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

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Editorial: Spirit, Cross and Church

WE OPEN THIS ISSUE with a challenging question about the Trinity: if in the act of justification, the Father declares us righteous, based on the Son's work, what is the role the Spirit? Based on the judgement that the typical Reformed view of justification is 'pneumatologically barren', Jeffrey Anderson analyses various aspects of the question and finds a dynamic solution in the notion of 'the Holy Spirit as the creative agent of God's speech'. He concludes, 'The Father's declaration that we are righteous is spoken by means of the Spirit and was secured by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. This, then, is Trinitarian justification.'

Then we move to an important aspect of our church practice—unity. Protestants, and perhaps evangelicals in particular, have a propensity for holding strongly to certain convictions which often pushes the unity of Christian fellowship and structures to the limits. So George Harper has tackled this problem by reflecting on the importance that should be placed on 'Cyprian's paradigm' of strict organizational unity. Advancing several arguments against the traditional view, he proposes that the evangelical practice of ecclesiology as a 'secondary concern' (which allows 'room for a wide range' of expressions of church) is entirely valid, and can serve 'the health of the body of Christ and the advance of the gospel'.

Worship is another vital concern for Christians in which evangelicals have an interesting history. Recent experiences of the variety of types of worship have led John J. Davis to think about current trends towards 'thinning' and 'flattening' of worship. He uses the analogy of 'the game' and the sociology of knowledge with the aim of retrieving a 'more robust doxological imagination' through deepening the sense of transcendence in worship; the basis is that 'the act of true New Testament worship "in the Spirit" involves a process of ontological transformation of the church'.

Our fourth paper is the final contribution from our 2007 consultation on evangelical political engagement. David Hoehner gives a succinct historical review of the emergence of liberal democracy and shows how Christians can engage most effectively with this system which, contrary to some thinking, does enable the church to be more authentic in its witness than was the case under 'Christendom'.

Our final article is a review essay by James Merrick, examining the way in which evangelical interest in Karl Barth has re-surfaced in the context of the widespread quest for 'evangelical identity'. Merrick thinks that the change of mind that is now evident has the possibility, especially in regard to Barth's exegesis, of making a 'profitable, stimulating, and, when appropriate, formative' contribution to our theology. Any such activity is surely worth pursuing!

David Parker, Editor.

Correction: We apologise for two errors in our April 2008 issue (Vol 32:2). On page 189 the reviewer's name should be Ken R. Manley, and the publisher should be Edwin Mellen Press.

The Holy Spirit and Justification: A Pneumatological and Trinitarian Approach to Forensic Justification

Jeffrey Anderson

IN AN ARTICLE entitled 'Justification Through New Creation'[1] Frank Macchia raises some provocative and thought-provoking questions about the subject of justification. He begins by presenting the Protestant (i.e., Luther's) understanding of forensic justification. Yet it is clear that he is unsatisfied with such an understanding when he describes it as 'the shallow well of the forensic model';[2] and 'the pneumatologically barren notion of forensic justification';[3] or when he asserts that 'Justification is thus both declarative *and transformative*'.[4] Macchia states the crux of the matter (apparently with some frustration) when he writes, 'Protestant theology has tended…to confine justification to the cross as the event in which God's justice and wrath were satisfied and the basis of justification of the sinner *objectively* established. Where is the Holy Spirit in this understanding of Christ's redemptive work for our justification?'[5]

Although our conclusions are different, it does seem that he has raised an important question: What *is* the role of

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1 Frank D. Macchia, 'Justification Through New Creation, The Holy Spirit and the Doctrine by which the Church Stands or Falls', *Theology Today*, Vol. 58, no. 2 (July 2001), p. 216.
2 Macchia, 'Justification Through New Creation', p. 205.

3 Macchia, 'Justification Through New Creation', p. 207.
4 Macchia, 'Justification Through New Creation', p. 208, emphasis added.
5 Macchia, 'Justification Through New Creation', p. 209, emphasis in original.

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the Holy Spirit in justification (if any)? Put differently, if every act of God is truly a Trinitarian act, then what role does the Holy Spirit play in the drama of justification? It is relatively easy to see the roles that the Father and the Son play, but what about the Spirit? *That* is the question this essay will address.

I will begin by examining the Holy Spirit as the eschatological Spirit—the Spirit of the Kingdom. From this I plan to look at the union between Christ and the Spirit and what this may contribute to our understanding of redemption. The next step will be to examine Trinitarian salvation under three headings: First, the classical *ordo salutis* and what that may be able to contribute to our discussion; second, to examine the role of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and to explore the significance of such a connection; and third, to look at the speech of God in the Hebrew Bible, and see what insight it may offer us for the doctrine of justification. The final section will pull all of the strands of the above together by suggesting a pneumatologically informed understanding of justification, one that fully honours the Reformation understanding of forensic justification, yet is Trinitarian at its core.

I The New Age of the Eschatological Spirit

When the New Testament opens we are met with the enigmatic figure of John the baptizer. In all four Gospel accounts John predicts the coming of the one who would baptize in/with the Holy Spirit (Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33). The baptism predicted in these passages, and later fulfilled at Pentecost, was an eschatological outpouring of the Spirit. That is, it inaugurated a new age—the age of the Sprit. Macchia is correct when he says in another place,

> The neglect (of Spirit baptism in traditions other than Pentecostal/ Charismatic) is puzzling in the light of the fact that all four gospels introduce the ministry of the Messiah with the Spirit baptism metaphor in a way that does not merely predict the effects of Christian baptism but, more broadly, explains what will usher in the kingdom of God (e.g., Matt. 3: 2-12; cf. Acts 1:2-8).[6]

Gregory of Nyssa, the fourth century Eastern Church father, wrote, 'The Spirit is a living and a substantial and distinctly subsisting kingdom with which the only begotten Christ is anointed and is king of all that is.'[7] Macchia cites this passage and summarizes Gregory's statement as, 'Christ is the King and the Spirit the kingdom…Spirit baptism brings the reign of the Father, the reign of the crucified and risen Christ, and the reign of divine life to all of creation through the indwelling of the Spirit.'[8]

'The Kingdom' is at the centre of Jesus' message and ministry. Ladd

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6 Frank Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), p. 61.

7 Gregory, *On the Lord's Prayer* 3; cited in Kilian McDonnell, *The Other Hand of God: The Holy Spirit as the Universal Touch and Goal* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2003), p. 226; Macchia, p. 89.

8 Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit*, p. 89.

says of the Kingdom,

> …the Kingdom is present in the person and activity of Jesus. What was present was divine power, the activity of the Spirit of God, the working of God himself. Men were being delivered from the powers of evil; demons were being cast out by a greater power. Jesus asserted that this meant that the Kingdom of God itself was present.[9]

Jesus draws a connection between 'the Kingdom' and 'the Spirit' when he says, '…if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you' (Mt. 12:28, NRSV[10]). The Kingdom's power is the Spirit's power. The in-breaking of the Kingdom is the Spirit's 'dynamic reign invading the present age without transforming it into the age to come'.[11] To be in the Kingdom means to be 'in the new order of the messianic salvation';[12] that is, to be 'in Christ' by the Spirit. It is the presence of the King in the here-and-now; however it is not the full realization of that Kingdom yet. Kuhn states, 'The Then of the coming of the kingdom of God cannot be separated from the Now of the battle against the kingdom of Satan. Inasmuch as Jesus breaks the power of Satan with his word and with his deeds the kingdom of God is actually made

manifest…'[13] In his earliest work Ladd argues that, 'The kingdom has come in that the *powers* of the future kingdom have already come into history and into human experience through the supernatural ministry of the Messiah which has effected the defeat of Satan. Men may now experience the reality of the reign of God.'[14]

In short, it is the 'already, but not yet' tension of the kingdom age of the Spirit. The presence of the Kingdom, then, is the very presence of the Spirit; it is, in brief, the presence of the new covenant, ratified by the blood of Christ.

The people of the Old Testament looked forward to a 'new covenant' age when the work of the Holy Spirit would be much more powerful and widespread (Num. 11:29; Jer. 31: 31-33; etc.). With the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost a new epoch began. 'Pentecost publicly marks the transition from the old to the new covenant, and signifies the commencement of the 'now' of the day of salvation (2 Cor. 6:2).'[15] Wayne Grudem captures this sense of transition when he writes,

> But we must realize that the day of Pentecost is much more than an individual event in the lives of Jesus' disciples and those with them. The day of Pentecost was the

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9 George Eldon Ladd, *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 144.

10 *The New Revised Standard Version*. This will be the version used in all cases unless otherwise stated.

11 Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, p. 149.

12 Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, p. 202.

13 K.G. Kuhn, *The Scrolls and the New Testament*, K. Stendahl, ed. (London: SCM, 1958), p. 111; as quoted by Ladd, p. 155.

14 George Eldon Ladd, *Crucial Questions About The Kingdom Of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952), p. 91.

15 Sinclair Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit: Contours of Christian Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), p. 57.

point of transition between the old covenant work and the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the new covenant work and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Of course the Holy Spirit was at work throughout the Old Testament…But during that time the work of the Holy Spirit in individual lives, was in general, a work of lesser power.[16]

In other words, Pentecost was not simply empowerment for the individual disciples; rather it signified the beginning of God's new covenant work. It was not just another act in the drama of Christ's work, it was 'precisely the sum of all that is communicated to us in his incarnation and words and deeds'.[17] Sinclair Ferguson in his helpful book states, 'In Luke-Acts…Pentecost is portrayed as a redemptive-historical event. It is not primarily to be interpreted existentially and pneumatologically, but eschatologically and Christologically.'[18] Jürgen Moltmann, shares a similar eschatological understanding when he states,

> In the whole of the New Testament the Spirit is understood eschatologically. He is the power of the new creation. He is the power of the resurrection. He is the earnest and pledge of glory. His present efficacy is the rebirth of men and women. His activity is experience inwardly,

in the heart; but it points ahead into what is outward and public.[19]

If, as Ferguson suggests, the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost is to be understood 'eschatologically and Christologically', what, then, is the relationship between Christ and the Spirit? It is to this question we now turn.

II Jesus and the Spirit

Jesus was the bearer of the Spirit; he was (and is) the giver of the Spirit. His entire ministry was conducted in the power of the Spirit. Luke states, 'Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan…. Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee,… "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me"… Then he said to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"' (Lk. 4:1, 14, 18, 21). G. R. Beasley-Murray sees this close interactive relationship between Jesus and the Spirit when he says, 'The manifestation of the kingdom in him was possible because of his unique relation to the Spirit of the Kingdom…It was as Bearer of the Spirit that Jesus was the instrument of the divine sovereignty— or, as we may equally say, the Bearer of the Kingdom.'[20]

Moreover, the Spirit's presence in Christ was not limited to his miracles. One can see that the Spirit was present with him even at his death. Hebrews

16 Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), p. 825.

17 D. Lyle Dabney, *Starting with the Spirit*, eds. Stephen Pickard & Gordon Preece (Hindmarsh: Australian Theological Forum Inc., 2001), pp. 70-71

18 Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 82.

19 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), p. 89.

20 As quoted by Dabney, *Starting with the Spirit*, p. 49.

9:14 states that Christ offered himself to God 'through the eternal Spirit'. A strong case can be made for understanding the *pneuma* in which Jesus offered himself as referring to the divine Spirit. Calvin says in this regard, 'He now clearly shows how Christ's death is to be estimated, not by the external act, but by the power of the Spirit. For Christ suffered as man; but that death becomes saving to us through the efficacious power of the Spirit.'[21]

So complete was this union between the Spirit and Christ that not even in his passion was it fractured. Dabney remarks, 'The story of the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, as related in the New Testament gospels, is thus the story of suffering and sacrifice *of* and *by virtue of* the Holy Spirit, for their witness to Jesus of Nazareth is a witness to Jesus Christ, to the one defined by the Spirit of God on his way to the cross.'[22] Similarly, commenting on Hebrews 9:14, Moltmann writes, 'The surrender through the Father and the offering of the Son take place "through the Spirit". The Holy Spirit is therefore the link in the separation. He is the link joining the bond between the Father and the Son, with their separation.'[23]

This may be a novel suggestion to some however. The question may be asked: Does not Jesus' cry of derelic-tion—'My God, my God, why have your forsaken me?'—preclude the idea that the Spirit was present with the Son at his passion? After all, at his death Jesus spoke not of intimate sonship but of loss, of estrangement from his Father; of abandonment by the one whom he loved most. William Lane draws our attention to this when he comments, 'The sinless Son of God died the sinner's death and experienced the bitterness of desolation.'[24]

Nevertheless Moltmann seems correct when he stresses the necessity of viewing God's actions, even the crucifixion, in Trinitarian terms. He cites the cry of dereliction and then states,

> In these words, the basic categories of the Trinitarian event of the cross are laid out, and with them the identities of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit: The Father sacrifices or gives up the Son to the cross, the Son suffers abandonment by the Father, and what proceeds from this event between Father and Son is the Spirit.[25]

In other words, even though the bond between the Father and Son was broken as Christ took the Father's cup of the wrath against sin, the Spirit was still present with Christ—even in death. This 'cup' did not pass from him; he 'drank' it on the cross. But he drank it through the Spirit.

Dabney states the same when he writes,

> The death of Jesus Christ on the

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21 John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, complete from the *Calvin Translation Society* edition, http://www.ccel.-org/c/calvin/comment3/comm_vol44/htm/xv.iii.htm accessed September 15, 2006.

22 Dabney, *Starting with the Spirit*, p. 45.

23 Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 82.

24 William Lane, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 573.

25 Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), p. 244.

cross represents, therefore, something other for the Spirit than for the Father or the Son. For the Father and the Son the cross means absence: the Father's loss of his beloved Son, the Son's experience of abandonment by the one whom he had addressed as 'Abba Father'. But the Spirit suffers neither such a 'loss' nor such an 'abandonment'. Rather, what the Spirit experiences is a function not of *absence*, but of *presence*. For the Spirit of the Cross is the presence of God with the Son in the absence of the Father. Thus, whereas the cry of Jesus reveals the yawning chasm of loss and desolation that opens to separate Father and Son, no such chasm exists between the Crucified One and the *Spiritus Crucis*, the one who suffered death on the cross and the *Spiritus Vivificans*.[26]

This bond between the Son and the Spirit was never broken—it couldn't be. Even in death the union remained. To be sure, Jesus' human nature died on that cross, but the doctrine of Christ is that he was both God and Man—fully God, fully man. As such, when his human nature died, his divine nature lived on in union with the Spirit. Even in his ascension the Spirit was present with him. 'Christ on his ascension came into such complete possession of the Spirit who had sustained him throughout his ministry that economically the resurrected Christ and the Spirit are one to us.'[27]

It was as a result of his death and resurrection that salvation was secured. But as the New Testament connects the resurrection of Christ to the subject of justification we will now attempt a Trinitarian understanding of redemption.

III Trinitarian salvation

1 *Ordo Salutis*

The expression '*ordo salutis*' simply means 'the order of salvation'. The idea of an *ordo salutis* came about by trying to answer the question: How does the Holy Spirit apply the work of Christ to the individual?[28] Perhaps the most famous *ordo* came from the English Puritan, William Perkins (1558-1602), when he offered 'the golden chain of salvation'.[29] In this 'golden chain' Perkins used Romans 8: 29-30 as a template for what he understood to be the order of the application of redemption. The passage says,

> For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and

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26 Dabney, *Starting with the Spirit*, pp. 56-7.
27 Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 54.

28 The Latin expression '*Ordo salutis*' has been traced back to F. Buddeus, *Institutiones Theologiae Dogmaticae* (1724), and J. Karpov, *Theologia Revelata Dogmatica* (1739); 'indicating the emergence of the terminology, but not necessarily the idea itself, in the so-called scholastic Protestant orthodoxy of the seventeenth century' (Ferguson, p. 260, f. n. 3).
29 William Perkins, *The Works of William Perkins*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1612-19), vol. 1: pp. 11-117.

those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

In short, Perkins pointed out that whoever 'those' are in verse 29 ('those' that God foreknew), they are the very same 'those' who were predestined. 'These,' in turn, are the same ones who are (effectively) called; and 'they' are the same ones that are justified, and glorified—hence, the idea of a 'chain'. The purpose of an *ordo*, however, went beyond the chronological order of redemption; the goal was to demonstrate a logical order.[30] Additionally, the objective was to show the relationship between the various facets.

A (very) brief case-study may be useful. What, for example, is the relationship between faith and justification? Wayne Grudem provides a helpful explanation when he writes,

> Paul quite clearly teaches that this justification comes *after* our faith and *as God's response to* our faith. He says that God 'justifies him who *has faith* in Jesus' (Rom. 3:26), and that 'a man is justified *by faith* apart from the works of law' (Rom. 3:28). He says 'Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom. 5:1). Moreover, 'a man is not justified by works of the law but *through faith* in Jesus' (Gal. 2:16).[31]

Put simply, faith precedes justifica-

tion. Before God justifies a person they place their faith in Christ. Again, it is clear that this is a *logical* ordering of events; the realities themselves take place at the same instant in time. As a result, the moment a person places their faith in Christ they are justified.

More recently, however, the very legitimacy of the *ordo* has been brought into question. Herman Ridderbos states,

> In Paul's preaching there is no such thing as a systematic development of the ordo salutis, a detailed doctrine of the anthropological application of salvation. The cause for this is not only that the character of Paul's doctrine is not 'systematic' in the scientific sense of the word, but above all that his viewpoint is a different one.[32]

This is not to suggest that the various features of redemption are randomly related. Surely, no one would hold such a view. Rather, the answer is to be found in the ministry of the Spirit. The question, then, becomes: On what 'principle' or 'model' is the order of the Spirit's work to be understood? The answer to this is the union with Christ that the Spirit brings about.

The central role of the Spirit is to reveal Christ and to unite us to him. The implication is that the model we employ for structuring the Spirit's ministry should be that of union with Christ. Every facet of the application of Christ's work ought to be related to the way in which the Spirit unites us to

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[30] There is a book-length exposition of the *ordo salutis* in John Murray, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), pp. 79-181.

[31] Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 777-778; emphasis in original.

[32] Herman N. Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of his Theology*, tr. J. R. de Witt (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), p. 206.

Christ himself, and viewed as directly issuing from personal fellowship with him. The dominant motif and architectonic principle of the order of salvation should therefore be union with Christ in the Spirit.[33]

This is not to suggest that justification, adoption, sanctification, regeneration, *et al*, are not distinct categories of redemption. They are; and they should not be confused. But they are not separate events. Rather, 'they are aspects or facets of the one event of our union with Christ in his risen glory, effected by the power of the Spirit and worked out progressively through the Spirit's ongoing ministry'.[34] In brief, the Spirit unites us *to* Christ wherein he applies all of the benefits that are ours *in* Christ.

Although the above accounts for and clarifies certain aspects of redemption, the purport of this essay is to demonstrate the role of the Holy Spirit specifically in justification . Yet it is important to make clear the mission and role of the Spirit of God in working out our salvation; in particular, the connection of Christ's resurrection to the Spirit, and of the resurrection to justification. It is to this we now turn our attention.

2 The Spirit Who Raised Him From the Dead

It may seem superfluous to even ask the question: Who raised Christ from the dead? The question can, however, be answered in more than one way. On one hand, we are told that the Father raised the Son from the dead: 'Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father' (Rom. 6:4); 'God the Father, who raised him from the dead' (Gal. 1:1); etc. On the other hand we are told that the Son raised himself from the dead: 'Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."…he was speaking of the temple of his body' (Jn. 2:19, 21); '…lay down my life in order to take it up again…I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again' (10: 17-18).

However, that is not the end of the matter. There are passages that indicate that the Holy Spirit raised Christ from the dead as well. For example, 1 Peter 3:18 says, 'He was put to death in the body but *made alive by the Spirit*'. Additionally, Romans states that it was 'through the Spirit of holiness' that Jesus was 'declared with power to be the Son of God, *by his resurrection from the dead*' (Rom. 1:4). The Greek in this passage can be translated in more than one way. However, whatever way one chooses, it is clear that the Holy Spirit was directly connected to the resurrection of Christ. The point is that the resurrection of Christ from the dead was a Trinitarian act; all three persons of the Godhead were involved.

The question may rightfully be asked: So what? What is at stake in demonstrating that all three members of the Trinity were involved in the resurrection of Christ? The significance of this is that Paul makes a clear connection between the resurrection of Christ and our justification. '[Jesus] was handed over to death for our trespasses and *was raised for our justification*' (Rom. 4: 25). James Dunn comments that this passage serves to

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33 Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 100.
34 Ferguson, *The Holy Spirit*, p. 106.

'underscore the soteriological significance of Jesus' resurrection…'[35] Similarly, evangelical scholar, Douglass Moo, notes the implications:

> Particularly striking, because unusual, is the connection made between Christ's resurrection and our justification….we must still insist that Paul is affirming here a theological connection between Jesus' resurrection and our justification (cf. 5:10). As Jesus' death provides the necessary grounds on which God's justifying action can proceed, so his resurrection, by vindicating Christ and freeing him forever from the influence of sin (cf. 6:10), provides for the ongoing power over sins experienced by the believer in union with Christ.[36]

To say that Jesus was raised *for* our justification is to say that his resurrection authenticates and confirms that our justification has been secured.[37] The grammar of the text, on the surface, seems simple enough,[38] yet the implications are that our justification (whatever that term may mean) is inextricably connected with Christ's resurrection. In short, you do not understand Easter if you do not understand justification. Our justification and his resurrection are bound up in such a way that Paul can meaningfully draw a causal relationship.

Additionally, there are places in the New Testament where it describes Christ's resurrection as *his* justification. For example, 1 Timothy 3: 16 states that Jesus was 'revealed in flesh, justified by the Spirit, seen by angels'. This type of statement can be confusing. From what did Christ need to be justified? Additionally, *prime facie* this passage does not appear to connect the work of the Spirit to the resurrection. However, Dabney's comments on this passage are helpful: '"Christ", it is said, "was justified by the Spirit". What can this statement possibly mean? In general, commentators agree that *this is a reference to the resurrection*.'[39] That is, the Spirit was involved in some way with Christ's resurrection. Sinclair Ferguson writing in a similar vein says,

> Paul views the resurrection of Christ from the dead as his 'redemption'. His death is everything that death truly is. In his capacity as the second man, the last Adam, he experienced death as the wages of sin, separation from life, judgment under the wrath of God and alienation from the face of the Father (Rom. 6:10; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13). He died to the sin under whose power he came (Rom. 6:10:

35 James Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (Word Biblical Commentary, 38a, Dallas: Word, 1988), p. 225.

36 Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 289-90.

37 Schlatter takes this too far, however, when he asserts that our justification preceded Jesus' resurrection. Adolf Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God*, trans. by S. S. Schatzmann (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), p. 118.

38 For a detailed discussion of the grammar see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 244; also, Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 3: *Syntax* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963), p. 268.

39 Dabney, *Starting with the Spirit*, p. 59.

'the death he died, he died *to sin*'). But from death thus conceived Christ was raised, delivered, vindicated or 'saved' through the resurrection (1 Tim. 3:15). In his resurrection he was 'redeemed' and delivered from death by the power of the Holy Spirit.[40]

And Richard Gaffin, Jr. reinforces this when he writes,

> It is, then, not only meaningful but necessary to speak of the resurrection as the redemption of Christ. The resurrection is nothing if not his deliverance from the power and curse of death which was in force until the moment of being raised…The resurrection is the salvation of Jesus as the last Adam; it and no other event in his experience is the point of his transition from wrath to grace.[41]

In all this, his justification was his resurrection, and his resurrection secures our justification. As a result, when he transitioned 'from wrath to grace' (to use Gaffin's expression) Christ had fulfilled his messianic obligation of drinking the cup of God's wrath *for us*. In the poetic words of Richard Allen Body, 'Christ drained the cup of God's wrath bone dry, leaving not a drop for us to drink'.[42] The consequence of this is that the grace of God that justifies us is tied up with the life-giving Spirit.[43] And yet this Spirit defies simplistic categorizations.

3 The Speech of God—The Holy Spirit of God

In examining the role of the Holy Spirit in justification, one is struck by the need to move beyond simplistic categories that have sometimes been used to describe our theological understanding. Think again of the Holy Spirit as the bond between the Father and Son in Christ's passion,[44] or one of the analogies that Augustine used to describe the Trinity. He likened the Godhead to a lover and the beloved. There is one who loves, and the one who receives the love. But, it may be asked: Where is the Trinity in that analogy? Isn't that a bi-unity rather than a tri-unity? Augustine's answered, however, that the Father is the 'lover,' the Son is the 'beloved,' and the Holy Spirit is 'the bond of love' between them.[45]

Even though Augustine was a western father, he was not a twenty-first century westerner. As a result, he didn't necessarily use the same categories we use; he had others at his disposal.

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40 Ferguson, 104. Ferguson develops this idea further on pages 103-107.

41 Richard Gaffin, Jr., *The Centrality of the Resurrection* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), p. 116.

42 Richard Allen Body, *The Voice From the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2000), p. 62.

43 See Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, p. 241.

44 See above, section II, 'Jesus and the Spirit'.

45 Augustine, *On the Holy Trinity*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 14 vols. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004 reprint), vol. 3. Augustine uses more analogies than this, but all of them are more complex than the popular ones heard today. When, for example, he uses the mind of humanity as an illustration of the Trinity he utilizes a human's memory, their understanding, and their will, and the way in which each of these interacts with the other, pp.134-143.

It is in trying to think creatively about the Spirit that we discover just how correct Spurgeon was when he said, 'The most excellent study for expanding the soul is…the knowledge of the Godhead in the glorious Trinity.'[46] In this section I want to suggest a possible option in the way in which we perceive the Holy Spirit.

Benjamin Warfield once wrote,

> The Old Testament may be likened to a chamber richly furnished but dimly lighted; the introduction of light brings into it nothing which was not in it before; but it brings out into clearer view much of what is in it but was only dimly or even not at all perceived before. The mystery of the Trinity is not revealed in the Old Testament; but the mystery of the Trinity underlies the Old Testament revelation, and here and there almost comes into view. Thus the Old Testament revelation of God is not corrected by the fuller revelation which follows it, but only perfected, extended and enlarged.[47]

Never was an analogy more true than when we come to the Holy Spirit in the very beginning of the book of Genesis.

The Hebrew Bible begins with the Spirit of God moving over the face of the deep (Gen. 1:2). Then in verse three we are told that God spoke, and suddenly light burst into existence.

