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A Global Forum

WEA
WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
*Theological Commission*

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# Evangelical Review of Theology

## A Global Forum

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# Editor's Introduction

In 1979, as a new Christian looking for solid fellowship while home from college for the summer, I attended a local Catholic charismatic prayer group, even though I had never been nor intended to become Catholic. That summer, I experienced each Wednesday night precisely what Tom Johnson describes in his contribution to this issue of *ERT*: Catholics who sounded just like me, except that they (1) repeated the Ave Maria at the end of their meetings while I abstained and (2) possessed far more spiritual maturity and biblical knowledge than I did.

Those unforgettable prayer meetings reinforced experientially what I already knew theoretically: God can and does work powerfully through people who belong to the Roman Catholic Church.

The World Evangelical Alliance has grappled deeply with the issue of how to relate to the Catholic Church or to individual Catholics. This issue of *ERT* features one major product of that engagement: a report summarizing a consultation between Vatican and WEA representatives from 2009 to 2016. The document has also been published by the Vatican's Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity.

This report is neither a record of heated debates nor a mealy-mouthed compromise statement. After articulating the urgency of and the challenges entailed in maintaining mutual respect and trust between these two branches of Christianity, the document presents points of agreement and encouragement, followed by tough questions posed by each side to the other.

Doubtless, many readers will wish that the document also included each side's answers to the other side's questions, but that might have taken another three years. Instead, answering those questions, as my math books used to say, is left as an exercise to the reader. One goal of the consultation report is to promote dialogue and collegiality in local settings all over the world as evangelicals and Catholics alike work out their own answers and pursue better mutual understanding.

We present four articles related to the Vatican-WEA document. First, Rolf Hille and Joel Elowsky, the two evangelical representatives on the document's drafting committee, comment on their experience and its theological and practical implications. We also include the message that Tom Johnson, the WEA's ambassador to the Vatican, delivered to the European Evangelical Alliance in October 2017, as he sought to build on this milestone in evangelical–Catholic relationships. Finally, John Bugay, a Reformed blogger and former Catholic, offers a well-informed, mildly sceptical outsider's perspective.

In other articles, Russell Huizing and Kye James argue biblically why Christian instruction should look more like apprenticeship than pupilship, and frequent contributor Jim Harries returns with a provocative examination, inspired by his personal experience in Africa, of the undesirable consequences that can result from classifying Christianity as one of many 'world religions'.

Happy reading!

**—Bruce Barron, editor**

ERT (2018) 42:2, 100-130

# ‘Scripture and Tradition’ and ‘the Church in Salvation’: Catholics and Evangelicals Explore Challenges and Opportunities

*A Report of the International Consultation between the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance (2009–2016)*

## Introduction: Setting the Frame for Our Consultation

### The Biblical Foundations for This Consultation

1. The love of God has been poured out by the Holy Spirit into the hearts of believers (Rom 5:5). This love summons Christians to follow Christ, embracing the way of the cross in humble self-giving (Phil 2:1–11). In this spirit of love all are called to strive for what makes for peace and for building up the body, with all concerned for the whole community, the strong caring for the weak (Rom 14:19–15:2). Being joined to Christ through faith, each person is personally associated with Christ and becomes a member of his body. But what is the Church, and who belongs to the Church, which is his body? We take consolation in knowing that the Lord knows his own and his own know him (Jn 10:14).

Evangelicals understand that through the power of the Holy Spirit, the very moment one enters into a relationship with Christ through a personal commitment in confessing Jesus as Lord and Savior (Mt 16:16) and is baptized, one belongs to the Church, the community which he established (Mt 16:18).[1] As a fruit of this faith, the Christian undertakes the path of life-long discipleship.

Catholics understand that a person is received into the Church at the moment of Baptism, whether as an infant or an adult, and it is expected that the person’s initiation into the church will be deepened through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that is sealed through confirmation and participation in the Eucharist, as they seek to live as his disciples.

2. The unity of the body of Christ is founded on “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all” (Eph 4:5). The church celebrates unity with Christ and with one another in the Lord’s Supper/Eucharist in which his death and resurrection are proclaimed and celebrated until he comes in glory. At his second

**1** As stated in the document *Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission* (ERCDOM): ‘Conversion and baptism are the gateway into the new community of God, although Evangelicals distinguish between the visible and invisible aspects of this community. They see conversion as the means of entry into the invisible church and baptism as the consequently appropriate means of entry into the visible church’ (4.3).

coming it will then be revealed in the heavenly community who belongs to the unity of the body of Christ throughout the ages and from all countries and languages. Then, the whole creation will be incorporated into the eternal doxology of praise to God (Rev 5:11–14; Phil 2:10–11; Rom 8:19–23; 1 Cor 15:28). While we look forward to the final consummation of all things, we are called in the Church to be Christ's body in the here and now.

3. Christ's prayer for unity in John 17 takes as its premise that his present and future disciples be brought into the unity that he shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit. This unity testifies to the world that "you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (Jn 17:23). There is a unity which the church receives, and which God has given.[2] But unity also comes to us as a task, one that can only be accomplished by the Spirit working in and through us. The Apostle Paul makes an appeal "that there be no dissensions among you and that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 Cor 1:10).

4. We realize that in the history of the Church, continuing even to today, divisions have damaged the visible unity of the Church and shaken the credibility of the Gospel that is to be preached in the world. Unity is something deeply desired by our Lord and empowered by his Spirit. Therefore, the Church may not remain comfortable when the body of Christ is divided (cf. 1 Cor 12:25), but is called to strive for the greatest possible unity which Christ himself calls for (Jn 17:20–23; Phil 2:5). In doing so, we are agreed that the Church must make every effort to preach the Gospel in its truth and purity, though we have not always understood what that means in the same way. We recognize that in the history of the Church, striving for the truth of the Gospel has not always resulted in unity or resolved all of our differences. But we also welcome the renewed effort to address these divisions in our present consultation.

## The Challenges Encountered among Evangelicals and Catholics

5. According to the reports our consultation commissioned from 22 countries and from five continents, relations between Catholics and Evangelicals vary according to the regions, local history, public recognition and role in society as well as other new and emerging circumstances. While mutual ignorance and mistrust, fears and prejudices, as well as majority/minority dynamics have prevented relations from being improved in certain countries, in other areas where Catholics and Evangelicals are challenged by the contemporary society, or exist as minorities threatened by religious persecutions, or work in common efforts to confront poverty or various natural disasters, collaboration has been established at different levels.

