a table, *Lawh-i-Mahfuz*, in paradise. It is from the

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eternal word of God, in its original form that it is formed; God has gradually released revelation to humanity. Yusuf 'Ali in his English translation of the *Qur'ān* calls it the 'Mother of the Book', the foundation of Revelation, the Preserved Tablet, which is also the core and the essence of Revelation.

Muslims believe that it is from the mother book in paradise that all the books sent down to the Prophets were derived. It follows therefore that the Islamic revelation is progressive and points to the coming of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. Starting from the former Prophets like Adam and Abraham and moving down to the latter Prophets, Dawud, Isa and Muhammad, God has made his revelation known to all nations.

Unlike the other sectarian prophets who were sent to their respective nations, Muhammad was the seal of the prophets who was called as a messenger to all humanity (Surah 7:159; 21:107). The scripture, with which he was sent, the *Qur'ān*, is therefore not for only some people or a particular tribe, but for the entire humanity.

One of the mistakes made by those who seek to enter into some sort of Christian-Muslim dialogue is to equate Muhammad to Jesus Christ, and the *Qur'ān* to the Bible. The difficulty with this comes because for Christians the Bible reveals Christ—it discloses him as the Word of God and the eternal Son of God, and that through faith in him, and thus what is revealed about him in the Bible, they receive eternal life (John 20:31; John 1:14). On the other hand, in Islam, it is Muhammad who reveals the *Qur'ān*; the uncreated, eternal Word of God, which became a Book.

The *Qur'ān* is the key to the knowl-

edge of salvation for it is the revelation of God, giving the sign of how to walk the straight path of obedience to the divine will—Islam. For the Muslims, Muhammad's life was the *Qur'ān*. The correct contrast, however, should be between Muhammad and the Bible on the one hand, and Jesus and the *Qur'ān* on the other. It is noteworthy, that Islam calls Jesus *Kalimat'Allah*, 'a word from God' and *Ruh'Allah*, 'the Spirit of God'.

### The Nature of the Bible

While Muslims believe that the *Qur'ān* was revealed exactly in its original form as contained in the *Umm-ul-Kitāb*, thereby being received through dictation, the Christian concept of scriptural inspiration is *theanthropic*, a coterminous word of God and man, the latter being protected from error by the influence of the Holy Spirit. Although the Christians believe that Scriptures are God-breathed, (2 Tim. 3:16), these are also received as the work of human beings (2 Pet. 3:15-16).

### The Qur'ān and the Bible

When the *Qur'ān* refers to the Bible, it assumes that the original text was still with the *ahl-al-Kitāb*, 'the people of the book'. This followed the assumption that the *ahl-al-Kitāb* should have read their scriptures well unless the copy of the scriptures that they possessed was the corrupt one.

Initially, the *Qur'ān* assumed that in fact what the *ahl-al-Kitāb* had was actually the true word of God. This was so much so that the *Qur'ān* asked Muslims to seek clarification and guidance from them if and when they encountered dif-

difficulties in understanding certain religious realities in their newly found religion. This was therefore an endorsement of all the books as revealed to Musa (Tawrat 'Torah or the Law'), Dawud (Zabur 'Psalms'), and Isa (Injil 'the Gospel') (Surah 3:113; 5:43ff).

Nevertheless, in Surah 5:69, Christians are attacked for not following their revelation. This attack does not point to their changing of their revelation books or text. It is clear in v. 71, that the only way of escape for the *ahl-al-Kitab* would be if they followed their revelation.

So far, the *Qur'ān* agrees indeed, that the scripture the *ahl-al-Kitab* had was actually right, but it was the people who were not following it, therefore downplaying its worth. The question that comes to mind at these early stages is this: when was the Bible corrupted or falsified, if up until this time the *Qur'ān* was asking Muslims to seek help from the *ahl-al-Kitab*? In Surah 10:95, Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, was likewise asked to seek clarification from the *ahl-al-Kitab*.

There are a number of examples where some *ahl-al-Kitab* were accused of concealing the truth of scriptures. These include; Surah 2:101, 140, 146, 159, 174; 3:70, 71, 187; 9:91, 92. However, a closer look at the text, Surah 6:91-92, shows that these were Jews who were accused of suppressing the truth through their misconduct.

### 3. Muslim Attitude and Exegesis of the Bible

Over the years, Muslims have used different approaches in looking at and interpreting the Bible. There are differ-

ent reasons for the ways in which Muslims see the Bible. There is always a reason behind each of the main objections raised against the Bible. For instance, the different attitudes held by Muslim Scholars have always been dependent on factors as diverse as their religio-political allegiance, the desire to prove that the Bible shows the coming of Muhammad and at the same time wishing to disavow large sections of the Bible as hopelessly corrupted.

The main accusations preferred against the Christians as far as the Bible is concerned include what Lazarus-Yafeh points as: *Tahrif* or Falsification, *Naskh* or Abrogation, Bible Exegesis and the Lack of *Tawatūr* or Lack of reliable transmission.<sup>1</sup>

As earlier stated, *Qur'ānic* arguments are used to judge the Bible in the first three, while the fourth finds its origins in the importance of *isnad*<sup>2</sup> in the study of Hadith.

#### *Tahrif* or Falsification

Amongst the accusations preferred against both the Jews and Christians, *Tahrif* is the most prominent. It means the distortion or modification of the original text.<sup>3</sup> There is *Qur'ānic* support for the different forms of *tahrif*, the first being Surah 2:146: 'but some of them conceal the truth which they them-

1 H. Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton, Princeton University Press 1992), p. 19.

2 The careful study of the chain of transmission used as a basis for judging true *Hadith*.

3 A. Bewley, *Glossary of Islamic Terms* (London: Ta-Ha, 1998), p. 23.

selves know'.<sup>4</sup> This type of *tahrif* is known as *taktumuna*, which means, 'concealing the truth'. It is assumed that Christians and Jews distort and obscure the truth, especially in regard to that which refers to Muhammad.

The second accusation is that of *tukhfuna* which means 'hiding what is in Scripture'. The passage that is used in support of this is, Surah 5:15b, 'There hath come to you our Messenger, revealing to you much that ye used to hide in the Book'. The concept is that Christians and Jews have hidden some truth and now the coming of the *Qur'ān* was meant to make bare the hidden reality in the previous revelations.

The third thought about the Bible is captured by the word, *yuharrifūna* which means, 'wilfully changing the Word of God'. The understanding is that the two, Christians and Jews, have distorted the truth of scripture knowingly and with the full knowledge of what they were doing. Surah 5:41 which says in part, 'They change the words from their times and places' is commonly taken to support this thought.

Lastly, *baddala*, which means, 'changing one word for another'. This comes from the understanding that, Jews and Christians had been involved in changing words from their rightful place and putting in words that would not properly portray the Islamic truth, as they would have it portrayed. Surah 7:162a 'But the transgressors among them changed the word that which had been given them...' According to this

text, Christians and Jews are called transgressors for the gravity of their offence.

This kind of understanding prompted Muslims to study the Bible to identify where these misrepresentations would be found. Progressively, whatever may have appeared to the Muslims as being part of the falsification has been used polemically to launch attacks on the Christians. It was from the foundation of these and similar verses that Muslim scholars examined the Bible and found examples of falsification, which they then used for polemical purposes.

Generally, there are two different types, namely first, *tahrif bi-al-ma'anâ*, which means, the corruption of meaning and secondly, *tahrif al-lafz*, meaning, 'literal falsification'.<sup>5</sup> In discussing this subject, John Chesworth states, 'The corruption of meaning allowed that Christians and Jews had deliberately interpreted passages of the Bible in their own way to their own advantage'. He gives an example from *The Book of Religion and Empire* by al-Tabarî, who takes various passages from the Bible to show that they foretell Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam. Chesworth points out al-Tabarî's discussion of chapter 16 of John's Gospel, where he says:

The interpretation of the saying 'He will send in my name,' is this: as the Christ was called Paraclet, and Muhammad was called by the same name, it was not strange on the

<sup>4</sup> All quotations from the *Qur'ān* are taken from the Yûsuf 'Alî translation.

<sup>5</sup> John Chesworth, 'Muslims' attitudes towards the Bible in the Classical Period' (unpublished paper, n.d.).

part of Christ to have said 'He will send in my name'.<sup>6</sup>

From this, it is clear that, Al-Tabarī's concern was to show how the meaning of the Bible had been distorted, but he did not give the impression that the Christians had corrupted the text, but that it was their interpretation that was corrupt.

With time, these accusations moved from mere distortion of interpretation to the changing of the text deliberately in order to serve their own interests. The key proponents of this thought included Ibn Hazm of Cordoba. Lazarus-Yafeh says that Ibn Hazm was 'the first Muslim author to use a systematic scholarly approach to the Bible to prove in detail this *Qur'ānic* charge [falsification], perhaps because he was one of the first Muslim authors to have a real knowledge of the Biblical text'.<sup>7</sup> Ibn Hazm in his writings, particularly *Kitāb al-Fisal fī-l-Milal wa-l-Ahwā wa-l-Nihal* (Religion and Sects), consistently shows his view that the text had been falsified. An example shows Ibn Hazm showing inconsistencies between the four Gospels and saying that at least one of the Gospel writers must be lying:

But if what Matthew says is true, then John has deliberately transmitted lies when he dealt with the same subject in his Gospel. It is one or the other. This is enough to demonstrate that the Gospels are

the work of accursed liars.<sup>8</sup>

This is an example of his approach and it shows clearly his attitude—to clearly demonstrate to fellow-Muslims the unreliability of the Bible and therefore its falseness, that the writers of the Gospels are unreliable and cannot be trusted.

We know that they [the Christians] have made mistakes in transmission and interpretation. This is because those from whom they received their books were four, John, Matthew, Luke and Mark.... But it is common knowledge that among four there is the possibility of alteration, substitution and suspicion of lying, so how can we depend on their account for what is and is not possible regarding God?<sup>9</sup>

The examples of the use of the charge of falsification show that it was understood in different ways by various Muslim Scholars, yet in all they showed a desire to demonstrate that the Bible had been 'corrupted' either by interpretation or on purpose, so that Christians and Jews may be shown to be wrong and Muslims may not be attracted by the Bible

### *Naskh* (Abrogation)

The *Qur'ān* is seen as superseding the Bible, so in effect revoking it. Muslim scholars used the principle of abrogation to show that the Bible had indeed been revoked by the *Qur'ān*. The idea of *naskh* is found in the *Qur'ān* Surah

6 al-Tabarī in Jean-Marie Gaudeul, *Encounters & Clashes: Islam and Christianity in History* 2 Vols (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e Islamici, 1990), Vol II pp. 226-228.

7 Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, p. 26.

8 Gaudeul, *Encounters & Clashes*, p. 284.

9 'Abd al Jabbār, *Kitāb al-Mughnī* Vol. 5 ed. M.M. al-Khudayrī (Cairo, 1958), p. 143.

2:106: 'None of Our revelations do We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, but We substitute something better or similar'.

Muslim scholars understood it to mean 'that the later revelation... is legally the valid one'.<sup>10</sup> This led them to look at the Bible and to demonstrate that it had been abrogated. They were able to point to the Christians who, with the coming of the New Testament, had abrogated the Old Testament, yet were resisting the idea of their teachings being abrogated in turn by the *Qur'ān*.

Ibn Hazm may have used earlier scholars' work, yet he was the first to develop it systematically. He scrutinised the contents of the Bible to look for examples of abrogation.<sup>11</sup> Lazarus-Yafeh gives an example of Ibn Hazm's use of Isaiah 54:5-6:

Where the prophet mentions that in future, foreign people will also serve God (apparently in his Holy Temple), in distinct contrast to Mosaic law, according to which only descendants of Levi can serve therein. This verse according to Ibn Hazm, not only is a good example of abrogation, but actually prophesies the coming of Islam, and the worship of God by Arab, Persian and other Muslims in the mosques of Jerusalem and elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

The use of abrogation pointed to the almost ambivalent attitude that Muslim scholars had to the Bible—they

wanted to show that the Bible pointed the way forward to Muhammad and to Islam, and yet they wanted to question the very validity of the source itself.

### Bible Exegesis

The use of the Bible by Muslim scholars is a fascinating paradox: as we have seen above they wished to demonstrate that it was corrupt and untrustworthy, yet they also desired very strongly to use it to show that Muhammad was clearly foretold in it. The divide between biblical exegesis and showing *tahrīf* is very narrow and in many cases, they go together. For example, in commenting on a text like John 14:16 concerning the Paraclete, Christians are accused of changing *perikleitos*—far praised one, to *paraklētos*—Counsellor, helper, to hide Jesus' foretelling of the coming of Ahmad (Muhammad).

Biblical exegesis by Muslim scholars is used not only to look for proofs that Muhammad is foretold in the Bible; it is also used in a polemical manner to demonstrate how wrong Christians and Jews are to trust the texts that they have. Often the anthropomorphisms found in the Bible are attacked as being inappropriate, yet when similar ones are found in the *Qur'ān* they are explained away.

Ibn Hazm, who was a *Zahiri* and therefore a literalist, was interested in Christian interpretation of the Bible and it is here that we see something of his attitude. He dislikes analogy and attacks the Christian use of it on several occasions. Laila cites *al-Fisal* where Ibn Hazm 'criticises the divinity of Christ as established in the performing of miracles. He then uses the Chris-

<sup>10</sup> Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, p. 35.

<sup>11</sup> Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, pp. 39f.

<sup>12</sup> Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, p. 40.

tian tendency to analogy as a weapon of attack, arguing that the Old Testament prophets who performed miracles also merit the description of divine.<sup>13</sup>

Al-Tabari used exegesis of various passages to demonstrate that they were about Muhammad. An example from *Religion and Empire* uses the Book of Daniel to show that the number of 1,335 days used in Chapter 12:12 refers to the coming of Islam. He says: 'I have carefully examined this, and found that it refers to the Muslim faith, and more especially to this "Abbasid kingdom".'<sup>14</sup>

'Abd al-Jabbār used the Bible in his work mainly to 'offer proofs of the truth of Muhammad's prophecy'.<sup>15</sup> He sees that Christianity has perverted Jesus' teaching, by making him divine. He uses various passages from the Gospels to show how Christians have neglected Jesus' own orders. An example shows that Jesus had brothers and sisters:

In their gospels and stories it is found: When he was crucified, there came his Mother Mary with her children, Jacob, Simon and Judah, and stood in front of him. He said to her from the tree: Take your children and go away!

Do we need a more explicit statement to show that after Jesus, Mary bore these children by Joseph the

carpenter, so that they were brothers of Jesus from his mother's side? Can there be anything more absurd than this?<sup>16</sup>

'Abd al-Jabbār mainly looked for proofs of Muhammad in the Bible, for instance in the only explicit quotation in the *Qur'ān* (Sura 21:105 quoting Psalm 37:29): 'righteous slaves shall inherit the earth'. Lazarus-Yafeh says of him that he found 'not only an explicit confirmation of the true prophethood of Muhammad and the rise of Islam, but also a clear allusion to the great conquests of the first four caliphs'.<sup>17</sup>

The use of biblical exegesis never properly developed into an effective tool apart from its use to illustrate proofs for the inevitability of Islam.

### Lack of *Tawatūr* (Lack of reliable transmission)

This accusation, not found in the *Qur'ān*, is an interesting one, in that it reflects an understanding of the Bible that was probably different from that of Jews and Christians of the time and is certainly different from today. It reflects a desire for the presence of *isnad*, that is, reliable chains of transmission, as are carefully attested to for Hadith, and by implication for the *Qur'ān*. Muslim Scholars, such as al-Jabbār and Ibn Hazm 'stressed the miraculous character of the unbroken, reliable, and public transmission (*tawatūr*) of the *Qur'ān*, so different from earlier Scriptures'.<sup>18</sup>

13 A. L. Laila, 'An Introduction to the life and work of Ibn Hazm', *Islamic Quarterly* 29:75-100, 165-171, at p 92.

14 Gaudeul, *Encounters & Clashes*, p 222.

15 S. M. Stern, "Abd al-Djabbar b. Ahmad" in *Encyclopedia of Islam* (2nd Ed. 1967), Vol I p. 35.

16 Stern, "Abd al-Djabbar b. Ahmad", p. 52.

17 Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, p. 77.

18 Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, p. 42.

Arnaldez says of Ibn Hazm that 'he attacks the Gospels, demonstrating that they show no guarantee of being a revealed text, since they have not the nature of one (the *Qur'ān* being taken as the criterion) and that they do not achieve the credibility of hadith, since they are totally lacking in *isnad* (demonstrated from the prologue to St. Luke's Gospel)',<sup>19</sup>

If there is no reliable transmission, it must be questionable and therefore the text was probably tampered with.<sup>20</sup> Ibn Hazm goes into great detail about the Torah and the fact that the only copy was kept in the Temple as it could be viewed only three times a year, therefore the Priests had ample opportunity to alter it. Even if they did not alter it, Ezra the Scribe purposely corrupted the biblical text.<sup>21</sup>

'Abd al-Jabbār in *Mughnī* writes of the fact that the Christians received their books from the four Evangelists:

They read about it from these, because when the Messiah was no longer present—they claim that he was killed—and his companions were killed, there was no-one from his faith to pass on to them his book and injunctions... except these four.<sup>22</sup>

For the Muslim scholars the lack of reliable transmission for biblical texts was seen as further proof of their unre-

liability and the likelihood of textual corruption.

#### 4. Mihadhara: Contemporary Examples of Islamic Bible Exegesis

What were Muslim scholars attempting to do in using the Bible? To understand that would help us to understand their attitude to the Bible. They wanted to show respect for the Bible because of its place as the one preceding the *Qur'ān* and for the Prophets contained within it, Moses, David and Jesus in particular. They also had a desire to use the Bible to show that Muhammad and Islam are clearly foretold in it. Some scholars wanted to attack the Bible in order to warn Muslims. Adang cites Ibn Hazm demonstrating the 'alleged apocryphal and blasphemous nature of [the] Scriptures.... for the benefit of [his] co-religionists, many of whom he found had a deep respect for... Scripture, which they considered a genuine revealed book'.<sup>23</sup> Finally they wished to use the Bible in a polemical manner, to show Jews and Christians how corrupted it was, to show them the error of their ways and to lead them to the truth.

In many ways, they were equipped to look at the Bible only from their own standpoint, using the methods that they applied to the *Qur'ān* and Hadith. This finally shaped their attitudes to the Bible and to Christians and Jews.

19 R. Arnaldez, 'Ibn Hazm' in *Encyclopedia of Islam* (2nd Ed., 1967), Vol III p. 796.

20 Lazarus-Yafeh, *Intertwined Worlds*, pp. 43-45.

21 'Abd al Jabbār, *Kitāb al-Mughnī* Vol. 5 ed. M.M. al-Khudayrī, (Cairo), p. 143.

22 'Abd al Jabbār, *Kitāb al-Mughnī*, p. 143.

23 C. Adang, 'Some hitherto neglected Biblical material in the work of Ibn Hazm' *Al-Masaq*, (1992) 5, pp. 17-28 at p. 18.

### Background Information on *Mihadhara*

*Mihadhara* are a widespread method of outreach in Kenya. Most *Mihadhara* speakers are itinerant preachers moving from town to town, holding lectures. Small groups of Muslims in different towns are involved in inviting the preachers and hosting their *Mihadhara*. In a study carried out in six towns in Kenya,<sup>24</sup> it was observed that the Bible exegesis was the main approach of teaching.

In *Mihadhara*, both the Bible and the Qur'an are used side by side either to discount some Christian teachings or endorse some Islamic teachings. A number of topics featured prominently in the *Mihadhara*, most of which were applied to the Kenyan, socio-religious context. The style of using the bible exegesis is used to discuss various themes, including, the person of Jesus in the Bible, and the *Qur'an*, True religion, and True worship.

### The Person of Jesus in the Bible and the Qur'an

The divinity of Jesus is discussed under the heading, *Je, Yesu ni Mungu?* (Is Jesus God?). Speakers capitalize on the teaching that God is one, without partners or associates and that any attempt to include Jesus in the Godhead would prove futile in the end. Biblical texts that teach the unity of God are used to discount the teaching that Jesus is God. For instance, the Deca-

logue<sup>25</sup> (Exodus 20:1ff) is used to point out God's declaration that he is one and that no images should be made for worship.

The Qur'an, *Al-Maida*: 75-78, is used to point out that *Isa* is a messenger of God no different from the others who came before or after him. Biblical passages like Matthew 19:4, where Jesus declares himself to be the creator is usually opposed. The question then are how Jesus, who claimed to be God, could say 'our God' in Mark 12:19. In addition, how could God be crucified in Luke 24:36-40? According to *Al-Israa*:18, life was in the hands of God alone and no human being had power over it, including Jesus except by God's permission.

According to these Muslim scholars, the reference to Jesus as holy in Luke 35:135, should not be taken as sufficient reason for Christians to designate Jesus as God, since the Bible in the same book, Luke 2:23 referred to first-borns as holy. *Fatir* 135 certified this concept by stating that being holy did not necessarily make one God. Following on this argument, *Al-Maida*: 75, is cited as pointing to the fact that anyone who called Jesus God, blasphemed. Equally, John 20:17 is interpreted to show that Jesus himself warned people against worshipping him, rather asking them to worship God alone.

Proponents of *Mihadhara* see John 17:3 to be pointing to the fact that Jesus came so that people would know God. Consequently, Jesus was a messenger like the rest, deserving to be given revelation from God to deliver to

<sup>24</sup> These included Nairobi, Nakuru, Mom-basa, Kitui, and Mwingi.

<sup>25</sup> The Ten Commandments.



his people (Rev. 1:1). In John 13:13 Jesus was shown as a teacher and lord, not a deity.

### The True Religion

Muslims believe that there is one God. Since the *Qur'ān* is the last revelation, it sums up all God's revelation and so it and its agent of revelation Muhammad should be the ones to be followed.

For Muslims, all of humanity, starting with Adam, have always been Muslims. However, defiance to God's law led to the proliferation of religions. When God chose to send prophets for all people in all generations, he intended that they would deliver his message honestly and faithfully so that all people from all parts of the world would hold fast to the true religion of God. To enforce this, out of the many prophets sent, four<sup>26</sup> were given written messages for guidance, and to lead people to the 'way of God'.

The Muslims believe that Islam is left as the final religion given to mankind for their wellbeing and a safe-haven for ensuring their good relationship with God. All humanity should therefore believe in Islam, the 'religion of our ancestors', Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus and Muhammad.

According to Surah *As-Saf*: 6, Jesus' mission on earth was three-fold; first, it was to fulfil the law, second, to point to '*Ahmad*', the one who was to come as prophesied by the former prophets, and lastly to save his people the Israelites. This points to the fact that Jesus' audience was marked out for him as being

restricted to the Israelites, whereas the audience of Muhammad, seen by the Muslims to be the seal of prophethood, was universal.

For the Muslims involved in the exegesis of the Bible, Jesus was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel, (Mt. 15:24) and not to the rest of the world. Galatians 4:21 (Gen. 15), the story of Abraham and his 'two' sons, Isma'il and Isaac, is interpreted to show that Ishmael was indeed the one through whom God's covenantal blessings would be transmitted to future generations. These are Arabs, who were Muslims and so the blessings were prophesied for them and not through Isaac, as Christians have always wanted to believe.

Genesis 21:24ff. is used as proof of God's care for both Hagar and the boy, Ishmael for whom God provided water at the well known as *zam zam*. Surah *Al-Furqan*: 51 is used to show that, had God wanted, he would have sent a prophet for all the people, but he chose to send Muhammad from the line of Isma'il, to serve as a prophet to all people.

Biblical texts such as Isaiah 19:19<sup>27</sup> are interpreted to mean that the pillar of the prophet would be in Egypt. Since Egypt was an Arab-Muslim stronghold, this must have meant that Muhammad was the prophet. In Deuteronomy 33:1,<sup>28</sup> the blessing of Moses is interpreted as being bestowed upon Arabs

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<sup>27</sup> In that day, shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD.

<sup>28</sup> And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.

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<sup>26</sup> These are Musa (*Tawrat*), Dawud (*Zabur*), Isa (*Injil*) and Muhammad (*Qur'ān*).

who later became Muslims, making Muhammad the first beneficiary thereof.

In Matthew 21:43,<sup>29</sup> the thought that Jesus himself warned that at some point the Kingdom would move from the Israelites and be given to others, 'who bear their fruit', is interpreted to show that 'others' means the Muslims. In addition, Ephesians 1:13<sup>30</sup> is interpreted to mean that Muhammad, who came from Arabia, was the one from whom the message was heard, believed and sealed, and that he was the one who was meant to bring salvation to all people. Amongst the prophets, only Muhammad came from Arabia bearing the truth of God, and coming as the seal of God's final truth for this generation.<sup>31</sup>

### The True Worship

Here we see how Islamic ways and modes of worship are enforced, using both the Bible and the Qur'an. Surah *Al-Qiyamat*: 36 points out that God has not left humanity without regulation.

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29 Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

30 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

31 Jesus' parable of the narrow and the wide way from Luke 13:23-30 was used to show that those that passed through the narrow way, coming from all directions were Muslims. Christians on the other hand, will come to Christ on the judgment day, weeping, and gnashing their teeth, recounting the things they had done in Jesus' name. Jesus' response will be to cast them out of his sight saying he never knew them, a loss for Christians.

The guidance has however been obscured by human innovation (*bid'a*). It is apparent in *Az-Zariyat*: 56, that God created people and all other creatures to worship him.