Over the rest of the chapter an account is given of a cycle where God speaks and creation appears; God says… and the cosmos comes into being. One thing becomes clear from this: God's speech is no ordinary speech. In fact, God's word is uniquely creative. Although space does not permit its full development here, it will suffice to say that, according to Whitaker, God's word (*dābār*[48]) signifies,

> 'That which lies behind'…In accordance with a common feature of Heb. psychology a man's *dābār* is regarded as in some sense *an extension of his personality and further as possessing a substantive existence of its own*…[In] the Pentateuch…the Word possesses a like power to the God who speaks it (*cf.* Is. 55:11) and effects his will without hindrance. Hence the term may refer to the creative word of God.[49]

In the same vein, Harris, Archer, and Waltke warn against thinking that it is simply that 'the word had a power independent of God. Rather, *it is God the Creator who does what he will*. This will of God is expressed in words of command and they are effective because he makes them so.'[50] In other words, the *dābār* of God is an extension of himself. Put succinctly, the 'word of

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46 As quoted in J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1973), p. 5.

47 Benjamin Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1988), pp. 141-142

48 Richard Whitaker, *Whitaker's Revised BDB Hebrew-English Lexicon* (Norfolk: Bible-Works, 1995), p. 55; emphasis mine.

49 *The New Bible Dictionary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1962), n. p.; emphasis mine.

50 R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., & Bruce K. Waltke, *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), n. p.

God' is the Holy Spirit. Hence, the phrases 'God spoke…' and 'the Holy Spirit created' are virtually synonymous.[51] If the above is true, then the role of the Holy Spirit in justification becomes much more apparent.

IV The Spirit and Justification

The term 'justification' has a long history of controversy. However, since the time of the Protestant Reformation the term has generally come to be understood as a legal (forensic) act whereby God declares us righteous. A. A. Hodge states the matter clearly enough when he writes:

> Justification is a judicial act of God, whereby he declares us to be conformed to the demands of the law as the condition of our life; it is not an act of gracious power, making us holy or conformed to the law as a standard of moral character.[52]

The Protestant Reformers were correct when they argued that the term cannot mean 'to make righteous'.[53] For example, Luk. 7:29 says, 'When they heard this all the people and the tax collectors *justified God*, having been baptized with the baptism of John.' The people 'justified God'? Obviously, the people didn't 'make' God righteous.

Rather, the ESV captures the right sense when it translates the passage, 'they declared God just…' This is the sense of the term: 'To declare as righteous'.

This is also the sense of the term in passages where the New Testament talks about us being declared righteous by God: 'The judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification' (Rom. 5:16);[54] 'it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus' (Rom. 3:26); 'we know that a person is *reckoned as righteous*[55] not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ' (Galatians 2:16).

Additionally,

> The idea that justification is a legal declaration is quite evident also when justification is contrasted with condemnation.[56] Paul says, 'Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn?' (Romans 8:33-34). To 'condemn' someone is to declare that person guilty. The opposite of condemnation is justification, which, in this context, must mean 'to declare someone not guilty.'[57]

In his typical forthright way, John Murray states, 'Justification is a judicial or forensic term and refers to a

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51 I am indebted to several discussions with Steve Service for this insight. At the time of this writing, Steve was completing his dissertation on the *YHWH dāḇār* at Regent University School of Divinity.

52 A. Hodge, *Commentary on the Westminster Confession* (Escondido: Ephesians Four Group, 1999), n. p.

53 As the Roman Catholic Church maintained.

54 Note the contrast between 'condemnation' and 'justification.' See Grudem's comment on footnote 57.

55 The actual term is 'justified', however the NRSV offers this as a viable translation.

56 Note the example above in Romans 5:16.

57 Grudem, *Systematic Theology* p. 778.

judgment conceived, recognized, and declared with respect to judicial status. It does not mean to make righteous or upright or holy in the subjectively factititive and operative sense but to pronounce or declare to be righteous.'[58] In other words, justification is something that God *says* about us. He *speaks*, he *declares* us righteous. In this *statement* he imputes to our account the positive righteousness that Christ earned. This is, quite obviously, nothing more than the Reformation view of forensic imputation.

The term imputation simply means 'to attribute to'. 'In the juridical and theological sense of the word, to impute is to attribute anything to a person or persons, upon adequate grounds, as the judicial or meritorious reason of reward or punishment.'[59] It is precisely here that the Holy Spirit is present in justification. *He* is the speech of God; *he* is the declaration; *he* is the pronouncement of righteousness. Just as the Spirit was the *dābār* of God in creating the cosmos in Genesis, he is also the Father's declaration of our legal standing. One would be hard pressed to conceive of a more pneumatologically rich understanding of justification.

The advantage of this understanding is that it preserves what the Reformers regained. Namely, 'How much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free *gift of righteousness* exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ…so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification' (Rom. 5: 17-18). One does not need to eschew forensic justification in order to have a pneumatologically robust view of justification. Luther cautioned,

> [Justification is] the chief article of Christian doctrine…For if we know this article, we are in the clearest light; if we do not know it, we dwell in the densest darkness. Therefore if you see this article impugned or imperiled, do not hesitate to resist Peter or an angel from heaven; for it cannot be sufficiently extolled.[60]

D. Lyle Dabney is certainly right when he says, '…we must bring together what that interpretation has torn apart: a supposedly "objective" work of Christ and a supposedly "subjective" work of the Spirit, God's "forensic" act in the death of the Son of God's "charismatic" act in the outpouring of the Spirit. And to do that, I suggest, we must develop a broader understanding of not only the means but the substance of redemption through Christ and in the Spirit.'[61] This, it seems to me, is done by seeing the Holy Spirit as the creative agent of God's speech. The Father's declaration that we are righteous is spoken by means of the Spirit and was secured by the res-

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58 John Murray, *Systematic Theology*, volume 2 of *The Collected Writings of John Murray* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth, 1982), vol. 2: p. 204.

59 Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), vol. 2: p. 194.

60 Martin Luther, from his exposition of Galatians 2:11 in *What Luther Says: An Anthology*, 2 vols. Ewald M. Plass, ed. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1959), vol. 2: p. 705. When Luther spoke of 'justification' he clearly had in mind forensic justification.

61 Dabney, *Starting with the Spirit*, p. 81.

urrection of Christ from the dead. This, then, is Trinitarian justification.

Conclusion

I began this paper by citing Macchia's concern that the typical reformed understanding of justification was 'pneumatologically barren'. He says, 'Luther's understanding of justification begs for greater exploration into its accomplishment ultimately through the Spirit's final work in new creation on a broad cosmic scale.'[62] Without reservation I applaud Macchia's assertion that the doctrine of forensic justification 'begs for greater exploration,'[63] but that exploration does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that justification must necessarily be equated with the renewal of all things. It is possible to preserve Luther's doctrine of forensic justification in a pneumatologically informed way. This, it is hoped, will carry the theological discussion an additional step so that we will see anew 'the unsearchable riches of Christ' (Phip. 3:8, NIV).

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62 Macchia, 'Justification Through New Creation', p. 205.

63 In fact, it was in reading Dr. Macchia's essay that I first began to think through the very ideas expressed in this essay.

Breaking with Cyprian's Paradigm:
Evangelicals, Ecclesiological Apathy, and Changing Conceptions of Church Unity

George W. Harper

KEYWORDS: *Denominationalism, ecclesiology, ecumenism, sectarianism, Puritans, pluriformity, religious liberty*

MY WIFE AND I ARE career missionaries. From 1994 until 2005 we served in the Philippines, where I taught church history and historical theology, initially in a seminary and later in a graduate program run by a seminary consortium. Not long before we left that country, I received a phone call from one of my former students, 'Juan de la Cruz' (the Philippine counterpart to 'John Doe'). A year earlier, Juan had received his Th.M. from the consortium; I had been his thesis advisor, so I had got to know him quite well. He was an ordained minister in a small denomination that had been planted in the Philippines thirty years earlier by foreign (but non-American) missionaries, and he was a member of the faculty of their semi-nary, located in a town several hours' drive south of Manila, as well as the pastor of a small congregation that he himself had planted.

Juan said he was calling to ask for my advice. He was very unhappy at the behaviour of several of the foreign missionaries who controlled his seminary's board of trustees. According to him, those missionaries had taken a number of actions that violated the school's bylaws, and, try as he might, he had been unable to persuade any of his denomination's Filipino leadership to take a stand against what was being done. He had responded, he said, by resigning his position at the seminary and surrendering his ordination in the denomination. He really felt he had no choice. His congregation had withdrawn from the denomination as well, they had asked him to stay on as pastor, and he was in the process of organizing a new denomination. He had already recruited a number of other

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ministers, including several whose prior ecclesiastical affiliations were quite different. He said he wanted my opinion about this, but it was clear that what he really hoped for was my blessing. Should I have given it to him?

According to another of my former students, 'Jaime de la Estrelya', the answer to that question is, Absolutely not! Several years before Juan, Jaime had also received his Th.M. from the seminary consortium; as with Juan, I had been his thesis advisor and got to know him quite well. He was a member of a prominent Pentecostal denomination, and the subject of his thesis was the sectarianism that Philippine Pentecostals often display in their dealings not only with non-Pentecostal churches but even with one other. Why, he asked, are there so many such groups, with most of their clergy viewing the clergy of other Pentecostal denominations not as brothers and sisters in Christ and colleagues in ministry, but as rivals fishing from the same pool of potential converts? Can such competition possibly be justified?

In a word, no, insisted Jaime. In fact, he went so far as to argue that the mere existence of multiple denominations, each with its own distinct leadership and discrete authority structure, is a standing affront to Christ's prayer in John 17:21 that we might be one, just as Christ and the Father are one, and thus serves as a hindrance to our testimony on behalf of the gospel. Is Jaime correct?

I worked very hard to persuade him to soften his language. I pointed out that if he followed through on the logic of his position, he might end up a Roman Catholic—something that would give pause to any Filipino evan-

gelical. But the question remains. Is our membership in so many individual denominations and independent congregations fundamentally incompatible with our membership in the one body of Christ? Is it a sin to be a Presbyterian or a Baptist or a Methodist or even a Catholic and not just a Christian? And does our tendency to think of evangelicalism as a movement that cuts across all these denominational lines rather than standing apart from them imply that our movement suffers from a sort of ecclesiological myopia? Or is something else at work?

I Denominational Proliferation and Church Unity

If structural pluriformity in Christ's body is indeed a sin, then we are in serious trouble, and the problem can only get worse. Scholars estimate that in the US today there are more than five hundred denominations and quasi-denominational organizations, with that number constantly on the rise.[1] Is this a particularly or even uniquely

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1 Arthur Carl Piepkorn, *Profiles in Belief: The Religious Bodies of the United States and Canada*, 4 vols. (New York: Harper and Row, 1977-1979), includes articles on 546 Christian bodies in the US (my count). J. Gordon Melton, *The Encyclopedia of American Religions*, 3rd. ed. (Detroit, Mich.: Gale Research, 1989), includes articles on 1588 religious bodies, including non-Christian organizations (see p. xv), an increase of almost a third over the book's first edition, published in 1978; Melton notes that some of the increased count is due to expanded coverage but some is due to the continuing establishment of new groups (see p. xi).

American problem? Such has been the claim of a number of scholars, most of them stressing that from their point of view it certainly is a problem. For example, Charles Clayton Morrison, the long-time editor of *The Christian Century*, referred scornfully to what he called the US 'ecclesiastical zoo' and claimed that 'no other country presents a comparable picture'.[2]

However, the fact is that even if the multiplication of denominations is a problem—and I will return to this point later—there is nothing particularly American about it. David Barrett and his colleagues who prepared the *World Christian Encyclopedia* estimate that in 1970 there were already 10,680 'traditional denominations' worldwide, along with 15,670 'paradenominations and networks', yielding a total of 26,350 Christian organizations. In 2000, they estimate, there were 11,830 'traditional denominations' worldwide, along with 21,990 'paradenominations and networks', yielding a total of 33,820 Christian organizations.[3] This is an increase of 7,470 organizations, 28[3] percent, in just

thirty years, with the bulk of the proliferation in places like sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia where the Christian community is growing very rapidly.

In fact, the multiplication of denominations seems to be an inevitable concomitant of the renewal and expansion of the church. So if denominations' mere existence is indeed a kind of 'plague',[4] their rapid reproduction must represent a kind of spiritual contagion, and we evangelicals who pray for the church's revival and work for the spread of the gospel would also be praying and working, albeit inadvertently, for the spread of what amounts to a deadly ecclesiastical pestilence. But are we?

Perhaps it comes as no surprise that what might be called the epidemiological understanding of denominationalism is almost taken for granted by the Roman Catholic magisterium. For example, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* notes the existence of large communities 'separated from full communion with the Catholic Church' but insists that the 'ruptures' which have produced them 'do not occur without human sin'.[5] Similarly, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's recent declaration, *Dominus Iesus*, describes what it sees as the demonstrable 'lack of unity among Christians' as 'a *wound* for the Church; not in the sense that she is deprived of her unity, but "in that it hinders the com-

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2 Charles Clayton Morrison, *The Unfinished Reformation* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1953), pp. 2, 3.

3 David B. Barrett, George T. Kurian, and Todd M. Johnson, eds., *World Christian Encyclopedia: A Comparative Study of Churches and Religions, AD 30-AD 2200*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1:10. They define a denomination as 'any agency consisting of a number of congregations or churches aligning themselves with it' (1:27) and a paradenomination as 'a recent network of churches that is becoming a new denomination but resisting denominationalist shortcomings' (1:29).

4 Albert C. Outler, *The Christian Tradition and the Unity We Seek* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 11.

5 *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), §817.

plete fulfilment [sic] of her universality in history"'.[6]

Also predictably, this perspective has been embraced by conciliar and ecumenical Protestants committed to structural (re)union. For example, the By-Laws of the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission simply assume that the lack of such union is incompatible with John 17:21, stating that Faith and Order's aim is 'to proclaim the oneness of the Church of Jesus Christ and to call the churches to the goal of visible unity in one faith and one eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, in order that the world might believe'.[7] H. Richard Niebuhr's description of denominationalism as 'an unacknowledged hypocrisy' that reflects Protestantism's 'moral failure'[8] is echoed in the recent 'Princeton Proposal for Church Unity' issued by sixteen theologians associated with the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology: '[F]riendly division is still division. We must not let our present division be seen as normal, as the natural expression of a Christian marketplace with churches representing different options for a variety of tastes. Consumerist values and an ideology of diversity can anesthetize us to the wound of division.'[9]

Less to be expected is the similar outlook on denominationalism taken by some progressive evangelicals. For example, Brian McLaren argues that what he calls Protestantism's 'dividing frenzy' has given rise to '*a kind of market economy for religion, where religion [is] commodified.* This competitive Protestant religious market [has] spawned a kind of infomercial reality, where each group advertise[s] its unique features, seeking loyal customers….The unfortunate side effects…[have] included distor-

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6 *Declaration 'Dominus Iesus' on the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church* (Pasay City, Philippines: Paulines Publishing House, 2000), p. 36; italics in original. Quotation is from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith's letter, *Communionis notio*, §17, which describes the wound as 'even deeper in those ecclesial communities which have not retained the apostolic succession and a valid Eucharist', i.e., Protestant denominations.

7 By-Laws, Faith and Order Commission, World Council of Churches, quoted in *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), Preface, p. 1. See also *A Plan of Union for the Church of Christ Uniting* (Philadelphia: Consultation on Church Union, 1970), pp. 10, 17.

8 H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Cleveland, Ohio: World Publishing, 1957), pp. 6, 25.

9 Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *In One Body through the Cross: The Princeton Proposal for Church Unity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), p. 43; see the prior discussion of what is described as the undermining of witness for the gospel by Christian 'tribalization', pp. 33-42. The most extreme expression of this position by a Protestant of which I am aware is by Ephraim Radner, who goes so far as to claim that the Holy Spirit has abandoned the church because of its structural divisions; see Radner, *The End of the Church: A Pneumatology of Christian Division in the West* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 26, 27, 28, and passim.

tion…and arrogance.'[10] Stanley Grenz contends that evangelicalism's equanimity in the face of the church's division into 'various confessional groups, each of which constitutes only a part of the one Church of Christ', is both a cause and a consequence of what he sees as its ecclesiological apathy.[11]

George Hendry notes that this abhorrence of denominationalism, shared as it is by Roman Catholics, conciliar Protestants, and at least a few evangelicals, rests on a shared heritage: 'The Churches of the West, by both temperament and history, have been disposed to think of unity in terms of organic consolidation or doctrinal consensus, the former being more characteristic of Rome [and, today, conciliar Protestantism] and the latter of [today, evangelical] Protestantism. It is not easy for them to recognize a unity which is anterior both to the organization of the Church and to the articulation of its faith',[12] a unity which

would thus allow for and even encourage a degree of both connectional and confessional pluriformity.

II The Fathers and the Reformers on Church Unity

Why have Western Christians tended to think in terms of unity that is primarily structural, whether the structure be that of the episcopate or the catechism? They have done so, I would argue, because of the foundational teaching of several Fathers of the second and third centuries, including Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus of Lyons, and especially Cyprian of Carthage.[13] 'As the twig is bent, so grows the tree.' Early in the second century, Ignatius was a strong defender of episcopal unity on at least the local level: '[S]hun divisions, as [they are] the beginning of evils. All of you are to follow your bishop, as Jesus Christ followed the Father, and [follow] the presbytery as [you would] the apostles.…He who honors the bishop is honored by God; he who does anything without the bishop's knowledge serves the devil.'[14]

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10 Brian D. McLaren, *A Generous Orthodoxy: Why I Am a Missional, Evangelical, Post/Protestant, Liberal/Conservative, Mystical/Poetic, Biblical, Charismatic/Contemplative, Fundamentalist/Calvinist, Anabaptist/Anglican, Methodist, Catholic, Green, Incarnational, Depressed-yet-Hopeful, Emergent, Unfinished CHRISTIAN* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2004), p. 125; italics in original.

11 Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2000), p. 296. See also Andrew Purves and Mark Achtemeier, *Union in Christ: A Declaration for the Church* (Louisville, Ky.: Witherspoon Press, 1999), p. 65.

12 George S. Hendry, 'The Theological Context of the Church Today', in *The Ecumenical Era in Church and Society: A Symposium in Honor of John A, Mackay* (New York: Macmillan, 1959), pp. 48-49.

13 J. S. Whale, *Christian Union: Historic Divisions Reconsidered* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1971), pp. 15-16; Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), pp. 117-118, 159-160; Ludwig Ott, *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, ed. James Bastible, trans. Patrick Lynch (Cork, Ireland: Mercier Press, 1955), pp. 302-304.

14 Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* 8.1-2, 9.1, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, ed. and trans. Jack Sparks (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1978), pp. 112-113, altered.

Note that for Ignatius, the bishop's primacy over the local church was not an end in itself; instead, he saw fidelity to the apostolically ordained episcopate as above all a means of defending fidelity to the apostolically imparted truth.[15] Over time, unfortunately, the subordination of the former goal to the latter tended to be forgotten, so that the two were set alongside each other and departure from the episcopate was even taken as an instance of departure from the truth.

For example, this tendency is evident in Cyprian's landmark mid-third-century treatise, *The Unity of the Catholic Church*, which extended Ignatius's logic from the local to the universal church, identifying the latter with the bishops taken together just as Ignatius had identified the former with the bishop taken individually.[16] Cyprian stated his position very forcefully:

> The authority of the bishops forms a unity, of which each holds his part in its totality. And [thus] the Church forms a unity, however far she spreads and multiplies by the power of her fecundity....Whoever breaks with the Church and enters into an adulterous union, cuts himself off from the promises made to the Church; and he who has turned his back on the Church of Christ shall not come to the rewards of Christ: he is an alien, a worldling,

an enemy. You cannot have God for your Father if you have not the Church for your mother....Can anyone then be so criminal and faithless, so mad in his passion for quarreling, as to believe it possible that the oneness of God, the garment of the Lord, the Church of Christ should be divided, or dare to divide it himself?...Do you think a man can hold his own or survive, when he leaves the Church and sets up a new place and a separate home for himself?[17]

Ideas have consequences. At least partly because of this insistence that the church's unity as posited in Ephesians 4:4-6 and other biblical texts both presumed and required its structural unity,[18] the Donatist controversy, triggered by differing responses to the final round of Roman persecution half a century after Cyprian's own martyrdom, left the North African Christian community permanently crippled. Since his theology construed episcopal pluriformity as an intolerable manifestation of ecclesiastical disunity, the clash over control of what had been his own see, the episcopate of Carthage, led, not merely to competition between what would be seen today as two rival denominations, but to the government-backed yet ultimately futile attempt by

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15 Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Philadelphians* 2.1-2, in *The Apostolic Fathers*, pp. 104-105.

16 See the discussion of this treatise in Christopher A. Hall, *Learning Theology with the Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2002), pp. 236-241.

17 Cyprian of Carthage, *The Unity of the Catholic Church* 5, 6, 8, in *St. Cyprian: The Lapsed; The Unity of the Catholic Church*, ed. and trans. Maurice Bévenot, Ancient Christian Writers 25 (New York: Newman Press, 1956), pp. 47-51.

18 Cyprian, *Unity of the Catholic Church* 4, in *St. Cyprian: The Lapsed; The Unity of the Catholic Church*, p. 47.

the smaller of these, the 'Catholic' party, to forcibly suppress its larger, better-inculturated rival, the 'Donatist' party. One unintended consequence was that several centuries later, when Islamic armies overran their lands, rather than following the example of the Christian community of Syria and settling into relatively protected 'dhimmi' status, the disaffected Christian community of North Africa simply melted away.[19]

Yet the logic—and illogic—of Cyprian's argument continued to carry weight in the sixteenth century, so that even John Calvin used much the same terminology:

> [L]et us learn even from the simple title 'mother' how useful, indeed how necessary, it is that we should know her [i.e., the church]. For there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast, and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance.[20]

None of the Reformers, Protestant or Catholic, would have been content with a sixteenth-century counterpart to Stalin's 'socialism in one country'.[21] All of them aimed at the reconstruction of the church universal, each after his own pattern.[22] In this, of course, they failed, with their failure first conceded, at least provisionally, in the Peace of Augsburg, ratified in 1555, and finally enshrined in the Peace of Westphalia, ratified in 1648. The idea of Europe as Christendom was no more; its place was taken by the idea of Europe as an interlocking complex of miniature Christendoms, a confessional mosaic whose pattern was defined by the principle of '*cuius regio, eius religio*'.[23] Cyprian's idea of the church's visible, structural unity was reduced to a kind of theological cudgel which representatives of Europe's various confessional families wielded against their theological adversaries, each blaming the others for the rending of Christ's 'seamless robe' (Jn. 19:23-24).[24]

In time, confessional uniformity at even the local level broke down as religious toleration and eventually religious freedom were implemented. And

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19 Gerald Bonner, *St. Augustine of Hippo: Life and Controversies*, revised ed. (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 1986), pp. 274-275. For an overview of the Donatist controversy and its aftermath, see W. H. C. Frend, *The Donatist Church: A Movement of Protest in Roman North Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Clarendon Press, 1952).

20 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian Classics (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 4.1.4, 2:1016.

21 Robert Conquest, *Stalin: Breaker of Nations* (New York: Penguin, 1992), p. 122; Marcel Liebman, *The Russian Revolution*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (New York: Vintage, 1970), pp. 342-351.

22 Howard P. Louthan and Randall C. Zachman, eds., *Conciliation and Confession: The Struggle for Unity in the Age of Reform*, 1415-1648 (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004).

23 Bruce Hindmarsh, 'Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron? A Historical Perspective', in *Evangelical Ecclesiology: Reality or Illusion?*, ed. John G. Stackhouse Jr. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2003), p. 20.

24 Cyprian, Unity of the Catholic Church 7, in *St. Cyprian: The Lapsed; The Unity of the Catholic Church*, p. 49.

wherever the coercive arm of the state was lifted, wherever it became possible to organize new Christian bodies, religious innovators did exactly that, so that the number of what we today would recognize as denominations tended always to increase. For example, this scenario played out in England during the Commonwealth period, with the flourishing of Independent and Baptist churches and the emergence of radical groups such as the Quakers and the Fifth Monarchy Men.[25]

At the time, few saw the consequent competition for members in the newly bustling religious marketplace as anything but a curse. It might be true that, as Catholic critics charged, apart from government intervention, such steadily mounting structural pluriformity was Protestantism's natural state of being.[26] However, good Protestants who continued to read their Bibles through Cyprianic spectacles fought a bitter rear-guard action against the inevitable, doing their best to slow what they could not stop.[27] Some of them would even stand the logic of the situation on its head, concluding that since the early church had been undivided, the only proper response to the

ecclesiastical divisions they saw all around them was the restoration of the early church in their own time and place.[28] Paradoxically, these primitivists who started by rejecting denominationalism ended by organizing what were in effect new denominations.

III Reconciling Pluriformity with Church Unity

But supposing that Protestantism's, and indeed Christianity's, natural state of being really is one of ever-more-elaborate pluriformity,[29] is this really such a bad thing? Does the steady increase in the number of religious bodies that Melton, Barrett, and other scholars have documented truly demonstrate nothing more than the steady increase of entropy in the spiritual universe, serving as a kind of ecclesiological parallel to the steady increase of entropy in the physical universe described by the Second Law of Thermodynamics?

25 Hindmarsh, 'Is Evangelical Ecclesiology an Oxymoron?', p. 21; Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1972).

26 Johann Eck, *Enchiridion of Commonplaces against Luther and Other Enemies of the Church*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 1979), pp. 10, 48.

27 Richard Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*, ed. A. S. McGrade and Brian Vickers (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), p. 193.

28 Richard T. Hughes, ed., *The American Quest for the Primitive Church* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Richard T. Hughes, ed., *The Primitive Church in the Modern World* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1995).

29 Roger E. Olson, 'Free Church Ecclesiology and Evangelical Spirituality: A Unique Compatibility', in *Evangelical Ecclesiology*, p. 176; Rodney Stark, *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 17-20; Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), pp. 19-67; Stark and Bainbridge, *A Theory of Religion* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996), pp. 121-153.

Is denominationalism merely a form of disease, as so many have claimed, or might it instead serve a useful function in the struggle against the undoubted disease of religious nominalism?