6. There is a wide range in the quality of local relationships. Sometimes relations

**2** As affirmed in the WEA Statement of Faith: 'We believe in … the Unity of the Spirit of all true believers, the Church, the Body of Christ' and in the Decree on Ecumenism, *Unitatis Redintegratio* l: 'Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only.'

are characterized by open rivalry and opposition in the missionary field, marred by accusations and counter-accusations of proselytism, persecution, inequality, idolatry, and/or rejection of the recognition of the Christian identity of the other. At other times or places, relationships are characterized by open collaboration in the public sphere, especially in family matters and ethical and moral campaigns at every level, as well as prayer initiatives and evangelistic and common charitable campaigns inspired by the Bible.

7. Members of the Consultation are happy to note that in most parts of the world there is a consciousness of the need to improve our relationship. Catholics and Evangelicals are convinced that "Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. At the same time, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings."[3] In accordance with the principles of the Gospel, important steps can be taken together through mutual knowledge and recognition, healing of memories, theological dialogue, as well as encouraging local collaboration between Catholics and Evangelicals wherever possible and appropriate.

## The Contemporary Challenges to the Christian Witness

8. Neither Catholics nor Evangelicals can escape the challenges that an increasingly globalized context poses, where the paradigm is shifting more and more to a secular view of society and culture. This raises the question of how the gospel can be preached adequately in this context without giving in to the pressure to conform to the world. Challenges come to us in different forms:

- There is a creeping secularism that is antagonistic to the Christian faith as we live as strangers in an increasingly strange land (1 Pet 1:1). In many places religion has been relegated largely to the private sphere of the individual with little or no public presence of religion allowed. Many people have forgotten that they have forgotten God. There is an increasing erosion of the churches themselves which affects their impact on society and culture. This erosion is not only in the West; this is a global challenge. It is an erosion whose long-term effects are not yet fully understood.
- Our age is experiencing an ethical disorientation, one that often disallows God and his revelation to serve as any type of reference point for ethical discussion. In sexual morality, there is an underlying assumption that everyone is free to do what is perceived to be right in their own eyes; there is no longer basic agreement on the definition of marriage; sexual orientation now is the accepted way of defining who we are as human beings and the redefinition of marriage to include same-sex unions is more and more common. The dignity

**3** Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, World Council of Churches and World Evangelical Alliance, *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations far Conduct,* Preamble, Geneva, 28 June 2011.

and sanctity of human life at all stages is under attack. Euthanasia, assisted suicide, abortion, and some genetic and reproductive technologies threaten and undermine the basic understanding of what it means to be human. This in turn also has repercussions for the primary foundation of society—the family.

- Religious and ideological diversity is the norm in many societies and cultures around the globe. Although that is not necessarily problematic, it does serve as a challenge to the church because the truth of the Gospel can be seen as just one option among many. The exclusive claims of Christ himself (Jn 14:6) are perceived by some as a direct affront to the dominant controlling ethos of toleration. Religious pluralism has had the unintended consequence of intensified violence caused by an increasingly polarized religious environment. A perceived lack of conviction on the one hand is met with religious radicalization on the other. In such a polarized context, those on the extremes use their religious convictions to justify violence against those with whom they disagree. In this context, we note with dismay and sadness that Christians are persecuted in many countries around the world today. It is our duty to pray for the persecuted church and to stand up for religious freedom wherever it is denied.

## Response to These Challenges and Our Shared Beliefs

9. To what extent can Evangelicals and Catholics continue to face such challenges alone and apart from one another? What of our present situation? The participants in this consultation, appointed by the World Evangelical Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, are convinced that the urgency of the present situation makes it imperative that we as Evangelicals and Catholics speak and act together wherever we can to confront these challenges. We are called together by Christ so that the world may come to realize his presence in a world that is fractured and fragmented—a world which he loved even to the point of death and still loves (Jn 3:16; 17:20–23).

One purpose of this consultation has been to explore areas of common concern. Part of discerning what we can do together has been learning more about each other's personal faith and commitment to Christ's Gospel and his mission to save a dying world. We have also sought to explore more deeply those issues which continue to divide us. We do so because our divided witness weakens our response to these challenges in the eyes of the world. While we recognize our enduring divisions, we can acknowledge the work that each other is doing and even consider working together in as many areas as possible.

10. We as Catholics and Evangelicals are in agreement that Christians believe: that God is triune, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three persons in one God (Gen 1:1–3; Mt 28:19; Jn 1:1; 10:30, etc.); that he created all things, both visible and invisible, by his Word (Gen 1; Jn 1:3; Col 1:16–17); that human beings brought sin into this world, and as a result, all are born sinful and in need of forgiveness and reconciliation with God (Rom 3:20–23); that the Word, the second person of the Trinity, became flesh (Jn 1:14) as our Lord and Savior, true God and true man in

one person (Col 1:19); that he came to earth as both God and man to save us from our sins (Phil 2:5–11; Col 2:9), that he was born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified for our sins, died, and was buried, he descended into hell (1 Pet 3:18–19) and rose again on the third day and ascended into heaven where he sits at the right hand of the Father and will judge the living and the dead on the last day. We believe in the Holy Spirit who leads us to repentance, calls us to faith, justifies us by grace through faith, and enlightens us with the Word of God as he inspired the Apostles and prophets; therefore we believe that all Christians of any community can have a living relationship with God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit which the Spirit himself enables; it is the responsibility and privilege of all Christians to proclaim the saving Gospel to all who have not repented, believed and committed their lives to Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:18); we also believe that the Spirit calls and gathers all believers into his one, holy, catholic,[4] apostolic Church where we strengthen and build one another up in the body of Christ as we receive his gifts of Baptism and the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:23–34; 1 Cor 12:12; Mt 28:19; Mk 16:16; Mt 26:26–29). We look forward to the resurrection of the body and to the time when we will see God face to face and live with him forever (1 Cor 15; 1 Cor 13:12).