The five pillars of Islam<sup>32</sup> are then discussed as the ideal way in which God wanted to be worshipped. The five are supported with biblical as well as *Qur'anic* texts. Under prayer, such issues as posture of prayer, ablution and the like are subjects of discussion.

First 'bowing' *kusyjudu* is discussed and given Qur'anic basis in passages such as, *Maryam*:49, *Al-Hajj*:77<sup>33</sup> and *Al-i'Imran*:52<sup>34</sup> to show that Allah worship is the only acceptable way, and the decreed way was through bowing. Of equal importance in worship is the subject of worship to these Muslim scholars. Qur'anic scriptures such as *An-Nahl*: 73 and *An-Nisaa*: 116<sup>35</sup> are used to show that true worship should be of only one God, and that it was unacceptable for people to worship that one God in multiplicity.

As earlier stated, the Bible then becomes an important point of reference to show the truth of the Islamic way of worship. To begin with, Moses

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32 *Shahada* (recitation) *swalat* (Prayer), *zakah*, (almsgiving), *saum* (fasting), and *hajj* (pilgrimage).

33 O ye who believe! bow down, prostrate yourselves and adore your Lord; and do good; that ye may prosper.

34 'It is Allah who is my Lord and your Lord; then worship Him. This is a way that is straight.'

35 Allah forgiveth not (the sin of) joining other gods with Him: but He forgiveth whom He pleaseth other sins than this: one who joins other gods with Allah hath strayed far far away (from the right).

was instructed to inform his people that they were to worship only God, and never to make any image or likeness of God to worship (Ex. 20:1ff).

During Jesus' temptations in Matthew 4:8, Muslims scholars underscore the fact that Jesus informed Satan that only God should be worshipped, after which Satan fled. Revelation 14:6; 19:10 is usually used to mean that the angel in this context bore an Islamic message to the world about the right way of worship. In Nehemiah 8:6,<sup>36</sup> the focus of worship is identified as the 'Great God' (*Allahu Akbar*), to whom people responded *amin, amin, amin*, falling down and bowing (*kifudifudi*).

Christians are blamed for reading scriptures selectively. According to Muslims, they intentionally miss essential texts. Exodus 4:31 is one example of such selective reading, where the children of Israel responded to God by bowing their heads and worshipping him. Other texts that are used to point to key biblical characters who bowed in worship include, 1 Chronicles 29:20<sup>37</sup> where David bowed, Matthew 26:39, that Jesus bowed in his prayer in Gethsemane. Revelation 22:9 is interpreted to show that all those who were true followers of the Bible had no

choice but to bow in their worship to God.

## Conclusion

The style, method and approach used in *Mihadhara* are not new. Most of their teachings could be traced as far back as the time of Ibn Hazm, al Jahiz, and al Juwayn and more recently in the 19th century in the Indian sub-continent where Karl Pfander engaged Rahmatullah al-Hindi in arguments similar to those of *Mihadhara*. In terms of style and content, *Mihadhara* seem to borrow a lot from the self-proclaimed 'scholar of contemporary religions', Ahmed Deedat, who was himself, influenced by the style and works of al-Hindi.<sup>38</sup>

In the East African context, *Mihadhara* are a means of Muslims exerting themselves in a dominantly Christian setting. Having been for a long time passive and less active in outreach, while Christians continued to make headway in many parts, *Mihadhara* may be seen as a reactionary attempt to catch up. This has made Christianity their sole target for outreach.

The holding of *Mihadhara* in open places, playgrounds and stadiums is very similar to what Christians have done over the years. The use of powerful public address systems to reach as big an audience as possible also has a lot of similarity with what happens

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<sup>36</sup> And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

<sup>37</sup> And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and the king.

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<sup>38</sup> D. Westerlund, 'Ahmed Deedat's Theology of Religion: Apologetics through Polemics', *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 33:3 (2003), pp. 263-278.

amongst Christian groups in their 'crusades'.

The type of training used by *Mihadhara* preachers would be interesting to study, including the content of their curriculum. Important issues like qualifications, duration of training and the like would be helpful in assessing *Mihadhara*. Although not endorsed by mainstream Muslim institutions, *Mihadhara* enjoy a great deal of goodwill from a number of them. This love-hate situation could be equated to the way mainstream Muslims regard the Ahmadiyya.<sup>39</sup> Largely, Muslims do not regard them as a Muslim group. However, they seem to support them, especially when they polemically attack Christianity.

It is common knowledge that there are biblical texts that *Sunni* Islam finds uncomfortable to use, on authorship and content grounds. Some of these include John's Gospel, and Pauline epistles. These are, however, used without question in the *Mihadhara*. In addition, Muslims accuse Christians of falsifying, corrupting and changing their scriptures to alter their meaning; yet the Bible is extensively used in illustrating and reinforcing major Islamic teachings. In the *Mihadhara*, all major parts of the Bible<sup>40</sup> are cited, leaving one wondering what areas are falsified.

If Jesus' mission was threefold as stated earlier, in which of these did he fail and how has Muhammad accom-

plished this mission? The speakers talk of Jesus being opposed by his own people but immediately go on to talk of how the Quraishy, Muhammad's tribesmen, denied his prophethood. Do not these cancel out each other? What about the fact that many of the prophets had problems with their people which resulted in Jesus' saying: 'a prophet has no honour amongst his people'?

*Mihadhara's* use of the Bible is interesting—the Bible, the Christian scriptures, like other sacred books, could be used to say anything due to the diversity of its subject matter and the extent of the period covered. Could the 'proof-text' technique of the *Mihadhara* speakers stand sound biblical exegetical study?

Observing *Mihadhara* in different parts of Kenya, it is evident that there is a lot of predictability. Most of *Mihadhara* material is lifted word for word from Ahmed Deedat or Ngariba and Kawemba's works.<sup>41</sup> Having attended a number of *Mihadhara* where the same subject was discussed, it was obvious that there was little originality, most of the material being repetitive, *kama kasuku* (like a parrot) as Al-Amin Mazrui used to state.<sup>42</sup>

This does not mean that *Mihadhara* speakers had not contextualized their *Mihadhara*. Christian terminologies

39 *Sunni* Muslims do not consider this as a Muslim group.

40 The law, writings, prophecy, Gospels, epistles to Revelation.

41 For instance, although, it is about twenty years since the peak of Ngariba and Kawemba's debates, their works are still faithfully transmitted.

42 J. Lacunza-Balda, 'An Investigation into some concepts and ideas found in Swahili writings' (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of London, 1990).

such as, 'eternal life' (*uzima wa milele*), 'to be saved' (*kuokoka*) and eternal judgment (*hukumu ya milele*) were used to endear themselves to their audience, especially if the majority were Christians. While real concerns and issues were raised during *Mihadhara*, these could not be given the weight that serious thinkers would give to such argument.<sup>43</sup> Of course, this is important when it is understood that the kind of audience targeted in *Mihadhara* is the laity.

While *Mihadhara* speakers agree on most of their teachings, there are differences, for instance on the use of music, with some criticizing it while others even use it to illustrate their points. For example, a speaker in Uhuru Park, Nairobi sang the Christian song *ni ahadi ya Bwana haivunjiki milele* (the Lord's promises last forever) to illustrate his point. In addition, there are *sufi* groups who engage in music, like the popular coastal *taarab*, and other processional songs.

Muslim ideas such as the *Sunnah* and *hadith*<sup>44</sup> are used to judge Christians, especially when Christians are accused of not adhering to the actions and deeds of Jesus and other prophets.

Also noted was that, although big topics like worship were introduced, only the 'juicy' subtopics were given prominence, leaving out most of the other components. For instance, in worship, only prayer was dealt with, and not even the content, but only the outward expressions like bowing, and ablution.

As a whole, the Muslims seem to be in agreement with the Bible in as far as it supports the message of Islam. However, where the Bible seems to contradict this, Christians are largely accused of corrupting, changing and even altering the Bible.

One church leader who had attended a number of *Mihadhara* concluded that '*Mihadhara* thrive on deceit'. Asked why, the many promises that those attending are given were raised. For instance in the Nairobi *Mihadhara*, while people were invited to come and hear testimonials from former Bishops, Reverends, Pastors and others Christians who had reverted to Islam, eventually there was none who gave a testimony. This and many other features show to what extent some of the speakers and organizers would go to attract Christians into embracing Islam.

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<sup>43</sup> Leaving these aside, *Mihadhara* teachers went for populist arguments, avoiding the deeper arguments that one would expect from the Muslims. Think for instance of the errors or corruption of the Bible of which Christians are accused.

<sup>44</sup> *Sunnah* and *hadith* are the deeds and the sayings of Prophet Muhammad, which are authoritative teachings of Islam in the lives of Muslims.

# Monastic Renewal in Australia: Holy Transfiguration Monastery

Paul R. Dekar

*Keywords: Monasticism, rule, liturgy, grace, community, Benedict, spirituality, hospice, hospitality, truth, evil, suffering*

THE RENEWAL OF Christian monasticism is a great spiritual movement of our day. Imbued with a love for God, neighbour, and self, people are going to monasteries to find peace, to deepen their relationship with God, and to pray.<sup>1</sup> In North America, traditional vocations may be declining, but some orders are growing.<sup>2</sup> In ten years the

number of Benedictine oblates has multiplied by over seventy-five per cent.<sup>3</sup> Rendering more porous the wall that often separates monastery and world, the Holy Spirit is guiding many Christians to explore contemplative practices suited to the multiple complex contexts in which they live.<sup>4</sup> For Cistercian lay associates,

the Cistercian charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit bestowed not solely on those who live within monastic enclosures. Rather, we feel it is the gift of a 'way of life' that can be as appropriate for a lay person living

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1 Ruth Fox, 'Benedictines in the Third Millennium', *American Benedictine Review* 54 (March 2003), p. 11.

2 Bonnie Thurston, 'Soli Deo Placere Desiderans', in Patrick Hart, ed., *A Monastic Vision for the 21st Century; Where Do We Go from Here?* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 2006), p. 3; 'Orthodox Monastery to Move into Manton Area', *Red Bluff Daily News*, 20 May 2006; Tracy Schmidt and Lisa Takeuchi Cullen, 'Today's Nun Has a Veil—and a Blog', *Time* 20 November 2006.

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3 Linda Kulzer, 'Monasticism beyond the Walls', in *Benedict in the World*, ed. Linda Kulzer and Roberta Bondi (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2002), p. 5. On 23 September 2006 the [Memphis] *Commercial Appeal* reported there are more than 700,000 lay Franciscans worldwide.

4 Diana Butler Bass, *The Practicing Congregation. Imagining a New Old Church* (Herndon: Alban Institute, 2004), p. 61.

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in the world as it is for a monk or a nun living in a monastery.<sup>5</sup>

In the 1930s German Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer anticipated the current of monastic renewal in a letter to his brother, Karl-Friedrich,

I think I am right in saying that I would only achieve true inner clarity and sincerity by really starting to take the Sermon on the Mount seriously. This is the only source of strength that can blow all this stuff and nonsense sky-high, in a fireworks display that will leave nothing behind but one or two charred remains. The restoration of the church will surely come from a new kind of monasticism, which will have nothing in common with the old but a life of uncompromising adherence to the Sermon on the Mount in imitation of Christ. I believe the time has come to rally people together for this.<sup>6</sup>

Writing in the late 1950s, Thomas Merton regarded monasticism as a yes to the world, a way of contemplative living by which people fulfil a calling to divinity as God's children

The most significant development of the contemplative life 'in the world' is the growth of small

groups of men and women who live in every way like the laypeople around them, except for the fact that they are dedicated to God and focus all their life of work and poverty upon a contemplative centre.<sup>7</sup>

The renewal of contemporary monasticism recalls an earlier time when monastic orders helped shape western civilization. Philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre observes,

If my account of our moral condition is correct, we ought also to conclude that for some time now we too have reached that turning point. What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages that are already upon us. And if the tradition of the virtues was able to survive the horrors of the last dark ages, we are not entirely without grounds of hope. This time however the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament. We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict.<sup>8</sup>

Whether or not another St. Benedict

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5 Eleven Lay Associates, 'A Lay Response to the Reflections of Dom Bernardo Olivera on Charismatic Associations', *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* [CSQ] 32 (1997), pp. 235-36.

6 Letter of 14 January 1935, *Gesammelte Schriften* 3, 25, cited by Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Theologian. Christian. Contemporary*, trans. under the editorship of Edwin Robertson (London: Collins, 1977), p. 380.

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7 *The Inner Experience. Notes on Contemplation*, ed. William H. Shannon (San Francisco: Harper, 2003), p. 142.

8 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame, 1981), pp. 244-5.

or St. Scholastica emerges, or has already emerged, monasticism offers a prophetic presence in modern life. The experience of Holy Transfiguration Monastery [HTM], a Baptist monastery in Geelong, Victoria, Australia, is illustrative. HTM began to take its current form in the early 1970s.<sup>9</sup> A founder, Brother Graeme, spent a year at the Anglican Benedictine Community of the Glorious Ascension in England. He met Brother Steve of the United States. They explored monastic sources like the *Rule of Benedict* [RB]. After Brother Graeme accepted the interim pastorate at a Baptist congregation in Norlane, a suburb of Geelong, they kept in touch. By November 1976 six young Christians were gathering for contemplation and other communal practices. Members of Breakwater Baptist Church had been praying that God would bring new life and invited the community to become a mission of the congregation.

The two groups began to journey together. Brother Steve, who immigrated to Australia in 1984, and others joined. In 1989 a new constitution recognized three ways to associate with the emerging monastery: those living in the Cloister under a common purse

in accord with Acts 2:45 and Acts 4:34, those who covenant to be part of the Greater Community, and those who relate to the community as a spiritual home.

In 2007, twelve monks live in the Cloister sharing a common purse. Thirty are in the Greater Community. Over a hundred persons identify HTM as their spiritual home, including Peace Tree in Perth, Western Australia and sketes (small monastic communities) in Melbourne, the United Kingdom, and North America. According to the *Testament and Pastoral Rule* (1999):

The monk, in our present understanding, is that mysterious archetype—the ‘solitary’ in every human soul—that like Lazarus is in our baptism made alive and called by the Son of God to ‘come forth,’ still bound by the grave cloths of the past, yet alive and free, even with the evidence of the past clinging to it, called to live as a profound sign of life in the midst of death, of life after death, of life that can transcend the past.

HTM accepts accountability to Baptist authorities such as clergy, theologians, and three successive superintendents of the Baptist Union of Victoria which recognizes HTM as an ecumenical mission. Anglican, Catholic, and Uniting Church representatives serve as advisors to HTM. The community has ties with the Cistercian Tararua Abbey in the Yarra River valley and two Anglican Benedictine monasteries: the Community of Holy Name near Melbourne and St. Mark’s Abbey in Camperdown, Victoria.

HTM members articulate their commitments in a *Resolve*. Neither a Rule,

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9 For background, Paul R. Dekar, ‘Imagine a Baptist Contemplative Community in Australia’, *Baptist Peacemaker* 25 (Fall 2005), p. 4-5; Ken R. Manley, *From Woollloomooloo to ‘Eternity’: A History of Australian Baptists* (Cumbria: Paternoster, 2006); Marita Rae Munro, ‘A History of the House of the Gentle Bunyip (1975-1990)’ (M.A. diss., U. of Melbourne, 2002); Michael Smith, ‘HTM’, *Overcuppa. Christian Community Perspectives* 2 (1998), pp. 4-5.



nor a set of laws, the *Resolve* is an instrument for following the Gospel and growing in Christ-likeness. Distilled and refined over a thirty-year period, the *Resolve* describes practices by which members have come to share life together. It reads as follows:

Being perfectly assured of your salvation, with your whole life proclaim your gratitude.

Reject nothing, consecrate everything.

Be the good of love, for God, for neighbour, for all creation.

Judge no one, not even yourself.

Love beauty.

Maintain inner-silence in all things.

Show hospitality; err only on the side of generosity.

Speak truth to power, especially power without love.

Let your only experience of evil be in suffering, not its creation.

For us there is only the trying, the rest is none of our business.

### **The Practice of Gratitude: Being perfectly assured of your salvation, with your whole life proclaim your gratitude**

This opening line of the *Resolve* integrates a major tenet of sixteenth-century Reformation teaching (*sola gratia*), the Eastern Orthodox and Pauline emphasis on synergy, and monastic themes. The Benedictines affirm that God redeems us by grace; one should boast only in the Lord (*RB*, Prologue 31, 32). In France the brothers of Taizé, a Protestant monastery, affirm,

Assured of your salvation by the

unique grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, you do not impose discipline on yourself for its own sake.... Let there be no useless asceticism; hold only to the works God commands... so as to share concretely in the sufferings of Christ.<sup>10</sup>

The sisters of Grandchamp in Switzerland affirm prayer is a response to God's grace,

Christians need to trust in the salvation of humanity, the pledge of the Spirit, and the coming of the Kingdom. They are called to glorify God. This is the witness of the community that prays. For those who pray are called by Christ to go up the Mountain of the Transfiguration.<sup>11</sup>

Many HTM members come from experiences in the church's life of working hard for God but not having time to be with God; speaking for God but not listening to God; and pushing agendas on God's behalf while there is little interest in being in communion with the God in whose name Christians evangelize. The culture of church life as many have known it fosters knowledge about God but does not satisfy the deepest longing in the heart to know God in intimacy as the Hebrew word *yada* connotes.

For HTM members, the grace of God is the primary source of assurance and the foundation of the community. Noth-

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<sup>10</sup> Community of Taizé, *The Rule of Taizé* (New York: Seabury, 1968), p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> Catherine E. Clifford citing Geneviève Micheli in, 'The Protestant Monastic Community of Grandchamp: History and Spirituality', *CSQ* 26 (1991), p. 234.

ing members do is about the earning of salvation. They do *not* work for God. Rather, they respond to God with gratitude. The *Testament and Pastoral Rule* offers this guidance: 'turn and train yourself to live in a constant state of gratitude for all things. For from gratitude is born respect, and from respect—reverence, and by reverence you will protect and preserve the entire Creator's work.'

Members experience the grace of the triune God—Creator, Christ, and Spirit—as the primary source of energy for daily living. By the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, members are being conformed to Christ's likeness from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor. 3:18). In response, members share Good News that God has become one with humankind in our humanity, including suffering.

A secondary source of gratitude is the experience of being part of a community characterized by Parker Palmer as a circle of trust, a communal place of safety that welcomes the soul, helps members to hear its voice, and reclaims what Thomas Merton called 'a hidden wholeness', an integrity that comes from knowing one's truest self.<sup>12</sup>

HTM offers assurance of salvation in part by the way community members respond to each other and to every person. This reinforces the saving influence on them of changes in their lives,

their relationships with one another, and their growth in transparency. By their responses to every person, HTM members witness that salvation is indeed happening. They see and experience it in each person. Members challenge any negative self-doubt or self-destructiveness and reflect the mind of Christ to each other.

Life in community nurtures members in a lifelong process of transfiguration into the life of Christ (Rom. 12:1-2). God is manifest in the lives of members who seek to live holy lives by following the kenotic pattern of Jesus (Philp. 2:6-11), the idea that Jesus relinquished all divine attributes to experience human suffering. Community members see this as a way to live their baptism. Salvation is not an ethereal concept focused on the hereafter but a new-birth experience manifest in such events and processes as joy and human fulfilment through liberation from events of the past and their imprisoning or paralyzing impact, the stabilizing of emotions, the healing of broken human sexuality, the opening up of human life for relationship and intimacy with God and others, and freedom from a sacrificial theology that breeds self-destruction or scapegoating.

Community members experience salvation in the here and now. Who has the Son has life (1 Jn. 5:12). 'And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (Jn. 17:3). To strengthen the inner assurance one has of salvation and how it is seen in positive ways in gospel-focused moral and ethical living, HTM members let their whole lives speak. Who they are and what they do in every aspect of

12 Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness. The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), p. 22. Palmer quotes Merton's 'Hagia Sophia,' in Thomas P. McDonnell, ed., *A Thomas Merton Reader* (Garden City: Image, 1974), p. 506.

their lives, not just what they say, attest that they are disciples of Jesus. Proclaiming the gospel in all of life, members use words only as necessary.

All phrases of the *Resolve* yield to the priority of gratitude. The way members make moral decisions; deal with despair, pathology, betrayal, disputes, and suffering; share possessions; nurture loving relationships; create and maintain beautiful grounds out of what was a local rubbish dump; show themselves to be serious about unity, truth, and goodness; and offer hospitality: everything is a response of gratitude to God. Union with God radiates into all of life. Doing comes out of being a New Creation in Christ.

Often the outer environment is a parable of what has taken place on the inside. This is evident at HTM. Members are grateful for not only what God did two thousand years ago, but also their experience of God today. They express this in worship. Their Saturday liturgy expresses gratitude for ways God is present to them in daily life.

Cantor: In facing the future

All: let us never abandon Him [Jesus Christ] or others.

C: In facing the truth

A: may we find freedom from illusion.

C: In accepting wounds

A: may we know the way to healing and wholeness.

C: In embracing the scapegoated

A: may we know our own redemption.

C: In discovering our true selves

A: may we abandon self-destruction.

All: in seeking adult innocence

Cantor: may we no longer harm.

A: In yielding to dying

C: may we know love's pain and joy.

A: In the folly of Jesus' life

C: May we find our own.

Cantor: Fools to our society

All: we know the Wisdom of God.

C: Unknown

A: we cannot be ignored.

C: Dying

A: we still live on.

C: Disciplined by suffering

A: we are not beaten down.

C: Knowing sorrow

A: we always have cause for joy.

C: Emptying ourselves

A: we make others rich.

C: Owning nothing

A: we are given the world.

C: Grateful for every breath

A: life becomes a precious gift.

To summarise, the first sentence of the *Resolve* has priority for HTM members. As God infuses everything with a gracious presence, God is renewing all things. The response of radical gratitude is deep, rooted, and fruitful.

## The Practice of Consecrating All of Life: Reject nothing, consecrate everything

By the second phrase of the *Resolve*, the sisters and brothers express their determination to become inviolably vulnerable, a concept from the ancient Syrian church.<sup>13</sup> Without vulnerability, the experience of God, life, or others will be very limited. Honouring the

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<sup>13</sup> Maggie Ross, *The Fountain and the Furnace. The Way of Tears and Fire* (Mahwah: Paulist, 1987), p. 15.

need for some measure of privacy in some areas, HTM members attempt to practice discernment with a basic attitude of openness and acceptance and to preserve inner peace and stability when the unexpected, the undeserved, or the unwanted threatens the individual or community by its sudden appearance.

To reject nothing demands a considerable degree of psychological and spiritual maturity, a willingness to suffer the stress of holding opposites together without resolving the tension by getting rid of and rejecting either the one or the other, or mixing them together. It means above all to come to terms with the shadow of the personal and collective lives of members, and of the life of the world.

By personal shadow, members understand that aspect of life that is unexpressed, unseen, hidden, unacceptable, and usually unconscious. The shadow can and indeed must be brought into consciousness. It is not evil. Psychologist Carl Gustav Jung (1875-1961) taught that perhaps ten percent of shadow is evil. The rest contains many treasures needed to balance the personality and essential for integration into wholeness.<sup>14</sup>

For community members the integration and consecration of the shadow is a moral concern. The shadow longs for incarnation. Members seek to recognize both the glory, and the demonic darkness of it, and to bring it to the light of God. They seek to understand

what is repressed, feared, rejected, hated, and despised, and how they project what is repressed on to others and other environments. Members seek knowledge of how they rationalize and deceive themselves and others, what sort of goals they have, and what they do (lie, hurt, maim, manipulate, abuse, and scapegoat) to reach those goals.

The healing of the shadow is an issue of love. Loving self is not easy. For HTM members, Jesus taught loving all of oneself, even the enemy, the inferior, the socially unacceptable, intractable weakness in stubbornness and wilful blindness, cruelty, meanness, sham, pride, and willingness to sacrifice another's life and welfare to secure one's own comfort. To love self is not to be permissive or to condone dark, destructive energies within. To love self begins by carrying all this consciously and by accepting the discomfiting pain of humiliation. As members come to accept the rejected parts of their shadow, they experience self-knowledge and humility in the presence of God who offers them, and all humankind a gift, containment of the shadow in immediate living and salvation. Learning to love and help themselves, HTM members love God and others.

To own one's shadow allows members no comfortable hiding place either in their inner world, or in communal life. Members cannot be with the poor from an insulated high-rise building in a city. To be a healing presence with a pure heart in wider society, they suffer the tension and contradictions of living with the rejected, violent, unredeemed parts of their lives in community. Before undertaking social action, members seek first to disarm the

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<sup>14</sup> James Hillman, 'The Inner Darkness: The Unconscious as a Moral Problem', ch. 3 of *Insearch. Psychology and Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967).

human heart, essential for personal transformation and non-violent living.<sup>15</sup>

To consecrate is to set apart for a holy use. For example, one makes a conscious, intelligent, and educated choice to use the energy of anger not in the service of evil but of compassion. To consecrate such a source of energy or capacity is to re-direct it in the service of God and of others. Stubbornness becomes persistence; perfectionism becomes the careful creation of beauty. In these and other ways, members re-channel energy that can manifest itself in evil back to God, who works all things for good.

### The Practice of Love: Be the good of love, for God, for neighbour, for all creation

The biblical emphasis on love is key in Benedictine spirituality. We are first of all to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, and minds; and our neighbours as ourselves (Mt. 22:37-39, parallels; RB 4.1). Loving begins with God. 'In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us' (1 Jn. 4.10). To be the good of love for God is to respond spontaneously, immediately, passionately, and vulnerably to God's love.