Over the centuries, a number of theologians have broken with Cyprian on this point, arguing that although unity, even visible unity, surely is Christ's will for his church, this is not the same as structural unity. For example, Richard Baxter, one of the leading voices of seventeenth-century Puritanism, insisted on the importance of the former: 'Unity is the very life of the church….As that is no body whose parts are not united among themselves,…so that is no church…which is not united in itself.'[30] Quests for the latter, however, he described as generally misguided and even, ironically, as a common source of further division:

> [I]t must be carefully noted, that one way by which Satan tempteth men into church divisions, is by an over-vehement zeal against dividers;…he that cannot bear with the weaknesses of the younger sort of Christians,… but will presently let fly at them as schismatics,… shall increase the zeal and the number of dividers, and prove himself the greatest divider.[31]

The Puritan theologian John Owen, a contemporary of Baxter, took much the same position: 'The principal cause of our divisions and schisms is no other than the *ignorance or misapprehension that is among Christians of the true nature of that evangelical unity* which they ought to follow after, with the ways and means whereby it may be attained and preserved.'[32] Owen, like Baxter, urged that visible and structural unity must not be equated. Diversity was inevitable:

> We do confess that…all the members of this church are in many things liable to error, mistakes, and miscarriages; and hence it is that… in the profession which they make of the conceptions and persuasions of their minds about the things revealed in the Scripture, there are, and always have been, many differences among them. Neither is it morally possible it should be otherwise, whilst in their judgment and profession they are left unto the ability of their own minds and liberty of their own wills.[33]

More than this, though, Owen sagely observed that diversity was often an aid to the church in the pursuit of its mission:

> The members of the body have divers forms or shapes, divers uses and operations, much more may be diversely clothed and adorned; yet are they one body still, wherein their unity doth consist. And it were a ridiculous thing to attempt the appearance of a dead, useless

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30 Richard Baxter, *The Reasons for Christian Unity and Concord* (1679), in *The Practical Works of Richard Baxter*, 4 vols. (London: George Virtue, 1846; reprint, Morgan, Penn.: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 2000), 4:708.
31 Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory* (1673), in *Practical Works*, 1:614.

32 John Owen, *A Discourse Concerning Evangelical Love, Church Peace, and Unity* (1672), in *The Works of John Owen*, 16 vols., ed. William H. Goold (London: Johnstone and Hunter, 1850-1855; reprint, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), 15:105; italics in original.
33 Owen, *Evangelical Love*, p. 79.

unity among the members of the body, by clothing of them all in the same kind of garments or covering. But granting them their unity by their relation unto the Head, and thence to one another, unto the constitution of the whole, and their different forms, shapes, uses, operations, ornaments, all tend to make them serviceable in their unity unto their proper ends.[34]

When nineteenth-century church historian Philip Schaff, a pioneer ecumenist, first arrived in the US, he was appalled by the sectarian rivalries roiling the religious marketplace, referring to denominationalism as a

grand disease…. To the man who has any right idea of the church, as the communion of saints, this state of things must be a source of deep distress…. The most dangerous foe with which we are called to contend, is… not the Church of Rome but the sect plague in our midst; not the single pope of the city of seven hills, but the numberless popes…who would fain enslave Protestants once more to human authority.[35]

Forty years later, though, he saw things very differently, arguing, much as had Baxter and Owen, that 'every Christian church or denomination has its special charisma or mission, and there is abundant room and abundant labor for all in this great and wicked

world….[N]one of the leading denominations of Christendom which faithfully do their Master's work could be spared without most serious injury to the progress of the gospel at home and abroad.'[36]

More recently, a number of theologians have made the same point. For example, G. C. Berkouwer insists:

The extreme concentration and responsibility of the Church's whole life does not require a forced, unattractive uniformity….The Lord of the Church, Who is the Shepherd of the flock, knows all the sheep—in all variation, in need and threat, and in the dangers of doubt and temptation. In only one thing are they 'uniform': He cares for them all, in their individuality, their history, their problems, their time, their cares, their new tasks, their gifts, and their lacks. This care makes room for an unexpected, enriching pluriformity, which is manifold and inexhaustible.[37]

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34 Owen, *Evangelical Love*, p. 106.

35 Philip Schaff, *The Principle of Protestantism* (1845), ed. Bard Thompson and George H. Bricker, trans. John W. Nevin, Lancaster Series on the Mercersburg Theology, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1964), pp. 140, 151, 154.

36 Philip Schaff, 'Discord and Concord of Christendom, or Denominational and Christian Unity', in *Christ and Christianity: Studies on Christology, Creeds and Confessions, Protestantism and Romanism, Reformation Principles, Sunday Observance, Religious Freedom, and Christian Union* (New York: Scribner's, 1885), pp. 299-300, quoted in Stephen R. Graham, *Cosmos in the Chaos: Philip Schaff's Interpretation of Nineteenth-Century American Religion* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), p. 40.

37 G. C. Berkouwer, *The Church*, trans. James E. Davison, Studies in Dogmatics (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1976), p. 75; see p. 56 n. 18 and p. 57, in which Berkouwer cites and quotes Abraham Kuyper to the same effect. See also Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The Unity and Disunity of the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1958), pp. 19-20.

Robert Webber echoes Schaff:

> [T]he insistence that the church must exist in a single form is a denial not only of the richness of creation, but also of the complexities of the human response…. The full church is not seen in any one denomination or body. Rather, every branch of the church should be seen as a part of the whole. The church catholic therefore needs every branch of the church to be complete.[38]

Michael Jinkins traces Christianity's pluriformity to its very first generation:

> The idea that theological/ecclesiological diversity entered the history of the church at the Protestant Reformation (or after) is fundamentally at odds with the realities of the preceding millennium and half of the church's existence. From the pages of the New Testament through the rise of various monastic traditions, the church has been blessed (not plagued) with a variety of ecclesial forms of life….However uncomfortable ecclesial diversity may be at particular moments, judging by the profound diversity of God's creation, I have a hard time imagining that such diversity is a curse. Rather, even the diversity among Christian forms of community seems to me a blessing and evidence once again of the wisdom and wonder of the Triune Creator.[39]

IV Apostolic Church and Church Unity

As Jinkins's comments illustrate, scholars' embrace of the ecclesiological pluriformity of the present-day church reflects their realization that the apostolic church was ecclesiologically pluriform as well. James D. G. Dunn's landmark treatise, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, summarizes his findings on this point: 'In our study of first-century Christianity *we have discovered no greater diversity than that apparent in the various concepts of ministry and community*.'[40] Oscar Cullmann agrees: 'There was no uniformity even in earliest Christianity.'[41] This is conceded by the authors of *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, issued by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches: 'The New Testament does not describe a single pattern of ministry which might serve as a blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry in the Church. In the New Testament there appears rather a

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38 Robert E. Webber, *Common Roots: A Call to Evangelical Unity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1978), pp. 57, 64.

39 Michael Jinkins, 'The "Gift" of the Church: *Ecclesia Crucis, Peccatrix Maxima*, and the *Missio Dei*', in *Evangelical Ecclesiology*, p. 185 n. 11.

40 James D. G. Dunn, *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament: An Inquiry into the Character of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), p. 121; italics in original. See also Everett Ferguson, ed., *Doctrinal Diversity: Varieties of Early Christianity*, Recent Studies in Early Christianity (New York: Garland, 1999); and Everett Ferguson, ed., *Forms of Devotion: Conversion, Worship, Spirituality, and Asceticism*, Recent Studies in Early Christianity (New York: Garland, 1999).

41 Oscar Cullmann, *Unity through Diversity: Its Foundation, and a Contribution to the Discussion concerning the Possibilities of Its Actualization* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), p. 29. For an earlier statement along these lines, see John Owen, *Some Considerations about Union among Protestants* (1680), in *Works*, 14:527.

variety of forms which existed at different places and times.'[42]

Catholic biblical scholar Raymond Brown goes so far as to grant that the traditional Catholic account of the origin of the threefold ministry and the apostolic succession has little or no basis in history: '[T]he affirmation that all the bishops of the early Christian Church could trace their appointments or ordinations to the apostles is simply without proof—it is impossible to trace with assurance any of the presbyter-bishops to the Twelve, and it is possible to trace only some of them to apostles like Paul.'[43]

Yet, curiously, though by now scholars generally concede the pluriformity of government in the church's first generation, though even Catholic scholars generally concede that the particular form of government associated with their own church originated not in the first but in the second and third generations, both Catholic and conciliar Protestant authorities continue to urge adoption of that form of government as useful and perhaps even necessary for achieving church unity today:

> Although there is no single New Testament pattern, although the Spirit has many times led the Church to adapt its ministries to contextual needs, and although other forms of the ordained ministry have been blessed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, nevertheless the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter, and deacon may serve today as an expression of the unity we see and also as a means for achieving it.[44]

But is this at all likely? Consider, first, that, as Baxter and Owen noted long ago, the quest for structural union on this basis is likely to end, most incongruously, in further disunion.[45] For example, when denominations accustomed to a congregational or presbyterian pattern of leadership choose instead to be led by bishops, and especially when they merge with other denominations which have already made that choice, as a rule the end result is more rather than fewer denominations, since opponents of change will often break away and form new institutions.

Consider, second, that since the pace at which new denominations are being established is demonstrably so fast while the process of denominational merger is necessarily so slow, if visible unity truly does require structural unity, then the end for which Christ prayed and ecumenists strive must grow ever more unattainable.[46] In a sense, Zeno's famous paradox of Achilles and the tortoise would be reversed, with the plodding tortoise of church union vainly pursuing the fleet-

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42 *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), M19, p. 37.

43 Raymond E. Brown, *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* (New York: Paulist Press, 1970), p. 73.

44 *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, M22, pp 38-39.

45 Baxter, *Christian Directory*, pp. 614-616; Baxter, *Christian Unity and Concord*, p. 704; Owen, *Evangelical Love*, pp. 105-106, 112-114. See also Bromiley, *Unity and Disunity*, pp. 29, 31.

46 Angus Dun, *Prospects for a United Church* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 27.

footed Achilles of denominational pro-
liferation.

V Church Unity and the Religious Marketplace

Consider, third and most importantly,
that Christianity's structural plu.rifor-
mity is demonstrably a great boon to its
worldwide growth and an aid to its
deep penetration of specific cultures.
John Macquarrie observes: 'It is inter-
esting to notice…that Christianity
seems to have thrived much more vig-
orously in countries where there has
been denominational diversity than in
countries where the great majority of
the people are embraced within a sin-
gle church.'[47]

This insight is not original to Mac-
quarrie. As far back as the late eigh-
teenth century, Adam Smith put a sar-
donic spin on toleration's conse-
quences, arguing that 'if the govern-
ment was perfectly decided both to let
[denominations] all alone, and to
oblige them all to let alone one
another', if competition were allowed
free sway and diversity were thus per-
mitted to flourish,

> [t]he teachers of each little
> sect…would be obliged to respect
> those of almost every other sect,
> and the concessions which they
> would mutually find it both conve-
> nient and agreeable to make to one
> another, might in time probably
> reduce the doctrine of the greater
> part of them to that pure and ratio-
> nal religion, free from every mix-

ture of absurdity, imposture, or
fanaticism, such as wise men have
in all ages of the world wished to
see established.[48]

A little over half a century after
Smith, Alexis de Tocqueville identified
religious liberty as the source of Ameri-
can Christianity's strength and religious
establishment as the source of European
Christianity's growing weakness:

> [T]here are men among us who
> have ceased to believe in
> Christianity, without adopting any
> other religion; others are in the per-
> plexities of doubt and already affect
> not to believe; and others, again,
> are afraid to avow that Christian
> faith which they still cherish in
> secret….Such is not the natural
> state of men with regard to religion
> at the present day, and some extra-
> ordinary or incidental cause must
> be at work in France to prevent the
> human mind from following its nat-
> ural inclination and to drive it
> beyond the limits at which it ought
> naturally to stop. I am fully con-
> vinced that this extraordinary and
> incidental cause is the close con-
> nection of politics and religion….In
> Europe, Christianity has been inti-
> mately united to the powers of the
> earth. Those powers are now in
> decay, and it is, as it were, buried
> under their ruins.[49]

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47 John Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity* (London: SCM Press, 1975), p. 16.

48 Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), ed. Edwin Cannan (1904; reprint, New York: Bantam, 2003), p. 1001.

49 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, 2 vols. (1835, 1840), ed. Phillips Bradley, trans. Henry Reeve and Francis Bowen (New York: Knopf, 1945; reprint, New York: Vintage, 1954), 1:325.

Building on Tocqueville's argument, Rodney Stark proposes that precisely because European ecclesiastical leaders allied themselves with secular authorities in order to ward off pluriformity and forcibly maintain the church's structural unity, at first throughout the region and after the Reformation on at least a country-by-country basis, Europe's evangelization was generally shallow, with the masses mainly coming to practise various forms of hybridized 'folk Christianity'. Eventually this facilitated their abandonment of the church, first of its institutions and later of even its most basic tenets, leading to the current post-Christian situation, with very low rates of church attendance and all-time-high rates of atheism across the continent.[50]

By way of contrast, Stark and Roger Finke contend, the US Constitution's ban on a national religious establishment and the eventual dismantling of state religious establishments enabled the emergence of dozens and ultimately hundreds of denominations, all of them competing on equal terms in a dynamic spiritual marketplace. Stark and Finke argue that this competition has the effect of improving most denominations, inducing them to offer better preaching, more effective pastoral ministry, and so on; denominations that cannot or will not compete find themselves losing members and influence. The end result is the highest rate of church attendance in the industrialized world.[51]

Though most other religions exhibit at least a degree of doctrinal and cultural pluriformity, none of them can match the intentional structural pluriformity of Christian denominationalism.[52] If Stark and Finke are correct, we ought to see this, not as a source of sin, not as a mere reflection of ecclesiastical entropy, but instead as a powerful tool for the advancement of the gospel. Rather than foreswearing that tool's use, we ought to wield it all the more vigorously.

However, if such pluriformity is not to degenerate into ecclesiastical chaos, if the church's unity is to be more than an empty slogan, there must be clarity as to what this means and entails. Brian E. Daley notes four common conceptions of church unity: first, 'the spiritual oneness of those who call Jesus "Savior"'; second, 'agreement on the fundamental content of the faith'; third, 'unity expressed in sacramental structure and practice', including the historic episcopate; and fourth, 'unity of theological and spiritual emphasis', as in a particular denomination or denominational family.[53]

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50 Rodney Stark, *One True God: Historical Consequences of Monotheism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 66-78; Stark, *For the Glory of God*, pp. 15-119. See also Philip Jenkins, *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam, and Europe's Religious Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

51 Roger Finke and Rodney Stark, *The Churching of America, 1776-1990: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1992), esp. pp. 17-21; see also Cullmann, *Unity through Diversity*, p. 32.

52 Barrett, Kurian, and Johnson, eds., *World Christian Encyclopedia*, 2:10-12.

53 Brian E. Daley, 'Rebuilding the Structure of Love: The Quest for Visible Unity among the Churches', in *The Ecumenical Future: Background Papers for 'In One Body through the Cross: The Princeton Proposal for Church Unity'*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), pp. 76-78.

The first of these I have already ruled out as insufficiently concerned with the visible; the fourth I would also rule out as overly narrow and unfriendly to doctrinal diversity. Of the remaining options, the third, which focuses on the sacraments and ecclesiology, finds maximalist expression in the traditional Catholic position[54] and a more moderate articulation in that of conciliar Protestantism.[55] But I have argued that this makes church unity unattainable and even its pursuit unhealthy.

What remains? Only the second option on Daley's list, which stresses agreement, not on theological fine points, but at least on doctrinal basics. As it happens, this was the position of John Owen, who argued that while visible church unity did require 'precise and express profession of the *fundamental articles* of Christian religion', these were

> but few, plainly delivered in the Scripture, [and] evidencing their own necessity....[I]n other

things..." every man [must] be fully persuaded in his own mind", and walk... according to what he hath attained,... follow[ing] peace and love with those who are otherwise persuaded than he is.... [F]or the unity of faith did never consist in the same precise conceptions of all revealed objects; neither the nature of man nor the means of revelation will allow such a unity to be morally possible.[56]

Such an approach is similar to that of Oscar Cullmann, who argues for what he calls a 'community of (harmoniously separated) churches' in which 'each would preserve its valuable elements, including its structure'.[57] Other approaches that instead stress structural unity are vulnerable to Howard Snyder's criticism that in laying such stress on visible oneness they tend to minimize the importance of visible diversity, implicitly aiming at a church that is at least relatively uniform or homogeneous. To the contrary, Snyder insists that the church's pluriformity is just as fundamental as its unity.[58] Stark makes the same point in more dramatic language: '[E]ven if there is only One True God, there can never be only One True Church.'[59]

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54 Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church: A Critical Assessment of the Church in All Its Aspects* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974), p. 131; *Unitatis Redintegratio* 2.4; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, §815.

55 'Gathered for Life: Official Report, Sixth Assembly, World Council of Churches', in *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, ed. Michael Kinnamon and Brian E. Cope (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 121, endorses a 1978 proposal from the WCC's Faith and Order Commission describing three necessary marks of church unity: 'common understanding of the apostolic faith'; 'full mutual recognition of baptism, the eucharist, and ministry'; and 'common ways of decision-making and ways of teaching authoritatively'.

56 Owen, *Evangelical Love*, p. 108; italics in original. See also Owen, *Union among Protestants*, p. 527. Richard Baxter's perspective was much the same; see Reno, 'The Debilitation of the Churches', in *The Ecumenical Future*, p. 59.

57 Oscar Cullmann, *Unity through Diversity*, pp. 35, 15.

58 Howard A. Snyder, 'The Marks of Evangelical Ecclesiology', in *Evangelical Ecclesiology*, pp. 85-86, 89. See also Webber, *Common Roots*, pp. 57, 64.

59 Stark, *For the Glory of God*, p. 119.

VI Church Unity and Shifting Metaphors

I would stress that in taking this position, in contending that the early church offers us a model for maintaining visible unity while embracing structural pluriformity, I am not advocating a novel form of Christian primitivism. In fact, my position is diametrically opposed to that which primitivists have traditionally defended. After all, I am proposing, not that we draw on any particular pattern of early church government as normative, but instead that we draw on the fact that in the early church no particular pattern of church government was normative. This means that ecclesiology should be a secondary concern for us, as indeed it is, with the evangelical community making room for a wide range of stances in regard to church leadership.[60]

Such an approach is not a sign of ecclesiological apathy, as some critics have claimed; instead, quite apart from its fidelity to the stance taken by the apostolic church, it reflects the obvious fact that our community cuts across the lines of denominations strongly committed to rival ecclesiologies.[61] C. S. Lewis has argued that individual believers' relation to the universal church is like that of members to a family; they are not 'units of a homogeneous class', hence the Christian community's oneness 'is a unity of unlikes, almost of incommensurables'.[62] I would argue that the same could and should be said of individual denominations' relation to the universal church.

In this I am drawing on the thought of the eighteenth-century Pietist leader Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf. According to Zinzendorf, each orthodox communion has a unique contribution to make to the universal church, a precious jewel whose proper place is alongside the jewels contributed by its sister-communions in a beautiful necklace adorning the bride of Christ.[63] Cyprian's idea of unity would require that this collection of gems be fused together to form a single enormous gem with a uniform crystalline structure throughout; only Zinzendorf's idea of unity, his vision of 'a commonwealth of Churches within the one Church of Christ',[64] allows for the structural diversity that is inevitable and even, according to Stark and Finke, beneficial.

Shifting the metaphor, I would propose that we think of church unity not in terms of a painting in which the

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60 Paul F. M. Zahl, 'Low-Church and Proud', in *Evangelical Ecclesiology*, p. 214.

61 Olson, 'Free Church Ecclesiology and Evangelical Spirituality', p. 162.

62 C. S. Lewis, 'Membership', in *Fern-Seed and Elephants*, ed. Walter Hooper (Glasgow: William Collins Sons, Fontana, 1975), p. 16.

63 A. J. Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer: A Study in the Moravian Contribution to Christian Mission and Unity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962), pp. 102, 104; Stephen R. Hammond, 'Zinzendorf: Our Legacy and Liability', M.A.T.S. thesis, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1982, pp. 12-13. See also Gordon D. Kaufman, *Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective* (New York: Scribner's, 1968), p. 58; Cullmann, *Unity through Diversity*, pp. 16, 17, 33; and Macquarrie, *Christian Unity*, p. 15.

64 Lewis, *Zinzendorf the Ecumenical Pioneer*, p. 14.

artist's brushstrokes are deliberately invisible, combining to create a single image, but in terms of a mosaic in which the individual tiles remain intentionally visible, retaining their integrity while at the same time contributing to the design of the larger work.

Conclusion

In closing, let me return to the illustrations with which I opened—to my two students, one of whom responded to problems in his denomination by starting a denomination of his own while the other argued that the very existence of denominations reflects division in the body of Christ and is thus inherently sinful. Obviously I reject the latter student's position; regarding the former student, though I think in his particular situation the establishment of a new denomination was at best premature, I must say that I have no problem with the existence of denominations as such nor even with the creation of new denominations in situations that seem to call for this.

Mao Zedong once famously proclaimed, 'Let a hundred flowers bloom! Let a hundred schools of thought contend!'[65] Paraphrasing Mao, I would proclaim, 'Let a hundred orthodox theological traditions bloom! Let a thousand or eleven thousand or thirty-three thousand denominations contend!' Painful though their contention may sometimes become, whether in friendly forums such as local and national councils and the World Evangelical Alliance or in the hurly-burly of the global religious marketplace, it serves the health of the body of Christ and the advance of the gospel.

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65 John King Fairbank, *China: A New History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1992), p. 364; Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1990), p. 568.

Real Presence, the Ontology of Worship, and the Renewal of Evangelical Doxological Imagination

John Jefferson Davis

THE OBSERVATION that John Calvin wanted the Eucharist to be celebrated weekly in Geneva, but that he was prevented from doing so by the town council is relatively well known among Reformed theologians and historians of liturgy.[1] It is also a curious fact of American church history that many American Presbyterian churches, even very conservative ones, have not fol-

lowed Calvin in his eucharistic theology, either in terms of his desire for weekly observance or in his doctrine of Christ's 'real spiritual' presence through the Holy Spirit on the occasion of the Eucharist.[2] Many of these churches, and much of the American

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1 These circumstances have been studied recently, for example, by Laurence C. Sibley, 'The Church as Eucharistic Community: Observations on John Calvin's Early Eucharistic Theology (1536-1545)', *Worship* 81:3 (2007):249-67.

2 For Calvin's understanding of a real though spiritual presence of Christ at the Eucharist see *Institutes* IV.17.3-10: the 'secret power of the Spirit towers above our senses… the Spirit truly unites things [glorified body of Christ in heaven, and the believer on earth] separated in space.' On Calvin's Eucharistic theology, see Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship that Is Reformed According to Scripture* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984) and *The Patristic Roots of Reformed Worship* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1975); Brian A. Gerrish, *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Kilian McDonnell, *John Calvin, the Church, and the Eucharist* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967).

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evangelical tradition from the nineteenth century to the present have been closer to Zwingli than to Calvin on the matter of the presence of Christ in the sacrament.[3]

Churches in this 'Zwinglian' memorial tradition observe the Eucharist in obedience to Christ's commandment, but often there seems to be an underlying feeling that it is a marginal practice that, if not quite superfluous, lacks the emotional and imaginative impact that can be found in a compelling sermon. This sensibility asks the question, 'What do I "get" in the Lord's Supper that I can't get in a good sermon? What's the point of doing this?' It seems that in many evangelical Protestant churches no compelling responses to those inchoate doubts are being provided to those who gather (monthly or quarterly) at the table.

The purpose of this essay is not to provide further analysis of Calvin's view of the 'real' (spiritual) presence of Christ in the Eucharist, but rather to use it as a point of departure for reflection on the larger issue of the *real presence of God* in Christian worship, or more specifically, to explore some of the possible reasons for the sense of the *absence* of God in many occasions of

'worship' in contemporary American Protestantism.[4]

This essay will first note some of the cultural influences stemming from the Reformation, the Enlightenment and nineteenth-century revivalism that have contributed to a 'thinning' and 'flattening' of the Protestant evangelical doxological imagination[5], and to the impoverishment of the theology and practice of worship; second, the metaphor and analogy of 'the game' and human 'playful' activity will be explored in the light of biblical theology, the sociology of knowledge, and recent researches in the area of ritual studies for the purpose of retrieving a more robust doxological imagination and 'ontology of worship';[6] and thirdly,

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3 Even Charles Hodge, that stalwart proponent of the Reformed theology of Old Princeton, could view Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper as 'an uncongenial foreign element in Reformed theology', *Princeton Review* 20 (1848):227-78, cited in Sibley, op.cit., 65n.54. The Zwinglian 'memorial' view has been called, perhaps unfairly, a 'real absence' view: Christ is really not present with the worshipping congregation, but only being recalled to mind.

4 On both sides of the Modernist-Fundamentalist divide in modern Protestantism, would a sociologist of religion visiting a typical Protestant worship service find clear evidence that the participants believe and act as though they were conscious of being in the presence of the *living God*?

5 The term 'doxological imagination' is proposed as a semantic reminder that worship involves humans not only at the cognitive-logical level, but also engages or should engage the imagination (visual sense), the emotions, the will, and the body: worship understood as a *holistic* and *embodied* human activity.

6 The term 'ontology of worship' is introduced to call attention to the fact that all human activities and practices presuppose some ontology, i.e., a background theory of *what is real*. The claim being made in this essay is that much contemporary worship operates on the basis of a 'thin' and 'flattened' ontology that has been impoverished by the impact of scientific naturalism, the practices of revivalism, and inadequate biblical understandings of worship. Consequently, many worship events lack robust 'ontic weight'.

some suggestions will be offered as to how such insights might be implemented at the level of congregational worship practices and beliefs.

I Reformation, Enlightenment, Revivalism & Doxological Poverty

In this section of the essay some brief observations will be offered to suggest that in their different ways the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century and the philosophies of the 17th and 18th century Enlightenment, and the revivalism of 19th century evangelicalism contributed to the impoverishment of the Protestant doxological imagination and practices of worship.

The Protestant Reformation delivered essential spiritual and theological benefits, of course, in the recovery of the biblical gospel of justification by faith through faith in Christ alone, the translation of the scriptures into the vernacular, administration of the Eucharist in both kinds, congregational singing, and so forth. These gains need to be maintained, recognized, respected, and further implemented in any proposals for the renewal of Christian worship.

At the same time, however, it can be asked if there were unintended consequences of the Reformation that had detrimental consequences for subsequent Protestant practices of worship. For example, did Protestant rejections of the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation overreact in the direction of 'real absence' memorial views? Did the Reformation emphasis on the preaching of the Bible[7] contribute to a neglect of the role of the sacraments in Christian worship? Did the Protestant (especially Cromwellian) 'stripping of the altars' and iconoclasm contribute to an impoverishment of the religious imagination, especially in regard to the heavenly realities of the saints and martyrs, angels and archangels, 'and all the company of heaven' of the invisible church triumphant?

Week by week the faithful in medieval churches could see visual reminders in the artistic representations of the saints and angels of spiritual realities that transcended the ordinary. Did this Protestant iconoclasm[8]

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7 Queen Elizabeth I considered that four sermons a year were quite enough for the English church, and viewed preaching with some suspicion; the Puritans understandably wanted weekly if not daily opportunities for the people to hear the Bible preached: James Hastings Nichols, *Corporate Worship in the Reformed Tradition* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1968), p. 91.