11. While we rejoice in holding these elements of faith in common, we also recognize that we are called to grow in understanding of those areas where there has not been full agreement, and address them directly. Two long-standing differences of great significance have been our understandings of the authority of Scripture and Tradition, and the role of the Church in salvation. There are other important areas of disagreement which we hope to address in future discussions, but due to limits of time and resources, in this text we will address only these two historically divisive issues.

12. Finally, in this introduction it is important to note that the Evangelical movement itself constitutes a highly differentiated ecumenical network. The World Evangelical Alliance brings together Evangelical Christians from Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed, Anabaptist and Pentecostal traditions. This diversity has significant consequences particularly for ecclesiology—that is, questions pertaining to ministry, authority and ecclesial structures, sacraments, and the nature of the church. These Churches differ greatly in their relationship to the Catholic Church. In view of the doctrinal issues raised in our dialogue, such differences were clearly in evidence. The challenge is made more complex when considering that the Evangelical movement has chosen not to address ecclesiological differences among the members of the WEA, but rather to focus on cooperation in common prayer, evangelism, and witness.[5]

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**4** The word 'catholic' in the creed means 'universal'.

**5** On the ecclesiological convergences and differences between the Evangelical and Catholic understandings, see *Church, Evangelization, and the Bonds of Koinonia; A Report of the International Consultation between the Catholic Church and the World Evangelical Alliance (1993–2002),* especially Part 1, 'Catholics, Evangelicals, and *Koinonia'*, Sections B and C.

## Method of the Consultation

13. The current round of consultations has built upon the Evangelical–Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission (1977–1984), the 1993 Venice Consultation between the World Evangelical Fellowship and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, and the *Church, Evangelization and the Bonds of Koinonia* document (2002). The current consultation brought together 13 participants from 10 different countries on 5 continents, ensuring that many different perspectives would be given voice in our discussions.

14. The members of this consultation were given the mandate to enter into conversation representing our diverse communities, seeking greater mutual understanding, and attempting to identify the state of our relations and how they might proceed appropriately and responsibly. Over the past six years, we met in São Paulo, Brazil; Rome, Italy; Chicago, USA; Guatemala City, Guatemala; Bad Blankenburg, Germany; and Saskatoon, Canada. In all of these places we met with local Evangelicals and Catholics and heard areas of concern and examples of cooperation in each of their regions.

At our meetings, we presented papers, explained our positions, argued, asked questions, prayed together (and separately) for God's reconciling grace, gained insights—and asked more questions. We were not in the business of compromise and negotiation, but rather of respectful and frank conversation, aware that nothing other than a deep honesty, graciously articulated, would serve our communities well. When we gathered, we sought to be faithful to Jesus Christ even when we encountered disagreements. The way forward was for us firstly to map out convergences, building on previous consultations, and on the basis of our respective teachings and practices; secondly, to name aspects of the other tradition which give us encouragement, where we rejoice in seeing God at work, and where we may learn from the other; thirdly, with the help of the dialogue partner, to formulate questions to each other in a respectful and intelligent way (hence the term 'fraternal'), thus identifying issues we were not able to resolve in this round of consultation, which still need to be addressed by our respective communities.

With mutual trust and respect, we have sought to undertake this task in a way which also records the understanding we have gained, the insights which allow us to pose the questions differently than we may have done prior to the current round of consultation. With prayer and a desire to be true to our calling and our convictions, we have posed questions that are intended to stimulate further discussion between Catholics and Evangelicals that will spill over into our own respective communities where we would like to see the conversation continue. It is our fervent hope that the Holy Spirit would enable us to go deeper in our self-understanding as we learn from each other about the God who loves us all and gave himself for us.

# Part 1: The Word of God Is Living and Active: Evangelicals and Catholics Reflect Together on the Scriptures and the Apostolic Tradition

## Introduction

15. Catholics and Evangelicals have long seen ourselves as standing in opposition to each other regarding the authority of Scripture, and its relation to Tradition. From the time of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, our respective positions seemed well summarized by two radically distinct alternatives: *Scripture alone* or *Scripture and Tradition.* Churches of the Reformation, which are an important part of an Evangelical inheritance, continue to be convinced that the Bible will always be the ultimate authority in matters of faith, doctrine and practice, that the church can and has erred, and that authority is only to be sought in the Word of God. Catholics have stressed the need for and the authority of the Church's teaching office in the interpretation of the Bible.[6]

16. Meeting in our present context, five hundred years after the beginning of the Reformation era, Evangelicals and Catholics taking part in this consultation were able to discern that we have come a long way from the disputes and battle lines of the 16th century. This is not to say that we are now in or nearing full agreement, but we have come to realize that we can rejoice in the growing centrality of the Scriptures in the lives of Catholics as well as Evangelicals. We also rejoice in the convergences apparent to us in our understanding of the significance of the Apostolic Tradition and the transmission of faith through the generations.[7]

17. Under the headings of 'Scripture', 'Apostolic Tradition', and 'Scripture and Tradition', we begin by identifying common ground or convergences; then proceed, in light of a deeper understanding of the other, by indicating areas where each finds encouraging developments within the ecclesial life of the other; then by posing, in a friendly but direct way, remaining questions that challenge the other community to articulate the theological foundations of its convictions in order to search for common ground.

## 1. The Scriptures

### *A. Our Common Ground*

18. Through discussion, and a study of our respective documents, Evangelicals and Catholics have come to find much common ground regarding the revelation of God and the place of the Scriptures in the Church. We as Evangelicals and Catholics firmly believe that God has spoken to humanity, revealing his divine

**6** Regarding the use of the word 'Church' in this document, see paragraphs 50 and following.

**7** See section 2 on the Apostolic Tradition, beginning with paragraph 29.

self—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—to us, and also revealing God's will for the human race. Together, we believe that the fullness of revelation is found in Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, the eternal Word made flesh. In Jesus, the innermost truth about God is revealed. Through his words and deeds, his miracles and teaching, and above all in his death for our sins and his resurrection he has freed us from sin and has brought redemption, has shown us the face of God, and has taught us what it is to be human.