Because love can be harmful, manipulative, smothering, deceived, self-serving, or violent, self-knowledge

allows one to face manipulative, smothering, deceived, and self-serving aspects of love. These are among the many ways by which people abuse others in the name of love to gain something for oneself. HTM members intentionally seek to choose the *good* of love. This is rooted in the kenotic love of Jesus. Jungian Sibylle Birkhauser-Oeri writes, 'One must not forget that it is impossible to love others so long as one does not know oneself. Sentimentality is not love; it is a state of ignorance of one's shadow. Only conscious eros has healing power.'<sup>16</sup>

To be the good of love for neighbour means engagement in social and justice issues locally and in the wider world, to be an extreme presence not by violence that separates and isolates but by compassionate, inclusive love, especially for the personal and collective enemy. To be the good of love for creation leads members to seek to care for the environment, to create and protect beauty, and to reverence all life.

### The Practice of Not Judging: Judge no-one, not even yourself

Community members understand judging as condemnation or being pharisaic by separating oneself from others as a result of thinking oneself better than others. To be non-judgmental is not an attempt to escape self-knowledge or self-confrontation, neither does it condone or cooperate with unethical

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15 Brother Graeme, 'Festival Letter-Epiphany 2005', p. 6; John Dear, *Disarming the Heart: Toward a Vow of Nonviolence* (Scottsdale: Herald, 1993); Thich Nhat Hanh, *Anger. Wisdom for Cooling the Flames* (New York: Riverhead, 2001).

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16 Sibylle Birkhauser-Oeri, *The Mother: Archetypal Image in Fairytales* (Studies in Jungian Psychology 34; NY: Inner City, 1988), p. 94.

behaviour in ourselves or others. Rather, it means compassionate understanding of others and of the unredeemed, lawless parts of life. Jesus calls us, not to reject and consign to hell, but to love and transfigure. We can be genuinely non-judgmental only if we personally own, name, and embrace the edges of our own destructive affectivity. We discern the same destructive elements in ourselves that we see in others out there. As we own them, we cease to project them onto others.

In order not to judge, the human heart must first be disarmed. The acceptance of personal evil and darker self-knowledge can take place only in a safe environment that does not limit anyone's capacity courageously to own, name, and embrace needed work for change and inner peace. This is why members make ample room for contemplative prayer. A rhythm of life rooted in silence, stillness, and solitude allows members to contemplate the attitude that God has towards us in the Incarnation. God has identified the Divine Self with humankind in radical compassion. The Word-made-flesh instructs people to embrace the enemy within and without and to allow the Christ within to convert and transfigure our inner violence and rage, loving the enemy within and without.

Not to judge means the acceptance of suffering, not the avoidance of it. Bearing injuries patiently is among the 'tool for good works' (RB 4: 29-33).<sup>17</sup> It releases energy and a loving quality in

everything members do and gives life, hope, and a sense of endless new beginning. The self-knowledge gained in contemplation allows members to get in touch with one of the most powerful inner entities: the power to destroy ourselves and others. Members accept the legitimate suffering and pain of this knowledge, and the stress of the ensuing inner battle where the struggle to love as Christ loved is waged.

Putting these ideas into practice cannot be done in isolation. Evil is that strong. Disarming the heart is that challenging. Community members rely on two things principally: an experience of a Spirit that is greater than the spirit of evil; and a warm human community, '... C. G. Jung once aptly commented that only two things could keep a person's soul from falling under the power of evil: if a person's soul is filled with a power greater than the power of evil; or if a person is contained in a warm, related human community.'<sup>18</sup> Monica Furlong makes this same point, 'Wholeness demands relationship with man [*sic*] or with God, and often with both together.'<sup>19</sup>

To judge another is to do violence to that person. To judge oneself is to do violence to oneself and to others. Jesus has compassion for people. Learning compassion for self, members learn compassion for others. As they deal with the enemy in the microcosm, they are freed to deal with the enemy in the macrocosm.

17 For Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict. Insights for the Ages* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), p. 51, this 'peacemaker's paragraph' is the centre of the monastic life.

18 John A. Sanford, *Evil. The Shadow Side of Reality* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), p. 109.

19 Monica Furlong, *Travelling In* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), p. 64.

While the community does not judge, it does discern. This means feeling the tension of the opposites within us, good and ill, love and hate. Without running away, members seek to discern what is right, what is good. In community, members have time and space for this choice, so that repentance flowers. Members suffer the creation of this space, while the enemy continues to disturb and destroy. Seeking to be like Jesus, they do not return evil for evil or use the enemy's methods. They bless instead of curse. Joy lies before them. This is the hope not simply of the redemption of the enemy within, and without, but also of reconciliation and true peace. Members suffer the tension and sorrow of the waiting, the struggle of joy-making sorrow that will be worth-while in the end. And even if not, it is the way of Jesus to which the community has said yes.

### The Practice of Loving Beauty: Love Beauty

This fifth practice of the *Resolve* draws on the idea that beauty will save the world, and nothing is as beautiful as Christ.<sup>20</sup> Love of beauty is a window on the beauty of God and a practice shaping recent Christian thinking about art, film, literature, music, utilitarian pursuits, and worldview.<sup>21</sup> Because beauty

seems to characterise the solutions to scientific questions, even scientists and mathematicians search for elegance.<sup>22</sup>

Almost all visitors to HTM attest to the beauty they experience there. The grounds where the community gathers for worship, worship and work space, personal rooms, the setting of a table, and the way flowers are arranged all speak of the grace and beauty of God and are ways of witnessing to God. The love of beauty feeds, strengthens, and brings joy to the soul. It reaches deep into human beings. It creates a resonance, a vibration within. It generates energy, unseen yet felt, and calls for response.

Where there is beauty, God is present. In a spiritual and cosmic way, creation of beauty pleases God.<sup>23</sup> The love of beauty is a strong challenge to a negative self-image and calls those who worship to find the beauty of one's own being, the lost treasure, the Christ-Self. A liturgy puts it this way, 'O Christ You came forth to restore our Ancient destiny and renew our Ancient beauty'.<sup>24</sup>

Often society creates new things that are ugly, sterilized, and violent. By

<sup>20</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, 'From the life of the Elder Zossima', *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. David Magarshack (1880; Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), p. 340.

<sup>21</sup> Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture*, 50th anniversary of L'Abri edition (Wheaton: Crossway, 2005).

<sup>22</sup> Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe. Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999).

<sup>23</sup> In the 1981 film *Chariots of Fire*, Eric Liddell states to his sister that he runs because it pleases God. At the 1924 Olympics Liddell won gold in the four hundred meters. Two years later he began teaching in China. Held a prisoner-of-war by Japan, he died in 1945.

<sup>24</sup> *Noon Office*, Monday through Friday.

the practice of loving beauty, HTM testifies to belief in the true beauty of human beings who are made in God's image. Love of beauty allows for the invisible to be made visible and makes room for the non-utilitarian pursuits of the composer, craftsperson, dancer, poet, performer, and musician to create a quality of life and of the environment that evokes ever-growing gratitude for, and ever-deepening contemplation of the beauty of God.

### The Practice of Inner Prayer: Maintain inner silence in all things

According to Benedict, we are all to listen readily to holy reading and devote ourselves often to prayer (*RB* 4:55). The sixth sentence of the *Resolve* describes inner prayer as practising the presence of God.<sup>25</sup> The whole point of being mindful of God in prayer and in regular reading of God's holy word is to listen to God, learning always to be conscious of the Divine Other in the human soul.

Consciously, members of HTM understand that they are God-bearers. All the acting, speaking, and creativity of members come out of an intuitive awareness of God within. To discover the 'deep, abiding, fertile, healing stillness' that is God present,<sup>26</sup> community members have learned to quiet body and mind as a spiritual discipline. To

maintain inner stillness or awaken the imagination, some use aids such as listening, rituals, silence, solitude, and a psycho-spiritual approach to understanding dreams.

Maintaining inner silence in all things is an essential element for any pilgrim, a continual learning that increases in intensity through life's journey. Understanding that a Christian will never arrive at the goal in this life, members nonetheless practise mental, emotional, and physical stillness. While this practice is easier to do with others than alone, members also seek out times of alone-ness and of solitude.

Inner silence is a state of active attention, a state of being, not a blank. It is a listening to the voice of God. Inner silence is being sensitized to a compassionate, inclusive response to injustice so that members attempt not to repay evil with evil or set themselves against evil as it has set itself against what is good. 'Above all, community members value interior prayer. Its blessings are silence and stillness in all vicissitudes of life. Only your love for Christ Jesus can sustain you in this to the end of your journey.'<sup>27</sup>

### The Practice of Hospitality: Show hospitality, err only on the side of generosity

The community describes itself as a Baptist hospice, a place of entertainment and rest for pilgrims, travellers, and strangers, especially those who

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25 Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (1666; Old Tappan: Fleming H. Revell, 1958).

26 *Sabbath liturgy*.

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27 *Testament and Pastoral Rule*, p. 54.



belong to no religion.<sup>28</sup> Hospitality is central to monastic spirituality. Benedict instructed monasteries to welcome as Christ all guests. (*RB* 53:1) In the eighteenth-century, Ephrata, the pacifist community in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania and an historical Baptist antecedent, served as a hospital for soldiers in the revolutionary army. During winter 1777-1778 a patient described his experience at the cloister: 'Many a poor fellow, who entered there profane, immoral, and without hope or God in the world, left it rejoicing in the Saviour.'<sup>29</sup>

HTM articulates its experience of salvation as the hospitality of God who has through the Incarnation of Christ made room for humankind within the Life of the Holy Trinity. The community cites Jesus' words to Zacchaeus, 'I must stay in your house today' (Lk. 19:5) and George Herbert's poem *Love (III)*, 'Love bade me welcome' as expressing the idea of God welcoming us, an experience of salvation on earth.<sup>30</sup>

The Incarnation is for our inclusion. God invites us to share in the fullness of the Divine Life and empowers us to

dwell in God, for God is in us. Hospitality offers healing power that builds a bridge between enemies, between abusers and their victims, between different faith traditions, political traditions, and sexual orientations.

Hospitality includes generosity in the use of community finances, time, material possessions, and gifts. Friends of HTM attest that members go out of their way to nurture them over many years, genuinely taking them into their hearts, emotions, and being.

Citing, 'You prepare a table for me in the presence of my enemies' (Ps 23:5), HTM members have made room for enemies, as God has. They have engaged in dialogue with Baptist critics and in the neighbourhood. As a result, HTM has come to play a greater role in the life of the denomination and to offer leadership on local issues. For example, HTM helped organize successful resistance to efforts to divert the Barwon River, now a protected reserve. Members have helped close a source of noise pollution.

Summarising this practice, members proclaim the gospel through hospitality and generosity. These are among the most tangible forms of HTM's witness. Members have abandoned any temptation to profane these graces by using them for their own ends. By generous hospitality, they seek to manifest the ecstatic love of the Trinity to all people.

## The Practice of Truth-Telling:

Speak truth to power,  
especially power without love  
As disciples of Jesus, HTM members

<sup>28</sup> Jim Cotter, *Love Rekindled, Practicing Hospitality* (Sheffield: Cairns, 1996) 1, citing *The Times* 18 December 1894: 'The hospice provides twenty beds, soup, bread, and coals to families, and penny dinners to sandwich-men.'

<sup>29</sup> Broadsheet in commemoration of the 225th anniversary of the United States War for Independence (Ephrata: D. C. Martin, 2002); Jeff Bach, *Voices of the Turtledoves. The Sacred World of Ephrata* (University Park; Pennsylvania State, 2003).

<sup>30</sup> George Herbert, *The Country Parson, The Temple*, ed. John N. Wall, Jr., *Classics of Western Spirituality* (New York: Paulist, 1981), p. 316.

seek to deal with destructive, loveless power, within and without, by humble love. While they empty themselves, even for the enemy, what do they do if enemies do not change but resist love? Rather than resorting to force or violence, or cutting off an offending member or entity to safe-guard the community, or ignoring problems, members speak truth to power.

This is much harder than the alternatives. To speak the truth to power preserves integrity and leaves an open door for an offending power to acknowledge truth, repent, and change. A basic HTM commitment is to radical honesty about the self, transparency, revealing thoughts to a trusted person, and bringing into the open anything that troubles or disturbs the peace that Christ imparts to each person and to the community. Speaking the truth in their liturgical life, notably, members break the power of secrecy. Persons and HTM are freed from the paralysing hold of unconfessed attitudes or behaviours that otherwise infest and secretly poison community life. The *Eucharistic Liturgy* states, 'Lord, You have told us that hidden deceit saps the source of our communion with You.'

In the clearest and most compassionate ways possible members name truth as they see it. This gives them a power not of violence or of coercion but of truth, which can set free those who speak it and, ideally, those who hear it. Even if the other does not hear or accept or receive the truth, members believe they have done their best and are now free to suffer consciously, willingly, and knowingly whatever ill the other is doing. Suffering evil, they believe they are manifesting the love of

God. This gives them a sense of dignity and a deep peace even in the midst of the stress caused by living with what is hostile and unredeemed. In their *Prayer of Approach* congregants pray,

In the name of God  
In the name of Jesus  
Come out of darkness into the light  
that we may understand and with-  
stand you,  
that we may know your name and  
nature  
that you may cease your hold on us  
and  
wound us no more.  
Striving with you in the love of God,  
may you come to yield your energy  
in  
the service of healing life and mak-  
ing it whole,  
transfigured by the power of that  
love that  
is deeper than the deepest pain...  
However much you are held at bay,  
your power of destruction lurks.  
I cannot expel you, conquer, defeat  
or destroy you.  
We belong together,  
we live and die together,  
are bound hell-ward or heavenward  
together.  
I may have to say to you, 'Hold your  
distance, Stay in your own  
place.'  
I may have to bind you.  
Perhaps you are open to change,  
to transfiguration.  
Perhaps you could become my ally  
in the purpose of a greater good.  
If you struggle to take over and run  
riot in my emotions,  
my mind, my body,  
if you resist all love—you cannot  
destroy me.

In yourself you are power without love  
and love will triumph over mere power.

Love alone will take you, calm and soothe you of your violence and transfigure you.

### The Practice of Innocent Suffering: Let your only experience of evil be in suffering, not its creation

The ninth phrase of the *Resolve* accepts that there is no escape from knowledge of evil. Humans have become 'like God knowing good and evil' (Gen. 3:22). Humans are now responsible for choices made. This is a daily practical reality for anyone living in any community of faith and indeed for any human being. We are called not to reject the dark side of the human soul. We are clearly called to discriminate and to choose what is good, what is right, not to perpetrate evil, nor cooperate with it by silence or passivity.

As long as we make the error of imagining that evil can be done away with by 'amputation' or coercion, we will inevitably create more evil. It is in the nature of evil to be 'against'. If we set ourselves against evil, we will become *like* it by using its methods and terms. We will create more evil in the very attempt to eradicate it. Rather, 'suffering and evil must be combated by means of participation'.<sup>31</sup> It is the nature of the Word of God to be *for*, not

*against*; to save, not destroy. 'I am God and no mortal, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath' (Hos. 11:9). To save, not destroy, God suffers. God does not perpetrate evil but experiences evil by suffering, and in this way wrestles with it and overcomes it. The victory of Christ is not that of a warrior with a sword but that of a wrestler who stands her or his ground. The One who harrows hell is the Crucified One, covered with wounds but undiminished in mercy and compassion.<sup>32</sup>

Living in community is the spiritual discipline in which this choice is practised and which makes it possible to make this choice. Without a faithful human community we could be destroyed by the experience of evil. Knowing that we belong to the Body of Christ and are participating in his sufferings as we make the same choices he made, sustains us; in the fellowship of his sufferings we experience an increased intensity in our awareness of his presence.

To choose suffering rather than create more evil is not to glorify suffering for its own sake, or to make mileage out of being a victim. Nor need it imply stoicism or the shutting down of feelings, or indeed the suppression of expressions of anger or grief. If nothing is felt, nothing is suffered, then nothing and no one is loved either. Suffering is redemptive only if it is *consciously* chosen, *willingly* accepted and felt, for the sake of the good of love. 'No one takes [my life] from me, but I lay it down of my own accord' (Jn. 10:18). HTM has members who display

31 Julia de Beausobre, *Creative Suffering* (London: Dacre, 1940), p. v.

32 *Saturday Noon Office*.

courage and love, recognized in this liturgy:

Let us not forget our faithfulness and its cost.

Let us not forget our suffering—for others' benefit, for another's redemption.

Let us not forget that what is lacking in Christ's sufferings in the church is made up in our pain.

Do not forget your suffering or dismiss its significance for the transfiguration of the world.

Let us not forget that some people become voluntary pain-bearers absorbing the anger and hurt of others and giving back acceptance and care.

Their love creates the environment for healing change.<sup>33</sup>

In choosing this way, members have found a deep peace, beyond all anguish, the peace of Jesus who 'is as near the tempted mind as He is to the broken heart'.<sup>34</sup> Like Job and the other pain-bearers of Hebrew Scripture who were hints and guesses of the truth of God, and like Jesus, Word made flesh, HTM members have sought to become with them carriers of the Divine fate. This gives meaning to a choice to suffer instead of creating evil, liberation to one's soul, and a powerful intercession for the world. It shows in microcosm what could be done in macrocosm—nationally, internationally—and so becomes light and heaven. HTM mem-

bers have sought to follow Jesus who taught always to decide to repay every fear, hatred, and evil by innocent suffering.

Loving humility is a terrible force, the emotion, energy, and passion that belong to the Incarnation. It is the strongest of all things. There is nothing else like it. Endowed with all the treasures of the abyss, members seek to

Pray for all people of evil will.

Let the way we live together be the prayer that is offered to God for the enemies of life.

Pray for all who exploit and abuse; and more -

Love them, but not on your own, together.<sup>35</sup>

Innocent suffering is the link between the righteous ones who endure suffering and the sinners who inflict it. If there were not that link, they would drift apart. Sinful and righteous persons would remain on parallel lines that never meet. In that case, the righteous would have no power over the sinner because one cannot deal with what one does not meet. But in the meeting healing and reconciliation can emerge, as suggested by the story of Abraham interceding on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:32).<sup>36</sup>

33 *Evening Prayer and Testimony for the Season of the Transfiguration of Our Lord.*

34 Julia de Beausobre, *Flame in the Snow. A Russian Legend* (London: Constable, 1945), p. 12.

35 *Testament and Pastoral Rule* 24.

36 Metropolitan Anthony [Bloom] *Living Prayer* (Springfield: Templegate, 1966) 19; Elie Wiesel, *Legends of Our Time* (New York: Schocken, 1982), pp. 125-29.

**The Practice of Humility: For  
us there is only the trying,  
the rest is none of our  
business**

Words of the tenth and final part of the *Resolve* come from T.S. Eliot,

...And so each venture  
Is a new beginning, a raid on the  
inarticulate  
With shabby equipment always  
deteriorating  
In the general mess of imprecision  
of feeling  
Undisciplined squads of emotion.  
And what there is to conquer  
By strength and submission, has  
already been discovered  
Once or twice, or several times, by  
men whom one cannot hope  
To emulate—but there is no competition -  
There is only the fight to recover  
what has been lost  
And found and lost again and again:  
and now, under conditions  
That seem unpropitious. But perhaps  
neither gain nor loss.  
For us, there is only the trying. The  
rest is not our business.<sup>37</sup>

Success is not the object. HTM have found that any thought of success or achievement is an attempt at power and control. But while the work that is done is not for members to complete, it is nonetheless not the case that there is no trying. In the totality of their lives, members seek greater intimacy

between God and the human soul.

The public life of Jesus was a failure. His was a path consciously chosen. He emptied himself of all social, religious, and political power. He experienced such temptation in the desert and rejected the offer of success through the use of power to manipulate and control. He chose the right use of power way and not to abuse power.

In this light, the concluding line of the *Resolve* allows members to relax. It removes the pressure to perform and to be validated by church or society. It gives members permission to be a failure, and even to perceive failure as a sacrament. HTM has decided not to worry about survival in terms of vocations or recruitment. Trusting God, HTM floats, to paraphrase Brother Roger of Taizé, on the safe waters of life as it comes, with all the rough weather it may bring. They give without counting how many years are left. They do not worry about the long-term survival of the community.<sup>38</sup> Members cite Simone Weil, 'It is not my business to think about myself. It is my business to think about God. It is for God to think about me.'<sup>39</sup>

## **Concluding Reflections**

In the history of eastern and western Christianity, monasteries and intentional communities have played several roles. At times they have been centres of survival, providing stability as the wider culture has collapsed. Early

<sup>37</sup> T. S. Eliot, 'East Coker, Four Quartets', *The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1971), p. 128.

<sup>38</sup> *A Life We Never Dared Hope For* (Oxford: Mowbray, 1980), p. 69.

<sup>39</sup> *Waiting on God*, trans. Emma Graufurd (1950; London: Fontana, 1959), p. 20.

Benedictine monasticism provides one example. At times they have been prophetic, witnessing to a culture in which discipleship has been difficult if not impossible. The confessing church in Germany offers an example. At times they have been centres of church renewal, providing sensitive and thoughtful people new ways to live as Christians. Bose in Italy; the Catholic Worker movement; Corrymeela in Northern Ireland; Grandchamp in Switzerland; Iona in Scotland; Little Portion, a Franciscan community near Eureka Springs, Arkansas; Madonna House in Combermere, Ontario; Taizé in France; and The Church of the Saviour in Washington D. C. offer examples.

These latter communities share certain features: the centrality of Jesus Christ; communal life under a common rule; vital worship; use of the visual arts; care for creation; concern for youth; and ministries among the marginalized. In our times, such communities have engendered a renewed monasticism marked by integrity, imagination, confession of past wrongs, celebration of new relations, and commitment to the dream of God.

- HTM exhibits many of the same strengths of traditional and newer expressions monasticism. The community has been stable in its witness over many years; open to trying to change the environment for Christian witness; and powerful in its praise of God. One cannot help but to be moved by the liturgies and daily offices. I myself have been overwhelmed, down on my knees in grateful praise!
- HTM offers radical hospitality

rooted in radical gratitude.<sup>40</sup> Within the limits of their resources, members go out of their way to make room for all who come to them, offering contemplative space for members, inquirers, students, retreatants, and many who come out of the experience of sexual, religious, or other forms of abuse.

- HTM offers nurture through counselling, spiritual direction, the daily offices, and lengthy periods of residency. As many as a dozen ministers are in ministry today as a result. Perhaps no quality stands out more than the community's ability to create safe space for healing, the movement from darkness to light, from unhealth to well-being, and from lack of identity to true identity. For long-time observers of HTM, this is HTM's unique gift to the wider church, a source of inspiration and hope for the world.<sup>41</sup>

What differentiates HTM from other monasteries and intentional communities is that it is Baptist! Three marks of Baptist spirituality stand out. First, like the earliest Anabaptists of sixteenth-century Europe, the Baptists of seventeenth-century England, and the

<sup>40</sup> In *Making Room*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), Christine D. Pohl of Asbury Seminary lifts up several communities in the United States that have recovered hospitality as a central Christian practice.

<sup>41</sup> Tom Paterson, community therapist, interview, Melbourne, 29 June 2004. See also his *Family Therapy and the Good Life*, *The Geoff Goding Memorial Lecture* (2004).

Pietists of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, HTM has recovered the simplicity of early Christianity. HTM challenges some expressions of Christianity in western cultures where there is marked emphasis on size, growth, and success. That it has remained intentionally Baptist has exacerbated tension with the growth orientation of other Baptist congregations and megachurches in the region.<sup>42</sup>

Second, insightful analysts have identified loss of community, rampant materialism, and extreme individualism as causes of extraordinary stressors in western society.<sup>43</sup> Since the 1970s some have warned that modernity is not sustainable and that human-

ity is on the cusp of a new dark age.<sup>44</sup> As an antidote to loss of community, greed, and lack of concern for the common good, HTM has recovered a powerful current manifest in early Baptist congregational life, offering a path of spiritual and social renewal at a time when many perceive Christianity to be bankrupt.

Third, like the first Anabaptists, Baptists, and Pietists, HTM has created powerful liturgies and contemplative space by which people may experience the presence of God. We all need inescapably to have a sense of life's final meaning and to come into relationship with that meaning. At HTM life in Christ is not cantered on a body of doctrine, but a Person, who calls people to himself, in whom people find meaning, and whose hands and feet become one with ours. Over a lifetime of living into the values of their *Resolve*, members of HTM have come truly to pray their lives and to live their prayers. As they live a faith that transcends doctrinal formulation, they invite companions to join them in the journey of love, compassion, non-violent living, and care for creation.

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42 For parallels among the Mennonites, Amish, and Brethren, under the theme 'Pilgrims and Exiles,' *Christian History* issue 84 (Fall 2004).

43 Robert N. Bellah and others, *Habits of the Heart. Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985); Albert Borgmann, *Power Failure. Christianity in the Culture of Technology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003); Clive Hamilton, *Affluenza: When Too Much is Never Enough* (Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin, 2005); Parker J. Palmer, *The Community of Strangers. Christians and the Renewal of America's Public Life* (New York: Crossroad, 1981); Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone. The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); David Tacey, *The Spirituality Revolution. The Emergence of Contemporary Spirituality* (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2003).