8 In a fascinating and perceptive study, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), Margaret Miles notes that 16c. Protestant iconoclasm was experienced by many Protestants not as destructive, but as 'liberating', in the sense that images and frescoes of the saints, the Virgin, Christ as Pantocrater, and so forth, were felt to be a religious image and justification of ecclesiastical *hierarchy and authority*: hierarchies on earth were a reflection of hierarchies in heaven: chpt.5, 'Vision and Sixteenth Century Protestant and Roman Catholic Reforms', pp. 95-125. For further insights on the generally low estimation of the visual arts in English and American Protestantism, see John Dillenberger, *The Visual Arts and Christianity in America: the Colonial Period through the Nineteenth Century* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), with many illustrations and examples.

leave the Protestant evangelical tradition more impoverished, and perhaps less equipped than the Catholic and Orthodox[9] traditions, which in their different ways are more 'iconic', to respond appropriately to the new postmodern, media-driven, image-saturated sensibilities[10] of emerging generations? Such questions are, of course, easier to pose than to answer, and will not be pursued at greater length in this essay, but they do deserve the consideration of serious students of contemporary worship practices.

It is generally recognized that the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century constituted a watershed in the religious sensibilities of Christians in the West,[11] with major impact on both Protestants and Catholics and theological conservatives as well as liberals.[12] Across the religious spectrum the impact of the new scientific view of the world—the 'clockwork' universe of Newton[13]—tended to push religious sensibility and imagination away from 'mystery' toward morality, and away from a sense of the immediate presence of God in the world (and in the worship event) toward a deistic sense of a distant God far removed from the immediacies of the present.

This moralizing tendency in Enlightenment religion was exemplified, for example, in Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* (1793), where he spoke of three kinds of 'illusory faith… the faith in miracles… the faith in mysteries… the faith in means of grace'.[14] 'Means of grace' such as the Eucharist could be justified, on Kant's view, not as a mysterious means of experiencing the presence of the divine, but only as pedagogical tools for the inculcation of

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9 On the significance of icons as understood in the Orthodox tradition, see Leonid Ouspensky and Vladimir Lossky, *The Meaning of Icons* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982).

10 See Tex Sample, *The Spectacle of Worship in a Wired World* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998) for observations on the pervasive impact of the new digital technologies—sound, light, image, rock music beat—on the sensibilities of post-WWII generations. For contrasting views on digital technology in worship, see Marva Dawn, *Reaching Out Without Dumbing Down* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) [critical], and Len Wilson and Jason Moore, *Digital Storytellers: the Art of Communicating the Gospel in Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002) [pro-technology].

11 The Orthodox churches, largely hidden from the West because of the cultural dominance of Islam and Soviet communism, are only now fully encountering the challenges of 'modernity' represented by the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the scientific revolution, and the historical-critical attacks on biblical authority.

12 Among the many studies in this area, see Bernard J. Cooke, *The Distancing of God: the Ambiguity of Symbol in History and Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), esp. chpt.9, 'Modernity, Science, and Religion'. See also Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: an Interpretation* (New York: Knopf, 1966-69; and Paul Hazard, *The European Mind: the Critical Years, 1680-1715* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1953).

13 On the historical origins of this mechanistic imagery in modern science, see E.J. Diksterhuis, *The Mechanization of the World Picture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969).

14 Cited in James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), p. 144.

moral behaviour. The sacraments and Christian worship generally needed to be 'demystified' to be made more acceptable to Enlightenment sensibilities. The Christian God may have acted in the past, but is now known only in memory.

At the risk of oversimplification, it might be helpful to posit significant points of contrast between the 'cosmological imaginations' of three historical eras and religious sensibilities: the biblical/premodern; the Enlightenment/modern; and the postmodern. In any given culture today all three sensibilities may coexist and be present to various degrees, and the boundaries between these sensibilities may not be sharply drawn either synchronically or diachronically; nevertheless, these distinctions can still provide worthwhile points for reflection. The point here is that the dominant 'cosmological imagination' of a given culture provides the background ontology ('What is real?') for the religious practices of a given community, even where that community may formally dissent from the prevailing worldview.

In the biblical/premodern imagination, the notion of a 'cosmic hierarchy' or the 'Great Chain of Being'[15] may be proposed as the dominant image. 'Reality' is hierarchical in nature, with the earth and human beings below, and the heavens and the saints and the Virgin and the angels and the Holy Trinity above. The world below is in principle open to the transcendent world above (cf. Gen. 28, Jacob's dream at Bethel),

and God is 'religiously available' through the sacraments, the prophetic and biblical word, dreams, visions, and other supernatural interventions in human history.

The human social and ecclesiastical hierarchies below mirror the heavenly hierarchy above. Spiritual realities above (especially the Holy Trinity) are more 'real' and have greater ontic weight than the transient material realities below. Premodern cultures had religious sensibilities in which a 'sense of the holy' and certain places as 'holy' (where the divine presence had manifested) were generally part of the cultural fabric—a sense of what Rudolf Otto called feeling of the 'numinous' largely missing in many contemporary (and, especially, 'seeker driven') worship settings.[16]

The scientific revolution of the seventeenth century presented, and still presents, a massive challenge to the biblical and premodern religious sensibility. Reality is no longer imaged as hierarchical, and certainly not with 'Spirit' at the top of a metaphysical hierarchy, but as naturalistic, non-geocentric, and 'de-centred'. Heaven above and hell below are discarded as pre-scientific mythological notions, together with their disembodied inhabitants.

The 'clockwork universe' can serve as a master image for this sensibility, and the only 'real' fish are those which

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15 The classic study here is Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being* (New York: Harper & Row, 1936).

16 Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931). Abraham's characterization of the Canaanite city of Gerar (Gen. 20:11) seems sadly apt for many contemporary worship gatherings in the West: 'Surely there is no fear of God in this place.'

can be caught in the nets of logical demonstration, mathematical formulae, and the empirical results of the scientific method: all the rest is 'sophistry and illusion', in the famously dismissive words of Hume. 'God', if still accorded reality, is existentially distant and for practical purposes lacks ontological weight; or alternatively, in a more consistently naturalistic point of view, is merely a construct of human imagination and the evolutionary history of the race, an epiphenomenon of material forces and processes.

Mathematics—which, as Galileo noted, was the true language of science, and a crucial instrument for man's control and domination of nature—replaces the pictorial, narrative imagination with the *quantitative*: the 'real' is that which can be quantified, measured, and expressed in a mathematical formula such as $E = mc^2$. The dominance of mathematical formulae in the scientific mindset devalued the 'final' and 'formal' causes of Aristotle in favour of the 'material' and 'efficient' causes of scientific investigation, and also devalued the narrative and pictorial ways of knowing of the biblical and premodern sensibilities.

Orthodox theologians and biblical scholars laboured mightily and often successfully during the modern period to defend the Bible and the Christian faith from the assaults of Enlightenment materialism and atheism, but the fact remains that at the subliminal level, the unrelenting pressures of modernity can be absorbed in 'one's mother's milk', reinforced as it is by the pervasive influence of those strategic institutions that control the image production of a culture and constitute the 'gatekeepers' of acceptable definitions of the 'real' and the dominant ontology: the elite universities (and especially, the faculties of the 'hard' sciences), the federal judiciary, the public schools, the major media outlets, and the entertainment industries.[17]

Christian churches need to constitute in their practices—especially in their practices of worship—alternative 'plausibility structures' that can embody and *experience* the presence of the divine in a way that directly challenges the suffocating naturalism of the dominant culture. It is important to defend belief in God and the supernatural theologically and apologetically, but this cognitive strategy, in order to have real 'traction' and attractiveness, needs to be embodied within a believing community that is aware of regularly experiencing the reality and presence of the God of the Bible in its worship.

What is variously understood as the 'postmodern' sensibility is, of course, no one unitary set of ideas, but nevertheless points to a sensibility that is pervasively felt in our culture as an alternative to or critique of the Enlightenment mentality and scientific naturalism. For the purposes of this essay, a phrase such as the 're-enchantment of nature' and the image of the 'Spiral

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17 The secularization of these institutions has been examined in George Marsden and Bradley Longfield, eds., *The Secularization of the Academy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984); Stephen L. Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

Dance'[18] will be offered as points of departure for discussion.

This sensibility is expressed in the imaginative worlds of 'Star Wars' and 'Lord of the Rings' and 'Harry Potter'; in the 'dawning' of the 'Age of Aquarius,' in the efflorescence of Eastern and New Age religions, the 'Green' movements of ecology and eco-feminism, the invention of neo-paganism and the revival of the religions of pre-Christian Europe, and the neo-romantic and Gothic worlds of simulation games and virtual worlds such as *Myst, World of Warcraft*, and *Second Life*.

In this post-Enlightenment and post-colonial sensibility, mystery, magic, and ritual return with a vengeance to challenge the 'flatness' of modernity's rationalisms. Orthodox Christian churches should not capitulate epistemically to this new sensibility, but neither should they ignore it, for the new imaginative landscape—in some ways closer to the biblical world than to that of the Enlightenment—provides an opportunity to connect with cultural streams that are now seeking a sense of the transcendent.

Will postmodern seekers be able to find in the worship events of the American churches the sense of the reality and presence of God that the consumerist and entertainment-driven expressions of modernity have failed to provide?[19] Can evangelical churches retrieve from their own theological traditions the elements of mystery, of sacrament, of the immanence of Spirit in nature, of humanity's connection with the earth, and the deeper resonances of ritual action to connect with this postmodern sensibility? A positive answer would seem to require a recovery of a more robust theology of worship than that practised in many churches today.

To round out this first section of the essay, it can be briefly noted that the revival tradition of eighteenth and nineteenth century America, so formative for the evangelical Protestant heritage, did not escape the 'flattening' impact of the Enlightenment on worship practices and sensibilities. In the drama and excitement of personal conversion experiences in the setting of the revival meeting, the momentum of the religious meeting typically reached its climax in the sermon preached and the 'invitation', not in the invitation to encounter the 'real presence' of Christ in the Eucharist.

Revivalism arguably contributed, however unintentionally, to the further marginalization of the Lord's Supper in American evangelicalism: the 'real'

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18 From the title of the book by Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: a Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), considered by some to be one of the 'bibles' of the modern revival of Wicca and goddess religion. On modern goddess religions, see Larry W. Hurtado, ed., *Goddesses in Religion and Modern Debate* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990).

19 In 1977 Paul Vitz, noting the cultural shift under way, wrote that the '…search for transcendence of the self is now firmly begun… the country is full of holy men—Sri Chinmoy, Maharishi,… Baba Ram Dass… but where are the Christian holy ones? Where are the Christian mystical messengers to our pagan universities and suburbs?' in *Psychology as Religion: the Cult of Self-Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), pp.134-35. The 'Emerging Church' movement can be seen as one attempt to respond to this shift in sensibility.

action was to be found in the sermon, not in the bread and the wine. This 'Frontier' style[20] of worship pushed American evangelicalism in the direction of a simpler, more casual, less liturgical, and more speaker-oriented styles of worship—a trajectory that can be traced from Whitefield to Finney to Billy Graham to Bill Hybels and Willow Creek at the present. In its weakest and crassest expressions, the 'Frontier' model of worship could focus the consciousness of its participants on the magnetic personality of the revival speaker rather than on the glory of the Risen Christ, invisibly but truly present in the assembly in the power of the Spirit.

The 'Frontier' model of worship had the unintended consequence of shifting the audience's attention from the 'Big Name of Jesus' (heavenly Kurios, Acts 2), invisible in heaven, to the 'Big Name speaker'[21] who was visible on the earthly (concert) stage. The stage had been set for a 'doxological paradigm shift' from 'Kurios-consciousness' to 'celebrity consciousness' as the tacit preunderstanding of the evangelical attendee at 'worship' events. The loss of the sense of the presence of the *sacred* qua sacred in the worship-event can lead to a state of affairs where the 'worshippers' celebrate not the presence of the transcendent God, but rather celebrate the Self in and among *themselves*.

II 'The Ontology of Worship':

In this middle section of the essay attention will be focused on the 'ontology of worship'. This terminology is being proposed to call attention to the following claim: all theologies and practices of worship presuppose certain background theories or ontologies *of what is considered real*; and further, that eviscerated or 'thin' background theories of the real will produce thin or eviscerated expressions of worship, even in the case of formally adequate theories of the real, but which are in fact diminished in view of pervasive background pressures and influences from the dominant culture and the churches' own worship traditions. It is proposed in this essay that the ontologies or background theories of the real that underlie the worship practices of most Protestant evangelical churches have been substantially eviscerated by pressures of the Enlightenment's scientific naturalism and by the 'Frontier' traditions of worship stemming from revivalism, and that this 'thinning' of worship has not been adequately recognized or challenged from the perspective of a robust evangelical and biblical theology of worship.[22]

This reflection on the 'ontology of worship' will be in four parts: first, observations regarding ontology in general; second, observations on the ontology of the *church*, that is, reflection on the ontological or metaphysical reality of the *ecclesia* in relation to

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20 On the impact of the 'Frontier Tradition' of worship on the American churches, see James F. White, *A Brief History of Christian Worship* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), pp.160-61.

21 And, more recently, at times to the 'Big Name Band' in emulation of rock star celebrity concerts.

22 Substantive Protestant treatments of the theology of worship would include J.J. von Allmen, *Worship: Theology and Practice* (New York: Oxford, 1965) [Reformed], and Peter Brunner, *Worship in the Name of Jesus* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1968) [Lutheran].

other entities that constitute the total class of the 'real', in view of the belief that proper understanding of what the church *does* (e.g., worship) arises out of insight into what the church essentially *is*; third, reflection on the ontology of worship with respect to the *context* worship, i.e., the location of the church's worship-event in space, in time, and in relation both to the heavenly realm and to the lower creation; and fourth, with regard to the ontology of worship and the *event* character of worship, reflections will be focused on the ontological nature of *games* and *play* as specific forms of human activity, in order to elicit, by way of metaphorical and analogical imagination, fruitful insights about the ontic quality of the church's worship-event.

These latter reflections will be informed by perspectives drawn from the sociology of knowledge, cultural anthropology, studies of symbol and ritual, and concepts drawn from information science and computer technologies.

1. Ontology: General Considerations

First, with regard to a general ontology or background theory of the real, a five-level ontology is here presupposed, with historic Christian and biblical theism being assumed as normative. Five levels or realms of the real can be distinguished in this schema: Level 1 is the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—where the Son is recognized as the eternal Logos, incarnate, crucified, now enthroned at the right hand of the Father as *kurios*, as cosmic Lord of the universe and of the church. The Holy Trinity, as eternal, uncreated, and necessarily existent, has the greatest 'ontic weight' of any level, and is the source and ground of all else that constitutes temporal and created realities.

This 'ontic density' of God, a 'neutron star' of Trinitarian Being, will be visibly manifested on the Day of the Lord and the Last Judgment, when 'Earth and Sky will flee from his presence' (Rev. 20:11); the relative 'lightness' of the seemingly solid physical universe will then become apparent. As the ground and starting point of any proper biblical and Christian ontology, the self-grounded reality of the Holy Trinity shows that the ultimately real is *personal* and not impersonal in nature, and that, more specifically, the ultimately Real is found in *persons in relationship*, not in an abstract and impersonal 'Being'.[23]

Level 2 is the spirit or 'heavenly' world: angels, archangels, principalities, powers; Satan, demons; saints, martyrs, the 'church triumphant'. Entities in Level 2 are created, not eternal realities, and are understood to have such personal attributes as consciousness, intelligence, and will.[24]

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23 This critical insight has been advanced vigorously in Trinitarian theology by John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985); see also his subsequent work, *Communion and Otherness* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 2007).

24 The eclipsing and neglect of the spiritual world in the modern church is noted by the Episcopal priest Charles Jaekle, *Angels: Their Mission and Message* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse, 1995), p.2: 'I, for one, cannot recall one sermon on that subject that I ever preached, or heard anyone else preach, in all my years within the Christian church… Further, I cannot recall even once, in all my entire theological education… any discussion having to do with angels or the church's historic angelologies.'

Level 3 is man, *Homo sapiens*, considered, in Christian and biblical theism, to be created in the divine image for relationship with the Trinity, but then fallen, and subsequently redeemed (or redeemable) in Jesus Christ. The designation 'Level 3' suggests that *Homo sapiens* occupies something of an intermediate position in the schema of reality, being capable of conscious awareness of and interaction with entities in the other four levels.

Level 5 consists of material (but subhuman) entities: animate, inanimate, sentient, non-sentient: rocks, trees, great blue whales, bald eagles, dinosaurs, stars, black holes, electrons, Mount Everest, and so forth. The entities generally associated with the biblical concept of the 'creation' or 'Nature' are to be found here.

Level 4 consists of entities occupying the realm of the *symbolic* and the *cultural-artifactual*, a class of entities including what is termed 'virtual reality': a song by the Beatles such as 'Eleanor Rigby'; the Constitution and Bill of Rights; cave paintings in Lascaux, France; a recipe for apple cobbler or blueberry muffins; Einstein's Theory of Special Relativity; traffic laws for the state of Massachusetts; software for a computer game such as *Myst V*; a performance of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*; the books in the Library of Congress; the IPod and IPhone; EBay; Google; Microsoft Office; the rules governing major league baseball; the rite of the Latin Tridentine mass—and so forth, *ad infinitum*.

The point here is that *Homo sapiens*—or biblical man as *imago Dei* is a symbol-using creature, and has the power to make and shape his own world through symbolic creativity and invention. Man rarely if ever relates to the 'natural' world immediately, without symbolic mediation, but almost exclusively through symbolically shaped media: clothing, furniture, tools, instruments, and, most crucially, through the symbols of language, mathematics, music, and culturally learned and transmitted practices and experiences.[25]

The symbolic-cultural world is a world of *information*—that is, a patterned string of symbols that convey meaning, that can give structure and function to material objects and processes, and provide 'scripts' for human performances and behaviour. Information is embedded, for example, in the DNA of the double helix's genetic code in every living cell; in mathematical formulae; in the Code of Hammurabi; in the musical score of Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*; in the lines of code that constitute the software of Microsoft *Office* or *Powerpoint*. The scientific community is, in fact, beginning to recognize information as a 'fifth form' of natural reality—alongside space, time, matter, and energy.[26]

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25 Cultural anthropologists have defined culture as systems of symbols—law, religion, music, myth, rituals, scientific theories—that give meaning and identity to social groups and define their place in the larger scheme of the universe: see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Amos Rapoport, 'Spatial Organization and Built Environment', *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 460-452.

26 Hans Christian von Baeyer, 'Information as Physical Reality: a New Fundamental Principle Proposed by Anton Zeilinger', http://www.mdpi.org/fis2005; von Baeyer, 'In the

Level-4 realities can be recognized as having as much ontic weight as entities in levels 2, 3, and 5—perhaps not self-evident, but to be argued below.

Several brief observations will be offered here regarding the relevance of this five-level ontological schematic as a hermeneutical device for reflecting on the ontology of worship. With regard to Levels 1 and 2—the Triune God and the inhabitants of the heavenly realm—various influences have conspired to eviscerate the doxological imagination of Protestant evangelicalism. Much popular evangelical preaching is effectively 'Unitarian', focusing on Christ to the neglect of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, and further, this Christ is generally imaged as the historical Jesus, dying on the cross, with little discourse (except perhaps at Easter) on Christ as the *presently risen, living, reigning and returning Lord*, the Kurios who is 'religiously available' in 'real time' through the Spirit in the worship-event.

Level 2 religious imagination was also 'stripped' by Reformation and Puritan iconoclasm, removing from the churches the weekly visual reminders of the saints, the angels, the Virgin, the martyrs, and 'all the company of heaven'. The unremitting foreground and background pressures of scientific naturalism tended to make the imaginative intensity of angels and demons and the heavenly world recede in the modern evangelical mind, despite the continued affirmation of these realities at the formal and theological levels.[27]

Level 5 realities—the 'creation', the world of nature, the animal world and the biosphere—are generally underrepresented in Protestant evangelical doxological imagination as well. 'Creation' is often referenced in terms of 'creation-evolution' controversies, not with respect to the intrinsic value and beauty of creation, itself to be redeemed (Rom. 8:21,22) in its eschatological trajectory toward a glorious New Creation (Rev. 21, 22). This trajectory of creation toward the glorious New Creation is largely underrepresented in the church's hymnody, preaching, and doxological imagination generally.

Level 4 realities—the world of symbols, words, rituals, cultural artefacts, and so forth—can also, curiously, be underrepresented in the evangelical doxological imagination, even though the evangelical Protestant tradition is a very 'wordy' tradition, a tradition of 'the Book'. Some of the possible reasons for this defect, rooted in a thin theology or ontology of culture, will be suggested below, in relation to the discussion of the ontology of the game and of play.

Beginning Was the Bit', in *New Scientist* n.2278 (17 February 2001). Zeilinger, an Austrian physicist and specialist in quantum mechanics, has proposed that information theory can provide a way of unifying the worlds of classical and quantum physics: cf. Anton Zeilinger, 'A Foundational Principle for Quantum Mechanics,' *Foundations of Physics* 29(1999):631-43.

27 This generalization needs to be somewhat qualified in light of the Pentecostal and charismatic revivals since 1900, and the recent growth of the Southern Church, giving greater prominence to the reality of the spirit world and the demonic.

2. Ontology of the Church

Before proceeding with reflection on the ontology of the worship-event, some observations will be offered concerning the *ontology of the church*. The significance and weight of a human activity is very much dependent on the context within which the activity takes place. Boys kicking a soccer ball around in a city park and Brazil vs. France in the final game of the World Cup are both 'soccer,' but the latter is a much more intense and 'weighty' expression of the game. A support staff entering data on laptop computers in the local high school and a support staff working on laptops on Air Force One with the president of the United States on board are engaged in similar activities, but the latter staff has greater 'weight' and authority. The 'White House' is not just a building on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., but *that place where the president is personally present*—a centre of command and control and authority.

Three of the fundamental images of the church in the New Testament[28]—the family of God (the Father), the body of Christ (the Son), and the temple of the Holy Spirit—call attention not only to the Trinitarian and pneumatic nature of the church, but also to the *presence of the living, Triune God* as its defining and characteristic mark. Throughout the Bible it is assumed that the initiative in true worship is God's, and of particular significance for understanding the divine initiative

is the reality of the *divine presence*, in connection with the ark and mercy seat, the cloud and fiery pillar in the wilderness, the tabernacle, and the temple as places of manifestation of the glory of God.[29]

The ecclesia, the assembly of the living God, the true church, is that entity constituted by those people elected and called by God, assembled by his authority in his presence to experience and respond to his presence in the worship-event. In biblical thought, the presence/parousia of the true and living God unmasks and overturns the 'common sense' ontology of self-enclosed naturalism. When Yahweh appears on the Day of The Lord, 'the mountains melt like wax before him'(Ps.97:5)—the apparent solidity of a Mount Everest disappears like smoke in a hurricane, like shadows of the night before the rising sun—before the intense ontic reality of the Triune God, whose 'ontic density' places the 'lightness of material being' in its proper perspective.

The personal presence of God in the ecclesia, by virtue of his covenant promises, his Word, sacraments, and Spirit, invests the ecclesia with an ontic weight that does not obtain with merely human organizations and assemblies.[30] In practice, it seems that

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28 Cf. Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

29 C.E.B. Cranfield, 'Divine and Human Action: the Biblical Concept of Worship,' *Interpretation* 12 (1958):385-98 at 386; the entire article is worthy of careful study.

30 A high 'ontology of the church' is presented, from an Orthodox perspective, by Sergius Bulgakov, *The Bride of the Lamb* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 2002), 253-68, based on his reading of Eph. 1:4-11 and the biblical

ordinary evangelical Protestant concepts of the church reflect notions that are more sociological than theological, more functional and pragmatic than 'mystical' and ontological, more 'Pelagian'[31] than 'Pauline' and pneumatic, i.e., an eviscerated ecclesiology in which the church is viewed as a voluntary human organization gathered for certain activities: 'worship and praise', instruction and motivation, and friendship.

The ecclesia of the New Testament is in fact a *theanthropic reality*, considered ontologically. That is to say, its reality can only be partially described in terms of material, sociological, psychological, anthropological, and historical categories; these latter categories can be useful in describing aspects of the church, but they fail to capture its defining essence. The ecclesia is a *sui generis* entity in the universe, among the ensemble of all entities constituting the 'real', for it is essentially that class of individuals among the species *Homo sapiens*, from the beginning of time, chosen and designated to subsist, exist, and have their identity and purpose defined and grounded by a real ontic bonding with the Triune God, mediated by Word, Spirit, and sacrament.

The ecclesia *is* the family of God the Father; the ecclesia *is* the body of Christ the Son; the ecclesia *is* the temple of God the Holy Spirit, where 'is' is given full ontic weight. This real presence of the Triune God and his ontic-covenantal bonding with his people was manifested experientially in the Pauline assemblies of the New Testament era, as the cry 'Abba' expressed the sense of the personal presence of the Father, the cry 'Maranatha' the vivid awareness of the risen, exalted and returning Son, and the Spirit was palpably felt in the manifestations of the charisms exercised by *each one* (1 Cor. 14:26). Not only the Corinthian church was 'charismatic,' however; in New Testament theology, each true assembly is pneumatic, Trinitarian, and theanthropic in its fundamental being.

The evangelical Protestant tradition has been characterized as generally having a 'low ecclesiology'; the New Testament, however, has a *high* and ontically 'weighty' ecclesiology, because it has a *high Christology*.[32] The church is 'high' because Christ is 'high': seated at the right hand of the Almighty, as *kurios* invested with universal and plenipotentiary authority,

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images of the Bride of Christ and the Temple of the Holy Spirit: 'The Church… is a union of divine and creaturely principles, their interpenetration without separation and without confusion' (p. 262). In terms of the present essay, the church could be seen to represent a unique '*theanthropic* ontology' grounded in the eternal mind and purpose of God (cf. Eph.1:4).
31 The term 'Pelagian' has been suggested by James Torrance as a characterization of much Protestant worship, in the sense that, in practice, it seems to be performed in merely human energy, as though true worship in 'Spirit and in truth' (Jn. 4:24) did not require the 'pneumatic' presence and energy of the Spirit himself: *Worship, Community, and the Triune God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997), pp.20, 92, 117.

32 On the 'high ecclesiology' in Paul, especially in the prison epistles, see Lucien Cerfaux, *The Church in the Theology of St. Paul* (New York: Herder, 1959), pp.289-383, 'The Church Heavenly'.

appointed as 'head over all things *for the church*, which is his body, the *fullness* of him [Christ] who *fills* everything in every way'(Eph. 1:22,23, emphasis added).