19. After Jesus' resurrection and ascension to the Father, the Holy Spirit descended upon the community of his disciples, who went forth proclaiming what they had received from and witnessed in Jesus. This proclamation was faithfully recorded in the books which eventually comprised the New Testament. Jesus himself had understood the Old Testament to be the written Word of God, revealed to the chosen people of Israel (Jn 5:39). By his authority, the Christian Church from its very beginning accepted the Old Testament (eventually alongside the New Testament) as the only written Word of God.[8] The Bible is the written Word of God in an altogether singular way (2 Tim 3:16).

20. Catholics and Evangelicals rejoice in affirming together that the Scriptures are the highest authority in matters of faith and practice (2 Pet 1:20–21).[9] The purpose of the Scriptures, consistent with the purpose of God's revelation, is to lead people into faith in Christ, who is 'the way, the truth and the life' (Jn 14:6). Christians approach the Scriptures mindful of their internal coherence as the speech of God, and that they are to be read in light of the fullness of God's revelation in Christ. We hold that the books of both the Old and New Testaments in their entirety were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God uses human authors with human language to communicate his Word through the sacred texts of Scripture. It follows that the Scriptures teach solidly, faithfully, without error and efficaciously leading us into all truth. We agree that we know Christ through the Scriptures with the help of the Holy Spirit, and hold the authenticity and historicity of what the Gospels record of the life, teaching and deeds, death and resurrection of Jesus. We await no further public revelation before the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb 1:1–2).

21. The Bible has a central role in all Christian ministry and in the worship and life of the Church. The use of the Scriptures in worship and teaching was essential to the shaping of the canon. In the first centuries, the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognized and received from among many writings these 27 books as the canon of the New Testament. Although Evangelicals and Catholics have different views of the extent of the Old Testament canon that has been recognized, we can nonetheless agree that the Old Testament Scriptures

**8** As stated in Lausanne Movement, *Cape Town Commitment,* 2010, Part 1.6: 'We affirm that the Bible is the final written word of God, not surpassed by any further revelation, but we also rejoice that the Holy Spirit illumines the minds of God's people so that the Bible continues to speak God's truth in fresh ways to people in every culture.'

**9** 9 Cf. Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* 79.

testify to the promise of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ (Lk 24:27; Jn 5:39). These Scriptures are authoritative for the Church.

22. Evangelicals and Catholics are in agreement that prayer should accompany the reading and study of the Scriptures and that the Holy Spirit can and will lead us into all truth (Jn 16:13). We also agree that the written Word of God is foundational to theology and catechesis. As the Church Father Jerome said, 'Ignorance of the Scriptures is ignorance of God.'[10] Finally, Catholics and Evangelicals believe that we are called to shape our lives in all their dimensions according to the Scriptures. We firmly believe that the closer we come to Christ, the closer we come to one another; so too, the more we attend to the Scriptures and live by them, the closer we draw to God and to one another, as individuals and as communities.

### *B. Words of Encouragement to Each Other*

23. As **Catholics**, we are encouraged by …

- The Evangelicals' faithfulness to the great commission, their engagement in proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ and their zeal for evangelizing;
- The Evangelical commitment to a morality and ethics based on the Scriptures, and to a moral life lived according to the Scriptures;
- The place of Scripture in the devotional and theological life of Evangelicals;
- The recognition that Scripture needs to be read in community;
- The move among some Evangelicals towards reading Patristic interpretations of Scriptures (such as that found in the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* or *The Church's Bible);*
- Finally, the role the Bible has in shaping community among Evangelicals.

24. As **Evangelicals**, we are encouraged by …

- The stronger witness to the Word of God in the Catholic Church of today. We rejoice in the renewed emphasis on Scripture as the foundation for faith and practice as found, for instance, in parts of Vatican II's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum* (1965) and in the Apostolic Exhortation from Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini* (2010);
- Seeing that the Scriptures are considered as 'the highest authority in matters of faith' *(Ut Unum Sint* 79) in the Catholic Church;
- The fact that Catholics see the written Word of God as authoritative and as the standard and foundation for all matters of faith and life;
- Finally, the Catholic Church's efforts with regard to the translation and distribution of the Scriptures among both clergy and laity and the further pastoral encouragement to not only have the Scriptures but to read and study them.

### *C. Fraternal Questions of Concern*

25. As **Catholics**, we believe along with Evangelicals that the Scriptures are the normative account of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. With you, we believe that Jesus Christ is the definitive Word spoken by God. Catholics are also encouraged

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**10** Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, Book 18, Prologue; PL 24:17b.

by the Evangelical acknowledgement of the oral tradition (*kerygma, viva vox evangelii,* the preached Word of God) preceding the written New Testament. Nonetheless, we would like to ask:

- Whether the Evangelicals' equation at times of the Word of God with the Sacred Scripture adequately takes into consideration the Incarnation of the Word as a person rather than as a text?
- Does the principle of *sola Scriptura* and its identification of the Word with Scripture, with seemingly no reference to Tradition, unduly limit our receiving of God's revelation?
- Does the Evangelical stance on Scripture alone sufficiently account for the ongoing value and work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Church in preserving her doctrine and teaching, especially in the articulation and development of the Tradition?
- We observe diverse interpretations of the Scriptures even among well-intentioned Christians. If the sense of the Sacred Scripture were plainly evident, as Evangelicals maintain, would it not be easier than it is to maintain unity among Christians?

26. Nonetheless, we are grateful that Evangelicals take the Scriptures and the challenges they present to us seriously in forming our understanding of who God is and how God works in the world, and have avoided relativizing the Scriptural message in addressing the modern world.

27. As **Evangelicals**, rejoicing in the growing role that Scripture has taken in the life of the Catholic Church, we would nonetheless like to ask Catholics …

- We both agree that the holy Scriptures are the inspired Word of God and, therefore, are the true, unchangeable revelation of God. However, we continue to struggle with how, according to Vatican II's *Dei Verbum* 9, 'both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence'—a basic restatement of the fourth session of the Council of Trent (1546). How are these positions compatible?
- Regarding the inerrancy of the Scriptures in *Dei Verbum* 11, with which we joyfully concur, we would like clarification on the implications of this stance on inerrancy and what it means in relationship to the challenges that the modern historical-critical method poses and which a number of interpreters within the contemporary Catholic Church seem to favor;
- How their understanding that the Bible is the supreme authority for faith and doctrine can be reconciled with the most recent dogmatic pronouncements since the 19th century (for instance, the 1854 dogma of the Immaculate Conception, or the 1950 dogma of the bodily assumption of Mary) which seem to us as Evangelicals to have little, if any, clear explicit Biblical support;
- And finally, we would like to ask Catholics about the authority given to Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament in the formation of doctrine when it seems that many in the ancient church distinguished the Apocryphal books from the canonical books as not being authoritative in matters of doctrine or practice.