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44 Donella H. Meadows, *The Limits to Growth* (New York: Signet, 1972) and *Beyond the Limits: Confronting Global Collapse. Envisioning a Sustainable Future* (White River: Chelsea Green, 1992); Tom Artin, *Earth Talk: Independent Voices on the Environment* (New York: Grossman, 1973); Jared Diamond, *Collapse* (New York: Viking, 2005); Jane Jacobs, *Dark Age Ahead* (New York: Random House, 2004); Ronald Wright, *A Short History of Progress* (Toronto: Anansi, 2004).

# A Brief History of the Blood: The Story of the Blood of Christ in Transatlantic Evangelical Devotion

Benjamin A. Pugh

**KEYWORDS:** *Spirituality, devotion, hymns, preaching, cleansing, redemption, mysticism, merit, perfectionism, Pietism*

There is a fountain filled with blood  
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins  
And sinners plunged beneath its flood  
Lose all their guilty stains.

HYMNS SUCH AS THESE can fill Evangelical hearts either with nostalgic affection or plain revulsion. Either way, such hyperbolic language about the blood of Christ is largely a thing of the past. Hymns, testimonies and sermons about 'the Blood' are the legacy of some remarkable movements such as the Salvation Army and some equally remarkable individuals such as Andrew Murray. The devotional outpourings bequeathed to us on this important theme I have termed 'Blood Mysticism'.

Blood mysticism, the veneration of

the visualised and verbalised 'Blood' of Christ with a view to achieving a richer and fuller relationship with God, is a tradition that, in many ways, is traceable to the New Testament itself. The New Testament writers commonly use 'the blood of Jesus' and similar phrases as shorthand for the treasured truths connected with the death of Christ in its atoning and saving significance. That death is gloried in and boasted of and made the hub of apostolic preaching. Yet the facts of history are such that Christian devotion to this theme has fluctuated wildly under the influence of factors that often lie outside the two covers of people's Bibles. And it is within Evangelicalism in its many forms that this particular New Testament theme seems to soar to its greatest heights.

## 1. Medieval Passions

The idea of the Eucharist as a sacrifice

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presented to God by the worshipping church goes back at least as far as Irenaeus of the second century AD.<sup>1</sup> By AD1000 belief in transubstantiation was widespread, being officially recognized at the 4th Lateran Council of 1215 and then reaffirmed at the Council of Trent.<sup>2</sup> This belief, entailing as it did the repeated offering of the Lord's body and blood, led to the multiplication of masses, as well as to the creation of a number of new devotional practices, including the annual summer feast of Corpus Christi. Besides these developments, the medieval period also witnessed growing devotion to the Sacred Heart in France as well as to the Five Sacred Wounds in Portugal, the creation of 'Calvaries'—life-size sculptures of scenes depicting the final hours of Jesus' life on earth, not to mention the appearance of countless splinters of the cross and the dissemination of various Holy Grail myths.

The background to this would appear to be a shift of emphasis taking place throughout the medieval and renaissance periods. This was a shift in popular devotion from a kingly exalted Christ in heaven to a very human Jesus, suffering and dying on a cross. After such emphasis on the divinity of Christ as had been seen in late antiquity, perhaps it was inevitable that the pendulum would eventually swing the other way. The trigger for this swing of the pendulum seems to have been the growing misery of ordinary people as

the Middle Ages reached their height. Until the first bubonic plague of 1349–51, population growth meant that people began to outstrip the natural resources available to sustain them. There was widespread rural poverty and a massive immigration to the cities where sanitation was poor and life expectancies short. A suffering human Christ could transfigure the deprivations of churchgoers as they beheld the various pictorial sermons of a Christ who suffered yet overcame death.

Of the many contributors to the passion mysticism of the time, Bernard of Clairveaux (1090–1153), the highly influential Cistercian monk, was by far the most significant. Of particular significance to this study is his influence upon the young Luther. Bernard's works were routinely read aloud at meal times at the Erfurt friary.<sup>3</sup> His most prized devotional classic, from which Luther quoted frequently, was his *Sermones in Cantica Cantorum*, his sermons on the Song of Songs. Mostly Sermons 61–62 of Bernard's *Cantica* are a meditation around the theme of the beloved in the cleft of the rock.

The Rock is pictured as Christ, and the cleft, his 'Side Wound'. The Bride, usually representing the church, but sometimes the individual, is exhorted to dwell in child-like abdication in this and other wounds of Christ by continually mediating upon them: 'It is because the Bride is thus devoted to the Wounds of Christ and meditates on them continually, that the Bridegroom

1 Irenaeus *Against Heresies* IV:18, 4–6.

2 R. McBrien, (ed), *The Harper Collins Encyclopedia of Catholicism* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), p. 1264.

3 G. Tomlin, *The Power of the Cross: Theology of the Death of Christ in Paul, Luther and Pascal* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), p. 131.

calls her "My dove in the clefts of the rock".<sup>4</sup>

## 2. The Merit of Martin Luther

By the time of Martin Luther (1483-1546), passion meditation was widespread, being espoused, for instance, by Thomas à Kempis, the most widely read of the late medieval mystics: "...take refuge in the Passion of Christ and love to dwell within his sacred wounds. For if you devoutly seek the wounds of Jesus and the precious marks of his passion you will find great strength in all troubles."<sup>5</sup>

The early Luther was steeped in late medieval passion mysticism, out of which would emerge his distinctive *theologia crucis*. The passion mysticism with which Luther was acquainted included meditating in detail on each of the wounds of Jesus. This was designed to reveal to oneself the true awfulness of one's sin, inspiring true penitence.<sup>6</sup> Later in life, following his famous 'discovery' of the true meaning of the righteousness of God in Romans, Luther, without leaving behind his earlier mysticism, became much more assured of the absolute merit of Christ's blood:

...and our sins have been forgiven,  
by His blood, that is, by the merit of  
His blood...<sup>7</sup>

...our place of propitiation is not won by our merits, but in His, Christ's, blood, that is, in His suffering, whereby He made satisfaction and merited propitiation for those who believe in Him.<sup>8</sup>

A basically Anselmian view of Christ's death as achieving a certain surplus of merit with God had remained unchanged with the transition to Protestantism; it was merely the way this merit could be appropriated that had changed: from the sacrament of the mass to the sacrament of preaching.

## 3. Zinzendorf: The Religion of the Heart

The Pietism of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries exhibited a strong desire to move away from what had by now, long after Luther's death, become lifeless Lutheran orthodoxy. The Pietists underlined the doctrine of regeneration as uppermost in their soteriology. This brought about the desired focus upon the subjective state of the believer as opposed to his or her objectively justified status. It also brought about a sharp division between 'head' and 'heart', a statement of Philip Spener's being typical of this: 'Let us remember that in the last judgment we shall not be asked how learned we were...' <sup>9</sup> The kinds of

4 H. Blackhouse, (ed), *The Song of Songs: Selections from the Sermons of St Bernard of Clairvaux* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), p. 196.

5 Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 68.

6 Tomlin, *The Power*, p. 140.

7 Romans 5:8 in H. Oswald, (ed), *Luther's*

*Works* (St Louis: Concordia, 1972), p. 45 (italics original).

8 Romans 3:25, *Luther's Works*, p. 32.

9 T. Tappert, (Tr. & Ed.), *Pia Desideria by Philip Jacob Spener* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964), p. 36.

dichotomies opened up by Pietism further deepened the fissure already opened up by Luther between an entirely extrinsic justification and a totally inward sanctification.

From 1727 a recognisably new form of Pietism began to emerge, whose leader, Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-60), actually came to reject the increasingly legalistic Halle Pietism that he had been brought up with. The group that gathered around the German Count became known as the Moravians, simply because most of their members had originally been part of the 'Hidden Seed' of Hussite Protestantism, which, before the outbreak of persecution, had dwelt mostly in Moravia in the present-day Czech Republic. Now, they were safe to practise their religion on Zinzendorf's estate in Saxony.

With the Moravians, the subjective dimension in the Christian life, already recovered by Halle Pietism, was no longer centred upon the new birth; now it was centred around the personal appropriation of the merits of Christ's death, an apparent *novum* introduced by Zinzendorf, utterly steeped as he was in Luther's theology of the cross. Because of the essentially subjective nature of Moravian spirituality, the use of the word 'blood' became more appropriate than 'cross', since 'blood', both symbolically speaking and biblically speaking, is the aspect of a sacrifice that can be most readily manipulated and applied personally to the worshipper. It is fluid and distributable.

The Moravian Brethren were thus encouraged to make the atoning work of Christ something morally and emotionally transformative. To appropriate this transformative power Zinzendorf's

followers were encouraged to visualise the wounds of Jesus:

Thus if you have serious thoughts about the Savior, conclude that the bleeding Savior stands before your hearts, that he is there in person, He longs to have you glance at His wounds.<sup>10</sup>

Yet this moral influence factor is also balanced by the Lutheran note of Christ's merit:

...the bleeding Husband forms Himself in the innermost part of the soul. Then the heart stands full of Jesus, full of His wounds and His sores, full of the Merits of the Lamb.<sup>11</sup>

Related to this there emerges the idea of 'pleading the blood'. Here is a remarkably full exposition of the concept from Zinzendorf:

...we must come to Him entirely natural, in the most wretched form in which we happen to find ourselves, pleading His blood, His faithfulness, and His merits, and reminding Him that we men are the reward of His suffering....<sup>12</sup>

To plead the blood, for Zinzendorf, was to surrender all attempts at the acquisition of merit before God on one's own account, to boldly approach God on the basis of Christ's merit and to remind God of one's status as blood-bought.

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10 Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures in Important Subjects in Religion Preached in Fetter Lane Chapel in London in the Year 1746*, Tr. & ed. Farell, G.W., (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1973), p. 67. (18 Sept 1746).

11 Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures*, p. 94.

12 Zinzendorf, *Nine Public Lectures*, p. 101.

The wholesale use of references to the blood and wounds of Jesus soon became excessive, a trend which reached its peak during what became known as the 'Sifting Period', dating from 1743 to 1750. At this time, Zinzendorf had been absent for some time and the Herrnhut community, a plant of the original Herrnhut, had become dominated by the vibrant spirituality of some of its younger members. These young people, striving for true intimacy with Jesus, took some of Zinzendorf's teachings to extremes. As a result, their terminology can seem to an outsider rather strange and perverse:

Now rests my whole mind on  
In one nook of the Side-hole,  
And dreams of Blood alone:  
Sometimes it is as a wide Hall,  
Sometimes so close and Deep  
As if each Heart in it  
Alone did lie and sleep.<sup>13</sup>  
Lovely Side-hole, take in me:  
Let me ever be in Thee  
O Side-hole's Wound, My Heart and Soul,  
Does pant for thy so lovely Hole.<sup>14</sup>

#### 4. The Wesleyan Way

John and Charles Wesley's first contact with the Moravians had been in 1737 on a voyage across the Atlantic. This encounter resulted in John Wesley becoming aware of his own lack of faith. Wesley soon became a close companion of Zinzendorf himself. The split between the two leaders came in 1741 when Wesley and Zinzendorf could not agree on the issue of sanctification.

When pressed on the matter, it seems that Zinzendorf's view of the blood was, in spite of his devotional enthusiasm, strictly forensic and firmly Lutheran: 'All Christian Perfection is, Faith in the blood of Christ. Our whole Christian Perfection is imputed, not inherent.'<sup>15</sup>

It was, seemingly, only the emotional impact of the wounded Saviour revealed to faith that was morally transformative, not the Blood itself. Wesley saw the cleansing of the blood as an inward crisis event leading to a 'Clean Heart'.<sup>16</sup> Scripturally, Zinzendorf was thinking along the lines of Romans 3-5 and spoke the language of imputation, while Wesley was thinking along the lines of 1John 1:7 and spoke the language of cleansing. Both men appear to have been confuting current concepts of sanctification and justification. For Zinzendorf sanctification was an outward, imputed holiness, while Wesley's thinking on sanctification produced the opposite kind of hybrid: an instantaneous inward perfection. From here on in Evangelical devotion to the Blood, the two worlds of justification and sanctification remain apart. Few further attempts are made at bringing the two together.

The most notable feature of John Wesley's *Plain Account of Christian Perfection* is, unsurprisingly, the total dominance of the cleansing motif. This is in large measure due to the fact that

13 *Moravian Hymnal* 1748 Part III, No.67.

14 *Hymnal* 1748, Part III, No.59.

15 The full conversation is available in English and Latin in J. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life* (London: SCM, 1992).

16 J. Wesley, *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection* (London: Wesleyan-Methodist Book Room, nd), pp. 23-27.

he takes 1John 1:7 as one of a number of proof texts for his doctrine of Christian perfection, claiming that the cleansing described is complete and final in this life:

A Christian is so far perfect as not to commit sin...For he sayeth not, The blood of Christ *will* cleanse (at the hour of death, or in the day of judgment), but it 'cleanseth,' at the present time, us living Christians "from all sin." And it is equally evident, that if any sin remain, we are not cleansed from all sin.<sup>17</sup>

Wesley held that a process of sanctification was begun in the heart at regeneration but that a second experience was needed to bring 'full salvation', or, 'entire sanctification'. This second blessing involved the cleansing away of all sin, followed by an influx of love towards God and man taking its place in the believing heart; hence, the frequent use of the epithet, 'perfect love', as a way of describing the experience. All failings from this point onwards were considered by Wesley to be unintentional. He preferred to call all subsequent sins, 'infirmities', which the atoning blood continually covered.

From the early 1740s onwards, John Wesley's attitude to the Moravians displayed much bitterness over the beliefs they held, such as their quietism, aspects of their blood and wounds theology, and their Luther-inspired antinomianism. Yet his attitude could also oscillate in the direction of an irresistible admiration for their spirituality. Charles Wesley, however, main-

tained a consistently charitable spirit towards them, even momentarily falling under the spell of their 'stillness' fad. His hymns also contain some overtly Moravian phraseology:

Thy Offering still continues new,  
The vesture keeps its bloody hue,  
Thou stand'st the ever-Slaughtered Lamb  
Thy Priesthood still remains the same...<sup>18</sup>

Charles Wesley, like his brother, was especially interested in the theme of cleansing:

Come, thou dear Lamb, for sinners slain,  
Bring in the cleansing flood:  
Apply, to wash out every stain,  
Thine efficacious blood.  
O let it sink into our soul  
Deep as the inbred sin;  
Make every wounded spirit whole,  
And every leper clean!<sup>19</sup>

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, both Moravian and Wesleyan terminology seems to surface from time to time in hymnody outside of Wesleyanism. The tormented soul of William Cowper, for instance, clearly found great comfort in the idea of the cleansing power of the blood, using the language of superabundance to underline its supererogative power to deal with guilt in his *There is a Fountain*, quoted at the start of this paper.

So, the Wesleyan dimension brought something new to blood mysticism. Moravian blood mysticism was, in many ways, only a small advance on medieval passion mysticism. It simply added Luther's emphasis on the absolute merit of Christ's death. With

<sup>17</sup> Wesley, *Plain Account*, pp.19-20.

<sup>18</sup> C. Wesley cited in Davie, D., *Christian Verse* (Oxford: University Press, 1981), p. 159.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Wesley, *Plain Account*, p. 114.

the Wesleys a new dimension is introduced that takes the believer beyond the realms of emotional response. Now, something actually happens somewhere within the psyche, a datable, crisis event called 'cleansing'.

### 5. The Highway of Holiness

The Holiness movement of the nineteenth century originated with American Methodism. During the years 1773-76, Wesleyan Methodism took firm hold for the first time in America in the state of Virginia by means of a significant revival.<sup>20</sup> By 1800, Methodism was a major denominational block and began tipping the theological scales of popular religion away from the Calvinism of the puritan settlers. By 1812, the Methodists were holding at least 400 camp meetings annually throughout the United States.<sup>21</sup> By mid-century, Methodism was the dominant religion of North America.

Dayton<sup>22</sup> has observed that the early preaching of the Methodists in America was inevitably 'salvation' orientated, the vast majority of people attending the camp meetings being unchurched. The new emphasis on Christian Perfection that took hold during the 1830s coincided with a

change in the make up of Methodist churches from first generation to second generation Christians. People no longer needed to know how to be saved but how to become better Christians, a challenge made the more urgent by the advances of German liberalism, Deism, Unitarianism and material prosperity.

There was also a change in the style of spirituality, from a Calvinist style to an Arminian one. The Calvinist mindset of throwing oneself utterly upon the mercy of a sovereign and holy God was set to change dramatically as the century unfolded. This change involved the democratisation of Christianity—its reduction to the individual's response to the call of the gospel. In Calvinist Christianity, the blood was of great value in easing the sting of a stricken conscience before an Almighty God who, in the manner of Jonathan Edwards, holds sinners by a mere thread over the flames of Hell.<sup>23</sup> To the Calvinists, the blood thus propitiated an angry God. To the Arminians of the generation following, the blood cleansed the responsive and consecrated heart.

Phoebe Palmer, and her sister, Sarah Lankford, represented the first major thrust in the advance of Perfectionism within American Methodism. The 1830s saw the beginning of the 'Tuesday Meeting for the Promotion of Holiness' held at the Palmers' home, soon to be augmented by the magazine, *Guide to Holiness*. Among the Presbyterians and Congregationalists an interest in Christian Perfection was being promoted by Charles Finney and Asa

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20 V. Synan, *The Holiness-Pentecostal Tradition: Charismatic Movements in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971, 1997), p. 9.

21 I. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994), p. 183.

22 D. Dayton, *The Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Metuchen: Scarecrow, 1987), p. 65.

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23 J. Edwards, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 1992), p. 19.

Mahan at Oberlin. By the 1840s there was a flood of Perfectionist teaching throughout the Evangelical churches of North America which was of a piece with the aspirational, expansionist spirit of the young nation.

Palmer's experience of sanctification began with 'an enlarged appreciation of the Atonement'<sup>24</sup> in the light of her own inability to be holy. From this experience, as well as from the theology of a certain Adam Clarke, came her 'altar theology'. The essence of this theology was an adaptation of Wesley's system that made the experience of the second blessing more readily accessible via a threefold process of consecration, faith and testimony.<sup>25</sup> If people followed these steps, they could assure themselves that they possessed this blessing, regardless of any evidence to the contrary. The agony and soul-searching was thus removed from the process and holiness was now a blessing that was simply there for the taking. The immediacy of the experience is celebrated in her hymn, *The Cleansing Wave*:

Oh, now I see the cleansing wave,  
The fountain deep and wide!  
Jesus, my Lord, mighty to save,  
Points to His wounded side.

*The cleansing stream I see, I see!  
I plunge, and oh, it cleanseth me!  
Oh, praise the Lord: it cleanseth me;  
It cleanseth me, yes, it cleanseth me.*

I see the new creation rise;  
I hear the speaking blood!

It speaks polluted nature dies!  
Sinks 'neath the cleansing flood.

Meanwhile, in Britain the shocking truth was revealed in the 1851 census that no more than half of the population went to church on a Sunday. More recent scholarship has surmised that 1851 in fact represented the most significant peak in church attendance in Britain since Norman times and was never to be repeated.<sup>26</sup> Later, a variety of factors contributed to the widely recognized Victorian crisis of faith so that as early as 1864, Lord Shaftsbury was lamenting that the 'Protestant feeling' of the nation was not what it was.<sup>27</sup> The evidence suggests that overall church attendance was in more or less continuous decline from 1851 onwards. For reasons that are still far from certain, America would weather the secularising storm that gathered with the turn of the century, while Britain would never recover from the steady decline in church attendance that went on to empty its churches and chapels in the twentieth century.

Faced with widespread questioning of Christian explanations for the universe, all Christians faced a choice. Either they could accommodate themselves to the prevailing cultural and intellectual mood, which rejected the perceived barbarism of traditional ideas of the atonement, or they could radicalise their Christianity. This radicalisation process, well documented as a reaction to secularisation, spawned a

<sup>24</sup> Phoebe Palmer's diary of July 27, 1837.

<sup>25</sup> C. White, *The Beauty of Holiness: Phoebe Palmer as Theologian, Revivalist, Feminist, and Humanitarian* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1986), p. 136.

<sup>26</sup> R. Gill, *The 'Empty' Church Revisited* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 212.

<sup>27</sup> D. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain, A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), p. 141.

number of new dimensions to the holiness movement, some more sectarian than others. Two of them are noteworthy: the Salvation Army and the Keswick Conventions. To these we now turn.

The theology of William and Catherine Booth was profoundly influenced by Phoebe Palmer's altar theology. Besides her, the preaching of James Caughey, another American holiness speaker, had a powerful impact on William during his youth. The Booths went on to extend their irradiationist theology of Christian Perfection into the social sphere, engaging in a widening campaign against all the social evils of working class Britain. As opposition mounted against the Booths and their followers, this holiness crusade was seen increasingly as a spiritual warfare. A newspaper cutting written for the Salvation Army's centenary in 1965 puts it aptly: 'To the Booths, and especially to Catherine Booth, the Devil was a personal opponent and as real as one's next door neighbour.'<sup>28</sup>

In the face of this enemy, the Booths were utterly defiant and completely confident of the power of Christ to defeat sin and Satan. And, more particularly, this strong faith was faith in the power of Christ's blood. As the Christian Mission took on the name of the Salvation Army, and William Booth took the title of general, the cleansing of the blood would be coupled with his belief in baptism in the Spirit to produce the now famous piece of branding: Blood and Fire. Through Blood and

Fire all the forces of 'Darkest England' would be overcome.

The *Salvation Army Song Book*<sup>29</sup> is the most blood mystical of all the holiness hymnals. The 1930 edition contains 1,733 songs. In all, there are a total of 454 references to the blood of Christ, which means that almost half of all the songs containing at least one reference to the blood. Not only does the word Blood always receive capitalisation, but all adjectives associated with it do too: Precious, Flood, Fountain and so on. Of the total references to Christ's Blood, 42 per cent (191) express the idea of cleansing and washing.

In order to aid the worshippers as they appropriate this cleansing, every imaginable liquid image is employed. The worshipper comes to the Fountain where he or she plunges beneath the Precious Blood, beneath that 'cleansing Flood', while the hand 'takes hold of Jesus'. Alternatively, they may prefer to 'dip' or to fling themselves at the cross '...for the Blood is flowing there'. All sorrows and doubts are swept away in the River that is 'streaming' and 'flowing'. It is a 'crimson tide', a 'Blood-current'. It is construed either as flowing from the cross, flowing or gushing from the riven side of Jesus, or flowing from the throne of God. Either way, it is a 'Purple Flood', a 'sin-cleansing wave', a 'cleansing Fountain' in which garments may be washed, sin destroyed, guilt removed and souls healed as the Precious Blood is applied. That blood may now 'Flood and cleanse' the heart itself. In spite of

<sup>28</sup> 'History of the Salvation Army', *Sunday Telegraph* (30 May 1965), cutting, Nottingham City Archives.

<sup>29</sup> *Salvation Army Song Book*, (London: Salvationist Publishing and Supplies, 1930).



their militarism, the Salvationists seldom referred to the blood as bringing victory or protection. Rather, they saw its power to cleanse or destroy sin as being, in itself, the victory they sought.

The second most common theme is way down the league. It is redemption. Under this heading I include all references to being redeemed, bought, purchased, set free and rescued. These make up a mere 7.2 per cent of the total (33 occurrences). The fact of the Master's ownership rights as purchaser of the redeemed is given a dual function. Firstly, believers owe it to Jesus to live their whole lives in consecrated service to him. The singer has been claimed by 'His life's Blood' to be 'a jewel in His sight'. Secondly, the lost are already purchased by Jesus' blood and must be claimed for him. These 'brands' plucked from the fire must be 'quenched in Jesus' Blood'.

Next in line, and perhaps unsurprisingly for Salvationists, is the theme of being 'saved', or receiving 'Full Salvation' through the Blood. Of the total, these make up seven per cent (32 occurrences). Of note is the appeal to drunkards and other dedicated sinners in many of these hymns. When addressing them, much is made of the theme of guilt, a word that is otherwise quite rare in hymnbooks of the period. The blood is 'spilt' for 'guilt'. Seemingly no effort is made to tone down the blood language when singing to sinners. Only when it comes to the hymns for young people is the word 'blood' edited out.

In contrast to the Salvationists, the middle classes who attended the Keswick Conventions were particularly keen to distance themselves from fanatical Perfectionist teaching. Yet in

practice, there was little difference between their view of holiness and that of the Wesleyans. They certainly shared with the Wesleyans a belief in sanctification as a sudden, crisis experience.

In Keswick's *Hymns of Consecration and Faith*<sup>30</sup> an average of one in every three hymns refers to the noun 'blood' in connection with the death of Christ. 51 per cent of these references refer directly to the 'cleansing' and 'washing' efficacy of the blood:

Trusting, trusting every moment;  
Feeling now the blood applied;  
Lying in the cleansing fountain,  
Dwelling in my Saviour's side.

Despite the allegedly non-Wesleyan nature of the Keswick view of holiness, the uses to which the blood is put are similar to Wesley's *Plain Account*. 54 per cent of Wesley's references to the blood in the *Plain Account* are about cleansing. Second to this, 27 per cent are about redemption. The *Hymns* shares these two priorities, with cleansing at 51 per cent and redemption at 13 per cent.