The glory/kabod/'heaviness' of the glorious Son flows into the ecclesia, the beloved bride of the Son, who fills his church with his Spirit, his love, joy—and ontic weight. At the end of this filling, this 'pleromafication' of the church, it will be revealed in sight as the massive, beautiful, and intensely real entity depicted in the new creation imagery of the New Creation (Rev. 21, 22),[33] a real 'reality' in which the 'reality', beauty, and value of the present age takes a quantum leap upward into an unimaginable future.

It is essential, then, for the people of the ecclesia to have an 'ontology of the church from above,' constituted by an awareness and recognition of its theanthropic, Trinitarian, and pneumatic character. This is in contrast with an ontology of the church 'from below', driven by functional, empirical, and pragmatic categories, all of which are all too prone to be held captive by the impoverished doxological imagination of modernity and its consumerist and entertainment-driven concerns.

This section on the ontology of the church will be rounded out by noting a number of distinctions that can be made with regard to the church in its

several aspects and manifestations. The church pre-existed in a *conceptual* sense in the eternal mind and plan of God before matter, energy, space and time were created by God *ex nihilo* in the 'Big Bang' creation event: 'he [the Father] chose us [the church, the body of Christ, temple of the Spirit] in him [in relation to the Son] *before the creation of the universe* (Eph. 1:4, emphasis added).[34] As foreseen and intended in the pretemporal consciousness and purpose of the Holy Trinity, the church already had ontic reality, for any entity conceptualized and willed by the eternal God has reality even prior to its historical and physical creation.[35]

This conceptual reality is then actualized as *historical and empirical* reality as God calls, converts, and assembles his chosen people through the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and New Covenants and the regenerative power of the Spirit in the *ordo salutis* (Rom.8:29,30). This historical and empirical church,

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33 The massive dimensions of the New Jerusalem/ecclesia—a cube measuring 1,400 miles long, wide, and high (Rev. 21:16)—and the gold, silver, and precious stones that image its nature, all point to the intensification, magnification, and ontological 'weightiness' of the *value, beauty, and being* of the church as a theanthropic reality.

34 The laws of physics, chemistry, and biology, the fundamental physical constants, are 'friendly to life' ('cosmic coincidences') because God created the physical world and its laws for the purpose of and having the church in view as his final purpose.

35 Theologically, in terms of the knowledge of God, it is usual to distinguish between those things that are known by God as logical but merely hypothetical possibilities (e.g., a world in which John Wilkes Booth did not shoot Abraham Lincoln), and those things foreknown by God as to become actual, because of the determination of the divine will that it become actual (e.g., that Jesus would die on the cross in Jerusalem). The latter has more ontic weight than the former; a set of symbols such as '2+2=5' has no coherent meaning, is not known as such by God or other rational agents, and hence has no ontic weight.

constituted with a theanthropic, pneumatic, and Trinitarian ontology, then subsists in either its 'gathered' or 'scattered' state.

When the church gathers itself together intentionally *as a church, in the name of the Lord Jesus* (1 Cor.5:4; cf.14:23-25), as an assembly of God for the worship of God, then God himself is present, and the church can experience its full theanthropic and ontological weight. The transcendent Christ is then immanently and really present in the midst of the assembly, investing it with his own reality, authority, and 'weight'.

An analogy may help to illuminate this distinction between the church as 'gathered' and 'scattered', with the gathered church being understood as having greater ontological weight and depth. Twelve persons called and selected to sit on a federal grand jury spend weeks hearing evidence and argument in a complex case involving terrorism and national security. At the lunch breaks, the members of the jury are strictly charged not to discuss the case with one another in the cafeteria; they are, so to speak, 'off duty'. Though still a jury ('scattered'), they do not have the full authority invested in jury members as a jury until they are officially 'gathered' again into the courtroom by the federal authority that called and constituted them in the first instance.

In like manner, the ecclesia can be thought of as 'scattered' during the other 'six days', but when gathered on Resurrection Day, the Day of the Lord, when the Lord himself is present in the Spirit, then they are invested with the ontological weight and exousia of the Lord himself, and their actions—wor-ship—is accordingly invested with high weight and significance.

3. Ontology of the Context of Worship

In this next section of the essay the theme of the ontology of the church will be examined with a view to highlighting the ontology of the *context* of the church and its worship. More specifically, attention is to be drawn to the peculiar and ontologically distinct nature of the *space* and *time* within which the worship-event takes place; the claim here is that, according to the theology of the New Testament, space and time themselves are altered and no longer 'ordinary space' or 'ordinary time' in light of the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus as Lord, the eruption of the age to come, and the outpouring and presence of the Spirit.

As to the nature of time in the worship-event, the assembly acts not in 'ordinary time', but what can be called 'Kingdom time', for with the advent of the Messiah, the ontic reality of the heavenly kingdom has erupted into ordinary time and history, 'the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'. The ecclesia experiences the presence of the Risen Christ in the power and presence of the Spirit, and lives between the 'already' and the 'not yet'; it is the End-time assembly of the Lord upon whom the end of history as we know it has already come (1 Cor. 10:11). The powers of the future age to come (Heb. 6:5) are already being experienced as present in the gathered assembly.

The great events of the redemptive past such as the Exodus, crossing of the Red Sea, Sinai, the cross and the resurrection, are 'remembered' not

just notionally and informationally in a 'Zwinglian' sense, but are made spiritually present (cf. Deut.5: 2,3: the Lord made a covenant at Horeb… with all of us who are alive here this day').[36] By the believing assembly's mystical and covenantal personal bond with the Lord through word, sacrament, and Spirit, the assembly experiences sacred 'time travel', re-experiencing with the Lord and his people the power of the saving events of the past, as well as tasting the reality of the future New Creation in the 'down payment' of the Spirit.

The members of the sacred assembly, chosen from eternity (Eph.1:4), are seen by God as mystically present at the Exodus, at the Last Supper, at the Cross, at the empty tomb, at Pentecost, for these events were pre-ordained with each member in mind as mystical beneficiaries and participants.

Sacred past and promised future are *ontologicaly* and not merely metaphorically present in the worship-event. This experience of the past and the Spirit-mediated experience of the future are constitutive for authentic Christian worship according to the New Testament. Not 'chronos', ordinary clock-time, but *kairos*, redemptive time, is the 'real' time during which the worship-event takes place.[37]

Similarly, the spatial context of the worship event, whether cathedral or house church, is not ordinary space, but is transformed, spiritually,[38] into sacred, 'Kingdom space'. This latter term is meant to evoke the image of an assembly caught up in the worship-event 'between heaven and earth'. In the liturgy the assembly is invited to 'Lift up your hearts… we lift them up unto the Lord'. John of the Apocalypse is 'in the Spirit' on the Lord's day (Rev. 1:10), and is lifted into the midst of the heavenly worship (Rev. 4, 5, 19) where he sees the Lamb on the throne, in the midst of countless angels and the church triumphant.

John's vision of heavenly worship is not unique in the New Testament; the writer of Hebrews reminds his readers that in worship they come into the presence of the Heavenly Zion and thousands of angels in festive assembly (Heb. 12:22-24). Paul reminds the Corinthians that in their assembly they worship in the presence of the angels (1 Cor. 11:10); for Paul, in fact, each believer is seated spiritually and mystically in the presence of Christ in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:6), and in the Spirit is being transformed, like Moses on Mount Sinai, by beholding the Shekinah glory of God in the face of the

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36 Cf. Edward P. Blair, 'An Appeal to Remembrance: the Memory Motif in Deuteronomy,' *Interpretation* 15 (1961), pp.43,47: 'In the Bible… If one remembers in the biblical sense, the past is brought into the present with compelling power… The patriarchs and the prophets become our contemporaries.'

37 Cf. Paul Hoon, *The Integrity of Worship: Ecumenical and Pastoral Studies in Liturgical Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), p. 131:

'… worship transforms time into its own time—'sacred time' or 'liturgical time'… Wherever two or three are gathered, there *am* I. The action of worship is grounded in the past action of the Word yet contemporizing and futurizing itself.'

38 That is, in view of the *epiclesis*, or prayer of invocation for the presence of the Lord in the Spirit to be present with the worshipping assembly when it gathers *as a church*.

risen, glorified Christ (2 Cor. 3:18).

The standpoints of John, of the writer of Hebrews, and of Paul should not be viewed as 'extraordinary' but as the 'normal' experience of the church in worship; its self-consciousness during the worship-event can rightly be termed 'heavenly' and pneumatic ('in the Spirit').

While biblical, Christian worship is 'heavenly' in that its sense of space is not limited to earth but keenly aware of heavenly realities, it can also be said to be 'earthly' in that, like the psalmist, it can invite the lower creation, the sea creatures, the animals, mountains, hills, fruit trees and all cedars (Ps. 148), to join in the praise of the glorious God, in anticipation of the renewal of all creation at the end of history (Rom.8: 21,22).

The praises of God's people for God's redemption of humanity do not forget God's work to redeem and transform the lower creation. It is fitting, then, for the physical space in which the assembly gather for worship symbolically, visually, and liturgically to enrich the Christian's imagination with images of the heavenly court and of a creation waiting for full redemption.

'Primitive,' premodern religions have a sense of the sacred space that is largely lacking in religious communities living under the ontological flatness of modernity. As Mircea Eliade has noted, for man in traditional religions, '… space is not homogeneous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others… the religious experience of nonhomogeneity of space is a primordial experience… the manifestation of the sacred ontologically founds the world' and gives it a

centre.[39] Moses takes off his shoes at the Burning Bush because the place where he is standing, where Yahweh chooses to reveal himself, is *holy ground*.[40] This is what Rudolf Otto in his classic study, *The Idea of the Holy*, called the sense of the 'numinous' or the 'aweful' *mysterium tremendum*.[41] The loss of this sense in much contemporary worship is a mark of the alienation of such worship from the biblical realities.[42]

Traditional Protestant religious sensibility may find the notion of 'sacred' or 'special' space troubling. Is it not the case, it might be asked, that in a post-70 A.D. context, after the resurrection and ascension, after the destruction of the Jewish temple, that all places are equally sacred and equally profane? Is it not the case that the church is now called to worship God not merely in 'Jerusalem' or 'Mount Gerizim' (Jn. 4:23,24) but in 'Spirit and in truth'?

This is indeed the case, but misses a crucial point in texts such as Jn.

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39 Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: the Nature of Religion* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957, 1961), pp. 20,21.

40 Since the sixth century the Greek Orthodox monks at St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai peninsula have remembered Mt. Sinai as a special place, where God revealed himself to Moses in the Burning Bush.

41 Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1931).

42 David F. Wells has called attention to the loss of the sense of the holiness of God in evangelicalism in *No Place for Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 300, and to the sense of the 'weightlessness' or inconsequentiality of God in modern culture in *God in the Wasteland* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), p.88.

4:23,24 and 1 Cor. 11:23-25 ('if the whole church *comes together*… 'God is really among you!''), namely, that when the assembly gathers in the name of Jesus and the Lord is present in the power of the Spirit (worshipping 'in Spirit', Jn. 4:24) then that location is a 'special' location not in virtue of the building or room per se, but because *the Lord himself is present*. Air Force One becomes a special airplane, it becomes for that time the 'White House' because *the President of the United States of America is on board and is in command*.

To briefly recapitulate, then, this discussion of the ontology of the *context* of the church's worship, when the church worships in 'Spirit and in truth', ordinary space and time become 'Kingdom space' and 'Kingdom time'. The earthly assembly is lifted up to heaven, seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Eph. 2:6), in the presence of the angels and the church triumphant (Heb. 12:22,23), and the powers of the age to come can be experienced *now* in the act of worship (Heb. 6:5; 1 Cor. 5:4).

A sports analogy may help to make the foregoing a bit more 'down to earth'. It could be said that 'Fenway Park' in Boston both is and yet is not the same baseball park in February and in late October. On a cold February afternoon during the off season, Fenway Park is still Fenway Park, though deserted, quiet, and forlorn. Late in October, with the Yankees in town, last of the ninth, two outs and a full count, bases loaded, with Ortiz at the plate, the Red Sox down by one run and the American League championship on the line—a capacity crowd, bright lights, emotion running at fever pitch—then, for this 'kairos', Fenway Park is no

'ordinary' place and this is no ordinary time but a 'magical' and intense moment that the fans may remember for the rest of their lives, and tell their children after them. Because of the participants in the game, and the 'historic' nature of the event, here is a 'parallel universe' that for those moments, are more 'real' than ordinary life itself.

4. Ontology of the Worship-Event

The baseball analogy above provides a natural transition to the last part of this middle section, to a discussion of the ontology of worship itself, considered as 'event' or by way of analogy, as 'game' or 'play'. As a point of departure, consider the definition of 'play' offered by Johan Huizanga in his classic treatment of the subject, *Homo Ludens: a Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (1998):

> Play is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself, joy and the consciousness that it is different from 'ordinary life'.[43]

This definition of 'play' can encompass games, sporting events such as baseball, a staging of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, a performance of the *1812 Overture* by the Boston Pops in Symphony Hall, a computer simulation game such as *Myst*, and many other expression of human culture, including liturgical worship. It draws attention

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43 Johan Huizanga, *Homo Ludens* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 26.

to the fact that such activities are socially constructed, rule-based activities[44] pursued for their own sake, usually for enjoyment and emotional intensity. They provide for their participants a sense of participating imaginatively in an 'alternative world' that, for the duration of the game, is more interesting than 'ordinary' life.

Such activities are, in practice, 'consciousness raising' or 'consciousness altering' events that are pursued, in large measure, for the purpose of experiencing such different states of consciousness. Participation in these 'games' generally involves what the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge called the 'willing suspension of disbelief' in 'ordinary' and customary perception, in order to enjoy a different state of awareness or a different way of looking at the world.[45]

Before pursuing further reflection on this definition of play, considered as a hermeneutical device or heuristic tool for reflection on the ontology of the worship event, a possible objection to this inquiry should be acknowledged. Some readers may be thinking, 'The comparison of Christian worship to "play" is demeaning to the biblical understanding of worship, and trivializes it.' It is true that in our current (American) cultural context, the word 'game' or 'play' tends to evoke images of the trivial and the superficial, of frenzied and over-hyped events in professional sports, of TV game shows such as *Jeopardy* or *Survivor*, that can embody the consumerist, entertainment oriented, and often competitive and violent elements of the culture.

All this being acknowledged, it remains the case that Huizanga has pointed to the 'game' as a serious subject for cultural reflection and analysis, because games are expressions of *Homo sapiens'* distinctive capacities for *imagination* and *symbolic thought*. The (human) capacity to envision and build a structure like the Eiffel Tower, and the activity of a colony of beavers building a dam in a mountain stream, differ essentially in that while the beavers build a structure by instinct, with little or no symbolic mediation, the human builder can, by an act of imagination, see a state of affairs that transcends the immediate environment, and construct that vision through the use of tools and symbols. The human's powers of visual imagination and manipulation of symbols (verbal, mathemati-

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44 Other human activities, such as a courtroom trial, or commuting to work, are socially constructed and rule-based, but are generally not pursued as ends in themselves for inherent enjoyment, but as means to other human ends, i.e., the pursuit of justice or earning a living. The logical structures and semantics of socially constructed 'institutional facts' such as marriage, money, and contracts have been analysed by the philosopher John Searle in *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1995), esp. chpt.2, 'Creating Institutional Facts'.

45 The phrase was coined in Coleridge's *Biographica Literaria* (1817), recalling his collaboration with Wordsworth in the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). Coleridge was making the point that good poetry can help the reader of the poem to see and experience the world in a fresh way, and can even '… excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom': in 'Suspension of Disbelief,' http'//en.wikipedia.org/ wiki/suspension-of-disbelief/ (accessed 12 November 2007).

cal, visual) are constitutive of the human qua human, and distinguish humanity from the lower animals.[46]

It should also be noted that in our 'ordinary' day-to-day existence, we as human beings rarely if ever encounter 'nature' in pure, unmediated state.[47] We move in a 'built' environment in which human symbols, images, intentions and purposes have been impressed on material objects. The carpet on the floor, the light fixture in the ceiling, the car keys in my pocket, the MP3 file on the IPod (as well as the IPod itself), the Google homepage on my laptop, the food on the table, the clothing we wear, the traffic rules we (usually) observe, the National Anthem at Fenway Park, the language we speak, the textbooks in our schools, the movies we watch…. *ad infinitum*.

Even 'wilderness' experiences—a hike in the remote regions of the Grand Tetons, for example—are still in fact symbolically mediated experiences, by virtue of the images and words I have absorbed through my guidebook, the backpack on my back, the maps, my culturally inherited memories and

expectations, and so forth. All this is to say that *Homo sapiens* is by nature a *culture forming* creature, and relates to the 'natural' environment through the mediation of 'cultural worlds' (law, religion, literature, music, rituals, images, traditions) that he himself has largely constructed through his own symbolic and imaginative capacities.

We now turn to a metaphorical and analogical comparison of the worship-event itself and an online, multiplayer, interactive computer simulation game[48] such as *World of Warcraft*.[49] As of 2007, the game developers were claiming some nine million online players distributed around the world, clustered in the United States and Canada, Europe, Australia, South Korea, and China.

For those unfamiliar with such online simulation games, the imaginative landscape of *World of Warcraft*, set in the imaginary world of Azeroth, has a neo-pagan, magical, and Gothic ethos reminiscent of elements of *Star Wars,*

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46 From the perspective of paleoanthropology, the emergence of clearly symbolic representations such as the beautiful cave paintings in the caves of Lascaux and elsewhere point to the emergence of culturally modern man, in distinction from earlier forms such as the Neanderthals, Homo erectus, and the Australopithicenes, whose behaviours and relationship to their environments did not seem to be mediated primarily by symbols.

47 This has been pointed out perceptively by the cultural anthropologist Thomas Zengotita in Mediated: *How the Media Shapes Your World and the Way You Live in It* (New York: Bloomsburg Publishing, 2005).

48 In his insightful article, 'Metaphor or Invocation? The Convergence between Modern Paganism and Fantasy Fiction', *Journal of Ritual Studies* 21(2007):1-15 Martin Ramstedt, notes that 'Fantasy role-playing games provide an intense link between mythic and mythological stories on the one hand, and personal imagination on the other, by allowing players to literally become part of the story… Cyberspace.. has nowadays turned into a salient metaphor for a realm of transcendence or "soul space"… the real success of "virtual reality" has also contributed to blurring the boundaries between the realms of the "factual" and the metaphorical' pp. 11,12.

49 The following descriptions are based on the article 'World of Warcraft,' http://en. wikipedia.or/wiki/World_of_Warcraft (accessed 16 November 2007).

Lord of the Rings, and *Harry Potter.* Players are characters in opposing factions (the 'Alliance' and the 'Horde'), choose membership in different 'races' (Human, Night Elves, Gnomes, Orcs, Undead, Trolls, etc.), 'character classes' (Druid, Hunter, Paladin, Priest, Rogue, etc.), and 'professions' (Herbalism, Mining, Alchemy, Enchanting, Cooking, Fishing, etc.), and engage in combat, fighting monsters, performing quests, building skills, and interacting with other players (and non-player characters driven by artificial intelligence) and earning money, rewards, and 'honour points'. The online game universe of *World of Warcraft* is supported by an online virtual community with chat forums, places for the display and exchange of personal artwork, videos, and comic-strip style storytelling.

It is fairly evident that *World of Warcraft* is an impressive contemporary example of the 'game' as defined by Huizinga above: 'a voluntary activity… executed within certain fixed limits… having its aim in itself… and the consciousness that it is different from "ordinary" life.' It is also intriguing to look at this enormously popular game as functioning, for some of its participants, at least, as a *substitute for religion.Warcraft* projects a complex, mysterious alternative world that appeals strongly to the imagination and emotions; has a multi-level 'ontology' of sentient beings that mimic the imaginative worlds of religion and myth (angels, demons, etc.); has story lines of the conflict of good and evil; provides a sense of community; provides opportunities for personal skill development and social recognition; the presence of magical powers mimics the supernaturalism of the biblical world and provides imaginative relief from the flat world of scientific naturalism and 'everyday' life.

It is no surprise that for the hundreds of thousands (millions?) of adolescents[50] around the globe that 'live' in *World of Warcraft*, that this alternative world, supported by powerful computer servers and software, and sophisticated 3-D graphic animations, is emotionally and imaginatively more 'real' than the 'boring' everyday realities of high school algebra—or typical church services!

The concept of *fantasy* associated with games such as *World of Warcraft*, suggesting as it does frivolous and unproductive activities of an escapist nature, may deflect attention from the significant cultural and religious implications that are embedded in this contemporary development in the cyber-world. Fantasy is an expression of the power of humans to imagine, to visualize a state of affairs different from the existing (ordinary) world, and as such is intrinsic to human nature and behaviour.

The imaginatively constructed Gothic world of *Warcraft* is not utterly different from the imaginatively constructed worlds of Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* or Shakespeare's *Macbeth* or *Beowulf* or *Cinderella* or the score for Beethoven's *Fifth Symphony*, though

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50 This is not to suggest or claim that all or the great majority of online gamers are adolescents, though many are; precise user demographics are not known to the author. Anecdotal evidence and personal observation suggests, however, that such online gaming is heavily populated by Gen-X and 'Millennial' males.

the literary quality and cultural level may vary from case to case. Each of the latter can be viewed as 'Level 4' (above) socially constructed symbolic artefacts. Such cultural artefacts are 'real' and have ontic weight to the extent that they display internal structures and coherence, embody intentions, meanings, and symbolic references, encode information, have stable existence over time, and have the power to shape and influence human behaviours and institutions.

The information encoded in the software for a game such as *Warcraft*, or, for that matter, in Microsoft Office, has an 'objective' existence that is to be contrasted, say, with the more 'fantastic' and shadowy reality of my private dream last night ('I dreamed I was Elvis Presley') or a hallucination (e.g., *A Beautiful Mind*). The dream has some reality, insofar as it is an experience that affected me (privately), but it lacks the public, intersubjective, coherent, and more enduring reality of entities here characterized as occupying ontic levels 1-5.[51]

Finally, to introduce the 'thought experiment' of viewing the worship-event as 'online multi-player simulation game', imagine that in the game of *World of Warcraft*, currently in progress, that the players encounter a mysterious new player-Avatar—a player of enormous knowledge, skill, and wisdom—who, in fact is an extra-terrestrial being, 'Golem', from a highly advanced civilization in another, very-distant galaxy. A transcendent, god-like being has become immanent in the world of Azeroth, interacts with its participants, and is 'really present' to them through his avatar.

It is easy enough to complete the comparison: in authentic Christian worship, the risen, reigning, glorified, and returning Christ is present to the worship participants through his 'avatar', the Holy Spirit;[52] in the game of 'Kingdom Life', the players/worshippers are imaginatively (by faith) transported in the Spirit to a complex, transcendent world (the heavenlies) that is more intense and interesting than ordinary life; the time between 'game starts' (invocation) and 'game over' (benediction) is not ordinary time, but 'Kingdom time'; the worship/cyberspace is not an ordinary space, but a 'Kingdom space', with the interpenetration of heaven and earth.

The activity is participatory, both

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[51] Perhaps the ontological schematic of this essay could be amended to include a 'Level 6' of lesser realities such as dreams and hallucinations that are not in the category of 'Nonbeing' but lack the fuller degrees of reality recognized for the entities of Levels 1-5.

[52] This analogy of Holy Spirit as 'avatar' of the risen Christ in the midst of the worshipping assembly recalls an element frequently missed in many worship services: a consciousness of the *real presence of Christ* in the midst of the community. Cf. Ralph P. Martin, *Worship in the Early Church* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1964), p. 130: 'the hallmark which stamped the assembling together of Christians (Heb. 10.25) as something for which no other religion can provide a parallel, was *the presence of the living Lord in the midst of his own* (Mt. 18:20; 28:20). Cf. also Larry Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), p.50: 'They [NT Christians] experienced their assemblies as not merely human events but as having a transcendent dimension. They sensed God as directly and really present in their meetings through his Spirit.'

players/worshippers, *and* the Triune God, Father, Son, Holy Spirit are 'online', present, and interacting in 'real time'. The Bible, the sacraments, and the liturgy and creed are the 'software';[53] the church building, furnishings, and musical instruments are the 'hardware'; the mind of the Triune God is the heavenly 'server' that archives all the software and the history of its action.

This comparison, however, could easily be misunderstood. Let it not be thought that the force of the analogy is to suggest that the worship experience is, so to speak, only a 'virtual reality' or a 'simulation' of a more 'real' everyday human reality. On the contrary, the notion here proposed is that the worship-event, because of the real presence of Christ by the Spirit in the midst of the assembly, is more real than ordinary life.[54] This is so because the greater ontic reality and weight of the 'Level 1' Triune God is irrupting into the midst of the assembly and investing it with an 'eternal weight of glory'(cf. 2 Cor. 4:17) even as the ascended Lord is constantly filling the church with the fullness of his glorious reality (Eph. 1:23); this is a present foretaste and anticipation of that final glorious 'ontic density' that will be displayed in the ecclesia/New Jerusalem in the New Creation, where its consummated beauty and weight will be revealed as unimaginably vast beyond its present earthly dimensions (Rev. 21:16).

The claim here advanced is that the act of true New Testament worship 'in the Spirit' involves a process of *ontological transformation of the church*, ('Christ *in you*, the hope of glory') in anticipation of the final, end-time of the 'ontic weight-gain' divinely ordained by the Triune God for his people. Indeed, 'his love (experienced in true worship) *is better than* (ordinary) *life*'.

It will be left to the reader to explore further this comparison between the worship-event and online simulation games. Hopefully, enough has been suggested to encourage additional efforts to restore to the Protestant evangelical doxological imagination some of the sense of mystery and transcendence, and especially the sense of awareness of the *real presence of Christ* in the worshipping assembly, that has been stripped away and weakened by the influences of Reformation iconoclasm, Enlightenment naturalism, revivalism's marginalization of the Eucharist, and the seductive powers of modern consumer and entertainment-oriented cultures.

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53 Cf. Gerard Loughlin on the connection between the Christian narrative and its enactment and embodiment in liturgy and worship: 'The participant's absorption in to the story is made possible through their absorption of the story in and through its ritual enactment. They are not simply witnesses of the story, but characters within it:' *Telling God's Story: Bible, Church and Narrative Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.223, as cited in David Torevell, *Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity and Liturgical Reform* (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 2000), p.10.