28. None of these questions should take away from the fact that we are truly grateful for the stronger witness that Catholics have shown in their defense of Scriptural truth and our united appeal to the authority of Scripture in matters of faith and life. The fact that Scripture has become a growing focus in Catholic piety and church life is extremely encouraging to us as Evangelicals.

## 2. Apostolic Tradition

### *A. Our Common Ground*

29. Catholics and Evangelicals, while looking back to the history of the spreading of the Gospel, recognize and rejoice in the action of the Holy Spirit in the mission of the church, evangelizing people and transforming cultures. The Holy Spirit has a history. We have witnessed that the Holy Spirit has never ceased to act in history by giving birth to true believers and summoning us to remain faithful to the revealed truth, 'No one can say that "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit' (1 Cor 12:3). Therefore, we listen to what our predecessors in faith have received from God, how they have understood the Scriptures, and how they have lived the Christian life (Heb 11).

30. Paul says, 'What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also' (2 Tim 2:2). This passing on of the faith is a dynamic process that continues in the life of the church at different times and places, with constant reference to the Scriptures, which remain the highest authority in matters of faith and life (cf. *Ut Unum Sint* 79). Catholics and Evangelicals believe that the revealed Word of God to which the apostolic church once and for all bore witness in the Scriptures is received and communicated through the ongoing life of the whole Christian community. As a church, led by the Spirit, generation after generation we pass on the apostolic witness that we have received from our forebears and teachers in the faith.

31. This Consultation has been able to affirm the above as valued and appreciated by Evangelicals and Catholics alike. We have defined 'tradition' differently, but we have all done so with reference to this dynamic process of passing on the apostolic faith in time. In this context, it is important to look back to the period of the Reformation. The Reformers were seeking to deal with traditions and practices that had arisen in the church that they believed not only had no Scriptural warrant but were in contradiction to Scripture. They were not seeking to jettison tradition altogether. Luther, and to a certain extent Calvin, had a critical, but overall favorable view of the tradition.[11] They saw much value in the creeds and the confessions of the church and often appealed to the ancient church as an

**11** The Reformers confessed the three ecumenical Creeds, Melanchthon and Luther often quoted the Church Fathers, including many citations of them in the Lutheran *Book of Concord,* which later included a *Catalog of Testimonies* compiled by Jakob Andreae and Martin Chemnitz; for Calvin's use of the Church Fathers, see also Anthony Lane's *John Calvin: Student of the Church Fathers* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 1991).

authority for their interpretation of Scripture. All of these fell within the purview of their understanding of tradition.

32. In our contemporary context, there is a shared sense of the post-modern critique of individualism by both Evangelicals and Catholics that realizes and recognizes the importance of community in strengthening and supporting the individual members of the body of Christ. Both Evangelicals and Catholics understand that the individual in concert with the whole community throughout space and time—past, present and future—are important components for supporting the body of Christ and remaining in the faith that has been passed on from generation to generation through the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit.

33. Evangelicals and Catholics both can have a critical appreciation of the contributions the Church Fathers have made to the Christian faith, even as we continue to grow in our understanding of tradition's role in the subsequent articulation of the faith of the Apostolic community. Further exploration is needed into the role of the historic liturgy in explicating and internalizing Scripture, and aspects of the sacramental life of the church which have had such an enduring history; these are also areas where there is much more we can learn from one another.

34. While giving thanks for some common ground in this dialogue, we need to note that Evangelicals and Catholics also have significant differences in their understanding of tradition and that these remain matters for further discussion.

35. The Catholic Church makes a key distinction when it treats the subject of tradition. In its primary sense, Tradition is the living transmission of what the apostles, empowered by the Holy Spirit, learned and handed down to us from Jesus' teaching and life. This 'is to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical or devotional traditions, born in the local churches over time … (and) adapted to different places and times, in which the great Tradition is expressed. In the light of Tradition, these traditions can be retained, modified or even abandoned' under the guidance of the Church's teaching office,[12] which 'is not above the Word of God, but serves it, teaching only what has been handed on' *(Dei Verbum* 10).

36. Evangelicals remain uncomfortable with any concept of tradition that could possibly elevate tradition above Scripture. Catholics would agree. However, how this works out in our different communities continues to be a point of contention. Nonetheless, we all want to affirm an openness to tradition that does not contradict Scripture.

### *B. Words of Encouragement to Each Other*

37. As **Evangelicals**, we are encouraged by and have benefited from …

- The fact that the Catholic Church has fostered the *ressourcement* movement[13] in

**12** *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [CCC] 84.

**13** A movement in the 20th century among Catholic scholars that engaged in a recovery of the ancient sources for use in liturgy, theology, and Biblical interpretation.

a recovery of the full patristic tradition for the whole church;
- The Catholic Church's commitment to upholding the historic deposit of faith (*depositum Fidei*)—the unchanging truth of the Christian faith (Jude 3; 1 Tim 6:20; 2 Tim 1:13–14)—in the face of the challenges that modern secularism and its philosophical values pose;
- The fact that Reformation emphases, such as the centrality of the Word and the importance of preaching in worship, are considered and recognized as part of the rich tradition of the whole church.

38. As **Catholics**, we are encouraged by and have benefited from …
- The increasing Evangelical recognition of the continuous action of the Holy Spirit in the 2,000-year history of the church;
- The Evangelical engagement with patristic writings and other sources of the Church of the first centuries (*ad fonts*) by some Evangelical scholars and their communities;
- Seeing among some Evangelicals an understanding of the differentiation between Apostolic Tradition and local traditions.