Perhaps most notable of all the Keswick speakers for his delight in the blood of Jesus is Andrew Murray (1828-1917). Being a Dutch Reformed minister from South African, he was Calvinist in his theology but appears to have reached similar conclusions to Keswick about cleansing, faith and holiness. He insisted that before opening oneself to the Spirit in order to acquire holiness by faith, the blood

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30 Mrs Evan Hopkins, (ed) *Hymns of Consecration and Faith* 2nd Ed. (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, nd).

must be applied to cleanse the heart.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, when the Spirit comes, he points back to the blood and further applies its benefits to the heart,<sup>32</sup> so that the blood brings the Spirit, and the Spirit brings the blood: 'We must once again notice the two sides of this truth: the blood exercises its full power through the Spirit, and the Spirit manifests His full power through the blood.'<sup>33</sup>

Partly because of this union of Blood and Spirit, both susceptible of the 'liquid' terminology of washing, flowing and flooding, the blood was understood by Murray to be alive, fresh and flowing. Primarily, however, the power of the blood as a living entity lay in the fact that it was shed by a High Priest who now lives by the power of an endless life. His blood, now offered in heaven, is still fresh and has eternal efficacy: 'Our Lord is a High Priest "in the power of an endless life," and thus the cleansing power of the blood of the Son of God is unceasingly conveyed to us.'<sup>34</sup>

Many other preachers, on both sides of the Atlantic, some within and some outside the holiness tradition, explored these themes with great thoroughness. An intriguing variety of metaphors are used. F.B.Meyer speaks of Christ's disc-like red blood corpuscles as the coinage by which he purchased the redeemed.<sup>35</sup> D.L.Moody delighted to

'honour' the blood. When preaching about the Passover night, the reason he gave for the Israelites being commanded to daub blood only on the lintel and doorposts and not on the threshold is that God 'would not have them trample on the blood'.<sup>36</sup>

Outside of the holiness movement, the blood was highly valued among all Evangelicals, non-holiness groups tending towards a somewhat polemical usage of it. Against the tide of liberal scholarship, Charles Spurgeon declared that he would rather have his tongue cut out than ever agree to stop preaching about the blood.<sup>37</sup> Preaching the once-for-all atoning blood was a way of opposing the perceived watering-down of the gospel that the liberals had brought with their penchant for the life and teachings of Jesus; it was also a way of countering the perceived replacement of the gospel that the revival in Catholic sacramentalism had brought in the wake of the Oxford movement. In the non-holiness context, therefore, the blood often served as an identity marker, identifying Evangelicals as anti-liberal and anti-ritualist.

## 6. Revival Through the Blood

Turning now to the Welsh Revival, numerous examples of blood mysticism in Evan Roberts survive from his letters and diaries. Ideas of power, of victory and of protection begin to take

31 A. Murray, *The Power of the Blood of Jesus* (Springdale: Whitaker House, 1993), p. 93.

32 A. Murray, *The Blood of the Cross* (Springdale: Whitaker House, 1981), p. 16.

33 Murray, *The Blood*, p. 16.

34 Murray, *The Blood*, p. 131.

35 F.B. Meyer, *From Calvary to Pentecost* (London: Marshall Brothers, nd), p. 13.

36 D.L. Moody, *Where Art Thou? And Other Addresses* (London: Morgan & Scott, nd), p. 103.

37 C.H. Spurgeon, *The Metropolitan Tabernacle* Vol.32, 1886, 129.

a central position: 'When I heard that the devil or the evil spirit attacked him...I could not but exclaim "O Lord, put him under the sign of the blood"'.<sup>38</sup>

The blood is no longer a source of cleansing so much as a source of confidence. Elsewhere in his diary he records:

Jesus' blood exalts the feeble,  
Makes their victory complete;  
Jesus' blood brings down the mighty,  
Lays them humble at His feet.  
Heavenly breezes!  
Breathe on me from Calvary.<sup>39</sup>

There was another, much more emotive dimension to Welsh Revival blood mysticism, however. The favourite hymn of the Welsh Revival, known as the love song of the Revival, was *Here is Love*. This was often sung solo by Anne Davies who accompanied Roberts on his missions.<sup>40</sup>

Here is love, vast as the ocean,  
Loving-kindness as the flood,  
When the Prince of Life, our ransom,  
Shed for us His precious blood...

The effectiveness of these hymns was well known: 'The most effective hymns of the present Revival are in the key either of the sufferings of Jesus in the Garden or on Calvary, or of the gracious wonder of His atoning love...'<sup>41</sup>

Eifion Evans draws attention to the type of hymns that were sung as evidence that the Welsh Revival was not as influenced by Keswick as has often been claimed.<sup>42</sup> Those affected sang songs about 'redemption and assurance', drawing from the eighteenth century Calvinistic Methodism of Daniel Rowland and William Williams, not the hymns of 'holiness and consecration' that were sung at Keswick.<sup>43</sup> Those impacted saw themselves as being in a direct lineage with previous Welsh revivals, not 'a novel English holiness movement'.<sup>44</sup> Even those who attended the Welsh Keswick at Llandrindodd Wells did not swallow Keswick teaching without adding the Welsh emphasis: 'Now at Llandrindod Wells the doctrines of Rowland and Keswick have come together. The Cross and the Holy Spirit; Calvary and Pentecost...'<sup>45</sup>

Clearly Keswick's crucicentrism was not quite cross-centred enough for the Welsh. It could be the strong note of assurance with which the Welsh sung and preached the cross that allowed a *Christus Victor* theme to emerge to the extent that it did. In the revival, not only were worshippers being moved to tears by the thought of Christ sweating blood at Gethsemane, a time-honoured theme from previous Welsh revivals, they were also standing up and claiming to have partaken of

38 Letter to David Lloyd, 12 March 1906.

39 Hymn by William Williams (1717-91) in B. Jones, *Voices from the Welsh Revival 1904-1905* (Bridgend: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1995), pp. 117-8.

40 K. Adams & E. Jones, *A Pictorial History of Revival: the Outbreak of the 1904 Welsh Awakening* (Farnham: CWR, 2004), p. 96.

41 Article entitled 'The Heart of the Revival' in *The British Weekly* (2 Feb 1905) in E. Evans, *The Welsh Revival of 1904* (Bridgend: Evangelical Press of Wales, 1969), p. 167.

42 Evans, 1904, p. 168.

43 Evans, 1904, p. 170.

44 Evans, 1904, p. 170.

45 Sermon by Rev Thomas Phillips at the Welsh Keswick of 1912: B. Jones, *The Spiritual History of Keswick in Wales 1903-1983* (Cwmbran: Christian Literature Press, 1989), p. 23.

a 'victory' through the blood, a theme until now only implicit within the Welsh tradition, (and surprisingly absent from the Salvation Army tradition). Yet it is this theme of victory that soon becomes dominant in twentieth century blood mysticism.

## 7. 'There's Power in the Blood.'

The events of April 1906 in Los Angeles under the leadership of the one-eyed Afro-American, William J. Seymour, are still considered by most to be the beginnings of worldwide Pentecostalism. An emphasis on the blood at his Azusa Street mission is indicated in what has now become the most famous quotation from the ministry of that church: 'The color line has been washed away in the blood.'<sup>46</sup> Frank Bartleman related how '...the "blood songs" were very popular' in the meetings<sup>47</sup> and reflected that 'The Holy Spirit always exalts Jesus, and His precious blood. As He is exalted and faithfully preached, God is restoring the old time power.'<sup>48</sup> A.S. Worrell could write, 'The blood of Jesus is exalted in these meetings as I have rarely known elsewhere.'<sup>49</sup>

This impression is supported by even a cursory reading of the earliest issues of *The Apostolic Faith*, a magazine that, having begun in September 1906, acquired a worldwide readership

of over 50,000 by 1909. During the first year there are an average of 25 references to the blood of Jesus per issue, with many articles devoted entirely to the subject of the atonement. A similar picture emerges two years later from the other side of the Atlantic with the first issues of Alexander Boddy's *Confidence Magazine*, which, together with his annual Whitsuntide Conference, became the shop window for the early Pentecostal movement in Britain. From the first issue in April 1908 until the March of the following year, *Confidence* magazine, a monthly of similar length to the *Apostolic Faith*, can boast an average of 26.5 references to the blood of Jesus per issue.

The distinguishing mark of Azusa Street blood mysticism is the recurring imperative to stay 'under', or 'covered by' the blood. This terminology may have been borrowed from the Welsh Revival; Frank Bartleman having himself had close contact with it. References to being covered by or being under the blood comprise 14 per cent of the total in *The Apostolic Faith*, second only to the cleansing theme, which stands at 21 per cent: 'As long as we live under the Blood we will have life and be preserved...' <sup>50</sup>

Another distinguishing mark, besides the 'covering' theme, and one that would come to dominate Pentecostal blood mysticism, is the victory theme: 'The blood of Jesus prevails against every force and power of the enemy. Glory to God.'<sup>51</sup> The number of times the blood is described as the means of victory over Satan and his

46 F. Bartleman, *Azusa Street: the Roots of Modern-day Pentecost* (Plainfield: Bridge Publishing, 1980), p. xviii.

47 Bartleman, *Azusa*, p. 57.

48 Bartleman, *Azusa*, p. 156.

49 Bartleman, *Azusa*, p. 86.

50 *Apostolic Faith* 1:6 (Feb-Mar 1907), p. 47.

51 *Apostolic Faith* 1:4 (Dec 1906), p. 3.

works is considerable, amounting to 11 per cent of the total in the *Apostolic Faith* and is greater still in *Confidence Magazine*, amounting to some 38 per cent.

There seems to have been a real fear amongst many that a counterfeit miracle might take place when they were seeking the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the sign of tongues. Seymour is more straight-talking than the English and, inspired by Luke 11:9-13, expresses clearly and bluntly the fear that many felt, offering the reassurance that the Devil cannot get past the blood: 'Never let the hosts of hell make you believe that while you live under the blood, honouring the blood, and pleading through the blood for blessings from the throne, that God will let Satan get through the blood, and put a serpent into you.'<sup>52</sup>

There was a fear among the Sunderland Pentecostals that was even greater than that seen at Azusa Street that they would be overtaken by a deceptive demonic power while seeking the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with the gift of tongues. Failing that, the Devil might do all he can to obstruct the seeker from receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit by means of accusations launched at the conscience. Alexander Boddy offers his advice: 'Satan will come to accuse, but steadfastly point him to the blood of that victorious life on high.'<sup>53</sup>

In the many testimonies published in *Confidence*, the breakthrough comes as a result of the seeker saying out

loud such phrases as 'The precious Blood of Jesus', or simply, 'Blood! Blood! Blood!' It is seldom clear exactly what the seekers are experiencing that they are looking to the blood to overcome. The testimony of a certain John Martin of Kilsyth, Scotland, gives more detail than most: 'I found I had spiritual enemies hindering my getting through. I felt them. They were like an atmosphere in front of me. I BEGAN TO PLEAD THE BLOOD. I assured myself and Satan that it was the all-atoning Blood, and that Jesus was both Lord and Christ.'<sup>54</sup>

Mr Martin reports that, within a few moments of this encounter, which all took place while lying flat on his back in his pastor's kitchen, he was swept '...in to the sea of Pentecostal Fulness with its unmistakable seal'. The 'unmistakable seal' was, of course, the gift of tongues.

This type of pleading the blood is markedly different from that which Zinzendorf would have commended or which Charles Wesley might have invoked in his hymns. For them, pleading the blood was theocentric. You appeal to the merits of the sacrifice of Christ as you approach God in his holiness. For the Pentecostals, pleading the blood was intended for Satan's ears rather than God's.

Pleading the blood in this latter form has, of course, survived right up to the present day. My African students say that their preachers will routinely plead the protection of the blood of Jesus over a meeting before they begin. Benny Hinn recommends simi-

<sup>52</sup> *Apostolic Faith* 1:4 (Dec 1906), p. 37.

<sup>53</sup> A. Boddy, 'The Way to Your "Pentecost"', *Confidence* 1:5 (Aug 1908), p. 24.

<sup>54</sup> Testimony from John Martin: *Confidence* 1:1 (Apr 1908), pp. 12-13.

lar practices. For him, this takes the form of a simple daily prayer for his family: 'Lord, cover Suzanne, Jessica, Natasha, Joshua and Eleasha with Your blood.'<sup>55</sup> He has written in detail about the subject, offering the story of the Passover as his chief biblical precedent.<sup>56</sup> Joyce Meyer has also taught extensively on this subject.<sup>57</sup>

As for the other dimensions to blood mysticism, it appears that with the rapid waning of emphasis on sanctification as a distinct crisis experience within most holiness groups, the blood became somewhat obsolete. Sanctity no longer holds the attraction it once did and the obsession with crimson tides and cleansing floods has disappeared with it. Instead, with the advent of the post World War II healing evangelists, the promise of power, of new anointings, and of miracles proved to be the attraction that filled the stadiums. Only in so far as the blood could serve the interests of this power hunger did it retain a function in popular spirituality. Yet the underlying dynamic was unchanged: the need to legitimate one's faith, the need to prove its reality in a hostile world. For nineteenth century holiness adherents, mastering sin proved the authenticity of the Christian message. For twentieth century Pentecostals and charismatics, it was mastering the

forces of nature or the powers of darkness that vindicated their beliefs. In this way, the blood has become part of the empowerment package that is perhaps the main attraction of Pentecostalism today.

## Conclusion

I have here attempted to trace a scarlet thread of blood mysticism that originated in the medieval mystics that were Luther's spiritual mentors. Through Lutheran Pietism the line is traceable to Zinzendorf and his followers and then on to the Wesleys, the holiness movement and the Pentecostals. In broad terms, there are three distinct phases of development.

The first phase is that embodied by the Moravians. It is the devotional phase, and its dominating note is that of personal, heartfelt response to the sufferings and death of Christ. At the dawn of the Enlightenment, at the start of the modern era, the Moravians drank deeply from a pre-modern well. In an age of growing infidelity towards religion, the blood of Christ was calling the Moravians to give themselves utterly to him who gave his life for them. The spirituality of the medieval mystics was now transfigured within a profoundly Lutheran and non-sacerdotal community. God now infused the mental image of the crucified Christ with his Real Presence rather than the physical elements of the Eucharist. Faith in a visualised blood and wounds would melt the heart and inspire repentance. The desired attitude of childlike surrender and abdication to all that the blood had achieved would run deep into the religious psychology of the holiness and Pentecostal movements of

<sup>55</sup> B. Hinn, *Power in the Blood: the Biblical Significance of the Blood from Genesis to Jesus to the Modern Believer* (Lake Mary: Creation House, 1993), p. 75.

<sup>56</sup> Hinn, *Power in the Blood*, passim.

<sup>57</sup> E.g. J. Meyer, *The Word, The Name, The Blood* (Lebanon: Time Warner, 2003), pp. 115-138.

the following two centuries.

The second phase begins with the Wesleys. Charles provides the devotional language while John supplies the theological framework. Thanks to them, the great blood mystical theme bequeathed to a huge body of nineteenth century devotion is that of holiness through the blood. The role of the blood in personal holiness is twofold. First and foremost, it cleanses the heart, Wesleyans would say permanently, from 'inbred' sin. Non-Wesleyans held to a fairly similar initial crisis experience but placed more emphasis on the blood's effectiveness at removing the guiltiness of ongoing sins before God once these were acknowledged. Secondly, it purchases men for God. To be bought at such a price is, as for the Moravians, a devotional summons to a higher Christian life. All of this thrived in the context of a wider church that was becoming 'worldly' and a society at large that was beginning to reject the very idea of religious belief.

The third phase begins insipidly during the Welsh Revival, but is more clearly seen at Azusa Street, and finally reaches almost psychotic levels in early English Pentecostalism. It is the demonological phase. At its worst, it is the blood mysticism of spiritual paranoia; it is the kind of belief that develops in the breasts of those who feel themselves to be inhabiting a world torn between God and Satan, and praying through a heaven clouded with demons. At its best it arms the believer with the confidence to repel the accuser as he or she seeks earnestly after God. This demonological element appears to have survived while the other chapters in our story have

receded somewhat into the background.

Alan Stibbs, in his masterful study of the word 'blood' in Scripture, concluded his monograph with the insight that blood is: '...a sign of life either given or taken in death. Such giving or taking of life is in this world the extreme, both of gift or price and of crime or penalty. Man knows no greater.'<sup>58</sup>

So the phrase, 'the blood of Christ' is by nature susceptible of hyperbolic usage. It is by nature extreme language. No greater gift and no higher price is possible; and no worse a crime or exacting a penalty is conceivable than all that is involved in the death of the Son of God at the hands of sinners on behalf of sinners. Desperate times call for desperate measures and it is in precisely those times when sincere believers feel desperate that their routine cross-centredness erupts into a fountain of blood mysticism. These peaks of blood mysticism are thus an extension of Evangelicalism's routine crucicentrism recruited in the cause of some specific fight: the fight against apostasy or against inbred sin or against demons. In a world increasingly seething with satanic anti-Christian beliefs, nothing, it was hoped, could stand against the all-cleansing, all-conquering Blood, the very heart of Evangelical faith.

The blood mysticism of Evangelicalism's past has much to offer. There is truth in the fact that the blood of Christ is a stimulus for us to give ourselves to him who gave himself for us. There is

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58 A. Stibbs, *The Meaning of the Word 'Blood' in Scripture* (Tyndale Press, 1948), p. 33.

truth in making the merits of Christ's all-sufficient sacrifice our final appeal as we come before a holy and awesome God. There is truth in the idea of the power of that sacrifice to fully cleanse and profoundly relieve the stricken conscience, preventing us from seeking harmful alternative ways to medicate the pain of guilt.

There is truth in the notion that we are bought at the price of Christ's blood and we are not our own; truth alike in the thought that the masses of the as

yet unreconciled to God are already bought and paid for by him. Truth there is in the appeal to the justifying blood as our mightiest weapon against the accusations of Satan.

The error lies only in taking just one of these concepts and peddling it to the exclusion of all the others. For here there are vast spiritual riches from the full length and breadth of our Evangelical heritage that any Christian may utilise and enjoy in the pursuit of a 'closer walk' with God.

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# Will There Be *New* Work in the New Creation?

John Jefferson Davis

**KEYWORDS:** *Theology of work, heaven, worship, redemption, consummation, divine image, creation, cultural mandate, business, property.*

THE SHINY GLASS and steel buildings seem to spring up like mushrooms in Bangalore, India, and the corporate signs of Epson, Microsoft, IBM, Texas Instruments, and the home-grown Infosys Technologies herald the presence of a new Asian 'Silicon Valley'. The newly globalized economies of Bangalore, Jakarta, Beijing, Hong Kong and other booming metropolises around the Pacific basin, based on software, brainpower, knowledge workers, and the outsourcing of service and information technologies, have been vividly described in Thomas Friedman's *The World Is Flat*.<sup>1</sup>

The question arises: will any of

these activities of the new global economy be present in the New Creation? Will the redeemed people of God have any work to do in the world to come, or will worship be their exclusive preoccupation? Many Christians have traditionally expected that all work will cease in the life to come, and that life in this world is greatly discontinuous with human activity in the world to come—implicitly denying the intrinsic value of our 'secular' work in the present.

Many Christians seem to struggle with a sense that their 'secular' work has no eternal or intrinsic value, but at best, is only a platform for evangelism or a source of income to contribute to the church and foreign missions. Theologians have, of course, developed various theologies of work to undergird Christian witness in the workplace,<sup>2</sup> but little attention has been

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, *The World Is Flat: a Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), pp.3-30.

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Robert Banks, *God the Worker* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1994) and *Redeeming the Routines: Bringing Theology to Life* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1993); Dar-

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given to the biblical theme of the *New Creation*<sup>3</sup> and what implications it might have for our understanding of the value of work.

This essay will argue that there will be *new work* for the redeemed people of God to do in the New Creation, and that worship will be a central but not the exclusive activity in the world to come. Biblical and theological arguments for this thesis will be presented, the nature of this work explored, and various objections considered. Along the way, notice will be given to the changing nature of work in our rapidly changing, globalized economies, and to contemporary scientific cosmologies, insofar as these might shape our images of work in the world to come. Expanded visions of the cosmos in a post-Hubble age give vastly enlarged dimensions to the 'New Heavens' and make the entire cosmos a potential 'workplace' for a redeemed humanity journeying to the stars.

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rell Cosden, *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Pater-noster Press, 2004); Lee Hardy, *The Fabric of This World: Inquiries into Calling, Career Choice and the Design of Human Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990); Michael Novak, *Business as a Calling* (New York: Free Press, 1996); Alan Richardson, *The Biblical Doctrine of Work* (London: SCM Press, 1963); Leland Ryken, *Redeeming the Time: A Christian Approach to Work and Leisure* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995); R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); Doug Sherman and William Hendricks, *Your Work Matters to God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1987).

3 Notable exceptions are Darrell Cosden, *op. cit.*, note 2 above, and Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

This proposition that there will be new work to do in the New Creation, if correct, would be a further basis for investing human work in both western and non-western contexts with lasting meaning and significance. Admittedly, all attempts to foresee specific conditions in the world to come are somewhat speculative, and this must be recognized at the outset. Nevertheless, such exercises in speculative theology can have significant value insofar as they raise fresh questions and re-energize the Christian imagination with respect to both the meaning of work and the realities of the New Creation.

Before examining the biblical and theological arguments for the proposition that there will be new work in the New Creation, it will be helpful to note, if only briefly, some highlights from the history of Christian understandings of heaven and the world to come, to provide perspective for what is to follow.

### A Very Brief History of Heaven

In their valuable scholarly survey, *Heaven: A History*, Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang argue that Christian understanding of the future life has tended to fall into one of two broad categories: the 'theocentric' and 'anthropocentric'.<sup>4</sup> 'Theocentric' conceptions

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4 Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). Their general conclusions are summarised on pp. 353-58, 'Paradise Found: Themes and Variations'. Less comprehensive but also helpful is Alister E. McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2003).

focus on the fulfillment of the believer's relationship to God and see worship and praise as the primary if not exclusive activities of heaven. 'Anthropocentric' conceptions, while not excluding worship, tend to emphasize reunion with family and friends, social relationships, and activities of service and work. McDannell and Lang see the 'theocentric' model exemplified in the New Testament, the earlier Augustine, medieval scholasticism, the Protestant Reformers, the Puritans, and much of contemporary theology, both Roman Catholic and Protestant.<sup>5</sup> 'Anthropocentric' conceptions can be found in Irenaeus, the later Augustine, the Renaissance, and in various eighteenth and nineteenth century authors.<sup>6</sup>

McDannell and Lang show how differing social and historical conditions

have affected conceptions of the future state. Authors whose social locations have reflected more optimistic worldly conditions and less alienation from the social order have tended to favour more anthropocentric conceptions. Since the First World War, both liberal and conservative Protestants have tended toward some form of 'theocentric minimalism', but for very different reasons. Theological conservatives note that the biblical texts give very little specific detail about heaven, and theological liberals, perhaps influenced by the scientific naturalism of the age, seem prone to believe that concrete knowledge of any future life is essentially unknowable.<sup>7</sup> Unlike the doctrines of Christology, the Trinity, or justification, the doctrines of heaven and the New Creation have not been the focus of major confessional attention in the history of the church, and as a result have remained somewhat undeveloped in matters of detail.<sup>8</sup>

The point of view advanced in this essay could be characterized as a 'theocentric maximalism'. Praise and

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5 McDannell and Lang, *Heaven*, pp.353-54. At times this has taken the form of a 'theocentric minimalism' in which there is little envisioned except the believer in the presence of God, apart from the created order. Augustine, for example, speaks of the happiness of heaven as a condition in which God will be all in all, and where '... there will be no weariness to call for rest, no need to call for toil, no place for any energy but praise': *City of God*, Bk.xxii, chpt.30. Chapter xxxiii of the Westminster Confession of Faith (1646), in speaking of the Last Judgment and the world to come, states that '... then the righteous shall go into everlasting life, and receive that fullness of joy and refreshing which shall come from the presence of the Lord', but gives no further details of the nature of the heavenly state.

6 McDannell and Lang, *Heaven*, pp.355-56. More activist conceptions of heaven can be found in authors as theologically diverse as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Charles Haddon Spurgeon.

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7 McDannell and Lang, *Heaven*, p.350. In the brief concluding section on 'The Eternal Abode of the Righteous,' Louis Berkhof states that '... the joy of each individual will be perfect and full', and that there will be 'social intercourse on an elevated plane', but adds little specific detail: *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1941), p. 737. The somewhat more detailed descriptions of the future state offered by Millard Erickson and Wayne Grudem will be noted below.

8 This point has been made by Jerry L. Walls, *Heaven: the Logic of Eternal Joy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 9. Pp. 3-9 in this work present a helpful overview of historical and contemporary trends in beliefs about heaven.

worship in the unclouded presence of God is understood to be the central but not exclusive activity of the world to come. If 'theocentric' orientations have tended to reflect the first Great Commandment (love of God), and 'anthropocentric' orientations have tended to emphasize the second (love of neighbour), then 'theocentric maximalism' would argue that love of God, love of neighbour, and *care for creation* (and culture) must be envisioned together as redeemed activities in the New Creation.

It seems that a major defect of historic 'theocentric' views of the world to come has been that *creation* as such tends to disappear or become marginalized in Christian eschatologies—there is not, as it were, enough 'creation' in the New *Creation*! A more robust theology of the New Creation should inform Christian visions of the future.