54 In popular culture, stories of persons abducted by extraterrestrial beings, with life-transforming consequences, are generally viewed with great scepticism. To follow this science-fiction analogy, in the act of true worship, those assembled in the name of Jesus in the presence of the Spirit do in fact have a 'close encounter' with an extraterrestrial being from a higher world, the Risen Christ who is *really present* in their midst.

Liberal Democracy and Christianity:
The Church's Struggle to Make Public Claims in a Post-Teleological World

David Hoehner

The promise of modernity was to establish an objective grounds for knowledge and ethics, both freed from the fetters of tradition. This modern quest translated politically into the emergence of secularized states oriented towards creating conditions for free and equal individuals to flourish. The ravages of the 20th century effectively called the modern project into question. The fall of the Soviet Union marked the failure of modernity's most radical political project, the attempt, often through tyrannical means, to achieve utopian Marxist ideals that were constructed on putatively scientific grounds.

The shortcomings of modernity, however, can in no way be restricted to the failed socialist experiments. Liberal democracies in the West suffer from ever more apparent social breakdowns attested to by unprecedented divorce rates, widespread drug use, and a growing sense of alienation reflected in emergent nationalist movements. The outbreaks of various fundamentalisms in the world must be understood at least in part as reactions to the inadequacy of a secularized politics to respond to essential dimensions of what it means to be human.

The purpose of this paper is to reflect on the question of the inter-relationship between Christianity and politics in the modern landscape. It is imperative first to try to grasp more deeply the dynamics of liberal democracy in general and the place it assigns religion in particular. As a result, this paper will begin with a brief look at the origins of liberal democracy. After this brief historical survey, it will seek to describe the implications of this regime

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for the church and the space it occupies in society. In the final section of the paper, it will attempt to make a constructive proposal as to what this relationship might look like in the present context.

I The Liberal Democratic Regime

The promulgation of the Edict of Milan in 313AD signified a watershed for the state's relationship to Christianity as it marked the beginning of a new period of cooperation between state and church, the advent of so-called Christendom. Perspectives as to whether this was good or bad vary greatly, but what is important to note is that this launched the state toward a more theocratic self-understanding; that is, the state began to assume more and more responsibility for perpetuating and advancing Christian spiritual and social ideals. However this may have worked in practice, it is vital to see just how significant it was for the church's own self-understanding. If before it was marginalized, it now had the benefits of state legitimation and increasingly the church itself was granted power.

It is against this background that one needs to understand the significance of the emergence of the liberal democratic regime. In the West, the Reformation subjected to doubt the possibility of a unified vision of the good that could unite and guide society. Although both sides remained self-avowedly Christian and, with the exception of the Anabaptist movement, saw the church and state acting in concert, the very fact of the breach raised

questions as to how the authority of the church (or Scriptures for Protestants) could be brought to bear on the realities of society in a unified way.

This question acquired particular urgency during the Thirty Years War that saw Christian fight Christian in the name of the faith. It is this violent context in which modernity was born.[1] Witnessing firsthand the impotence of tradition to guide men to truth, Descartes turned to the autonomous human subject and his or her reason as the only certain means to discover truth.

This turn away from unifying tradition to the individual is mirrored in the emergent political philosophy of the day as well. Machiavelli, considered the father of modern political philosophy, argued that humans could prosper if they constructed their society not on the basis of how people should live but rather on the basis of how they actually live.[2] This marked a radical departure from classical notions of politics where regimes were called to craft laws and institutions that fostered virtue so that the well-ordered society could achieve a universally defined happiness.[3]

For Machiavelli, the human search for glory pitted individual against individual leading either to anarchy or to tyranny. The solution, for Machiavelli,

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1 For a good account of the social context of the birth of modernity, see Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 13-22.

2 Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), ch. XV.

3 See for example Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1985), X.1179b-1181b.

is not to educate ambitious princes as Plato proposed[4] but to create political institutions that pitted the ambitions of the princes against the desire for freedom among the general populace,[5] a solution that anticipates the division of powers so characteristic of modern democratic regimes.

This turn of the political regime from pursuit of ultimate ends received further development in Hobbes and Locke whose respective 'states of nature' both conceived humans originally living as isolated individuals. For Hobbes, the savage brute, as with Machiavelli, ends up in a war of all against all because of human vainglory. The insecurity of such an existence leads to the formation of the social contract whereby humans give up their absolute rights for the sake of self-preservation and are given in return freedom only insofar as this freedom does not infringe on the freedom of another.[6] This new regime does not seek to determine wider societal ends, but rather allows individuals to continue to pursue their own private ends as long as it is in a way that does not bring harm to others.

Locke's narrative of the state of nature, while differing slightly from that of Hobbes, also envisioned a degeneration into war and anarchy that leads warring individuals to enter into a social contract for the sake of their self-preservation.[7] Locke's vision of human natural rights went a bit further than Hobbes in its affirmation that beyond mere physical existence individuals had the right to a comfortable and economically prosperous existence.[8]

This is seen in Locke's shifting from Hobbes' right to self-preservation to stress the right to property. Property for Locke logically grows out of the right to self-preservation since it is property that gives humans the means to sustain themselves. However, property's value goes beyond this. If human industry and reason are applied, it becomes a means to accumulate wealth and security.

This new political vision is enshrined in the American Declaration of Independence in the well-known assertion that all men are endowed with the inalienable rights to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness'. Notice the character of this social vision that seeks to liberate humans from the precarious existence of the state of nature where life was under constant threat. Human freedom is still maintained, albeit now in a way restricted by the rights of my neighbour.

Significantly, the right to the 'pursuit of happiness' in many ways sums up the spirit of the modern liberal democratic regime. It refuses to define 'happiness' and even to invest itself in the enterprise of ensuring this end is satisfied. In so doing, it defers to the

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4 See Plato, *The Republic* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1974), V.473d,e and the whole of VII.

5 Macchiavelli, *The Prince*, ch. IX.

6 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), I.13-14.

7 John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), II.2-3.

8 Locke, *Two Treatises*, II.5, 9.

individual the responsibility both of defining happiness and of attaining the happiness he or she has defined. That is, the broader society is no longer the place where ultimate ends are defined and is no longer responsible for creating the conditions for a virtuous life. Rather, it is now responsible for fostering an environment for individuals to freely pursue their own private visions of the good.

II Liberal Democracy's Failed Neutrality

Before we proceed to examine the implications of this shift for the inter-relationship of Christianity and politics in liberal democracy, it is important to note that this abandonment of 'ends' is not quite what it claims to be on the surface. Despite the 'modesty' of their claims, the liberal narratives concerning humans and the origins of society in themselves actually have much to say about human nature and the ends to which we are designed.

First, while the social side of our humanity is generally acknowledged, it is the individual, and not society, that serves as the foundation for the new political arrangement. Such a starting point is obviously not morally neutral and has significant implications for how the individual as well as social institutions are conceived. For example, the current cultural shift towards individual self-expression is in no way accidental to democracy and has become the basis for the consumerist ethos as well as for the recent creation of new sexual identities. The notion of something like a fixed human nature seems to be completely lost in the current cultural climate that stresses self-creation.

Similarly, marriage is now conceived as a contract that remains valid only insofar as the interests of the two spouses are being fulfilled, in much the same way that the state is the result of a social contract between self-interested individuals. A sacramental understanding that sees the rite of marriage constituting a new spiritual and social reality no longer has a place in the public discourse. These competing conceptions have recently led to violent disagreements about what kinds of marriage the state should sanction. These are disagreements that cannot be resolved so long as marriage is being defined by the different parties in divergent ways.

Second, the assigning of determination of ends to individuals reflects a distinctly modern understanding of the autonomous human knower and actor. It assumes the individual can somehow divorce himself or herself from the social context in which he or she is embedded to rationally determine which ends to pursue and how to pursue them. In the public realm, this has led to 20th century political writers arguing that laws must be based on morally neutral grounds. John Rawls famously posits a 'veil of ignorance' that denies agents knowledge of their social position or their conceptions of the good in order to ensure neutral deliberation.[9] Such an approach has been rightly criticized for making any deliberation impossible since judg-

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9 John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 12.

ments require a framework in which goods are ordered in some meaningful way.

Finally, the stress on self-preservation or personal prosperity speaks of humans ordered to primarily material ends. Liberal democracy gives birth to the much maligned *bourgeois* individual who is oriented toward personal security and material comfort. Such an arrangement ignores possible transcendent ends around which a society could be arranged. To be fair, Locke argues that human laws must reflect the laws of nature created by God. However, these laws of nature are discerned through autonomous human reason, calling into question the extent to which truly transcendent ends are being served. Additionally, the impetus to form society, as we have already seen, is personal security and the preservation of property, that is, very material ends.

In this brief detour, we have seen how liberal democracy's self-proclaimed abstention from determining particular ends is a somewhat philosophical sleight of hand, since it makes the individual the starting point and the material world the primary concern.

III The Naked Public Square

This declared narrowing of vision on the part of the state to focus more on guaranteeing 'means' rather than on organizing politics toward certain defined ends has led to the formal exclusion of religion in political discourse, the birth of the so-called 'naked public square'. For many this has been a source of great frustration as the church's sphere of influence has shrunk. This shift, however, need not be perceived as wholly negative.

The theocratic aspirations of earlier regimes were not without their problems. Even laying aside the many instances where injustices were committed by so-called Christian states, there is the question as to whether the church should seek such a close marriage to the state in the first place. The theocratic ideal is eschatologically deficient as it seeks to remove the tension between the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of God. In so doing, the church, while receiving greater legitimation, tends to lose its distinct identity vis-à-vis the state and becomes a tool of the state for its own legitimation. The church utterly loses a prophetic voice whereby it can judge existing structures and practices.

Liberal democracy's putative refusal to determine ends in theory allows individuals to discover these ends in other communities. This is a space that the church can comfortably occupy. The church can function as one of these moral communities, calling people out of the world and into itself. This need not entail a narrowing of the universal pretensions of the gospel it proclaims. Indeed, many theologians have hailed the fall of Christendom as opening a new era where the church can once again be the church.[10]

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10 One of the most prolific writers in this vein was the Anabaptist theologian, John Howard Yoder. See, for example, his essay, 'The Otherness of the Church', in *The Royal Priesthood: Essays Ecclesiological and Ecumenical*. Ed. M.G. Cartwright (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994). See also Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), pp. 96-115.

Having said this, the new freedom that the church wins with liberal democracy is not without tremendous cost. First, while liberal democracies generally accept the instrumentally useful role of religion as providing people with a moral compass, they strictly limit religion to the private sphere. Religion is merely a matter of subjective individual choice and cannot make any pretensions to enter into the wider public discourse. Thus, the space religion wins with liberal democracy to reclaim again its prophetic voice is lost with a concomitant privatization of religion.

This is not a deal that Christianity can accept. Despite modernity's attempt to reduce religious belief to subjective affection, Christianity believes of itself, as do most other religious traditions, that it speaks to more than merely subjective religious experience but dares to describe the world as a particular reality possessing a particular order. It also sees itself not as a mere means to the state's healthy functioning.

In fact, the church sees itself as providing the meaning and end of history and the state's function is to serve it by providing order while it carries out its mission in the world. It is no small irony that the very liberal democratic regime that sought to limit government and increase freedom ends up so limiting religious claims as to disfigure them beyond recognition.

IV Engagement in Liberal Democracy

How then might the church conceive of its place in a liberal democratic regime? First, while the church cannot accept its relegation to the private sphere, it need not reject the function of moral education that liberal democracy envisions for it. Modern democracies assume the presence of religious and other moral communities as places where moral formation occurs which is necessary to prepare people for citizenship. In fact, it has been argued that the dismantling of more theocratic feudal regimes without the concomitant empowering of civil institutions leaves societies particularly vulnerable to tyrannous regimes.[11] Jardine argues that this explains the difference between the relatively peaceful transition to democracies witnessed in England and the United States compared with the tours through tyranny that Germany and Russia took.[12] Thus, while the church may not accept being reduced merely to an instrument of the state as moral educator, it nevertheless can perform this vital role that does not in any way contradict its own

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11 Alexis de Tocqueville very early on saw that the atomizing effect of liberal democracy on societies made them potentially vulnerable to despotism if a strong civil society were not present. See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Perennial Classics, 1969), II.IV.6. For more recent discussions on the importance of a vibrant civil society for liberal democracies, see Mary Ann Glendon. 'Rights Talk: The Impoverishment of Political Discourse', *The Essential Civil Society Reader: The Classic Essays*. ed. D. Eberly (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), pp. 305-316; and Francis Fukuyama *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Perennial, 1992), pp. 322-27.

12 Murray Jardine. *The Making and Unmaking of Technological Society* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2004), pp. 121-23.

goal of the moral formation of its members.

That said, the church cannot accept religious claims being constricted to the private sphere and must demand the right to engage in the public discourse on its own terms. This is not a call to return to the model of Christendom. In the current pluralist, post-Christian world, it is no longer reasonable to hope for a homogenous moral community in any given state. While in certain states, a degree of homogeneity may be present, liberal democracy assumes the possibility for other actors to play a role in the public discourse as well.

Admitting the presence of other moral traditions, however, does not mean that public discourse should be advanced on purely neutral grounds, disallowing the participation of these traditions in their particularity. The naked public square that has emerged from this 20th century quest has left many societies bereft of the moral vocabulary needed to address the various ethical problems confronting us in this rapidly changing world. Ethical discourse assumes the presence of a tradition that provides it with its coherence.[13]

An important example of this in the international political discourse is the concept of 'human rights' that has proven so fundamental to the creation of international governing structures and legal codes. 'Human rights' in their original conception were taken to refer to an objective order in which humans enjoy particular prerogatives by virtue of this order. Thus, the US Declaration of Independence in its proclamation that all men are 'endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights' clearly locates human rights in the fact of human creation by God. To abstract this assertion of human rights from the tradition that provides its ground is to effectively render it meaningless.

One response has been to see human rights as a useful social construct for ordering the world, but this merely raises the question: If human rights are merely a social construct, then on what grounds can we insist on the universal observance of human rights? What happens if a nation chooses another social construct with a different construal of humanity? Human rights bereft of the traditions that give them content cease to function as a universal value that can usefully guide international relations.

While democratic regimes cannot privilege one tradition over another, allowing people to openly argue from their traditions might be one way forward. Essential to the success of moral engagement between traditions is that a given tradition possesses the means by which its arguments might be persuasive to others outside of the tradition. In the case of the Christian tradition, the natural law approach has historically been employed in this way. Natural law theory presupposes that this world possesses a certain creational ordering that is potentially open to the perception of those outside of the Christian tradition. As it is readily evident to all, the presence of such ordering is no guarantee that all will interpret this order adequately.

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13 Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 218-25.

In contrast to Enlightenment employments of natural law, a more particularly Christian appropriation of natural law would argue that this ordering is most immediately understood only if one makes use of God's self-disclosure as we find it in Scripture and tradition. While this order may be discerned most fully only with the aid of revelation, once discerned, the character of this order may be vigorously argued by appealing to common human experience that is available to all.

Assuming similar resources exist in other religious traditions, social discourse would focus on finding areas of agreement on what it means to be human and how to create a just order that reflects this. Thus, each individual, while informed by his or her respective religious tradition, seeks to find common ground for dialogue by positing interpretations of our common experience. As government in liberal democracy is limited, the measure of our agreement can be limited to areas that affect our mutual co-existence. The boundaries of these areas will vary according to what kind of agreement is found between the traditions in question. State scope will necessarily be more limited in contexts where traditions are deeply at odds with each other.

This does not preclude the pursuit of more extensive understandings of the good; it merely rightly defers these pursuits to communities bound by shared belief. From a Christian standpoint, this reflects well the notion that the state's function is to maintain peace so that the church that constitutes the real end of history can carry out its mission without interference.

It is incumbent upon the church then to take seriously the task of transmitting its tradition in its fullness to its members so they can live in ways that reflect the comprehensiveness of the Christian vision. The church must not look to the wider culture to provide legitimation and must at times through its proclamation and practices openly contest understandings and norms that prevail in the wider culture.

A helpful example here is the ways in which liberal democratic regimes have posited the individual as the starting point. While this does not necessitate a purely subjective individualist approach that leads to each determining for himself or herself the good, liberal democracy seems to possess a certain trajectory of consciousness that makes claims to some objective good increasingly problematic. It also makes the formation and sustenance of substantive communities quite difficult since each community is conceived as a 'voluntary' association.

The church cannot accept either of these outcomes. While it calls individuals freely to repent, this can never be understood as a mere expression of private religious preference. It is a repentance to a new understanding of what the world is and what our place in this world should be. Similarly, the church cannot accept a person's involvement in the life of the community as subject to the mere whims of the individuals that constitute it.

The Church is more than a club of people who have a shared interest; it consists of people who have been united by the Spirit to Christ and this new ontological reality demands a corresponding way of life. To live otherwise is to live in disjunction with one's

own confessed beliefs. To live consistently with our confession, however, assumes a deliberate process of catechesis that instructs believers in the substance of their beliefs, including the ways in which they diverge from the broader culture, as well as a comprehensive approach to spiritual formation that habituates them to an alternative way of being and living in the world.

Conclusion

In closing, we see that liberal democracy has indeed opened up space for the church to be the church in ways that it had not been under Christendom. Its vision of the limited state is conducive to other communities such as the church providing the context for the discernment and pursuit of human ends. Liberal democracy also regards the church as one of the various useful communities necessary for its own flourishing. While the church can certainly perform this function, it can never accept its function to be confined to this. The gospel it preaches has universal import. From the church's perspective it is the state that is instrumental to the fulfilment of its mission. For effective co-existence, it is important that each respect their God-given roles in this world. To move beyond mere co-existence to mutual enrichment, the church must look within its own tradition to find means by which it can engage people from other religious traditions to pursue public ends.

In an age of increasing social fragmentation, the church, which proclaims a gospel of reconciliation where there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female, neither slave nor free, possesses unique resources to be a much-needed voice to advance justice and to effect greater social cohesion.

Have Evangelicals Changed Their Minds about Karl Barth?
A Review Essay with Reference to the Current Crisis in Evangelical Identity

James R. A. Merrick

One can scarcely read a contemporary work of evangelical theology today without encountering the name of Karl Barth. Not only is there increased attention, but there appears to be a change in sentiment as evangelicals now feel less inclined to make negative assessment the trend of their engagement with Barth, suggesting that the fiery scepticism of the 1950s and 60s has subsided. One might conclude that this is simply a consequence of the rapidly booming industry of Barth studies, an industry whose output at times rivals that of biblical studies. Yet closer inspection reveals that Barth has become a significant, and, in some cases, primary conversation partner

for evangelical theologians. There is a sense that Barth is important for evangelical theology. Why are many evangelicals more interested in Karl than Carl (Henry)?

I The Evangelical Identity Crisis and the Barthian Turn in Evangelical Theology

The recent intellectual and cultural climate has placed a number of demands upon evangelical life and thought. Evangelicalism is facing something of an identity crisis. We seem to have lost the battle for respect in the academy so nobly waged by Henry and other 'neo-evangelicals'. The births of numerous evangelical seminaries, in the hope of giving evangelical scholarship an academic forum and presence, have at times, been more of a step backwards, isolating evangelical scholars and stu-

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dents from more public contexts. Megachurches may have proved to the world that evangelicalism is thriving, but many now lament at how the church has adapted itself to worldly strategy, its liturgy being exchanged for entertainment, its worship replaced with evangelism, its ethics turned into legalism, and its message watered down for the sake of simplicity and mass appeal. Additionally, while the United States has witnessed the political success of evangelicalism, the fear-based and propagandist tactics of some evangelical activists have called the movement's integrity into question. The media has in turn capitalized on those evangelical leaders who have either caused public scandal by personal failings or have had to apologize for foolish comments. Evangelicals are publicly portrayed as a mindless mass naively devoted to an intolerant religion preached by sensationalists, cunning opportunists, and ignorant slanderers. There are now mounting pressures on evangelicals to distinguish themselves again, to distance themselves from the intellectual and cultural retreats of fundamentalist separatism and sectarianism, to discern new strategies for ecclesial life and mission, and to develop sophisticated answers to today's questions.

Simply proclaiming what the Bible says has lost its immediate impact on today's culture. Indeed, many have deplored the almost overnight shift from relative familiarity with the Scriptures to widespread biblical illiteracy. As a result, evangelicals, once so accustomed to narrowly exegetical, prooftexting theology with its tendency to reduce theology to biblical studies, are in search of a more holistic, robust, and satisfying theology. The growing interest in the 'theological interpretation of Scripture' is but one example of evangelicalism's quest for a theologically vibrant and culturally compelling witness.

It is this search for respect, identity, and compelling answers to new or unanswered questions that has sparked today's interest in Barth. Evangelicals are turning to Barth, some perhaps just to garner the appearance of sophistication. Nevertheless, his theology is thought to provide a way forward that lessens the stress of being an evangelical in today's world. Bernard Ramm appears to have won out over Henry, Gordon Clark, and Cornelius Van Til. In fact, two members of the Evangelical Theological Society, Kurt Anders Richardson[1] and John Franke,[2] have recently written sympathetic guides to Barth's theology, both of which champion Barth as pioneer of postmodern evangelical theology. This turn to Barth has ruffled the tweed jackets of more than a few traditional evangelicals. Without the outspoken critics of Barth, some worry that evangelicalism will turn into Barthianism, a shift that will jeopardize the movement's adherence to biblical authority and relax if not tranquillize its historic zeal for missions, evangelism, and ethical activism.

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1 *Reading Karl Barth: New Directions for North American Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004).
2 *Barth for Armchair Theologians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2006).

II A Review of *Karl Barth and Evangelical Theology*

Evangelicals thus need direction and guidance concerning their relationship to Barth. This new book edited by Sung Wook Chung, then, is timely. It intends 'to be a balanced attempt to appraise Karl Barth's theology from a consensual evangelical perspective' (p. xx). Great evangelical thinkers, Kevin Vanhoozer, Henri Blocher, and Timothy George among them, move doctrine by doctrine in an effort both to explain and to evaluate. Here is an evangelical guided tour through the dogmatic theology of Karl Barth that seeks to point out hazard and spectacle alike.

The book begins where Barth began, the doctrine of revelation. Gabriel Fackre first tries to steer between the objective and subjective in Barth's thought, uncovering what George Hunsinger has termed 'actualism', i.e., Barth's tendency to understand *being* as contingent upon divine *willing* so that ontology is constituted by an event. He then traces how revelation is reflected in the natural world, witnessed to in Holy Scripture, and presented (made present) in the church. Fackre criticizes Barth's actualistic notion of revelation, suggesting that despite the emphasis on the objectivity of the Word, it falls into subjectivism. Yet this judgment appears to be made in neglect of an important feature of Barth's thought. The concept of revelation, according to Barth, includes human reception (subjectivity) precisely because it is *revelation*. Subjectivity and objectivity must be intertwined since the purpose of revelation is for the reality of God to penetrate human hearts and minds; God's revela-

tion is, as Barth liked to say, 'imparted to men'; it is reconciliation. It seems inappropriate, then, to say that Barth falls into subjectivism simply because he realized human reception must occur for revelation to truly transpire. Fackre's point that Barth's actualism does not procure Scripture as a stable medium of revelation is much stronger and well worth serious attention by both Barthians and evangelicals. The essay ends with a series of affirmations and problems which I believe will go a long way in pinpointing where Barth is helpful and harmful from an evangelical perspective.

Kevin Vanhoozer provocatively asks whether Barth can be called 'a person of the book'. This essay on Barth's doctrine of Scripture seeks to understand past evangelical critiques, locate misunderstandings, and mediate the dispute. After an analysis of Van Til's, Henry's, Ramm's, and Donald Bloesch's conclusions, Vanhoozer hazards a rescue in the form of a generous reading of Barth's doctrine of Scripture using speech-act philosophy. Barth could consistently say, as he did, both that the Bible *is* the Word of God and that it *becomes* the Word of God (again, actualism) by maintaining that the Bible *is* the Word in its locutions and illocutions and *becomes* the Word 'when the Spirit enables what we might call illocutionary uptake and perlocutionary efficacy' (p. 57). The net effect: the Bible contains by the Spirit the very words of God (inspiration) but those words remain ineffectual until by the same act of the Spirit (illumination) they direct the reader to the Word. Vanhoozer also reminds evangelicals that Barth's relocation of the authority of Scripture in the author-

ity of God was not due to doubt over the text as revelation, but to his Reformed sense that revelation is the miraculous grace of the free, sovereign God who as such remains the active Subject of his revelation. Barth did not intend to disparage the text, but to uphold and account for the sovereignty of God. This essay moves evangelicals beyond the false conclusions that Barth's actualistic doctrine of Scripture was founded on existentialism or that his reticence to see authority as a predicate of the text itself was due to his acceptance of higher-criticism; Vanhoozer surfaces the theological convictions that drive Barth's doctrine of Scripture. And while his charity might at places border on wishful thinking, his essay is certainly one of the most constructive and enriching, helping evangelicals overcome common caricatures of Barth's commitment to biblical authority.

The editor's 'A Bold Innovator: Barth on God and Election', like his doctoral thesis,[3] accuses Barth of innovation, and that quite repeatedly (nineteen times in a seventeen page article!). Readers will probably wish Chung would not have expended so much effort to prove a thesis Barth himself acknowledged,[4] a fact Chung curiously ignores.

His charge of 'innovation', which he dubs as a deficient deviation from

Reformed theology, runs as follows: Barth's rejection of substance metaphysics in favour of 'actualism' means his theology proper is not a viable evangelical option since traditionally evangelicals have held the former. When he argues that Barth adapted Reformed theology, particularly its notions of sovereignty and grace, according to an alien Kantian epistemology, he is in many ways simply reiterating the critique of Van Til. Indeed, he echoes Van Til when he complains that Barth 'constructed a God who is significantly different from the God of many Reformed evangelicals' (p. 70). But while acknowledging that Barth diverged because he felt substance metaphysics introduced *unbiblical speculation* into the doctrine of God, Chung instead simply proceeds to attribute this innovation to Kantian 'philosophical presuppositions' and thus does not seriously entertain the possibility that Barth's 'actualism' is truer both to Scripture and to Reformed theology as Barth had hoped. Instead, he is content with noting the surface discrepancy, and merely asserts that 'Barth's actualism is a pattern of thought that the Bible does not endorse explicitly or implicitly' (p. 64). I fear, and I have this worry about his doctoral thesis as well since it also follows the procedure of noting an apparent difference and then just attributing it without any sustained analysis to 'philosophical presuppositions', that his argumentation assumes what it is trying to prove.

The reader is left asking where Scripture holds up substance metaphysics as the paradigm for understanding the being of God? After all, the dominant biblical portrait of God is not that of a super-substance to which

3 *Admiration and Challenge: Karl Barth's Theological Relationship with John Calvin* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002).