### *C. Fraternal Questions of Concern*

39. As **Evangelicals**, we have learned the reasons for some aspects of Catholic popular piety that may have positive benefit. We have also been pleased to hear that in many instances Catholics have sought to address some of the excesses in their piety.[14] We would nonetheless like to discern from Catholics …
- Whether there is a critical principle that Catholics use to address what Evangelicals view as extra-biblical teachings that form the basis for certain aspects of Catholic Tradition, for example, the doctrines of purgatory and indulgences, and the dogma of the Immaculate Conception?
- How do you ensure that the development of doctrine and the appearance of new traditions remain faithful to the teaching of the whole of Scripture if some doctrines and traditions seem to be attested more from an implicit Scriptural attestation rather than an explicit Scriptural witness?
- Mindful that Evangelical piety has its own share of questions concerning our own practices, Evangelicals nonetheless would like to ask Catholics how they deal with a piety that often seems to be shaped more by tradition(s) than by Scripture (for example, Marian piety and the cult of the saints)?

40. Again, these questions should not detract from what we can say and do together as we rejoice in the faith once received and passed on throughout all generations under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who has promised to lead us into all truth (Jn 16:13).

41. As **Catholics**, we have come to a new appreciation of how Evangelicals increasingly speak of the work of the Holy Spirit in the history of the Church, and

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**14** Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* (Vatican City, 2001).

how some Evangelicals are turning to the Church Fathers. But we would ask:

- How does the evaluation of whether to accept or reject what the Church Fathers have to say occur? For example, in addition to Baptism and Eucharist, why are what Catholics refer to as other sacraments a challenge for Evangelicals to accept when the church in the first centuries accepted them as such (and some of them have explicit Scriptural warrant, for instance, forgiveness of sins, Jn 20:23 and Mt 16:19, and the sacrament of the sick, Jas 5:14–15)?
- Is the tendency to rediscover the Church Fathers a Global North development, or is this trend shared by Evangelicals in the Global South? In what sense is the teaching of the Church Fathers affecting the life of the Church?
- We have been made aware through our consultation that the World Evangelical Alliance brings together Christian communities with a common statement of faith, but also with great diversity, including diverging understandings of tradition. There are those who see tradition as of minimal importance to the present and future life of the church and those who are increasingly attentive to tradition. What are the values at stake in this process? Given your vision of unity and the diversity among Evangelicals, how do you discern whether the unity you uphold is a sufficient response to the summons to unity in the New Testament (Jn 17:20–21; 1 Cor 1:10)?

42. Even as we ask these questions of brotherly concern, seeking further clarification, we rejoice in the faithful witness we have seen among Evangelicals to the unchanging truth of the Gospel.

## 3. Scripture and Tradition

### *A. Our Common Ground*

43. There has been mutual suspicion and distrust, and perhaps a bit of caricature of one another's views regarding Scripture and tradition and the relationship between the two. Behind such criticism and distrust lie not only misrepresentations and misinterpretations but also real differences in doctrine and practice that have divided us and continue to prevent us from testifying to our unity in faith (Jn 17:11). As Evangelicals and Catholics, we seek to live as disciples of Jesus and come together in the task of mutual conversation, consolation, and the search for reconciliation. Our goal is to come to a clearer understanding of the truth of God's Word even as we acknowledge the need to be taught by our mutual, as well as our separated pasts. The words of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, later Pope Benedict XVI, remind us, however, that 'our quarrelling ancestors were in reality much closer to each other when in all their disputes they still knew that they could only be servants of one truth which must be acknowledged as being as great and as pure as it has been intended for us by God.'[15]

44. There is a realization among both Evangelicals and Catholics that Scripture

**15** Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 98.

need not necessarily be pitted over against tradition or over against the Church, nor need tradition and church teaching be opposed to Scripture. Both Evangelicals and Catholics have seen progress in moving beyond the disputes of the 16th century with the Reformers and Trent, even while acknowledging the continuing validity of many of their critical insights.

In the context of conversations with other worldwide communions deriving from the Reformation, the Catholic Church has gained insights and come to a greater appreciation of the Reformers. These dialogues have made significant progress in articulating a shared understanding of the relationship between Scripture and tradition.[16]

There is a noticeable return among many Evangelicals to the sources (*ad fontes*), which includes reading the ancient Christian writers, gaining a new appreciation for the Creeds of the church, and becoming reacquainted with their Christian past before the 16th century. In an increasing number of Evangelical circles at the beginning of the 21st century, the tradition and insights of the Fathers, as well as those who came after, are being appealed to in aiding Biblical interpretation and doctrinal exegesis, albeit with a critical eye, something Catholics also would affirm. Evangelicals would stop short of saying that the interpretation of the Fathers is authoritative, but have also begun to realize that they ignore the interpretation of the Fathers to their own peril. The Fathers knew their Bibles better than most of us. They are our teachers in the faith, teachers who have years if not, cumulatively, centuries of experience. We can also learn much from their doctrinal treatises which were, more often than not, simply focused exegesis that took into account the whole of Scripture in explicating a particular doctrine.

We have together identified what might be called an interweaving and interconnection between Scripture and tradition.[17] Tradition can serve as an important touchstone for the interpretation of Scripture and its explication of doctrine, even as Evangelicals remain committed to *sola scriptura.*

### *B. Words of Encouragement to Each Other*

45. As **Evangelicals**, we are encouraged by …

- The movement we perceive occurring with many—both laity and clergy—in the Catholic Church who see the increasing importance of Scriptural study in their worship and devotional lives;
- The insistence of Catholics on the importance of the community of the church in our encounter with Scripture, while still recognizing the importance of individual conscience, personal conversion and the value of our own Evangelical sense of a deepening personal relationship with Jesus Christ;
- The discerning eye of the Catholic reading of the Church Fathers, in whom

**16** Cf. Walter Kasper, *Harvesting the Fruits: Basic Aspects of Christian Faith in Ecumenical Dialogue* (London: Continuum, 2009), 87–89.

**17** Another term that has been used is 'coinherence'. See Evangelicals and Catholics Together, *Your Word Is Truth* (2002) for further explanation.

there is much wisdom to be found, notably in their exegesis of Scripture. They are our common teachers, but Scripture is the authoritative text.