A biblical view of the consummation of God's redemptive work involves a universe in which humans are rightly related to God, to other humans, and to creation—the latter broadly understood to include both the biosphere and, by extension, the world of culture. Stated in a different way, it could be said that 'theocentric maximalism' envisions a future state in which both the Great Commandments *and* the Cultural Mandate (Gen.1:28) will be fulfilled—and continue to be fulfilled in the New Creation in obedient and joyful acts of worship, service, and work.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The Cultural Mandate, instituted before the Fall, and renewed after the Flood (Gen. 9:1), is here understood to have continuing validity into the New Creation (procreation excepted: Matt. 22:30).

## Work in the New Creation

In this section arguments for the validity and existence of new human work in the New Creation will be presented on the basis of the biblical doctrines of God, work, the history of the Flood, Old and New Testament images of the New Creation, and the doctrine of man as *Imago Dei*. Several possible objections to this conclusion will also be considered.

The biblical doctrine of God teaches that all three persons of the Trinity are involved in the works of creation, providence, and redemption. While the work of redemption was completed in principle at the Cross and will be finally consummated at the end of history, it can be argued that God's works of creation and providence can be expected to continue into the New Creation and even beyond. With respect to the work of providence, God works to sustain the present creation by the word of his power (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17; Acts 17:28). The creation as such, whether in its original or fallen state, is not self-sufficient or self-sustaining; every creature is maintained in being by the omnipotence and sovereign will of God. The New Creation will still be a *creation*: that is, a creaturely reality that will continue to be sustained by God. It will still be true in the New Creation that a redeemed human being will need to confess that 'In him we live and move and have our being' (Acts 17:28). God will continue his work of sustaining and maintaining creatures in the new creation.

With respect to the divine work of creation, it can be argued that God the Creator is essentially creative in his being. God's original act of creation

was a free act, an act of divine love and freedom, not one necessitated by any lack or need on God's part. In the words of Karl Barth, God, '... under no other inward constraint than that of the freedom of His love, has in an act of the overflowing of His inward glory, posited such a reality which is distinct from Himself'.<sup>10</sup> Or as Colin Gunton has observed, '... like a work of art, creation is a project, something God wills for its own sake and not because he has need of it'.<sup>11</sup> God's essential nature as a free, creative, and omnipotent being will never change throughout eternity; God the Creator will still be creative in the New Creation. God will be free to create new things in the New Creation, and even to create new worlds beyond the existing one, should he so desire.

Since man, as the image of God, was created to mirror the nature and works of God, it follows that if God continues to work in acts of creation and providence, redeemed humans in the New Creation will continue to reflect the Creator by caring for fellow creatures and by engaging in new, creative acts of art, invention, culture, and worship.

But is it not the case that in some sense the creative work of God is finished, not continuing, and that God's people have entered a 'Sabbath rest' (Heb.4:3,4,9)? It is certainly the case that the biblical texts speak of God resting subsequent to the originating

acts of creation (Gen. 2:2); however, biblical texts also speak of God continuing to create in a continuing sense in the present (Ps. 104:30, animals created by the Spirit of God). Jesus says that the Father 'is always at work to the present day' in works of mercy and providence. Jesus' healing on the Sabbath reflects God's acts of mercy and care for his creatures throughout history. The work of redemption was finished at the Cross, and God's people can enter into that spiritual rest now by faith, but God's works of providence, mercy, and creation continue.

In Genesis 2:15 it is said that the 'Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it'. The word translated as 'take care of' (*shamar*) has the sense of 'watchful care and preservation'.<sup>12</sup> The narrative continues by saying that God also brought the animals to the man '... to see what he would name them' (Gen. 2:19,20). The man is not only given the task of preserving the garden, but also functions as a 'naturalist' and 'knowledge worker' who classifies and assigns nomenclature to God's creatures, in keeping with the mandate to exercise dominion (Gen. 1:28). The naming of the animals is an expression of the human ability to use symbols and to make a 'cultural' world from the raw materials of a 'natural' world; the animals become part of man's cultural world by the very act of naming. A 'cow' is no longer just a 'natural'

<sup>10</sup> Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics, III.1, The Doctrine of Creation* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1958), p. 15.

<sup>11</sup> Colin Gunton, 'The Doctrine of Creation', in Gunton, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 142.

<sup>12</sup> William Dyrness, 'Stewardship of the Earth in the Old Testament', p. 54 in Wesley Granberg-Michaelson, ed., *Tending the Garden: Essays on the Gospel and the Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987).

object, but a part of a human domestic economy. The power of naming constitutes a 'second act of creation' that completes, as it were, God's origina-tive act of creation, unlocking and developing the potentials inherent in the creature.

The first man is assigned the task of tending the garden *before the fall*. In biblical theology, work predates the fall, and is not a consequence of sin. The burdensome and painful aspects of work that are the consequences of sin (Gen. 3:17) are not inherent in the nature of work itself. Work was assigned in an unfallen world as an activity reflective of man's nature as the image of God, who is himself 'worker'. Just as it was 'not good' for the man to be alone (Gen. 2:18)—man being by nature a social being—so, by implication, it was *good* that man should work and care for God's creation. Viewed in this perspective, work is not inherently burdensome, much less a punishment, but rather a privilege and opportunity to reflect the character, activity, and creativity of the Creator. Consequently, if this is true of the nature of work in the first or original creation, and if the New Creation is the fulfilment of God's original intention, then it would follow that new work would be a feature of the new world to come.

In the narrative of the Genesis Flood the post-Deluge world can be seen as a type of the New Creation. Noah and his family emerge from the ark subsequent to God's judgment on the old sinful order and enter not into a period of perpetual rest, but resume the work of the cultural mandate and development of God's creation. Human culture advances from agriculture in

general to viticulture (grape cultivation; wine making) in particular. The mandate to work is not revoked, but continued into the 'New Creation' after the Flood. This analogy from redemptive history would again suggest that work will characterize redeemed human life in the world to come.

Some of the imagery of the New Creation in the Old Testament prophets points in a similar direction. In Isaiah's vision of a new heavens and a new earth the prophet foresees a new world in which the redeemed will '... *build houses* and live in them' (Is. 65:21). The obvious question, of course, is to what extent such imagery is to be taken in a literal or physical sense, or whether only a metaphorical sense of 'secure relationships' or the like is intended. The interpretation favoured here is that both senses could be understood: the people of God will indeed enjoy eternally secure relationships with God and one another, but as *embodied*, physical beings will still live not in caves or in the open fields, but in structures which they themselves have shaped. Building houses—and countless other constructive activities—can be envisioned as enjoyable experiences in the New Creation.

The expectation that redeemed humans will have new work to do in the world to come is also implied by man's essential nature as *Imago Dei*. Human beings will continue to exist as image-bearers of God in the New Creation. Man was created to reflect, in a finite and analogical sense, the character of God, and his works of creation, providence, and redemption. Just as Jesus the Son reflected the Father's work (Jn. 5:17, 19), so the redeemed daughters and sons of God can be expected to

reflect God's work in the life to come.

Man creates, of course, not in the absolute, *ex nihilo* sense of God's creation, but through 'adding value' to creation, by transforming that which already exists, through invention, discovery, innovation, and by the production of new artistic, musical, and literary works.

Humans reflect the providential work of God when they serve their fellow creatures, care for the biosphere, and maintain the existing physical and cultural orders. Humans imitate the redemptive work of God when they act in such a way as to mitigate the effects of sin, e.g., a doctor serving her patients, or a reformer working to remove social injustices. While in the New Creation the need for *redemptive* actions would be unnecessary, works of creativity and providence would still obtain. The damage done to the divine image in man having been fully restored (cf. Col. 3:10), the creativity and energy entailed in that image would be fully expressed in the New Creation.

Works of providence or provision will also still apply, since humans, animals, and plants, though redeemed and transformed, still remain *creatures*. Creatures, by definition, have needs that are met by others.<sup>13</sup> God alone has the attribute of aseity or metaphysical

independence; all creatures depend on God and, secondarily, on other creatures for their existence, life, and health. When houses are built in the world to come (Is. 65:21), they will presumably be built not by owners struggling alone, but by a team of willing helpers. Even the fruit yielded every month by the tree of life planted by the river of life in the New Jerusalem, as envisioned by John (Rev. 22:2), would plausibly not be 'self-harvesting', magically falling off the tree and rolling to a final destination, but would be joyfully harvested by the people of God who 'tend the Garden' (cf. Gen. 2:15) in the New Eden. Works of service would continue throughout eternity, as the people of God care for one another and for God's redeemed creation.<sup>14</sup>

The presence of the image of God in man and the cultural mandate (Gen. 1:26-28) imply that human beings are inherently shapers and creators of culture. The concept of culture, so crucial as a mediating category between man's inner and outer worlds, can be further developed here with insights from the disciplines of modern cultural anthropology and paleoanthropology.<sup>15</sup>

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**13** Even though God could meet the needs of creatures *immediately*, i.e., without any mediaries, he chooses in his providence to meet these needs *mediately* through others. This mediate provision of human needs is consistent with our finite and social human nature and reminds us of our dependence on others. This mediated provision for creaturely needs will plausibly continue in the world to come.

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**14** My colleague Scott Hafemann has pointed out that since faith, together with hope and love, are eternal (I Cor. 13:13), and so characterize the world to come, and since faith expresses itself in love for the neighbour (Gal. 5:6), this aspect of Pauline theology provides yet another reason to expect the continuation of such works in the future life.

**15** Paleoanthropology is the discipline that studies the ancient hominid species, now extinct, such as the Australopithecines, *Homo habilis*, *Homo erectus*, *Homo Neanderthalis*, and so forth, together with the remains of *Homo sapiens* from the prehistoric Paleolithic peri-

Traditional theological discussions often speak of 'man' and 'creation' without recognizing *culture* as an essential intervening variable. As already noted, human beings rarely if ever relate to 'nature' as such apart from the mediation of culturally defined symbols and artifacts. Even backpackers on a hike in a remote virgin wilderness in Alaska are carrying backpacks, stoves, food supplies, maps, sleeping bags and other artifacts that are products of human culture; the very categories of 'wilderness' and 'backpacking' are themselves culturally defined and historically situated.

One contemporary anthropologist, Amos Rapoport, defines culture as 'a system of symbols and meanings transmitted [from one generation to another] through enculturation.'<sup>16</sup> It is through such culturally defined frameworks that human societies give meaning to particulars, and organize the domains of space, time, meaning, and communication.<sup>17</sup> Roads, maps, boundary lines, houses, office buildings, 'Keep Out' signs, calendars, clocks, anniversaries, laws, stop signs, musical notation, mathematical symbols, hymns, prayers, clothing styles, con-

ventional greetings, and language itself are just a few examples of the many ways in which humans build their own cultural environments through the use of symbols. In modern information-driven economies, most 'work' involves the manipulation of symbols. A chimpanzee or a beaver<sup>18</sup> can relate to the world in a 'natural' environment, but *Homo sapiens* relates to nature and works through the mediation of 'built' or culturally-created environments.

Another anthropologist, Tim Ingold, has noted that a human being is by nature '... a designer, imposing symbolic schemes of his own devising upon the world of inanimate objects'.<sup>19</sup> The aesthetic aspect of human cultural and symbolic activity, expressed in art and music, seems so deeply embedded in human nature that humans will spend hours honing their skills and practising, not primarily for some external reward, but for the intrinsic satisfaction of mastering the skill involved.<sup>20</sup>

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ods. See John Reader, *Missing Links: the Hunt for Earliest Man* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988) for a helpful historical overview.

<sup>16</sup> Amos Rapoport, 'Spatial Organization and the Built Environment', pp. 460-502 in the *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, op. cit., at p. 474. Enculturation can involve any process that transmits learned, symbolic meanings from one generation to another: myths, stories, rituals, holidays, formal education, training, apprenticeship, mentoring, and so forth.

<sup>17</sup> Rapoport, 'Spatial Organization', p.465.

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<sup>18</sup> While it is true that a beaver in building a dam is 'building' an environment, such behaviour is instinctive or 'hard-wired', rather than 'cultural' in the sense used here. Human culture and processes of enculturation are not merely 'hard wired' or instinctive, but have a history and change dynamically over time, incorporating new learned behaviours and meanings in response to changing circumstances and individual creativity.

<sup>19</sup> Tim Ingold, *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>20</sup> David Premack and Ann James Premack, 'Why Animals Have Neither Culture nor History', in Tim Ingold, ed., *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology*, op. cit., p. 359. Such artistic and musical propensities distinguish humans from the lower animals.



This connection of the 'human' and the 'cultural' is so strong and so integral that Clifford Geertz has asserted that 'Most bluntly... there is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture'. Human beings without culture would not be so much like the clever young savages in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, but more like 'unworkable monstrosities' with few useable instincts, few recognizable human emotions and sentiments, and little intellect as we know it.<sup>21</sup>

It is precisely this uniquely human ability to form culture through symbolic activity that paleoanthropologists have used to identify the emergence of modern *Homo sapiens* in the history of the hominid fossil record. The remarkable Cro-Magnon cave paintings at Lascaux and other sites in the Pyrenees region of southwestern France and northern Spain are among the earliest examples of human art. Such examples of art, music, and symbolic activity have been dated to at least 30,000 years before the present. The Cro-Magnons, who were biologically and anatomically modern *Homo sapiens*, left other evidences of symbolically and culturally defined behaviours such as burial of the dead with ritual and ceremony, body decoration and ornamentation as signs of social sta-

tus, and the use of eyed boned needles for the production of carefully tailored clothing.<sup>22</sup>

One leading paleoanthropologist, Ian Tattersall, has stated that such symbolic activity '... lies at the very heart of what it means to be human'. The ability to generate complex symbols and to transform them, to use symbols to 'create a world in the mind and to re-create it in the real world' outside the mind is at the very foundation of the uniquely human powers of imagination and creativity.<sup>23</sup> Earlier hominid species show little or no evidence of complex symbolic behaviours. *Homo erectus* used standardized stone tools and may have harnessed the use of fire as early as 700,000 years before the present, but left no evidence of art or musical instruments.<sup>24</sup> Neanderthal man, while having a cranial capacity larger on the average than modern *Homo sapiens*, left no clear evidence of art or other symbolic activity.<sup>25</sup>

Both the hominid fossil record and the biblical accounts of human origins and early human history (Gen. 1,2,4)

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21 Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); 'The Impact of the Concept of Culture on the Concept of Man', p. 49. Geertz goes on to say that we '... are in sum incomplete or unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through culture—and not through culture in general but through highly particular forms of it... Javanese, Hopi, Italian, upper-class and lower class, academic and commercial': *ibid.*

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22 Ian Tattersall, *The Human Odyssey: Four Million Years of Human Evolution* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1993), ch. 12; 'The Human Spirit', pp. 153-171, is a succinct description of the evidence, with illustrations of art and other material artifacts.

23 Ian Tattersall, *Becoming Human: Evolution and Human Uniqueness* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998), p. 177.

24 Richard Leakey and Roger Lewin, *Origins Reconsidered: In Search of What Makes Us Human* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 47.

25 Christopher Stringer and Clive Gamble, *In Search of the Neanderthals: Solving the Puzzle of Human Origins* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1993), p. 160.

portray those whom we would recognize as 'like ourselves' as culture-forming, symbol-manipulating beings. The first man of Genesis is portrayed in the cultural terms of a Neolithic farmer (cf. Gen. 2:15), and cultural activities such as music, metalworking, and animal domestication are mentioned soon thereafter (Gen. 4). The implication of these considerations is that if man, historically, in the 'first' creation is essentially a culture-maker, then man in the second or New Creation will be a shaper of culture as well. In both the first and New creations, humans bearing the image of God relate to God, to other humans, and to the natural environment not immediately, but mediately through symbols that they themselves have shaped and transmitted. Redeemed human beings in a new creation, then, can be expected to produce new cultural artifacts as they do new work in the world to come.

### Images of Work in the New Creation

This final section of the essay will attempt to explore what types of work and activity might characterize life in the New Creation. Can we expect that there will be new works of art, music, and scientific discovery? What about business and finance? Will there be an 'economy' in the world to come? Eating and drinking? Manufacturing or maintenance activities? Farming or wildlife conservation? Will the fundamental laws of physics be entirely different in the world to come? Such questions may seem speculative and even bizarre, but are posed not so much with a view to developing definitive answers, but somewhat provisionally, in the hope of

providing new perspectives and questions for further reflection in the areas of eschatology and Christian understandings of work.<sup>26</sup>

These questions will be explored from the standpoint of a 'theocentric maximalism' that attempts to take the notion of New Creation seriously. Such a standpoint is contrasted with various forms of 'theocentric minimalism'. A more extreme form of theocentric minimalism would be represented by various Gnostic eschatologies in which the future life involves only disembodied spirits in the presence of God, apart from all matter and the lower creation. A less extreme form of theocentric minimalism is found in Aquinas, who anticipated the renewal of the earth and the heavenly bodies, but believed that animals and plants would have no place in the eternal state, because of their corruptible nature.<sup>27</sup>

In the theocentric maximalism presupposed here, the New Creation is envisioned as a state of affairs in which redeemed humans are rightly related to God, to other humans, to the world of culture, to the biosphere, and to the cosmos as a whole. This reference to

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<sup>26</sup> Just as the 'other worlds' of C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* and the *Space Trilogy* and the works of J.R.R. Tolkien have enriched the Christian imagination and Christian living in the present, so, hopefully, might explorations of the issue of new work in the New Creation.

<sup>27</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Supplement, Q.91, Art.5; 'Whether the Plants and Animals Will Remain in This Renewal?' Aquinas' conclusion—that plants and animals will have no place in the world to come—seems inconsistent with the *intrinsic value* of the biosphere in Gen. 1, and with God's preservation of animals on the Ark during the Flood.

the *cosmos* is a recognition of the fact that in a post-Hubble world the Christian eschatological imagination must encompass not only a new earth, but a new *cosmos* as well. The New *Heavens* have been vastly expanded since the discoveries of Galileo, Einstein, and Hubble; the 'playing field' of redemption, so to speak, has been vastly enlarged for the Christian in this era of human history.

The questions noted above will be explored from an interpretative perspective that could be called 'hermeneutical maximalism', i.e., a hermeneutical perspective that posits elements of both continuity and discontinuity between the old and new creations; that presupposes the fundamentally *analogical* nature of religious language;<sup>28</sup> and that posits 'inclusionary maximalism'. This last term is shorthand for the following working supposition: All things and human activities from the old creation are expected to be found in the New Creation except those clearly excluded, e.g., a) things logically impossible; b) things clearly sinful;<sup>29</sup> c) things explic-

itly excluded by New Testament revelation. The principle of maximal inclusiveness would seem to be consistent with the intrinsic goodness of the original creation and the divine preservation of representatives of the biosphere through the Genesis Flood. In the New Creation it will be just as impossible for it to be true that  $2+2=5$  as it is in the present creation. Clearly sinful activities such as murder, rape, theft, envy, idolatry, or blasphemy could have no place in the world to come.

The statement of Christ in Matt.22:30 that in the resurrection there will be no marrying or giving in marriage would seem to exclude sexual activity and procreation in the life to come. Admittedly, such a prospect might not seem desirable to many in modern cultures saturated with sexual images and expectations! However, it is not the case that the cessation of sexual activity would imply a diminishing of pleasure per se in the world to come. On the contrary, the New Creation can be expected to entail a state of affairs in which right pleasures—physical, emotional, relational, intellectual, aesthetic, and spiritual—would be intensified, not diminished, in a context in which redeemed human beings are in right relationships with God, other humans, and the entire cosmic environment.<sup>30</sup>

The cessation of sexual and procreative activity would not imply the cessation of gender distinctions;

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28 An analogical understanding of religious language holds that such language, while not, in a given case necessarily being strictly *literal*, is not, at the same time *equivocal*; rather, it is supposed that language used in normal human contexts has some points of similarity and correspondence to actual states of affairs when used of things in the world to come.

29 Citing 1 Cor. 3:12-15, Volf refers to a final judgment on human works, expecting that those works done not in cooperation with God, but 'in cooperation with the demonic powers that scheme to ruin God's good creation' (Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, p.120) will be burned up at the end and not enter the New Creation.

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30 Millard Erickson suggests the term 'suprasexual' in reference to the surpassing pleasures of the world to come: *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), p. 1240.

redeemed humans would still be recognizably male or female in the New Creation. The transcendence of sexual activity would, however, have a specific benefit for women: with the cessation of pregnancy, labour, childbirth, and childcare responsibilities, women would be freed to pursue the full range of artistic, scientific, and cultural activities that have historically been dominated by men.

A key assumption made in this discussion is that there will be some measure of continuity (as well as discontinuity) in the ways in which the basic laws of physics and biology operate now and in the new world to come. For example, it can be supposed that space will still have three dimensions, not one or two. A complex world of human and animal life could not be possible in a world of only one or two dimensions. If the law of gravity or the fundamental subatomic forces were substantially different, carbon-based life as we know it would not be possible.<sup>31</sup> Redeemed human bodies will still be transformed physical bodies that are subject to a form of gravity, rather than floating freely through space. The New Creation is a transformed creation, an ordered and law-governed world, not a world of magic and mythical fantasy,

free from all creaturely constraints.

Biblical images found in texts such as Revelation 22:2 ('tree of life... yielding fruit *every month*') and Is. 65:21 ('plant vineyards... eat their fruit') would seem to apply a state of affairs in the New Creation in which biological and metabolic processes—including eating—are still occurring. This last inference concerning *eating food* seems consistent with the gospel accounts of Christ, with a resurrection body, preparing a meal for the disciples (Jn. 21:13). To demonstrate the material reality of his resurrection body, Christ takes a piece of broiled fish and eats it in the presence of the disciples (Lk. 24:42, 43). The Pauline statement that the Kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking (Rom. 14:17) does not prove that eating and drinking are inconsistent with existence in the New Creation—for eating and drinking can be done to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31)—but rather, that disputes about clean and unclean foods (Rom. 14:13-16) should not disrupt the unity of the Christian fellowship.

With these general hermeneutical considerations in mind, we can now proceed to explore more specifically the question, 'What types of work might be expected in the New Creation?' As a point of departure, the divine work-triad of creation, providence, and redemption can be used as a heuristic model. The works of the Triune God in time are constituted by acts of creation, providence, and redemption; man, as the image of God, reflects the activities of 'God the Worker' imperfectly in the first creation, and more adequately in the age to come.

It is not hard to imagine that *creative* human activities such as art, music, lit-

31 Recent scientific discoveries have shown how the fundamental constants of nature are 'fine-tuned' for life: see, for example, Barrow, John D., and Frank J. Tipler, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); Paul Davies, *The Mind of God: Science and the Search for Ultimate Meaning* (London: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Michael J. Denton, *Nature's Destiny: How the Laws of Biology Reveal Purpose in the Universe* (New York: Free Press, 1998).

erature, drama, and scientific discovery would flourish in a renewed creation. Such activities are pursued for the intrinsic values and enjoyment<sup>32</sup> they produce, and as humans move from a 'kingdom of necessity' to a 'kingdom of freedom,' it seems plausible to suppose that such activities would be even more widely practised and enjoyed. The aesthetic values constituted by art, music, and literature, for example, and produced by humans as image-bearers of God, can be said to reflect in a finite way the nature of God, whose 'glory' epitomizes all true beauty. God is a *beautiful* and glorious being; the New Creation is a glorious and beautiful creation, and redeemed humans in the world to come will enjoy activities that add new (aesthetic) values to the world and conserve values that already exist.

Aesthetic values can be thought of in terms of the variables of complexity, variety, harmony, and intensity.<sup>33</sup> Other things being equal, a musical

composition, for example, characterized by greater complexity, variety, harmony, and intensity would have greater aesthetic value than one characterized by less complexity, variety, harmony, and intensity. The tune 'Twinkle, twinkle little star' has some degree of musical value, but far less than the *Ode to Joy* in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Insofar as the New Creation, suffused with the beauty and glory of God, is a preeminently *beautiful* creation, then it is to be expected that the human environment in the world to come would be characterized by increasingly greater degrees of complexity, variety, harmony, and intensity. The movements toward greater complexity and variety, for example, would be consistent with the overall biblical metanarrative that moves from the 'Garden' to the glorified 'City,' and with the 'complexification' of human civilizations moving from agricultural to industrial to information-based economies from the Neolithic eras to the present.

These variables of complexity, variety, harmony, and intensity, while originating in a context of esthetic values, could be further generalized to apply to redeemed human relationships with God, fellow humans, and the biosphere. New and varied ways of praising God, experiencing human friendship, doing work, and enjoying the lower creation would flourish in the world to come, and continue to unfold without foreseeable limit.

It does not seem that 'redemptive' work—activities such as medicine and nursing, for example, that repair the effects of sin and the curse—would have any place in a fully redeemed world where sin and the effects of sin

32 Insofar as sports and athletics are intrinsically enjoyable, there would seem to be no reason to suppose that such activities, freed from egoism and violence, would be absent from the new creation. Sporting events at their best display human enjoyment of the pursuit of excellence, and are characterized by variety and *unpredictability* that humans also find enjoyable.

33 This schema is from John B. Cobb, Jr., and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology: an Introductory Exposition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), pp. 64, 65. Cobb and Griffin have developed the process metaphysics of Alfred North Whitehead. The usefulness of the schema in question (complexity, variety, harmony, intensity) would not, however, necessarily imply agreement with process theology or metaphysics.

are no longer present. However, it might be suggested that acts of Christian *service* that ‘memorialize’ the acts of the Son of Man who came ‘not to be served but to serve’ and give his life as a ransom for many (Mk. 10:45), are, in that extended sense, redemptive acts. Redeemed humans will continue to help and serve one another in the world to come, as inherently social beings who can then more fully enjoy the satisfaction of free, altruistic action.