4 See, e.g., Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II/2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1957), p. 147 where he describes his thesis as a 'step forward, an innovation'.

various metaphysical attributes can be ascribed, but of a personal agent who is identified by his character which is revealed through his acts and relationships. Unfortunately, Chung scarcely advances beyond past complaints for he mistakes the Reformed character of Barth's thought for *philosophical* presuppositions. And in all of this, the question as to what it means to be evangelical/Reformed lingers: Does it simply mean the exact repetition of previous conclusions down to the very *letter* (i.e., philosophical presuppositions) or does it mean fidelity to the *spirit* of Reformed theology?

Oliver Crisp offers a descriptive essay on Barth's doctrine of creation. He outlines four areas of 'convergence' and four areas of 'divergence' between Barth and the Reformed tradition. The former, characterized as only 'partial agreement and overlap' (p. 84), are: (1) the triune God creates while the Father is the primary agent; (2) creation is a sovereign act of God; (3) supralapsarianism; and (4) the interconnectedness between covenant and creation. Divergences listed are: (1) rejection of a positive role for natural knowledge; (2) denial of any apologetic value of creation for faith; (3) classification of Genesis 1-3 as 'saga' rather than a historical narrative; and (4) the nature of God's 'time' and its relationship to 'created time.'

These latter points have been documented before. Barth's rejection of apologetics and natural theology, for instance, were recurrent themes when he fielded questions in Chicago during 1962, and both have been major factors in the dismissal of his theology as sub-evangelical. Yet Crisp is aware of the driving concerns behind Barth's

thought, making him better suited to accurately level criticisms. When, for example, Barth argued that creation cannot be truly known apart from God's revelation in Christ, Crisp notes that Barth was attempting to avoid a naturalist doctrine of creation, that is, a doctrine that begins neutrally (from non-Christian beliefs about the world) by harvesting the insights of the natural sciences and naturalist philosophy and subsequently supplementing such with Christian revelation. For Barth, as Crisp correctly ascertains, such a naturalist grounding allows non-Christian commitments to set the terms for Christian theology and thereby interprets the supernatural acts of the Creator on the basis of natural, created realities, the result of which can only be for Barth sub-theological and idolatrous.

The author is also unwilling to repeat previous mistakes made by evangelicals. Notable in this regard is his comment that 'Barth's characterization of Genesis 1-3 as saga is not a thinly veiled way of saying "Genesis 1-3 is a fairy tale"' (p. 89). Crisp does reissue the call to censure Barth's rejection of natural theology as too drastic. However, he does not develop this critique. Thus, we still await a crisp evangelical rebuttal of Barth's arguments (a) that natural knowledge of God is only knowledge of the natural, created order, not of the supernatural, Creator and (b) that any assertion to the contrary is a category mistake of idolatrous proportions.

A witty and playful, yet penetrating exploration of Barth's anthropology, including his hamartiology, is provided by Henri Blocher; it is substantially informed not only by a vigilant reading

of Barth, but also by considerable secondary literature; it is essential reading. Blocher shares Van Til's scepticism, namely, that Barth's theology is neo-orthodox rather than a fresh Reformed theology. He writes of Barth's 'innovative power' (p. 98), warning that 'if one reads Barth's statements as if they were Calvin's, one is likely to miss Barth's original sense' (pp. 99-100). Apparently what counts as 'Reformed' is reproduction, not reformulation; Barth's reform of Reformed theology is a move toward something else, not a fresh *ad fontes*.

Blocher begins by detailing Barth's conviction that anthropology must be christologically conceived. For Barth, Christ is the one true man, so much so that even Adam was a type of Christ. However, Blocher questions whether Barth does in fact follow through with his method, noting (but not detailing) that 'Barth wavers between the affirmation of the identity of Christ's humanity and ours and the emphatic warning that they remain different' (p. 107). He also questions whether Barth could in fact complete such a task given his actualism. After a reminder that events demand interpretation which requires a 'frame of reference', he asks: 'How can we discern, from the event [of Jesus Christ] itself and without prior knowledge, what is to be ascribed to deity and what to humanity?' (p. 107). In other words, Blocher wants to know how Barth, without any conceptual framework concerning true humanity, can determine what is true of Christ's humanity so as to then proceed to define the nature of humanity accordingly.

Yet he seems to stumble on to the answer, even if he is unwilling to let it

stick: 'The teaching of the Bible does provide [for Barth] the guidelines and the grid needed for the interpretation of the Event' (p. 108). The reason why Blocher refuses to let it stand is not because of Barth's actual exegetical practice, but because his practice is not supported by his doctrine of Scripture. Finally, Blocher disputes the legitimacy of Barth's approach. Quoting Berkouwer, he explains that Barth's contention that humans participate in Christ's humanity reverses the Scriptural pattern of thought which sees the incarnation as Christ participating in our humanity.

This is a substantial criticism and here, as throughout, he engages Barth exegetically, arguing that Barth's appeal to John 1:2; Colossians 1:15, and Hebrews 1:2f. 'overlooks two important textual facts' (p. 110): these passages are sapiential and are framed on a diptych structure. Hence, Blocher's final verdict: Barth's christocentrism fails because it is not constrained by the canonical Christ. According to Blocher, only those put under the 'spell' of Barth's rhetoric would follow his approach. The essay's strength is its exegetical engagement with Barth. It is light, however, on application of the analysis to evangelical theology.

Kurt Richardson's essay represents some of the shifts within evangelical theology. Whereas Clark and Henry found Barth's eschewal of propositional revelation deeply problematic, he sees it as the future of evangelical theology. Richardson rightly recognizes that Barth's opposition to propositions was not motivated by subjectivist or existentialist moorings, but by an attempt to remove idolatry from the-

ological inquiry, parallel to his rejection of natural theology. Indeed, by avoiding such Barth was trying to safeguard the unique objectivity of revelation, an objectivity grounded in God himself, not the created world. Richardson argues that Barth replaces propositions with the presence of Christ. It is the resurrected reality of Christ as he is present in the world through Spirit and church that grounds theological activity, not some natural phenomenon. He unfortunately stops short of outlining how this specifically bears on current evangelical theological methodology.

Frank Macchia explores Barth's pneumatology from an evangelical Pentecostal perspective. He traces the themes of Lordship, Spirit and Christ, Spirit and Church, verbal inspiration, and new birth. In the course of this discussion he proposes a way to mediate the dispute between Philip Rosato[5] and John Thompson.[6] Rosato claimed that Barth gradually became less a christocentric and more a pneumatocentric theologian. Thompson vigorously rebutted. Macchia argues that while Thompson was right to discern Barth's christocentrism as sustained throughout, Rosato was correct in that Barth's theology was working its way from salvation which is Christ-centred to redemption which is Spirit-centred. Macchia does seem to miss the fact that the debate is not over where one is in Barth's corpus, but over the reality of revelation which for Barth is always

Jesus Christ. Yet his mediation is a helpful contribution and I think there is something to his basic intuition.

Furthermore, despite the subtitle, 'An Evangelical Response to Karl Barth's Pneumatology', Macchia's essay even in its 'evangelical appraisal' section offers little *specific* discussion of how Barth's pneumatology might 'converge' with or 'diverge' from evangelical pneumatology; he limits his comments to declaring his general satisfaction with it. And here Macchia misses what is ripe for evangelical reflection. For Barth, because Spirit and Word exist in trinitarian relationship, revelation is not just Word, but also Spirit. Consequently, revelation includes what he termed 'revealedness', the impartation of the Word by the Holy Spirit to human hearts and minds. Therefore there is no Word apart from the subjective work of the Spirit (another dimension of Barth's actualism).

Given its roots in Moravian Pietism and English Puritanism, evangelicalism has always maintained that true religion is heart religion, and that no reception of the Word truly occurs until the Spirit breathes new life into the Christian's soul. Barth's linking of Spirit and Word provides evangelicals with a *trinitarian* framework for their cherished convictions that loving Christ means living by the Spirit and that authentic Christian confession is rooted in religious affections.

Alister McGrath's essay on justification does not concern the doctrine itself, but its place within Barth's project. Much like Blocher and Chung, he judges Barth's doctrine of justification as another instance of defection from Reformation theology. Barth's novel-

5 *The Spirit as Lord: The Pneumatology of Karl Barth* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1981).
6 *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Allison Park: Pickwick, 1991).

ties, he says, prompt 'the exploration of alternatives' (p. 174). McGrath sketches the historical backdrop both to the Reformation's and to Barth's view, concluding that whereas Luther focused on the moral dimensions of salvation, Barth, working with the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Kantian epistemological hangover, transposed the term 'righteousness' into the epistemological domain. 'Barth' surmises McGrath, 'has thus placed the divine revelation to sinful humanity at the point where Luther placed the divine justification of sinful humanity' (p. 182). After exposing Barth's 1914 essay on 'the righteousness of God', McGrath acknowledges 'that Barth's early dialectical theology, or mature "theology of the word of God", might represent a recovery of the Reformer's insights into the significance of the *articulus iustifactionis*' (p. 180).

However, 'this seems not to be the case' for 'its themes are incorporated and reinterpreted within the parameters of a dialectical theology, with its particular concerns relating to the actuality of divine revelation' (p. 180).[7] This leads him to the puzzling claim that Barth magnified Luther's 'otherness of God' motif to the marginalization of Luther's understanding of 'human bondage to sin', suggesting that the 'lack of interest in human bondage to sin, so characteristic of the liberal school and nineteenth-century theology in general, thus passed into the dialectical theology of the early twentieth century [sic]' (p. 181). The statement is strange because it is stan-

dard to see dialectical theology as a movement that, among other things, recovered the Reformation's hamartiology in contrast to Protestant liberalism's anthropological optimism.[8]

Similarly, readers of Barth will scratch their heads over some of McGrath's more curious comments such as, 'Barth has simply no concept of divine engagement with the forces of sin or evil' (p. 182), 'the death of Christ does not in any sense change the soteriological situation [for Barth'] (p. 188), or for Barth '[t]he dilemma of humanity concerns their knowledge of God, rather than their bondage to sin or evil' (p. 188). It seems that McGrath's dichotomy between 'dialectical' and 'Reformation theology', needed to make his case that Barth is of the former and therefore cannot be of the latter, has led him to overlook quite an amazing amount of contrary evidence, particularly the fact that for Barth there is no dichotomy between 'revelation' (epistemology) and 'salvation' (forgiveness) since Barth's hamartiology (!) demands the Spirit's work of regeneration for human reception of revelation. This is why Barth can say revelation is reconciliation.[9]

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7 A conclusion he shares with Chung whose thesis was completed under his supervision.

8 For example, note R. V. Schnucker who, after discussing the key theme of the otherness of God, remarks: 'The movement also stressed the sinfulness of humankind' ('Neoorthodoxy', in Walter Elwell, ed., *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 2d ed. [Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001], p. 820).

9 Barth's words are worth quoting in full to make the point: 'To the extent that God's revelation as such accomplishes what only God can accomplish, namely, restoration of the fellowship between man with God which we had disrupted and indeed destroyed; to the extent

McGrath also ignores both the Reformed character of Barth's version of dialectical theology and, most unfortunately, how Barth derived his theological epistemology from *moral* justification (for Barth since justification teaches that Christ's righteousness comes in contradiction of human works, so too God's revelation does not supplement natural human knowledge, but comes in contradiction of it).

Regrettably, McGrath concludes that 'Barth operates within much the same theological framework as the *Aufklärer*, Schleiermacher and the liberal school' (p. 188). Since Barth continued the modern quest for the epistemic justification of theological knowledge he did not make a complete turn back to the Reformation which perceived the heart of the gospel and humanity's deepest problem to be the forgiveness of sins. Here again is another essay echoing Van Til's worry that Barth wore modern rather than Reformed glasses. McGrath has little to say about how his discussion might bear on evangelical theology, contenting himself with the rather weak suggestion that Barth challenges evangelicals to double-check whether the Reformation's accent on justification is biblical.

Timothy George is refreshing as usual. His treatment of Barth's ecclesiology begins by highlighting how Barth's theology arose from pastoral

concerns. He shows that Barth tried to avoid the 'domestication of God', whether in the form of Roman Catholic over-realized eschatology or Nazi Germany's cultural optimism. Unlike Chung, Blocher, and McGrath, George is not afraid to draw parallels between Barth and the Reformers, noting that he is a 'Protestant theologian in the Reformed tradition' (p. 202) who at places 'stands in the best tradition of John Calvin' (p. 199). George exposits five themes: (1) the invisible church becomes visible by the Spirit; (2) Jesus Christ is Lord and head of the church; (3) the church is created by the Word; (4) the church's existence is cruciform; and (5) the church exists to manifest God and be his witness to the world. George concludes with suggestions for current evangelical life.

He finds that Barth's linking of God's election with the church challenges individualistic evangelical ecclesiologies, reminding evangelicals that Christian existence is corporate. Also, George believes that Barth's rooting of the efficacy of the church's witness in Scripture and faithful proclamation is a healthy alternative to the futile employment of marketing techniques and entertainment in an effort to attract people and plainly present the gospel.

John Bolt proposes a study of Barth's eschatology as a helpful corrective to evangelical imbalance. He looks at four themes: 'eschatology is about Jesus Christ', 'Jesus as victor', 'threefold *parousia*', and 'theology in progress' (*theologia viatorum*). The first three are employed to correct dispensationalism's errors, particularly those of focusing end-time hope on this-worldly chronology and a solely futur-

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that God in the fact of His revelation treats His enemies as His friends; to the extent that in the fact of revelation God's enemies already are actually His friends, revelation itself is reconciliation' (*Church Dogmatics* I/1, 2d ed. [Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1975], p. 409).

ist understanding of Christ's kingdom. Of the theme of the *parousia*, for example, Bolt remarks: '[Evangelicals should] appreciate that the notion of a threefold *parousia*, the effective coming and presence of Christ as a past and present reality as well as a future reality, provides us with a solid biblically based, kingdom-oriented perspective that is far superior to the futuristic speculation of dispensational premillennialism' (p. 225).

After sketching the backdrop to his essay by briefly outlining two different interpretations of Barth's *theologia religionum*, Veli-Mati Kärkkäinen suggests that the opposing views of Paul Knitter, who suggests Barth was a traditional exclusivist, and Paul Chung, who understands Barth to be a pluralist, stem from a tension in Barth's thought. He then embarks upon his own reading wherein he highlights two poles: (1) particularist themes such as the Trinity as fundamental to the identification of the Christian God, Christ is the only true lens for understanding the world and human history, and God's revelation occurs exclusively in Jesus Christ; and (2) universalist themes such as acknowledgement of 'other lights' outside the church, universal salvation, and no one religion is right, even Christianity, except by the justification of God. Kärkkäinen is inclined toward the inclusivist reading. In conclusion, he admits that it is 'difficult to assess the implications' of his reading of Barth for evangelical theology. Here, then, is another essay that avoids the book's goals of detailing convergences and divergences.

Kärkkäinen's inclusivist reading is arrived at in neglect of two important issues: First, the fact that Barth's 'universalism' implies an openness toward other religions is not a position at which Barth himself arrived in his doctrine of election. Secondly, if Barth advocated inclusivism it would have completely undermined the foundational planks of his dogmatic project. Barth's theology is grounded in the Reformation's *solus Christus* where the uniqueness of Christ entails an ecclesiology where the church, as Christ's body, is the locus of God's revelational activity. For him to have suggested that there is an event of revelation that occurs apart from Christ's body would mean the abandonment of his doctrine of revelation, the very launching point of his theology.

The relevance of Barth for postmodernism is considered in the final essay by John Franke. He begins where he always does, describing the so-called 'postmodern turn'. He then explores various postmodern interpretations of Barth such as Hans Frei's postliberal reading and Walter Lowe's, Graham Ward's, and William Johnson's nonfoundationalist readings. Bruce McCormack's critiques of these readings are introduced and allowed to stand. In the constructive portion, Franke argues that Barth's actualism is conducive to the postmodern turn in that it evokes an epistemology that both accounts for human fallenness and finitude and can sit well with some postmodern insights about the nature of language. His suggestions, then, are not concerned with the relevance of Barth for evangelical theology, but for the *postmodern context*. And here it is indeed startling that he believes a cultural context has readied the theological climate for Barth's relevance. Of course, Barth opposed all attempts to

allow a cultural shift or a philosophical trend to set the agenda for theological thinking.

It is an open question whether Chung gave his contributors a clear and specific description of the book's aims and an outline of what a successful essay would do since half of the essayists, as noted above, do not attempt the book's intention to explore convergences and divergences between Barth and evangelical theology. The majority of essays focus on expounding Barth's thought or offering a nuanced interpretation. Those who do note convergences and divergences, with the exceptions of Vanhoozer and Fackre, tend either to repeat past criticisms or to limit their comments to something so broad that it could be said about almost any theologian (thinking here of Bolt's argument that Barth corrects dispensational eschatology, a conclusion that can be drawn from any Reformed theologian).

There is also a lot of redundancy in the book. Facker's, Vanhoozer's, and Macchia's essays each consider Barth's understanding of Scripture's divine inspiration, making it appear as if Chung was not very scrutinizing in crafting the book's contents and keeping his contributors to a specific goal and task. Furthermore, as a reviewer I regret to say that, apart from a few positive examples, these essays contribute little, whether in terms of Barth studies or evangelical responses to Barth. The analyses of Barth are often weak or common to the existing literature, and the evangelical reflections are absent, well-known, or shallow.

Finally, Chung's book misses its goal to appraise Barth from a 'consensual evangelical perspective'. In his preface, Chung oddly contradicts himself on this matter. He first admits that there is and will be *no* consensus on Karl Barth amongst evangelicals because 'evangelical theology is increasingly becoming a diversified, not uniform, movement' (p. xix). Then in the same breath he justifies his project on the basis that there are 'core family values' (p. xix) according to which his contributors can judge Barth's theology. But the disparity concerning Barth's appropriateness for evangelical theological reflection and, most severely, the fact that the 'core family values', a purported constant, are nowhere present as criteria by which these evangelical essayists evaluate Barth's theology means that there is no 'consensual evangelical perspective' in this book.[10] I am much more optimistic about the recent work edited by David Gibson and Daniel Strange, *Engaging with Barth: Contemporary Evangelical Critiques*,[11] which not only proceeds from a definite shared perspective, but is also far more penetrating, perceptive, and informative both in its interpretations of Barth and in its evangelical evaluations.[12]

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10 Again, one has to ask why Chung did not alert his contributors to these 'core family values' by which they were supposed to be evaluating Barth?

11 (Nottingham: Apollos, 2008).

12 There are several distracting editorial issues: e.g., Sentence two on the first page does not begin with capitalization (see also, pp. 169, 276). Macchia's essay includes two confused sentences, one that begins (again without capitalization) 'with Barth puts' (p. 165) and the other, 'One is initiation in Christ' (p. 167). On p. 229, references remain in the text rather than footnoted; in note 85 John W. Webster should be John B. Webster (p. 231).

III Have Evangelicals Changed Their Minds about Karl Barth?

Despite the shortcomings of this book, we might ask in light of it: Have evangelicals changed their minds about Karl Barth? While many of the old objections to Barth's theology are still very much alive—suspicion over Barth's version of Reformed theology, his subjectivism, and his rejection of natural theology—in an important sense the answer is 'Yes', evangelicals have changed their minds about Karl Barth because the deep mistrust and anxiety of the earliest evangelical evaluations is absent from these essays. Lacking in this book is the sense that Barth's theology is thoroughly flawed and that no part is able to be integrated within evangelical theology. Gone too is the urgency that prompted early commentators to warn evangelicalism of the 'dangers' of Barthianism.

To illustrate this, it is helpful to recall one of the earliest evangelical responses to Barth, that of Van Til. Van Til recognized the similarities between Barth and evangelicals, and perceived this not as an opportunity for dialogue and cooperation but as a threatening temptation for evangelical theology. He saw Barth's theology as a deceptive distortion of true evangelical theology and worried that many might be fooled by Barth's use of evangelical terminology. Thus, with the scepticism of a modern biblical critic and the zeal of a televangelist, Van Til repeatedly warned evangelicals of the 'new modernism' represented by Barth.

He tried to surface what he thought was a modernist and therefore unorthodox core in Barth's thought which he believed Barth deceptively hid from view by dressing it in Reformed jargon. Van Til was convinced that no aspect of Barth's theology could be introduced into evangelicalism for all of his thoughts were infected by the disease of modernism. Like Matthias Flacius Illyricus who declared that in times of crisis there were no points of *adiaphora*, this early evangelical embattled in the fundamentalist-modernist era could not even hint at compromise with Barth's theology for such would concede too much to modernism.

With the possible exception of Chung who seeks to ensure that Barth's theology is perceived as 'absolutely innovative', these authors are much more charitable, able to appreciate aspects of Barth's thought without worrying that evangelicals will be Barthianized the moment their approval is given. And this is at least partially due to the distance current evangelical life has from the intensity of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy.[13] As the battles to protect evangelicalism from modernization and to vindicate her in the public sphere through academic credibility and political influence have smoldered into the current ambiguity of evangelical identity, many of today's evangelicals no longer feel the pressure to simply dismiss Barth's theology as a danger to the integrity of evangelicalism.

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13 This provokes interesting questions that cannot be explored here: Have evangelicals become ignorant of their past? Or, do today's evangelicals feel that the urgent tasks of yesterday are no longer worthy of pursuit today?

Indeed, as these evangelical essayists show, Barth's theology can now be engaged without the Van Tillian attempt to uncover a conspiracy. And while some of these thinkers feel it is best to be cautious about Barth's thought or find reasons for questioning it altogether, this is done without the suspicion and defensive posture of the past. There is little worry here about conceding too much to modernism. Absent, then, is Van Til's scepticism that Barth's theology is thoroughly corrupt and that no thought is salvageable for evangelical theology.

This increased charity has allowed evangelicals to appreciate and appropriate areas of Barth's thought that were previously stigmatized as off limits and hastily misread as sub-evangelical. The doctrine of Scripture is obviously the most notable area in which we see this. In addition to Vanhoozer's generous reading which finds Barth much closer to evangelicalism on biblical authority than previously thought, there are the identical comments of Timothy George and Oliver Crisp: Crisp writes that 'in practice, the way [Barth] uses Scripture is very conservative' (p. 95 n. 39) and George declares 'Barth's actual use of the Bible […] is not only extensive but exemplary from an evangelical perspective (p. 207). Fackre, who has reservations, similarly remarks: 'Barth practices what he teaches by his detailed and profound theological exegesis, letting Scripture speak its own Word. So stipulated and practiced, Barth appears to reflect characteristic evangelical emphases on the authority of Scripture' (p. 14). This more charitable approach has opened evangelical eyes to see Barth more as a kindred spirit than as a neo-orthodox nemesis on the doctrine of Scripture.

While there are certainly negatives that accompany this more welcoming engagement, such as the foolish attempt to turn Barth into the saviour of all things evangelical, positively it provides an opportunity for growth and opens new avenues for fruitful study. Continuing with the example of Scripture, Barth's so-called 'theological exegesis', while not always sound, has much to offer evangelicals currently moving beyond a narrowly exegetical theology into a 'theological interpretation of Scripture'. For Barth, 'being biblical' is not simply matching doctrinal conclusions with prooftexts, but *reasoning canonically* to doctrinal conclusions. Being biblical, then, is not merely a matter of arriving at an outcome that can be hailed 'biblical' because its conclusion accords with *a* conclusion found in any passage of Scripture, but of patterning or, better, disciplining one's thought *after* canonical thought patterns; the truly biblical theologian *thinks after* or *with* (*Nachdenken*)[14] the Scriptures so that the theologian *sees* and *understands* the subject matter (*Sache*) of the biblical text

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14 Note Richard Burnett's definition of this term: '[I]t means accompanying with one's own thoughts the thoughts of an author along a particular path—not necessarily the genetically reconstructed thoughts—but the thoughts of the author as stated and with reference to a particular subject matter' (*Karl Barth's Theological Exegesis: The Hermeneutical Principles of the Römerbrief Period* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004], p. 59).

in the same way its Author did (and does).[15]

Few evangelicals have reflected substantially on Barth's biblical reasons for and reasoning to his doctrinal conclusions. Now that the intense context of the fundamentalist-modernist controversy has passed and evangelicals are in search of an identity and theology for the future, we can expect study of Barth's exegesis to be profitable, stimulating, and, when appropriate, formative. At the very least, such study will facilitate a more accurate assessment of his thought.[16]

Books Reviewed

Reviewed by Henry S. Baldwin
Stanley H. Skreslet
Picturing Christian Witness: New Testament Images of Disciples in Action

Reviewed by Patrick Mitchel
Simon J. Gathercole
The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark and Luke

Reviewed by James Nkansah-Obrempong
Peter G. Riddell and Beverly Smith (editors)
Angels and Demons: Perspectives and practice in diverse religious traditions

Reviewed by Leonardo De Chirico
Craig Bartholomew, Scott Hahn, Robin Parry, Christopher Seitz, Al Wolters (editors)
Canon and Biblical Interpretation

Reviewed by W Travis McMaken
Simon Chan
Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community

Reviewed by David Parker
Carlos R Bovell
Inerrancy and the Spiritual Formation of Younger Evangelicals

Reviewed by Bryan A Johnson
Simon Carey Holt
God Next Door—Spirituality & Mission in the Neighbourhood

Reviewed by David R. Denton
Anthony C. Thiselton
First Corinthians: A Short Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary

Book Reviews

Picturing Christian Witness: New Testament Images of Disciples in Action
Stanley H. Skreslet
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Pb, pp272, Bibliog., Indices

Reviewed by Dr Henry S. Baldwin, Tyndale Theological Seminary, The Netherlands.

The concept of mission is intrinsic to the whole endeavour of the church. Even the most cursory reading of the teaching of Jesus leaves no doubt as to his 'marching orders' for the church. Yet in the day-to-day business of our Christian lives it is easy for the clear intention which Jesus gave in the Great Commission to be lost in a mass of meetings, services, administration, and 'the cares of this life'. Therefore, we may all be thankful to Stanley H. Skreslet for this excellent reminder and its call to visualize ourselves in the work of mission.

Dr. Skreslet, F. S. Royster Professor of Christian Missions at Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education in Richmond, Virginia, speaks with years of experience not only in the academic discipline of mis-

sions, but also from personal experience as a missionary educator in the Middle East. Though the ground Skreslet covers is well-travelled, he does so in a fresh and thought provoking way.