46. As **Catholics**, we are encouraged by …

- The Evangelical reading of the Church Fathers and the recognition by them of the reverence the Fathers held for the Sacred Scripture; the growing Evangelical recognition of the importance of the patristic interpretation in engaging Sacred Scripture;
- The value of fraternal correction by prominent Evangelical leaders as a 'sort of authority' in the Evangelical world;
- The keeping of a *sensus fidelium* among those in the Evangelical movement witnessing to a continuity of the Biblical witness;
- A growing attentiveness among Evangelicals regarding the importance of community particularly in strengthening the individual members within the context of the Christian community.

### *C. Fraternal Questions of Concern*

47. **Evangelicals** realize in light of all these encouraging signs and the convergences we have found, there is much to celebrate. And yet questions still remain that must be addressed. We would still like to ask Catholics …

- How the statement that 'the relationship between Sacred Scripture, as the highest authority in matters of faith, and Sacred Tradition, as indispensable to the interpretation of the Word of God' (*Ut Unum Sint* 79) can be reconciled with the statement of *Dei Verbum* that 'both Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence' (*Dei Verbum* 9), the latter of which to us seems to put Scripture and Tradition on the same level?
- In light of new relationships developing between Evangelicals and Catholics, how the principle of *Sola Scriptura* has been received and incorporated into the life of contemporary Catholics and Catholic theology?
- Recognizing our own sinfulness and need for correction, Evangelicals would further like to ask Catholics if the Church can recognize mistakes in its tradition expressed in its devotional piety, in light of human fallibility, and if so, could those mistakes be corrected in the light of Scripture?
- Since Paul exhorts us 'not to go beyond what is written' (1 Cor 4:6) and even the people of Berea in Acts 17:11 examined the Scriptures to see if everything the Apostles said was true, how therefore would Catholics reconcile this with papal infallibility?
- Understanding that on the one hand Christ has promised that his Holy Spirit would lead his church 'into all truth' (Jn 16:13), but on the other hand that Scripture itself declares that 'all Scripture is inspired by God' (2 Tim 3:16), Evangelicals would want to ask Catholics if the guidance of the Holy Spirit works in the same way in the subsequent life of tradition as it does in Scriptural inspiration of the written text?
- Is there a sense of what Evangelicals call *ecclesia semper reformanda* (the

church always reforming) in the Catholic Church today?
- In light of the Catholic stance on Scripture and Tradition, how do Catholics deal with clergy and lay members, nuns and professors at universities, for instance, who disagree with Scripture and the Church? What is the process for dissent and is it followed?

48. **Catholics** also realize the helpful convergence that is developing between Evangelicals and Catholics in the mutual affirmation of the authoritative nature of Scripture and an increasing appreciation of tradition. We still wish to ask Evangelicals the following questions:
- We see the strong Evangelical practice of using Scripture to interpret Scripture, working with an understanding of the internal coherence of the biblical message. We also appreciate your understanding that the Scriptures are read in the context of the Christian community while stressing the role of the Holy Spirit in the reading and interpretation of Scripture. Yet we note that among Evangelicals, just as among Catholics, differing and sometimes conflicting interpretations of the Scriptures arise. Without reference to a magisterium, how do Evangelicals maintain unity and guard against internal conflict in their interpretation of Sacred Scripture? What role does tradition play in the interpretation of Scripture? Faced with differing interpretations of Scripture, what is the methodology for discernment and discipline within the Church?
- Evangelicals have maintained a strong traditional morality, for which we are grateful. We nonetheless want to ask how you guard against moral relativism when it arises in the teaching of individual pastors or lay people?
- Given that Evangelicals believe that the Holy Spirit is active in history and that the Spirit leads us to unity, where do you see the Spirit at work in the Reformation period which brought about division in the Church? Is the Holy Spirit active solely in the Reformers and their communities or also in the Catholic Church of that period? How are the 16th-century Reformers viewed by Evangelicals today, and what role do their teachings play in the life of Evangelicals? How do communities formed after the Reformation period link themselves to the Reformation?
- Liturgical renewal has been a pronounced feature of ecclesial life over the past century. We see a diversity of liturgical and spiritual practices within Evangelical worship and devotional life, at times drawing on practices that derive from the early church. Could Evangelicals look to the sacramental and liturgical forms expressed in the period of the Church Fathers as an expression of the Word of God in the life of the Church? If so, how might this affect doctrine and practice?

49. Rejoicing in the saving message of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, who died for sinners to bring them forgiveness and life, Catholics and Evangelicals together affirm that Scripture is the authoritative rule and norm for faith and life. Jesus Christ, the Word through whom God has revealed himself, speaks through and in his Word to a world in urgent need of the Gospel. God has also given his church his Holy Spirit who not only inspired the Scriptures but ensures that

the truth of the Gospel endures and is transmitted in the life of the church as it proclaims that Gospel truth anew in every day and age. Differences remain concerning how we perceive Tradition and its relationship to Scripture and concerning the level of authority Tradition holds. Ongoing mutual questioning does not, however, bring our conversation to an end, but should motivate each of us to dig deeper into our theology, practice, and piety, and continue our discussion for the sake of the Gospel and its mission. Only as we stand together with the Word facing the world through the power of the Spirit can we hope to offer a message that has stood the test of time and remains unchanging. To this world, we offer Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8).

## Part 2: God's Gift of Salvation in the Church: Evangelicals and Catholics Reflect Together on Salvation and the Church

### *A. Our Common Ground*

50. Christ's redeeming death and resurrection took place once and for all in history. Christ's death on the cross, the culmination of his whole life of obedience, was the one, perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world. There can be no repetition of or addition to what was then accomplished once for all by Christ.[18] The gift of salvation is freely given, freely received (Rom 3:24; 1 Cor 2:12). For Catholics and Evangelicals alike, the question of salvation in Jesus Christ is of supreme importance; it plays a defining role in our lives of faith and in the shaping of our theologies. Salvation is a free gift of God (Eph 2:8–9). It does not come simply by being born of a Christian family, not even by being a formal member of a Christian church; it is God's gracious initiative. 'Salvation belongs to the Lord' (Ps 3:8). Salvation denotes God's total plan and desire for humanity and responds to the fundamental human need for redemption. Acts of the Apostles assures us that this salvation comes to us through Jesus, and that 'there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12).