The continuation of redemptive work in the world to come would obtain more directly under a more radically speculative scenario: the existence of other world or universes. Should other universes exist, and should there be fallen and redeemable sentient beings in such universes, then it is hypothetically possible that God would enlist redeemed humans in this world to announce the message of a cosmically valid redemption (cf. Col. 1:19) to such beings.<sup>34</sup> ‘Cross-cultural missions’ become ‘cross-galactic missions’; the Great Commission is extended to all possible universes. In such an admittedly bizarre scenario, God uses redeemed human, not angels, as ‘missionaries’, bearing the redemptive message to creatures in other worlds.

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34 On the implications of Col. 1:19 for the cosmic scope of the Cross, see John Jefferson Davis, ‘The Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence and the Christian Doctrine of Redemption,’ in Davis, *Frontiers of Science and Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), pp. 141-157. For a history of the discussion of the existence of other worlds, see Steven J. Dick, *Plurality of Worlds: the Origins of the Extraterrestrial Life Debate from Democritus to Kant* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

What about ‘maintenance’ work in the New Creation? Would redeemed humans still be engaged in farming, forestry, wildlife conservation, recycling, and the manufacturing of replacement goods in the world to come? In the prophet Isaiah’s vision of the new earth (Is. 65:21) he envisions a state of affairs in which ‘they will plant vineyards and eat of their fruit’. This text clearly presupposes a continuation of eating, drinking, the growth of grapes, harvesting, and the biological processes involved. If redeemed humans are still eating and drinking in the New Creation, this would seem to imply the continuation of cooking, food processing, restaurants, and entire industries associated with the culture of food.

Does it make any sense to think of ‘consumer goods’ in the world to come? For example, are we to think that shoes and clothing will last forever, never wear out, and never need replacement? Or will they still be subject to wear and tear, and so need to be replaced with similar manufactured items?<sup>35</sup> Some writers have supposed that the Second Law of Thermodynamics, which states that disorder has a tendency to increase, and that available energy in a machine or living being inevitably dissipates over time, is a consequence of sin, and would not

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35 The discussion of this questions assumes, of course, that clothing will be worn in the world to come—not as a sign of shame (cf. Gen. 2:25), but as signs of gender distinctions, cultural diversity, personal adornment and self-expression, and for purely utilitarian considerations of maintaining bodily comfort.

have applied before the Fall.<sup>36</sup> It might be thought that Rom. 8:21, where the apostle Paul speaks of the creation itself being liberated 'from its bondage to decay' in the world to come, supports such a notion.

There are, however, good reasons to believe that the Second Law is not a product of sin and is in fact a normal and essential feature of creation as God originally intended it. The Second Law implies that all living beings need to eat and have energy replenished from external sources, because heat and other forms of energy naturally tend to dissipate and move from warmer to cooler areas. From the beginning God provided plants as food for animals and humans (Gen. 1:29,30), having created them as beings that needed to eat. This implies, as Alan Hayward has noted, that '... they were subject to the Second Law from the moment of their creation.'<sup>37</sup>

Viewed in this light, it could then be understood that the naturally dissipative and disordering tendencies implied by the Second Law, that applied from the time of creation, were then directed by God for the particular judicial punishment of human sin e.g., death (Rom. 6:23). The removal of the curse envisioned in Romans 8:21 implies not a revocation of the Second Law, but rather, the ending of human death and all forms of alienation of God's creation from the Creator.

Scripture provides other examples of 'natural' processes being redirected by God for a specific redemptive or judicial purpose. Rainbows presumably existed from the time that rain showers and sunshine existed, but were invested with new meaning after the Flood as a sign of the covenant with creation (Gen. 9:13). The law of gravity that caused the millstone to drop on Abimilech's head and crack his skull was both present from creation, and used of God in judgment of Abimilech's wicked deeds (Judges 9:53, 56). In Thomas Aquinas' view, thorns and thistles grew on earth before the Fall, but afterward were used of God for the punishment of human sin.<sup>38</sup>

The upshot of this discussion is that some form of the Second Law could be expected to apply in the New Creation. Energy will still dissipate, living creatures will still eat, and shoes and clothing will experience wear and tear and eventually need replacement. Redeemed humans could still be expected, in the world to come, to be involved in the manufacturing and repair of such consumable items as are necessary for the maintenance of human life and culture. Such 'maintenance work' would be a reflection of the activity of 'Christ the Maintenance Worker', who even now is 'upholding the universe by the word of his power' (Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:17).<sup>39</sup>

Finally, consider the question, 'Will

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Henry Morris, *The Twilight of Evolution* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1963), pp. 56, 57, cited by Alan Hayward, *Creation and Evolution: Rethinking the Evidence from Science and the Bible* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1985), p. 183.

<sup>37</sup> Hayward, *Creation and Evolution*, p. 184.

<sup>38</sup> Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, Pt.1, Q.69, art. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Christ would presumably continue to maintain the New Creation in being, since the New Creation is still a *creation*, and as such lacks the property of aseity or metaphysical self-sufficiency that is true of God alone.

there be *business* and *economic* activities in the New Creation?' Jesus' parable of the Ten Minas<sup>40</sup> (Lk. 19:11-27), noted previously in this essay, would seem to indicate a positive answer to this question. The servant who managed the master's resources well is rewarded by being given charge of ten cities (Lk. 19:17). As with the case of Joseph in the Genesis narrative (Gen. 39-50), wise administration of worldly responsibilities is rewarded by God with greater responsibility, and is seen as a way of serving God's purposes and God's people. The parable presupposes that business and financial activities that are done in accordance with God's commands are consistent with the overall plan and purposes of God; the very fact that Jesus chooses such an illustration to illustrate Kingdom life undercuts any false dichotomy between business and 'spiritual' activities. The reference to management of *ten cities* would imply not only business activities, but also the administrative, governmental, legal, financial, banking, and information-technology services as well that are associated with modern information-based economies. 'Tom' could still freely choose to enjoy serving others by networking computer systems in a New Creation, and would not need to enroll in some heavenly seminary in order to be involved in meaningful work.

Now it might seem counter-intuitive that *money* and *economics* could be thought to have a continuing place in

'heaven' or the New Creation. Is it not the case that economics only reflects a situation where *scarce resources* have to be allocated among competing uses and users?<sup>41</sup> The point here is that in the New Creation material resources, though presumably abundant, will still not be *infinite*, and choices will still need to be made. Presumably the building of a new home (Is. 65:21) would not be attended by the delays, conflicts, injuries, or even fraud that sometimes characterizes construction projects in the present age; however, desirable lakefront property for building a home at a given lake is still limited, and choices would need to be made.

In the New Creation, it is postulated that human beings will still need to eat, to grow food, to harvest and process it, and to replace consumables because of normal wear and tear. A given plot of farmland could be planted with apples or pears or cherries, and the actual choice could reflect the aggregate preferences of the users and producers. Human beings in the world to come will still be *creatures*—not gods—and will have choices to make, having only so many hours in the day, and not having the ability to be everywhere at once or

<sup>40</sup> In the currency of the day, ten minas was an amount equivalent to approximately two or three year's average wages; one mina was about three month's wages.

<sup>41</sup> According to the economists James Gwartney and Richard Stroup, the basic ingredients of economic theory are scarcity and choice: 'Since scarcity of productive resources, time, and income limit the alternatives available to us, we must make choices. Choice is the act of selecting among restricted alternatives. A great deal of economics is about how people choose when the alternatives open to them are restricted.' James D. Gwartney and Richard Stroup, *Economics: Private and Public Choice*, 3rd ed. (New York: Academic Press, 1982), pp. 4, 5.



to do all things simultaneously.

Providing food would still require human effort and the exertion of energy; the grapes in the vineyards in Isaiah's new earth (Is. 65:21b) would not harvest themselves, but would still need to be picked from the vine. Choosing to raise apples rather than cherries, choosing to practise soccer rather than writing a book, choosing to bid for a prime lot by the lake rather than a beautiful new painting, are all economic choices, in that such choices allocate individual and societal resources through a continuing 'auction' that reflects the varying preferences and valuations of the parties to the auction. The diversity of preferences is not necessarily a result of sin, but can reflect the created diversity of human personality, temperaments, and interests.

This discussion presupposes that private property and economic competition are not inherently sinful or inconsistent with a redeemed state of human affairs. The prophet Micah looks forward to the messianic age when swords will be beaten into plowshares and each man will sit under 'his own vine and under his own fig tree' (Mic. 4:3,4). Micah envisions the conditions of the age to come, not in images of a vast collective farm, but smaller farms individually held. The reference to 'plowshares' is an indication that Micah, like Isaiah, expected agriculture to be a feature of the world to come. People in the New Creation will still need to eat.

In the present world competition is often notably characterized by sinful greed and pride. However, competition per se need not be inherently sinful. The apostle Paul can use the athletic

imagery of running a race (1 Cor. 9:24) as a positive illustration for the Christian life. Lawful, rule-based, and non-violent competition can be expressive of an intrinsic human enjoyment of 'play' and the sense of satisfaction derived from the achievement of excellence in the use of a human ability or skill.

It could be postulated that the economic inequalities that now result from the impersonal operations of market economies would, in the world to come, be mitigated both by a 'cosmic Jubilee' principle (cf. Lev. 25:8-55), which would, as needed, correct any disproportionate distributions of property and wealth, as well as by Spirit-prompted acts of generosity that freely share with those with less (cf. Acts 2:44, 45).

If it seems strange or even bizarre to contemplate an 'economy of heaven', consider some possible alternatives: Would all finite goods be distributed randomly by some heavenly lottery? Or would all economic decisions be made by divine fiat, with no human involvement whatsoever? Neither of these alternatives would seem to be consistent with either the general way that God has providentially delegated most such decisions throughout the course of human history, or with God's purpose of fostering human responsibility, rightly exercised. In the New Creation we can expect more responsible human choices and decisions, not fewer.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> This latter conclusion seems consistent with the parable of the Ten Minas: the faithful manager is rewarded with greater responsibility, not less, or with a life of ease and inactivity.

As this essay is drawn to a close, it also needs to be stated that the scenario envisioned here involves not just new work in the New Creation, but a *new Sabbath* as well. The regular rhythm of work alternating with rest, celebration, and worship that characterized the divine creation week in the first creation would also apply in some way in the world to come. The redeemed people of God would not be involved in ceaseless work, but the worship of the Triune God would for-

ever be the highest and most pleasurable of all experiences, as they delight in their glorious redeeming God, and right relationships with other humans and the entire created cosmos. Such a vision of the New Creation, it is here suggested, energizes and valorizes all forms of human work in the present that are done for the glory of God, until that time when the kingdoms of this world have become '... the Kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ.'

## NEW FROM PATERNOSTER

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**Andrew Perriman** lives in Holland and works with Christian Associates seeking to develop open, creative communities of faith for the emerging culture in Europe. He is author of *The Coming of the Son of Man: New Testament Eschatology for an Emerging Church*.

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## Books Reviewed

Reviewed by Late George Vandervelde  
Mark A. Noll and Carolyn Nystrom  
*Is the Reformation Over? An Evangelical  
Assessment of Contemporary Roman  
Catholicism*

Reviewed by John Crutchfield  
Christopher J.H. Wright  
*Old Testament Ethics for the People of  
God*

Reviewed by Tony Richie  
James R. Edwards  
*Is Jesus the Only Savior?*

Reviewed by Richard Johnson  
Tim Chester  
*Good News to the Poor: Sharing the  
gospel through social involvement*

Reviewed by Derek Foster  
J. Daniel Hays  
*From Every People and Nation: A bibli-  
cal theology of race*

Reviewed by: Rob Haskell  
Stanley Grenz  
*The Named God and the Question of  
Being: A Trinitarian Theo-Ontology*

Reviewed by Tony Richie  
Hans Schwarz  
*Theology in a Global Context: The Last  
Two Hundred Years*

Reviewed by Amos Yong  
Mark Husbands and Daniel J. Treier,  
eds.  
*The Community of the Word: Toward an  
Evangelical Ecclesiology*

Reviewed by Norman Barker  
Alister McGrath  
*Doubt In Perspective: God is bigger than  
you think*

## Book Reviews

ERT (2007) 31:3, 274-277

**Is the Reformation Over? An  
Evangelical Assessment of  
Contemporary Roman  
Catholicism**

**Mark A. Noll and  
Carolyn Nystrom**

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic,  
2005; ISBN 0-8010-2797-7  
Hb, pp 277, annotated bibliography.

*Reviewed by Late George Vandervelde,  
Emeritus Professor of Theology, Institute  
for Christian Studies, Chair, Taskforce on  
Ecumenical Relations of the WEA*

Catholics and Evangelicals 'have been  
backing toward each other in a world

where the gospel itself has become a  
costly commodity. In this awkward dance,  
many Catholics and evangelicals have  
bumped into each other, back to back.  
What should they do when they turn and  
try to ponder what to make of these oth-  
ers... ?' (p. 249)

On a dance floor, a back-to-back, acciden-  
tal encounter would no doubt raise some  
eyebrows. In the case of Evangelicals and  
Roman Catholics, however, that some-  
thing akin to a dance takes place at all  
comes to many as a surprise, if not  
shock. How did these two find themselves  
engaged in a dance of whatever sort?  
Does a dance not require a single tune? If  
one were to picture the past relationship  
of these two parties, their choreographed

movement would hardly be described as a dance, nor would the accompaniment have been the same tune. For centuries, the parties would have been more aptly described as marching to the beat of a different drummer—in fact, ‘marching as to war’. Consider the strident statement by an evangelical from a nation generally known for its moderation:

In 1873 at the New York meeting of the Evangelical Alliance, a delegate from Canada expressed an opinion that almost all others at that international Protestant gathering would have approved: ‘The most formidable foe of living Christianity among us is not Deism or Atheism, or any form of infidelity, but the nominally Christian Church of Rome’ (p. 11).

In this fascinating book, Mark Noll and Carolyn Nystrom examine how, in a rather brief span of time, Evangelicals and Catholics, could have traded their soldier boots for dancing shoes.

Although the authors focus primarily on the changes in the United States, they do consider developments elsewhere around the world. In fact, they attribute the change of attitudes in the northern hemisphere partly to the shift in the centre of gravity of world Christianity to the southern hemisphere. Not burdened by centuries of animosity, believers in regions of Asia and Africa are buoyed by the explosive growth of Christianity (p. 63). They see the Spirit move with holy disregard, it seems, for denominational boundaries, let alone, for old hostilities in Europe or North America.

The change, the authors point out is unmistakable, often dramatic. To return to the U.S. setting, in the 1960s Billy Graham’s evangelism events begin to feature Catholic leaders and counsellors (p. 18). Accordingly, Catholics answering the call to give their lives to Jesus would be

encouraged to bloom where they were planted, i.e., in their Catholic parish—something that was formerly unthinkable. Decision cards filled in by Catholics are sent to the diocese in which the person resides (p. 18). This new openness was in specific instances reciprocated by ‘Rome’. On one of his evangelistic campaigns in Europe, for example, the Archbishop of Krakow, soon to become an international luminary, was instrumental in providing Catholic churches in Poland as venues for Graham’s preaching (pp. 18-19).

The journey from hostility to greater openness is in no way restricted to the larger than life personages. This volume describes the many ways in which ordinary believers find themselves in the midst of an Evangelical-Catholic dance. Evangelicals read not only Stott, Graham, and Yancey, but also Catholic writers, such as Henry Nouwen, and Thomas Merton. Similarly, Catholics are as likely to read Evangelical authors, such as Richard Foster, and Max Lucado (p. 24). At official levels too, cross-fertilization occurs. Many Catholic parishes, for example, use the typically Evangelical renewal and outreach program called Alpha. Moreover, while Catholics and Evangelicals may not literally dance together, they often sing from the same page of historic hymnbooks and from identical slides projecting contemporary Christian songs, regardless of their origin.

The authors acknowledge that, in many regions of the world, relations between Evangelicals and Catholics look nothing like a dance, not even a clumsy one. Often a long history of antagonism continues, especially where one tradition dominates.

The authors dig beneath the description of the changed situation in Evangelical-Catholic relations by asking, ‘Why did

Things Change?' (ch. 3). In search of an answer, they examine various developments. They survey, for example, the ecumenical dialogues between the Catholic Church and Protestant traditions that have burgeoned in the last 50 years (ch. 4). They examine these dialogue reports for indications of new understandings of differences between separated churches. The authors also delve into the political components of the antagonisms in the United States (pp. 43-49, 55-58, 67-70, 212-228), and the change in attitude that made possible the election of the first Catholic president of the U.S.A., John F. Kennedy.

An entire chapter is devoted to an examination of the extensive elaboration of the Catholic faith found in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (published in English translation in 1994). While lauding the rich vein of the Christian tradition articulated there, they also discern a deep underlying difference (pp. 145-150).

Given the North American setting and focus of this book, the authors understandably delve into the 'Catholics and Evangelicals Together' (ECT) phenomenon (ch. 6). They trace its development, from its origin in a side-by-side socio-political march ('co-belligerency' or 'ecumenism of the trenches') to the subsequent face-to-face dance expressed in documents dealing with justification by faith and with the authority of Scripture.

While dealing with informal conversations such as ECT, the authors seem to be oblivious of the major official dialogue between the World Evangelical Fellowship (now 'Alliance') and the Roman Catholic Church, though they do mention the controversy that occasioned the subsequent consultation (p. 188). Engaging in more than a decade of conversations, this consultation yielded, not only published papers on the topics dis-

cussed in this book, but more importantly the study document 'Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of Koinonia' (2002). Especially in view of its official character, this consultation should not have been missed.

In the final chapter, the authors return to the central question that is posed in the title of the book, 'Is the Reformation Over?' Much of this book leads one to expect that Noll and Nystrom would answer the question in the affirmative. 'Differences on basic Christian convictions between Catholics and evangelicals', they conclude, 'fade away as if to nothing when compared to secular affirmations about the nature of humanity and the world.' Or, when compared to differences between traditional and modernist Christianity, the remaining differences between evangelicals and Catholics who are open to cooperation are 'infinitesimal' (p. 230). In that case, the Reformation must be over.

Yet, while relativizing the differences, the authors do not wish to gloss over the significance of the differences. In fact, upon reading the import that the authors ascribe to these differences, one may well expect the conclusion that the Reformation is *not* over. After describing differences such as those regarding Scripture, justification by faith, Mary, and the sacraments, the authors identify an underlying difference. It concerns the nature of the church. From the viewpoint of Evangelicalism, given its generally minimalist ecclesiology, one could assume that the authors place differences regarding the church too within the realm of the 'infinitesimal'. Yet, they rightly resist that option. They consider this difference between Evangelicals and Catholics to constitute a 'central', 'fundamental', 'deep', and pervasive divide (pp. 233-240). Far from considering these dif-

ferences marginal, the authors maintain that 'there are still two systems at work.' (p. 246). Given the depth, scope, and divisive character of this difference, the expiry date of the Reformation, one would think, has not yet arrived.

In response to the book's question, the Noll and Nystrom let the two opposite answers that their own study suggest stand side by side. The authors provide several rationales for this ambivalence. The most basic of these involves an appeal to the limitations of the historical discipline: 'Unfortunately, historians can only look backward...' (p. 251). To this diffidence, the reader is likely to respond: 'Fortunately, this book is hardly a rearview-mirror project, nor a merely descriptive overview of the Evangelical-Catholic landscape.' This work represents a historically informed exercise in spiritual discernment. The authors place their finely honed historical skills at the service of Christ-followers who are baffled by the changing church-and-world scene. The authors do far more than observe and describe the awkward Evangelical-Catholic dance. With trained ears and eyes, they assess the movements and the music of the dance, discerning harmony, as well as discord and dissonance.

The reason for evading their own question does not lie in the limitations of the historical discipline. Rather, the unanswered question is rooted in an unresolved issue, namely, the nature and relative weight of two phenomena: pervasive 'fundamental differences,' and basic agreement or agreement on basics

Despite these caveats, this work provides an excellent overview and assessment of Evangelical-Catholic relations. Moreover, as bonus the book includes an extensive, generously annotated, bibliography (although the highly competent and sharply critical Evangelical assessment of

Roman Catholicism by Leonardo De Chirico deserves to be included: *Evangelical Theological Perspectives on Post-Vatican II Roman Catholicism* (New York: P. Lang, 2003). Wherever Evangelical and Roman Catholic dancers turn to face each other, this book will prove to be an immense help in joining the dance less awkwardly, in discerning the musical harmonies and dissonances more clearly, and in encountering the other more graciously.

ERT (2007) 31:3, 277-279

### Old Testament Ethics for the People of God

Christopher J.H. Wright

Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004.

ISBN: 085117848

Hb pp 520 pages, Bibliog, Indices

*Reviewed by John Crutchfield, Columbia International University*

Christopher J.H. Wright, International Ministries Director of the Langham Partnership International and former Principal of All Nations Christian College, has fully revised and updated his two earlier books on Old Testament ethics, and has integrated them into one edition. The result is his fullest expression of the fruit of many years of reflection and study on the authority and relevance of Old Testament Scripture to Christian ethics. The present work, however, is not simply a combination of the two earlier books, for there are omissions (I was unable to find in this new edition his helpful discussion of 'human rights' from *Walking in the Ways of the Lord*) and there are additions (for example, the present work includes chapters on 'Ecology and the earth' and on 'Culture and Family').

Wright divides his work into three parts.

The first one hundred pages (Part One) are a brief introduction to, and then an extended explanation of, his basic structure for OT ethics. He explores the theological angle (OT ethics is based on the person and works of YHWH), the social angle (Israel functions as a historically specific 'ethical paradigm' for other cultures and people), and the economic angle (Israel's spiritual and social relationships can be measured by the use of the land). Although this material is largely taken over from *Living as the People of God* (or as published in America, *An Eye for An Eye: The Place of Old Testament Ethics Today*), there is in all three chapters sufficient interaction with recent scholarship and new and fuller thinking on Wright's part to justify a fresh reading.

Part Three, roughly the last one hundred pages, constitutes another three chapters and an appendix on 'What about the Canaanites?' Wright surveys a wide sampling of historical approaches, in which he briefly examines various approaches to OT ethics from throughout church history (chapter 12). Chapter 13 is a helpful updated bibliographical essay on contemporary scholarship in which he comments generally on the strengths and weaknesses of contributions from other scholars in the area of OT ethics from roughly the last 30 years of the 20th century. In chapter 14, Wright presents extended reflection on the issues of hermeneutics and authority in OT ethics. Sandwiched in between Parts One and Three is a collection of eight chapters devoted to various themes and issues surrounding OT ethics, like 'Economics and the poor', 'Politics and the nations', and 'Justice and Righteousness'.

Wright's new chapter on 'Ecology and the earth' is an application of his 'paradigm' approach. Just as with Israel, the 'land',

still owned by Yahweh, was deeded to Israel with responsibilities, so with humanity, the earth, still owned by God, is given to humankind but with responsibilities. He develops his ideas around two main assertions: 1) the earth is God's (and is therefore, good; is distinct from but dependent on God; is not to be worshipped; exists for God's glory); and 2) the earth has been given to humanity with responsibilities (humanity rules over the earth as God's image; dominion involves servant-kingship, not exploitative tyranny). Under this second point, Wright engages in a helpful discussion of the meaning of dominion and, rightly I think, absolves the Christian worldview of blame for current ecological crises. His third section discusses God's eschatological and redemptive purposes in creation. I wish Wright had attempted to handle the challenge of actually living out a Christian pro-ecology policy. This has become difficult, at least in America where this reviewer lives, because 'green' politics is dominated by two groups which share almost nothing with Evangelicalism. On the one hand, leftist political groups use environmental issues to progressively erode personal property rights and capitalism, to be replaced with a Marxist agenda, and on the other hand, New Age and pagan groups, like Wicca, embrace environmental issues out of love for 'Mother Earth'. To what extent, if any, should Christians who want to fulfil their God-given responsibilities to exercise servant-kingship dominion over God's good creation cooperate with these groups?

Another added feature of the present volume is a list of 'Further Reading' at the end of each chapter. Wright's bibliographic control puts those of us who use his work for reference in his debt. But, in general, what is particularly inspiring

about Wright's work is his attempt to live seriously under the authority of all of Scripture and at the same time to negotiate a theological passage between the Scylla of Theonomy and the Charibdes of Dispensationalism. His title accurately reflects his approach: how can 'the people of God' benefit from OT revelation? The macro-structure of OT ethics dictates Wright's thought and the result is a morally robust ethical paradigm applicable to all peoples but based on God's historical revelation to and treatment of Israel. Wright's contribution is a welcomed one.

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### Is Jesus the Only Savior?

James R. Edwards

Grand Rapids/Cambridge:

Eerdmans, 2005

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Pb, pp 250, Indices

*Reviewed by Tony Richie, Church of God Theological Seminary, Cleveland, TN, and New Harvest Church in Knoxville, TN*

The very first sentence of this book declares its purpose to be, as the title states, considering whether Jesus is the only saviour of the world. On the same page the author announces his own affirmative opinion regarding that question. Edwards addresses two types of readers: those whose Christian faith has been disturbed by debate over Christ's exclusivity, and those with no particular Christian claim but who are interested in the subject. He does not write primarily to academia, therefore minimising (though not eliminating) technical language and use of footnotes, but he is still solid from a scholarly point of view. Edwards uses an interesting analogy of the shore and the

current as a guide for the book. The shore suggests an unchanging reality while the current suggests movement in changing perspectives. For him noting that the shore of Christ's reality is unchanging is important; apparent changes are actually due to human movement. He intends to help readers to navigate changing currents of popular opinion regarding Christ in order that they may better perceive his enduring quality.