Recognizing that much has been written on the topic, Dr. Skreslet undertakes his work by narrowing his focus to analyse and reflect on five images of disciples engaged in mission. In doing so Skreslet builds a bridge for us where it is most needed: he shows flesh-and-blood people living their lives of discipleship by doing the work of evangelism. Thus he provokes his reader to ponder, surely, cannot I do something of the same? The five images drawn from the NT are these: announcing good news as a herald; sharing Christ with friends; interpreting the gospel cross-culturally; building and planting churches; and finally, one less anticipated, shepherding.

After laying out his task in chapter one, Skreslet presents the first of his chosen images in chapter two, 'Announcing Good News.' The action analysed is described in the New Testament as *kerussein*, 'to preach or proclaim'. Skreslet's central focus is on Peter and his preaching in Acts. The author then goes on to give us one of the true delights of his book. Each chapter contains not only an analysis of the biblical text, but also an analysis of the theme as represented in Christian art. Exegesis is followed by application, using evocative pictures, iconography and/or statuary from the early Renaissance to the present from many cultures around the world. In chapter two we are delighted with Masolino's portrayal of Peter, by Baroque statuary of Francis Xavier and Ignatius Loyola, and by a 19th century illustration of Paul before Agrippa. Each of these provides opportunity to consider the social setting in which the public preaching of Acts took place, as well as

the practice of proclamation in mission across the centuries.

In chapter three Christian witness is pictured as sharing with friends. The evidence of the Synoptic gospels is juxtaposed to that of John's Gospel. Sharing with friends is seen as more prominent in John. Of course, the Samaritan woman is invited centre stage, but in a rather unusual way—through an illustration from the *Gladzor Gospels*, an early Fourteenth Century Armenian manuscript. The illustration pictures the woman at the well, but her neighbours include a man in Mongol dress. Here we have an 'extraordinary example of contextualization' (p.95). The illustrator of the Gladzor manuscript was expressing the universality of Christ's mission, even when the neighbour was the Mongol enemy of the Armenian. Thus Skreslet provides us with a subtle invitation to reflect on sharing with our own neighbours.

For me, however, the highlight of the whole work is chapter 4, 'Interpreting the Gospel.' It takes for its text the encounter of Philip the Evangelist and the Ethiopian eunuch. In essence, this act of evangelism is that of a gentle teacher or guide who can bridge the biblical message from one cultural context to another. Using the biblical text and the intriguing watercolour images of Acts 8 done by contemporary Dutch artist Kees de Kort, Skreslet draws out the essential elements of this kind of evangelism. 'Philip shares what he knows from his own experience of the Christian life, guided by the Holy Spirit. He does not attempt to interpose himself between the Word that the Ethiopian is attempting to understand. He does not confront...as a herald... instead he interprets....'

The chapter is rounded out with images of the doors of the cathedral of St. Vitus

in Prague which tell the story of Cyril and Methodius, interpreters of the Gospel to the Slavs *par excellence*.

Chapter 5 is a useful reminder for those who find themselves 'too busy' with oversight of the church to find time for evangelism. Skreslet highlights the primitive gospel image of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Shepherding, Skreslet reminds us, is not just care and rectification of the flock on hand—it is also a charge to go and gather those who belong to the flock, but are not yet enfolded. A tiny detail from Raphael's *Christ's Charge to Peter*, skilfully integrates Peter's call to be a shepherd, his responsibility for the keys of the Kingdom and Jesus' assertion in John 10 that there are other sheep still to be brought into the fold. Chapter 6 highlights the work of Paul, evangelist and missionary strategist.

Dr. Skreslet's work is a solid effort with few things to complain about. The fresh attempt to integrate exegesis of the text with art-as-application-of-the-text has high impact and is well suited for postmodern audiences. It really does cause the reader to ponder and consider the text in new ways. The book, however, does disappoint in few places. There are times when the message struggles under the weight of excessively academic verbiage. In other places there appears to be both unnecessary and unhelpful deference to an old-fashioned historical-critical exegesis. This is seen in places, for example, with regard to the historicity of the Book of Acts. The careful interplay between history and history-as-interpretation with which Luke approached his work is now well documented in the studies of the last thirty years. Evangelicals really do hold the high ground in this area. No apologies are necessary.

In summary, *Picturing Christian Witness* is a relevant and motivational book which

serves first of all as a useful personal stimulus. For that reason alone, it deserves wide dissemination. But I believe teachers also would find that it could serve well to spark discussion and exploration in the classroom of mission/evangelism courses.

The Preexistent Son: Recovering the Christologies of Matthew, Mark and Luke
Simon J. Gathercole

Reviewed by Dr Patrick Mitchel, Irish Bible Institute, Dublin Ireland

This is a bold book, in which the author swims determinedly against the tide of New Testament scholarship. His thesis is simple ('the preexistence of Christ can be found in the Synoptic Gospels') and yet profoundly important for understanding the christological framework of the Synoptic Gospels and how that framework relates to John, Paul and the rest of the New Testament. In short, we are revisiting territory covered so controversially in 1980 by J. D. G. Dunn in his *Christology in the Making* when he concluded that preexistence was a late theological development, found only in John. However, even those unconvinced by Dunn's wisdom Christology in Paul (where Jesus is the personification of divine wisdom but does not have prior existence) have tended to agree that he was generally right on the Synoptics. It is this sort of 'over-cautious' minimalist consensus that Gathercole sets out to challenge.

His proposal develops in four parts. Part 1 argues that Jesus' preexistence (defined as 'the life of the Son prior to his birth') was an accepted concept before AD 70, primarily as a result of Pauline Christology, but is also visible in Jude and Hebrews. Paul's use of preexistence in a range of different letters is all the more striking for the way it is assumed rather than argued for. It was likely, therefore, that the Synoptic writers were aware of preexistence. Gathercole also concludes that the Synoptic material clearly portrays Christ as transcending 'normal human limitations'. While there is nothing new in these claims, they set the scene well for the main argument that unfolds in the next three sections of detailed exegetical and theological discussion.

Part 2 represents the heart of the book where the case is made that the 'I have come' sayings provide compelling evidence of preexistence christology. Gathercole contends that contrary interpretations pointing to prophetic or messianic origins of Jesus' ministry are inadequate. Rather, both quantitatively and qualitatively these sayings are closely related to explanatory announcements by angelic figures of the purpose of their visit to the earthly realm. Thus, taken together, Jesus' 'I have come' and 'I have been sent' statements point to preexistence. This conclusion coheres with, rather than stands in opposition to, other texts redolent of prophetic and messianic imagery (such as the parable of the wicked tenants for example).

Part 3 examines whether Jesus is the incarnation of preexistent wisdom.

In other words, has Jesus, like 'Lady Wisdom of the OT and Jewish tradition' come to earth as the incarnate manifestation of God's wisdom in order to proclaim the arrival of the kingdom of heaven and

summon people to enter it? Does this sort of wisdom christology provide another plank of evidence for preexistence? Gathercole engages with various expressions of this theory and concludes that while there may be a loose identification of Jesus with divine wisdom (especially in Matthew), the texts do not support such an exaggerated typological exegesis. In a separate chapter he draws similar conclusions about Matthew 23:37 (*cf.* Lk. 13:34), a text on which much wisdom Christology has been built. However, he does find in this text an extremely exalted christological statement about Jesus as a transcendent figure repeatedly calling Israel to repentance throughout her history. As such, it stands as a unique reference to the ongoing activity of Christ prior to his incarnation within the Synoptics.

Part 4 turns to the 'big four' titles of Jesus; Messiah, Lord, Son of Man, and Son of God. His careful consideration of their christological implications is not guilty of wishful maximalism. His examination of the material reinforces the case for preexistence in the subtle imagery behind the 'coming' sayings of Son of Man and the heavenly motif connected to the Son of God in particular. But, he argues, this must be seen within the total framework of the Synoptic material.

The overall portrait of preexistence in the Synoptics that emerges is of a theme that is certainly not systematically drawn, but neither is it one that can be dismissed as a marginal irrelevance. The evidence points to the presence of an early high Christology, independent of John. Preexistence exists in the background, serving to underpin the main focus of the first three gospels, the soteriological mission of the Christ.

Gathercole makes a persuasive case and engages with opposing views with clarity

and fairness. His argument is rooted in careful exegesis and is related with integrity to wider theological discussion of preexistence in the New Testament. All this makes this book a valuable resource to students of NT Christology. While it may not turn the tide all on its own, it certainly provides good reason for swimming in the other direction.

Angels and Demons: Perspectives and Practice in Diverse Religious Traditions
Edited by Peter G. Riddell and Beverly Smith Riddell

Nottingham, England: Apollos, 2007
ISBN: 978-1-84474-182-3
Pb, pp 277, appendices.

Reviewed by James Nkansah-Obrempong, Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST), Nairobi, Kenya.

Angels and Demons is a fascinating and interesting book. The subtitle indicates its major contents. Apart from the Introduction, all thirteen chapters, each contributed by a different author, focus on the diverse ways peoples of different religions and cultures see the spiritual world, and how this world relates to their day-to-day lives.

Four basic religious traditions are addressed. Chapters 1-2 deal with 'the spiritual realm in Traditional African Religions' (TAR), and 'demons and deliverance in African Pentecostalism' respectively. Chapters 3-4 focus on Christianity's teaching on angels and demons by looking at the following topics: Pentecostals and angels; the charismatic devil: demonology in charismatic Christianity; and binding the strongman. Chapters 6-7 deal with Hindu understanding of angels and demons, and chapters 8-10 are on Islamic teachings. In addition, the last three chapters, 11-13, focus on coping with the non-existent: *A course in Miracles* and evil; Satanism and the heavy-metal subculture; Not just halos and horns: angels and demons in western pop culture respectively.

The authors emphasize the reality of spirit beings—ancestral spirits, angels and demons. Though different traditions and cultures may view these beings differently, they are in fact real. These spirit beings can be good or evil. The authors point out that these beings have the ability to influence human life and exert certain influences on creation in general.

The introductory section of the book is very helpful for giving insight to the unity of the book, despite the diversity of traditions discussed in the book. One is able to see the similarity of beliefs and ideas shared in common between the different faiths and cultures concerning angels and demons. The book is an easy read. Nevertheless, there are a couple of chapters with technical terms that are difficult to understand. However, the glossary provides help for the reader to understand these terms.

The authors cover a range of themes such as spirits beings and their origins, angels, demons, jinn, roles of the spirit beings, angels and demons; spiritual warfare, origin of evil, deliverance and exorcism, discernment, the relationship and role between the Holy Spirit and angels, human suffering, spiritual powers, use of talisman, Satanism and many others.

The approach of the authors is extensive and balanced. Although they are descriptive in nature, they also provide some critique of the particular tradition they are writing about. The critique given by Andy Bannister on Muslim beliefs regarding the divine source of the Quran by denying the

oral, and the storytellers' role in the composition of the Quran is interesting and helpful. Similarly, Ruth Bradby's critique of *A Course in Miracles*, its relevance, the usefulness and legitimacy of New Age theology to the starving, oppressed, and war-affected people in many parts of the world is useful. Evil cannot be wished away! It is a reality. We see it all around us. It is not an illusion! We may have to live with it, hoping that the return of Christ will remove evil from our midst for good.

Lastly, the discussion on the Satanism as an 'atheistic, self-centric philosophy', that appeals to rationalistic, secular society, which is critical of belief systems that are at odds with modern science and progress, and its anti-establishment attitude is helpful. It shows the mindsets expressed by different cultures regarding the spiritual world. The chapters on western contemporary understanding of angels and demons as expressed by western pop culture, music, and movies are insightful, and helpful for Christians who would like to engage in discussion on this topic.

The book will be valuable for students in theological institutions and others who would like to know more about this subject. The various perspectives on the subject expressed by a range of religious traditions can enrich our understanding and sense of appreciation of some of the common things cultures share in terms of belief systems. It provides both religious and contemporary understanding of the spirit world. This may be helpful to build one's knowledge in the field of angelology and demonology and may be relevant for ministry as well.

Canon and Biblical Interpretation (Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, vol. 7)

Craig Bartholomew, Scott Hahn, Robin Parry, Christopher Seitz, Al Wolters (editors)

Reviewed by Leonardo De Chirico, Istituto di Formazione Evangelica e Documentazione Padova, Italy

This book is the seventh volume of the 'Scripture and Hermeneutics' Series, an ambitious project started in 2000 which is seeking to renew biblical interpretation by rethinking the relationship between hermeneutics and language, ethics and politics, history, and biblical theology.

In dealing with theological liberalism, biblical interpretation was once over-concerned with issues stemming from historical criticism. The postmodern culture is now asking new questions revolving on the intricacies of textuality, the power of narratives and the role of interpretative communities within a pluralist world. The Series is an attempt to encourage evangelical hermeneutics to be part of the conversation with these new trends while, at the same time, opening the dialogue with other Christian interpretative traditions (e.g. catholic scholars like Scott Hahn). It is anticipated that the final volume (the eighth) will deal with the Bible and the academy. On the whole, then, the Series is an outstanding contribution to revitalise biblical interpretation, thus showing the richness and complexity of the hermeneutical responsibility of the

scholar-believer.

This volume originated in a consultation held in Rome in 2005 and is composed of fifteen essays plus an introduction by Anthony Thiselton which reflects *a posteriori* on the contributions. The main issue which is discussed is that of canonicity. For biblical interpretation, the canon is pivotal because it distinguishes between ancient religious materials by recognising only some as Holy Scripture and provides a hermeneutical framework through which these texts can be adequately read within the flow of an over-arching narrative. While the liberal agenda challenged canonical readings on the basis of its rejection of a firm *locus* of divine authority (i.e. the Bible), the postmodern ethos is not at ease with the idea of a somewhat normative meta-narrative which governs our approach to Scripture and limits theological diversity within canonical boundaries. Against this background, traditional debates concerning the nature of the canonical authority of the church and the extension of the canon itself appear to be less prominent in current discussions.

As it often happens in collective works of this kind, both themes and degrees of interest vary considerably. The book is divided in two parts dealing respectively with the hermeneutical implications of having a canon and the prospects and problems of reading the Old Testament canonically. The reader is left with the question about the New Testament which is missing in this overall content of the volume. It is true that the first part includes a paper on the Gospels within the canon but the rest of the New Testament would have deserved a proper and specific treatment. Because of this weakness the book is not a comprehensive introduction on the topic. It is more of an eclectic selection of contributions.

Very helpfully, Brevard Childs summaris-es recent debates over canon, both within the English and German speaking worlds. Of course, Childs himself has championed the so-called 'canonical approach' to Biblical Theology as a way to recover the nature of the biblical text as a composite whole. So his contribution is a first-hand critical reflection on a wide-spread tendency in contemporary biblical theology. As Stephen Chapman recalls in his essay, evangelicals like Carl Henry highly welcomed Childs's insistence on canonical theology. The main problem, however, was with his nebulous views of divine revelation and inspiration. Further work needs to be done in order to shape a canonical theology which also reflects a high view of Scripture and can account for the roles of tradition and communities.

The second part is the most rewarding section of the book. Evangelical scholars like Gordon McConville, Chris Wright, Gordon Wenham, and Tremper Longman investigate important issues related to canonical readings of Old Testament laws, the Psalms and Wisdom literature.

Liturgical Theology: The Church as Worshiping Community
Simon Chan

Reviewed by W. Travis McMaken, Princeton Theological Seminary

Simon Chan, Earnest Lau Professor of Systematic Theology at Trinity Theological College in Singapore, has set out in this volume to redress the evangelical 'ecclesiological deficit' (p. 11).

Rather than thinking theologically about the church, evangelicals have been content with an 'essentially sociological' (p. 12) ecclesiology. Chan's goal is 'to present a vision of the church as an ontological reality' (p. 14). What kind of ontological reality is the church? Chan's answer to this question gives this volume its shape in that 'the nature of the church cannot be understood apart from its calling as a worshiping community' (p. 15).

Chan's book is not merely an ontological account of the church. From the ontology of the church provided in the first chapter comes the discussion of the church's worship in the second, and this discussion necessitates an exploration of the liturgy in chapter three. Chapter four treats the liturgy in terms of the church's practice, which Chan describes as 'reenacting the Christian story' in a circumstance characterized by 'synergy of divine-human acts' that results in 'spiritual formation…taking place' (p. 98). This is the point toward which the first four chapters, grouped together as 'Part One: Foundations', have been moving.

In the second part, 'Practices', Chan discusses the catechumenate of the ancient church (chapter 5), the 'Sunday liturgy' (chapter 6), and what it means to actively participate in Christian worship (chapter 7). These chapters are not an appendix to the more theoretical first four chapters, but are the practical elucidation of those chapters. The material on the Sunday liturgy would be especially valuable to pastors and seminarians who find themselves drawn to liturgical worship, persuaded by Chan's ecclesiology, and are now trying to make sense of the particulars of liturgical meaning. This is also true of Chan's discussion of liturgical time in chapter 7, as well as the Apostles' Creed, the Decalogue and the Lord's Prayer in chapter 5.

There is much to be admired in the vision of the church and worship that Chan provides here. He is right to want to help evangelicals move beyond merely sociological understandings of the church. But, we might wonder whether Chan has actually succeeded in his intention to surpass sociological accounts of the church. While Chan is on the right track in talking about synergy, that is, a communion of divine and human activity in Christian worship, he is not precise enough in explaining this relation. This synergy begins to be taken for granted rather than recognized as prayerful hope and gracious promise. Danger arises when Chan seems to equate the formative power of liturgy with the work of the Spirit. Chan quotes a paragraph that speaks of what we do in worship and affirms that 'this is what it means to call [the formation that comes through the liturgy] the work of the Spirit' (p. 91). This rather flat-footed equation of human activity in worship with the work of the Spirit raises serious questions about what Chan means by 'synergy' and seems to give us a baptized sociology rather than a truly theological account of the liturgy. That is, Chan has not finally surpassed sociological accounts of the church but has given us a sociological account of a higher order. A more dynamic understanding of the freedom of the Spirit's work is needed.

A second worrisome aspect of this volume has to do with how Chan orders the relationship between liturgy and theology, and with his relationship to Friedrich Schleiermacher. Chan rejects the Schleiermacherian notion that 'the source of religion [is] to be found precisely in human subjectivity' (p. 121), but he also seems to want the theology implied in the liturgy to take 'pride of place over other forms of theology' (p. 51). This is because the theology embodied in the liturgy is

'immediate to the divine-human encounter' (p. 50). We seem here to be left with a revised Schleiermacherianism that bases theology not upon individual human subjectivity but upon a form of corporate subjectivity. However, this is not what Chan seems to actually want. Whereas Chan here seems to make theology dependent upon liturgy, he reverses this relation a short while later: 'True worship must reflect the reality of who God is. That is, whatever the liturgical forms may be, they must conform to certain theological norms' (p. 57). We take this, combined with Chan's stated critique of Schleiermacher, to be indicative of his intention in this matter even if he has become entangled in working out the particulars.

This much is certain, however: Chan's volume represents a step forward in the evangelical discussion of ecclesiology and, despite any flaws that it may possess, deserves to be engaged with care by those who, like Chan, hope to overcome evangelicalism's ecclesiological deficit.

Inerrancy and the Spiritual Formation of Younger Evangelicals
Carlos R Bovell

Reviewed by David Parker, Editor,
Evangelical Review of Theology

The author of this book writes out of deep personal experience with one of the most prominent tenets of evangelicalism, the doctrine of scripture, and a deep desire that the spiritual welfare of younger evangelicals be not jeopardized (as his was)

on account of the commonly held notion of inerrancy. Defining 'evangelical' by the doctrinal standard of the Evangelical Theological Society and the Evangelical Philosophical Society, he believes that inerrancy is often held as an unexamined mantra, a 'sacred postulate' which is 'psychologically necessary' for acceptance in the mainstream evangelical world, even though the reasons given for such a position are at root non-theological, and unworthy of the faith, untenable and inadequate as a basis for sound belief. He is concerned that inerrancy as commonly assumed is 'unhelpful to younger evangelicals' and to continue to insist on it in the way which it has been presented is to place 'the spiritual welfare of the next generation of evangelicals… at stake'.

Covering an extremely wide range of disciplines and aspects of the topic, the main part of the book consists of six 'recognitions' or case studies that he has worked through in his own pilgrimage, to demonstrate his case. These include the idea that adopting a world view as a presupposition destroys the possibility of examining the nature and claims of scripture on their own terms, through to the problems of associating the human and divine qualities of scripture with the dual natures of Christ, and the openness of the canon as an historical fact. An interesting historical example from the Reformation shows how 'younger evangelical can learn from an old controversy' (see *Evangelical Review of Theology*, 30 (2006) 322-338).

Although Bovell does not see himself as a younger evangelical or as a post-modern, his line of approach addresses concerns related to these groups. Nor is his book directed to these groups, but to the older generation, calling upon them to present the case for the authority of scripture in a manner that relates to the concerns of

younger people, and in a way that is credible and does not 'ignore or neglect critical data'. Working inductively, he contends that 'historical and biblical scholarship should more openly and critically inform evangelical philosophy and theology' because the 'conversation between the disciplines has gone in the other direction for too long'. He realizes that many 'older' evangelicals hold the doctrine of inerrancy in a 'more nuanced' way than popular understandings would indicate. However, because younger evangelicals are so dependent on the teaching and example of their seniors, it is the latter's 'spiritual responsibility' to 'more actively support the fledgling disbelievers among them in their search for ways out of wholesale liberalism or even total unbelief'.

This is likely to be a controversial book, but the author is frank and open about his position, including chapters addressed to younger evangelicals and justifying his use of pragmatic arguments. Taken in the spirit intended, it is, as the title indicates, a challenge for 'evangelical leaders and teachers … who are concerned about the spiritual formation of their students'.

God Next Door—Spirituality & Mission in the Neighbourhood
Simon Carey Holt

*Reviewed by Bryan A. Johnson, Auckland,
New Zealand.*

Simon Carey Holt, a post-modern lecturer in spirituality, has listened to the experiences of numerous people of faith living in a variety of urban and suburban neighbourhood contexts across many nations, including his city of domicile, Melbourne, Australia. He has developed transformational conversations with these people that illuminate for the reader the endless possibilities for spiritual encounter in our own neighbourhoods, if we will seek God's presence in our neighbourhood, and take time to interact with the communities we live in.

In the opening chapter the author reviews the three views that sociologists have held of urbanisation through the 1900s. The first view was that urbanisation dealt a fatal blow to any possibility of genuine communal experience; the second that pockets of neighbourhood thrive in an otherwise alien environment; the third view that urbanisation actually spawns new ways of being a community. These three responses can be defined as community lost, community found and community liberated.

In the second and third chapters Simon challenges the suburban state of mind, and the mobility and cohesion of suburban neighbourhoods.

The biblical mandate, the call of God, and urban mission are the focus of the next two chapters. Influenced by men who advocate alternative urban church structures such as Robert Banks, Simon searches through New Testament and early church history to show how the early Christians maximised their neighbourliness to evangelise Mediterranean communities. Focusing on his past and present urban environment, Simon explores the relationship between discipleship, evangelism, cross-cultural mission and the emerging multicultural suburbia through the fascinating stories Simon narrates throughout the entire book.

Towards the second half of the book the

author deals with the sad dichotomy many suburban Christians face between church life and suburban life. They choose the safety of church life because it facilitates relationships with people of like mind and like interests. Over their years of church life they lose the conversation needed to encounter their neighbours, often travelling considerable distances across the city to join their church community, ignoring the local community. This behaviour negates the possibility of any meaningful engagement in local community activities. The author proposes community service as one of the spiritual disciplines of the neighbourhood. He states that God's presence is in our neighbourhood, and it has been associated with our roots, making the church an 'embedded' community. These ideas start to develop a theology of land and community leadership.

It seemed appropriate to this reviewer that this Baptist affiliated author could have explored the origins of the word 'diakanos' and how Greek society had deacons for cities and suburbs who gathered in forums (diakonos) as city leaders to care for the needs of the urbanites. The author does develop the idea that city and suburban leadership arises out of service to one's neighbours in fulfilment of Jesus' second command, 'to love your neighbour as yourself'.

The author often refers to dichotomies in 'Western' Christian thinking that do not exist for Christians who come from holistic tribal cultures. Jesus had an holistic worldview and this enabled him to bypass the religious communal segregation of his day. Simon rightly concludes that an holistic urban faith calls us to a high level of inclusivity as was demonstarted in the call of Jesus ministry (Isaiah 61:1-3) to people of every social strata, every despised group in his society, and every

race with which he had contact.

Engagement and identification with the neighbourhood are topics discussed in chapters 6 and 7. A parallel is drawn with the incarnational presence of Christ on earth, in the life of the believer by the power of the Holy Spirit, and in the serving believer as God's representative in the neighbourhood.

The writer states at the end of the book that his purpose in writing will be served if readers re-look at their neighbourhood as an important place for spirituality and mission. The thought provoking concepts adequately illustrated with relevant and captivating stories ensures that this purpose will be well fulfilled.

First Corinthians: A Short Exegetical and Pastoral Commentary
Anthony C. Thiselton

Reviewed by David R. Denton, Brisbane, Australia

Thiselton produced a massive commentary of about 1450 pages on the Greek text of 1 Corinthians for the NIGCT series in 2000. This later book is, he indicates, not an abbreviated version, but a new work, with a different agenda and a broader readership in mind. Specifically, it has a pastoral and practical aim, seeking to relate the message of the epistle to today's church and society, an aim which is very successfully achieved. Instead of covering every conceivable question and issue or incorporating every scholarly

interpretation, the author majors on presenting his own understanding of the text and its application.

The epistle is expounded in 52 sections, each with a heading, the text (in the author's translation), exegesis, and 'suggestions for possible reflection.' Exegesis is not detailed, and not always verse-by-verse, but the thrust of the passage is forcefully presented. In this section the words of the text are in boldface, and so are clearly distinguished from the author's comments. Frequently the precise meaning of the Greek words is painstakingly explained, which results in a very careful and apt English translation, and a more precise understanding of Paul's message. The final draft of his suggestions for reflection is a mixture of reflections and questions, which intend to 'facilitate practical impact for thought and life today', and possibly also provide sermon material. They are rich in thought-provoking questions and ideas.

This is one of the major strengths of the commentary.

The selective introduction has four principal sections, but only brief comments on occasion and date. Its focus is on the culture of Corinth and the ethos which permeated the church, with relation to the situation of the church in the 21st century. Thiselton highlights competitiveness, self-achievement, self-promotion and self-sufficiency as problems of the Corinthian church. Other 'Corinthian' traits with modern counterparts include consumerism and postmodernity. It is along these lines that he demonstrates the modern relevance of the epistle.

Behind it all, of course, lies a depth of scholarship and a lifetime of research and contemplation on this epistle. As a result there is even occasional modification of translation or understanding compared to the earlier commentary, and additional thoughts arising from interaction with literature which has appeared since 2000.

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