Unfortunately, Edwards does not get to his subject until Chapter 6 and even then he digresses somewhat in several places and even more seriously in Chapter 8. Fortunately, even his delays and digressions are worthwhile reading. Edwards decides to build a case for the reliability and authority of Scripture before tackling his stated subject. As part of that effort he debunks various affronts to scriptural reliability and authority. He devotes the first five chapters to that process. Though well done, one may get impatient to get on with it. Understandably enough, Edwards' approach is probably due to his trying to reach multiple audiences in a single volume—always a daunting task.

In Chapter 6 he takes up his task in earnest with a look at what the terminology of Jesus as saviour of the world entails. Then in Chapter 7 he explores the pluralistic aura of the gospel's original environment in comparison to that of today. In Chapter 8 he takes a detour to delineate the doctrine of sin (he could not resist a skirmish with moral relativism), but is back in focus in Chapter 9 with a discussion of how postmodernism affects perception of Christ (and other absolutes). In Chapter 10 he addresses the pressing post 9/11 issue of religious exclusivity and world peace, though somewhat indirectly. But then in chapters 10 and 11, the capstones of the entire book, he is definitely back on track and



the discussion and presentation are well worth the wait. Here we finally have direct instruction on how Christians should think about other religions and on the mystery of Christ's incarnation in relation to other religions.

Overall, Edwards argues that Jesus is indeed the only saviour of the world while steering a course between the extremes of 'an overly narrow and rigid conception of Christianity that would reject all other faiths as demonic and evil' and 'an uncritical pluralism that supposes all religions to be inherently equal' (227). His balance and poise are refreshing. Here is an uncompromisingly Christian theology of religions that is consistently sensitive and sympathetic to non-Christians.

Edwards is strong on showing solid scriptural support for his position, and argues cogently and convincingly while carefully never overstating his case. His many anecdotes and illustrations enliven the reading experience as well as enlightening the reader. Here is a skilled word-smith who knows how to turn a phrase in delightful fashion. Though tackling tough biblical and intellectual issues head on, this is no dry, dusty book; it inspires, and even entertains, as it informs. As an attempt to show that belief in the particularity and universality of Jesus Christ is both biblical and rational it shines. Simultaneously, its respect for other religions and their adherents is real and is remarkable.

Edwards probably succeeds well enough in reaching both his target audiences. I recommend *Is Jesus the Only Savior?* to those who are struggling with or stimulated by today's debates on the ultimacy and uniqueness of Jesus Christ, whether from within or from without the Christian faith. In addition, even those interested in studying the subject of Christ's status as saviour but already acquainted with and

convinced about biblical reliability and authority may want to read it anyway, but skimming or even skipping the first five chapters might be advisable. Clergy and interested laity will benefit from this book, but it has material relevant for more advanced research also.

ERT (2007) 31:3, 280-282

### **Good News to the Poor: Sharing the gospel through social involvement**

**Tim Chester**

Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004  
1-84474-019-6

Pb, pp 195 Indexes, Bibliog

*Reviewed by Richard Johnson, Redcliffe College, Gloucester, England*

For many years now Tim Chester has been involved at the interface between evangelism and social action—in both word and deed. His 'deeds' include having been the theological advisor to Tear Fund, and he is currently involved in a church-planting project in Sheffield, England; and his written 'words' include 'Awakening to a World of Need' (1993), a history of evangelical involvement in social action, and (as editor) 'Justice, Mercy and Humility: The papers of the Micah Network International Consultation on Integral Mission and the Poor' (2002). This present book, based on seminars given at Spring Harvest in 2002, continues this theme and presents, at an introductory (but not simplistic) level, a mature reflection on the relationship between the church's proclamation of the good news of the gospel and its demonstration of God's compassion for those on the underside of society.

Chapters 1 and 2 present the case for social involvement. In chapter 1, after

looking at several examples of Christian social involvement across the centuries, Tim offers three theological axioms, backed up with many biblical references, which underpin the legitimacy of this activity: the character of God (he quotes with approval Ron Sider's comment that concern for the poor is 'first of all a theological statement about the Creator and Sovereign of the universe'); the reign of God (focusing on the themes of stewardship and repentance); and the grace of God: 'we are to be gracious because God has been gracious to us.' Chapter 2 then explores how Christian faith has become privatised in the West since the time of the Enlightenment and the rise of rationalism, and (following a path well-trodden by Newbigin *et al*) argues against this trend, as the Lordship of Christ should embrace every area of our lives.

Chapter 3 then makes the case for *evangelizing* the poor. One cannot read the Bible without realizing that the *deepest* need of the poor, as of all human beings, is their need for reconciliation with God; and (without falling into the trap of an unbiblical dualism) their eternal future simply *is* more important than their present socio-economic situation; thus to fail to share the message of the gospel would be an abdication of responsibility by the church.

In chapter 4 the relationship between these two concerns is discussed in the light of the Lausanne Congress (1974) and its aftermath; Tim's conclusion is that 'the *text* of our gospel proclamation is best understood in the *context* of loving actions and loving community'. (my italics). Chapter 5 discusses the question of whether social action advances the kingdom of God, and here his conclusions are more controversial. He argues strongly that the kingdom exists only where 'Christ is acknowledged as king'; thus the

kingdom and the church are co-extensive. I would accept his point that 'salvation'-language is often used inappropriately to describe advances in social justice, but I am less sure that 'kingdom'-language covers precisely the same linguistic area, or that it is wrong to use such language to describe social changes which reflect aspects of the character of God even when the confession of God is absent.

Chapter 6 draws on the work of N.T. Wright to describe how Jesus' proclamation of 'good news to the poor' would have been understood in the first century (as a message of liberation, of grace and of community), and Chapter 7 describes the 'good news to the rich' (they no longer have to be enslaved by consumerism).

Three further chapters then describe different dimensions of how the church can become socially involved; by 'Welcoming the Excluded' (chapter 8), 'Strengthening the Powerless' (chapter 9) and 'Following the Crucified Lord' (as against seeking to re-establish Christendom—chapter 10). These chapters contain numerous helpful anecdotes and statistics (but note one error on p.121, where 'billion' has been left out of the sentence 'Each year Europe spends... \$105 on alcoholic drinks'!). A final chapter asks the question, 'Can we make a difference?' There is also a helpful guide to further reading, a bibliography and comprehensive indices.

Overall this is a very wide-ranging book which summarises many of the debates that have occurred around these issues over the last generation. It would be an excellent volume for 1st year students at a Bible College, but also for any Christian wishing to think about these issues in greater depth (or needing to be reminded of one or other side of the argument!). It could be very profitably studied chapter-by-chapter in a group setting, as the

issues discussed are ones that every Christian has to grapple with at some level, and the constant grounding in real-life situations prevents the book from ever becoming overly theoretical. Definitely recommended.

ERT (2007) 31:3, 282-283

# **From Every People and Nation: A biblical theology of race**

**J. Daniel Hays**

Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

NSBT 14

ISBN 0-85111-290-0

Pb, pp 240

*Reviewed by Derek Foster Redcliffe College, Gloucester, UK*

In this compelling book, relevant for academic and church leader alike, J. Daniel Hays (of Ouachita Baptist University Ark., USA) presents the reader with the essential multi-cultural nature of the people of God. He does this by examining the important role Black Africans have played in the unfolding of God's redemptive purposes for his people. He sees that our North American and European readings of the Bible have been blind to this Black African presence. He states, "This "marginalization" of Black African presence is perpetrated, consciously or subconsciously, not only by the popularizers of Christianity, but also by serious scholars. "Cultural pre-understanding" apparently influences many of us in the academic guild even though we piously claim to be historically objective.' Hays' purpose is not just to have us notice the presence of Black Africans as 'players' in the story but to insist that their active role within the narrative impels us to recognize the global, multi-racial compass of God's mis-

sion, begun in the call to Abraham and fulfilled in the visions of Revelation. He calls the church to make a radical application of Paul's teaching on the relationship between Jews and Gentiles in Galatians and so to demolish the persistent division of the church into Black and White. The point is well made—recently I have listened in shame to the stories of the older Caribbean-African members of my church recalling their hardships in the early years of their settling into the UK and particularly into British church life.

Hays begins by reflecting on the mixed racial character of societies in the ANE whose unifying bonds were cultural rather than racial. Within this cultural embrace of races he points to the prominence of Cushites, Black Africans from the nation lying south of Egypt; as a nation Cush briefly overwhelmed Egypt and survived well into the Christian period. Both the written and the graphic record show that Cushites were present at every level of Egyptian society from that of slave right through to the highest echelons of royal office. His point is that their adoption of Egyptian-ness defined their place in society in much the same way that the peoples of the Roman world were bound together by their conforming to a Graeco-Roman norm. Hays goes on to show that this principle of identity as defined by conformity to a uniting principle is the key for understanding the essential foundation of the multi-ethnic nature of God's people in their radical loyalty to Christ.

To develop his argument Hays demonstrates that Cushites would have been present amongst the 'mixed crowd' that went up from Egypt at the Exodus (cf. Ex.12:38). Hays argues that Israel's potential for openness to the sojourner is emphasized through the narrative of Exodus and is demonstrated through the

'theology-in-story' of Moses' marriage, firstly to Zipporah, the Midianite (Ex.2:15f.) and then later to the Cushite woman (Num.12:). Hays develops the theological implication of this second marriage: 'Moses' marriage to a Black Cushite should also probably be viewed as a development of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3. The promise to Abraham in Genesis drives much of the story in the rest of the Torah and the inclusion of one of the peoples from Genesis 10 (Cush) into the "sons of Israel" is a move toward fulfilment of that promise.' Hays sees inter-ethnic marriage within the Christian community as being 'strongly affirmed by Scripture'. I make particular mention of Hays' theme at this point as I work amongst those who are preparing for cross-cultural mission. We have celebrated a number of inter-racial engagements and marriages, each making a profound statement of the multi-ethnic nature of oneness in Christ.

Hays' concluding section offers a summary of preceding chapters with pointers towards a practical realization of the Bible's vision of multi-ethnicity. He looks to current Generation X-ers, with their openness to change, to see to it that at last 'the Church actualizes the unity that lies on the heart of our Lord'. It is here that I feel that Hays has more work to do. Throughout my study of this book I was nagged by the question, 'What does truly multi-ethnic church life look like?' Much of my missionary career has been in association with multi-ethnic churches, where at least one group has needed to make significant concessions to the other, thus losing an opportunity to contribute the whole wealth of its heritage in both worship and what might clumsily be termed as 'one-another-ing'. Hays' book is an important step in both compelling us to embrace Scripture's vision of a multi-eth-

nic people of God as well compelling us to work for practical expressions of this vision in our own churches.

ERT (2007) 31:3, 283-285

### **The Named God and the Question of Being: A Trinitarian Theo-Ontology**

(Part II of the Matrix of Christian Theology series)

**Stanley G Grenz**

Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster

John Knox Press 2005

ISBN: 0-664-22204-8

Hb, pp 386, Index

*Reviewed by: Rob Haskell*

Stanley Grenz's final book, published right after his untimely death, proposes a reorganization of the relationship between metaphysics and theology. Grenz argues that although metaphysics has often been the starting point for thinking about the being of God, the western metaphysical tradition is no longer a viable foundation for such an enterprise. It is time, therefore, to reorient our methodology and begin the discussion about being from the perspective of God's own self-disclosure in scripture.

Grenz sets out to both prove his point and begin the construction of his model in three major sections. In the first section he traces the story or 'saga' of being from its origins in Greek thought to its demise in the final throes of modern philosophy; from Plato's 'form of forms' to Heidegger's '*destruktion*' of metaphysics. The philosophical quest to understand being (in other words, metaphysics) and the implications this trajectory brought to the concept of God turn out to have been untenable. There is a sense in which all western philosophy as 'onto-theology' is a

failed theodicy. The grand synthesis of theology and metaphysics achieved by Thomas Aquinas that begins with the God of (Aristotelian) philosophy and arrives at the God of Scripture is now, after several hundred years of criticism, no longer a real option. For Grenz the critique of traditional metaphysics climaxes in the work of Heidegger for whom there is no metaphysic, or truth, that is unrelated to our 'being-in-the-world' and therefore we have no access to abstract truths that transcend us. Although Grenz seems to agree with this postmodern epistemological critique, he does not think that it spells the demise of theology. Rather, leaving the dead end of metaphysics behind, he turns to the much more promising subject of God's own self-disclosure through self-naming.

In the second section of the book we pass from philosophy to exegesis, as Grenz tells 'the saga of the I AM' in three stages. First he analyses the disclosure of the divine name to Moses in Exodus 3 where the meaning of 'I AM' is taken to be, not so much God's eternity (which would of course follow from a 'metaphysical' reading), but his 'be-ing present in the salvation of his people'. Important to this position is the observation that in Hosea 1:9 God removes his name from his people by quite literally negating it: 'I (am) not I am to you', underlining the fact that the I AM carries a connotation of relational faithfulness and does not serve primarily as a description God's being, since if the latter were the case it would be impossible to negate.

The second stage of the 'saga of I AM' is the incarnation of The Name, seen in Jesus' use of *ego eimi* in the Gospel of John. Grenz looks at several of the 'I am' sayings in John and concludes, especially from John 8:56, that Jesus explicitly took on the divine I AM and explicitly put him-

self forward as a further development of the meaning of the divine name.

Finally, Grenz takes us to the descriptions of Jesus in Revelation to argue for an eschatological, further revelation of the divine name that will be fully manifested in the culmination of the history of redemption. For example, the rider of the white horse in Revelation 19 has a secret name that no one knows because 'its full content can only be evident as history comes to its culmination'. The secret name, maintains Grenz, is nothing other than the tetragrammaton, the I AM revealed to Moses at the burning bush, whose full meaning is only now becoming clear.

In the last section of the book, we go back into ontology through the portal of the trinity. It is not so much that Grenz has rejected ontology in theology, but that, in keeping with the subtitle of the book, he is arguing for a new way of thinking about the relationship between the two: theo-ontology instead of onto-theology. That is, ontology that begins with the narrative, or saga, of God's self-disclosure in Scripture. The Father, Son and Spirit, argues Grenz in this final section, is the proper name of God in the New Testament and this Trinity is the appropriate foundation upon which to build a theological metaphysic.

At first brush Grenz' thesis that the divine self-disclosure in scripture ought to be the basis for metaphysics seems uncontroversial. Of course our concept of God ought to begin with Scripture. But as Grenz points out several times, most theologians throughout church history have arrived from the discussion of the name of God to the conclusion that God is in fact unnamable and unknowable, without paying much attention to the scriptural trajectory of divine self-disclosure through self-naming. And there is a rea-

son for this. The issues Grenz raises do lead down some thorny paths of controversy: toward questions about the nature of God's being, his eternality, his presence in or outside time and the connection, if any, between God's progressive self-revelation and the metaphysics of becoming. Also, the explicit acceptance of the postmodern epistemological critique of metaphysics is bound to raise important questions about the nature of truth and its role in theological discourse, especially among evangelicals.

And yet Grenz's exegetical focus and solid philosophical analysis ring true. This is not another reorganization of the theological categories for the sake of novelty but an appropriate response to the best insights of the postmodern critique. As such it pushes the boundaries of established theological orthodoxy in just the right ways: toward biblical foundations and toward a fresh assessment of biblical texts. Wrestling through questions about the nature of God with an author who is now recently in his presence adds a special poignancy to the experience, for one cannot help but to read with the awareness that many of the mysteries Stan Grenz attempted to grasp in his short lifespan are now clear to him.

ERT (2007) 31:3, 285-286

### **Theology in a Global Context: The Last Two Hundred Years**

**Hans Schwarz**

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005  
ISBN 0-8028-2986-4

Pb pp 610 pages, Indexes, Bibliog

*Reviewed by Tony Richie, Knoxville, TN*

Hans Schwarz, professor of Protestant theology and chair of the Institute of Protestant Theology at the University of

Regensburg, Germany, and an ordained minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, does students and teachers of theology a great service in this excellent summary resource. Focusing on significant trend-setting thinkers and writers over the last two hundred years, he places the context of Christian theology in global perspective. Essentially an introduction to and overview of the background of contemporary theology and its theologians, reading this work makes understanding today's titular thinkers a much less daunting task.

The book's format makes for fruitful reading. Fifteen chapters summarise the major thinkers and their theology, giving biographical background and seminal ideas. Each section begins with a concise introduction before proceeding to more in-depth treatment. Schwarz includes extended reading lists that should make more detailed follow up far easier for advanced researchers. Schwarz's strength is not so much in advocating his own agenda or ideas as in succinctly summarising massive amounts of material. One characteristic of his thought, however, is clearly evident: for Schwarz, theology is consistently contextual: biographical, cultural, and regional components help guide its developing shape. It is also becoming increasingly ecumenical, with interdenominational and global reciprocity becoming a rule rather than an exception. Along this line, his conclusion at the end of the book is an example of understated summary and supposition regarding the recent past state of theology and vital possibilities for its future.

Schwarz's own occasional analyses are insightful. He opines that Schleiermacher improves on Kant's moralistic and rationalistic religion by affirming the essentiality of experience and intuition but then he himself comes dangerously close to

pantheism. He takes Marx to task for founding on Feuerbach's left wing version of Hegelianism a paradisiacal political social theory but then forgetting important elements of Feuerbach, a fault dooming his ideological agenda to frustrated failure. On the one hand, he demonstrates Barth's inconsistencies in trying to deny absolutely any point of contact between God and humanity, giving Brunner room for real divergence regarding general revelation. On the other hand, he suggests African indigenous and Asian/Indian religions may indeed provide bridges with or points of contact for Christianity, but faults Samartha and Hick for philosophies of radical religious pluralism ultimately undermining authentic Christian identity. To him Moltmann is insightful but uneven (e.g., overemphasizing eschatology's present dimensions), and Pannenberg is constructive but speculative at times (e.g. his pneumatological field theory). Many more examples of Schwarz's brief but usually beneficial personal comments on his subjects abound in the book.

Interests in how theology's recent history has intersected with issues raised by the Enlightenment and Romanticism as well as by the Industrial Revolution and Scientific Materialism are evident in Schwarz's approach. Again, for him, contra Barth, theology is not accomplished in splendid isolation. Accordingly, one of the strengths of this writing is the way it addresses theology's societal interplay. That fact promises help for those studying connections between sacred contexts and secular culture.

Schwarz's study of 'The Challenge of Religion', or the impact of interaction with other religions on Christianity and its theology, provides keen insights into pluralistic components of contemporary ideology. A wide range of views is represented, but a preponderance of evidence suggests

many major theologians (e.g., Rahner, Küng, Tillich, Moltmann, and Pannenberg) have been moving more toward positions affirming the necessity of Christ for divine revelation and redemption with possibilities through Christ beyond the borders of the visible church. Christianity's encounter with religious others does not seem to be lessening but rather enlarging its view of Jesus Christ.

The ecumenical and international character of *Theology in a Global Context* is for the most part admirably carried out. Amazingly, Schwarz's single volume work well covers the main currents of Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Orthodox thought not only of Europe and America but also of Africa and Asia, including contextual theologies such as feminist and liberationist. Incredibly, however, it completely ignores the fastest growing, widest reaching movement in the last one hundred years—Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. The meteoric rise of this major movement during the precise period covered by Schwarz's book begs for treatment. No history of recent theology is truly ecumenical and global without at least a look at Pentecostalism. Fortunately, Pentecostals' close kinfolk, the Evangelicals, do rate treatment, bringing a bit of balance.

Overall, Schwarz gives a good summary introduction to the main currents of theological development during the last two centuries. *Theology in a Global Context* will make an excellent classroom resource for seminarians, though it should not stand alone. Supplementing this text with a general study of Pentecostalism (e.g., Vinson Synan's *The Century of the Holy Spirit*, Thomas Nelson 2001) will perhaps suffice to equip today's budding theologians with a good all around start. With that particular proviso this work is recommended.

ERT (2007) 31:3, 287-288

**The Community of the Word:  
Toward an Evangelical  
Ecclesiology.**

**Mark Husbands and Daniel J.  
Treier, Editors**

Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity  
Press, and Leicester, UK: Apollos,  
2005.

ISBN 1-84474-082-X.  
Paper, pp 291

*Reviewed by Amos Yong, Regent University  
School of Divinity, Virginia Beach, Virginia*

These fourteen essays—plus editors' introduction and concluding sermon—derive from a Wheaton College conference devoted to the theme in April 2004. Most of the essays are quite engaging, especially in terms of the questions that they open up, and the issues which they place on the theological conversation table. In fact, the primary contribution of this volume may lie precisely in its framing the various important ecclesiological points of discussion that need to be addressed in evangelical theology.

First, does not a robust evangelical ecclesiology threaten to dilute the emphasis on personal piety and experiential immediacy of divine grace bequeathed by evangelical heroes across the theological spectrum from Whitefield, Edwards, and Hodge on the one side to Finney on the other? Are not Hodge and Finney in agreement on this matter, and what might evangelical ecclesiological reconstruction do for evangelical historiography and theological traditioning? Second, which comes first: the gospel or the church? Does the gospel define the church (John Webster) or vice-versa? Third, what is the relationship between dispensational theology, hermeneutics, and separatism and an anaemic evangelical ecclesiology (Dennis

Ockholm)? Is there any connection between eschatology and ecclesiology, and if so, what is this connection? Related to this: can those who reject dispensationalist separatism then embrace Anabaptist separatism or John Howard Yoder's vision of the church as a counter-cultural community opposed both to individualism and to theocratic forms of ecclesiology (Craig Carter)?

Fourth, what is the nature of the visibility of the church (John Webster's second essay)—e.g., is the church's visibility to be understood structurally, institutionally, functionally, or in some other way—and how is this question reframed when understood in term of the church as the community of fellowship of the Spirit? Fifth, what is the relationship between the church and the sacraments? Is the church the one concrete sacrament (Gary Badcock) that embodies God's grace in the world through its various sacramental signs (e.g., baptism and Eucharist), or is the church constituted by its sacraments? Even more to the point: is the sacramental principle—'that God's grace and judgment come to us through matter because we more readily grasp things sensuously than conceptually' (Ellen Charry, p. 208)—true, and if so, what implications does that have for Christian mission and evangelization? Sixth, what about previous theological definitions of the church—e.g., as one, holy, catholic, and apostolic—and how are these related, if at all, to contemporary improvisational ecclesiologies (Jonathan R. Wilson) such as those seen in the Emerging church? Seventh, is the church also constituted topographically by its spaces, architecture, geography, and environment (William Dyrness)? If so, what's at stake for evangelical 'low church' traditions? Another set of no less important questions concerns the relationship between



the church and salvation. Historically, of course, the conviction *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*—no salvation outside the church—involved a theology of baptismal regeneration and a theology of the ministry of the church as representing the salvific ministry of Christ. In the evangelical framework, this history translates into the theological question about whether ‘the church collects saved individuals’ (editors, p. 13) or whether individuals are saved by being ‘born again’ into a new family, the body of Christ. Put alternatively, are we saved by the ‘inner workings of the Spirit’ or the ‘external operations of the Christian ministry’? How we answer this question may determine whether the church is ‘a subjective, invisible quality shared by the truly converted [Edwards and Hodge] or an objective medium of grace outside of which there [is] no ordinary possibility of salvation [Calvin and Luther]’ (D. G. Hart, p. 25). In this case, does a robust evangelical ecclesiology threaten to split the Reformation traditions even further?

Finally, can there be one dominant

metaphor for evangelical theology—e.g., the church as missional community (Darrell Guder), the church as a community of moral discourse (Allen Verhey), the church as a desiring and embodied community (Willie James Jennings) or the church as social theory (James K. A. Smith)—and if so, how do we adjudicate between competing metaphors? On the other hand, if there is no one dominant conceptualization, then are we doomed to an irreconcilable plurality of evangelical ecclesiologies?

It is not that the essayists do not either provide or attempt to suggest answers to these and other questions. It is to say that this reader, at least, was most captivated by how the contributors framed the issues at stake, and the kinds of theological and conceptual space which the essays actually opened up for a wide spectrum of evangelical and even broadly Christian readers. It is on this basis that I heartily recommend this as a supplementary text for all upper division undergraduate and seminary courses dealing with the doctrine of the church.

**Alister McGrath:** *Doubt in Perspective: God is bigger than you think.* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press 2006) ISBN-13:978-84474-137-3 Pb. pp142.

Alister McGrath, Professor of Historical Theology at Oxford University, and President of Oxford Centre of Christian Apologetics, seeks to put our doubts in perspective. He addresses lucidly many aspects of doubt—arising from world culture, personal frailties, and imbalance in our faith. He is concerned particularly for younger Christian students, but can stir the mind and heart (McGrath would put them in that order) of many an older believer. His main theme is that ‘doubt is an invitation to grow in faith and understanding’. Postmodern culture elevates doubt, detests faith and commitment, enthrones cynicism and relativism. Modern scientism makes negative, triumphalist claims for authority in religion, ignoring its own boundaries, or the element of doubt in all world-views, including atheism. McGrath treats personal aspects of doubt—human frailty, superficial and emotionally based religion. He urges a deepening of faith through spiritual disciplines and biblical and apologetic reading. He directs his readers to the website of the author of the foreword, Ravi Zacharias ([www.rzim.org/](http://www.rzim.org/)) and books for further study.

Reviewed by Rev. Norman Barker, Taringa, Queensland

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