51. Wherever two or three come together in that name, Christ is there (Mt 18:20). The Scriptures tell us that from the very beginning the Church was part of God's plan of salvation (Eph 1:4–10, 22–23). Beginning with Adam and Eve and extending throughout the covenant history recorded in Scripture, God has formed for himself a people, Israel, who are called out (*ekklesia*) from the world into a community that is then sent back out to be a light to the nations (Is 60:3). The fullness of this community is found in Christ the Word Incarnate, Israel reduced to One, who came to earth to redeem his people by saving them from their sins through his suffering, death on the cross, and his resurrection to life. God made known to the world this plan of salvation in his Son (Jn 3:16) who has brought

**18** Neither Catholics nor Evangelicals hold to the idea that Christ is re-sacrificed in the Eucharist by the presiding priest.

forth a new covenant people (Jer 31:31–34; Rom 9) in the community of His Church. He tells us that he himself will build this Church and that the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Mt 16:18).

Christ tells us later how he provides for his Church in Matthew 18:15–20 and John 20:23 by ensuring that the forgiveness of sins that he won for us and for our salvation is and always will be central to the purpose and message of the church. He has given the gift of ministers to his Church (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11–13) who are then called to be stewards of the mysteries and servants of God's people (1 Cor 4:1). The primary task to which Christ has called the Church, its ministers, and people is to go and make disciples, baptizing and teaching all that Christ has commanded us (Mt 28:19–20). He gave the promised Holy Spirit to his Church at Pentecost to empower the Church in its mission. As such, the Church is evangelized by God, but it also evangelizes for God. The disciples who are created by this work of God the Holy Spirit are then cultivated and grow in their faith as a community of believers (Acts 2:42–47) whose faith and trust is in the One who has saved them. The Spirit flourishes in this community, which Christ has called his Church, enlivening it with his gifts (Acts 2:1–4; 1 Cor 12; Rom 8:10–11) to witness to the world the love of God while also strengthening and building one another up in the body of Christ (1 Thess 5:11).

52. The Apostle Paul provides two primary metaphors (there are others) which describe this community. 1 Corinthians 12 describes the Church as the body of Christ with Christ himself as the head. Apart from the head, there is no body, just as there are no branches without a vine (Jn 15). Salvation comes by being grafted on to the body of Christ through the work of the Spirit since no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:3) and a branch cut off from the vine will wither and die (Jn 15:1–6). As Jesus said, apart from him we can do nothing (Jn 15:5). The body cannot exist apart from the Spirit, nor can it exist apart from the head which is Christ. But with the head and the Spirit there is indeed a body, a communion of forgiven saints who, animated by the Spirit, produce works which God prepared in advance for us to do, not to merit salvation but to give glory to him (Eph 2:10) and to draw still others to his body, the Church (Mt 5:16; 28:19–20).

53. A second metaphor for the Church related to that of the body is what Paul presents in Ephesians 5. There he presents the imagery of the Church as the bride of Christ, with Christ, again 'as the head of the Church, his body, of which he is the Savior … who loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless' (Eph 5:23, 25–27). In this metaphor, we see the sacrificial giving of the Bridegroom's very life in order to present the bride as his own by virtue of giving his own flesh on the cross. Through his sacrifice of himself, Christ has cleansed his bride, presenting her pure and undefiled, so that he also may take her to be his own to live with him in holiness and righteousness. The Church is not the one who sacrificed, nor is it the one who cleanses. Rather it is

the Bridegroom who sacrifices himself for his bride and cleanses her, he is the one who feeds and cares for her, i.e., for the members of his body (Eph 5:29–30). The bride, the Church, is in this sense joined to and submits to her Beloved; as such, she does what he himself has given her to do, promising that he will be with her until the very end of the age (Mt 28:19–20).

54. The Church, then, is God's gift to the world. While not all Evangelicals agree that the Creeds are authoritative, Catholics and Evangelicals can affirm that in the Creeds we found an expression of core Biblical teaching in many areas of doctrine, including the Church. After professing the Christian faith in God the Father and his work, in our Lord Jesus Christ and his life, and in the Holy Spirit and his sanctification of believers, we say that we believe 'in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church'. Christians profess faith in the Church which exhibits the marks of unity, holiness, catholicity[19] and adherence to the apostolic faith and teaching.

But we do not believe in the Church in the same way that we believe in the divine persons of the Trinity confessed earlier in the Creed.[20] When we say 'we believe in God the Father … in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God … and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life', we profess our faith in the work of salvation of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit. We put our confidence and faith in our triune God. We trust him and commit ourselves totally to him, our rock and our salvation. Our faith is in God alone, our salvation comes from him (Ps 62:2). The Church and its ministers are in service to this salvation wherever the marks of the true Church are found. The pure preaching of the Gospel and the right use of the sacraments/ordinances which Christ commanded his Church to observe (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:15–16; Lk 22:19–20; 1 Cor 11:23–25) are life-giving gifts for the nurturing and feeding of his flock.[21]

55. The Church is in service to the Gospel, as Paul says, because when Christ has reconciled us to himself he has also given to us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation' (2 Cor 5:19). The world will not hear this message of reconciliation apart from the Church, her ministers, and her people, who are to proclaim this message so that people may hear it (Rom 10:14–17; Mt 28:19–20). 'But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him?' (Rom 10:14 NRSV).

Therefore, the Church has the obligation and privilege to preach the Good

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**19** See footnote 4.

**20** The English translation of the Creed can be misleading, because in Latin we say: *Credo in unum Deum, Patrem omnipotentem … Et in unum Dominum Iesum Christum … Et in Spiritum Sanctum … Et unam, sanctam, catholicam et apostolicam Ecclesiam.* We 'believe in' the Divine Persons, but the Latin text does not include 'in' before 'the Church'.

**21** Catholics would also point to Acts 2:11 (Confirmation); Jn 20:22–23 (Penance and Reconciliation); Jas 5:14–15 (Anointing of the Sick); Num 11:25; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 5:10 (Holy Orders); and Matt 19:6; Gen 1:28; Mk 10:9 (Matrimony) to refer to the other five sacraments.

News of Jesus Christ. The Church, as the body of Christ, is the usual place where the offer of salvation is heard and extended. By the power of the Holy Spirit, she proclaims Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, with a view to persuading people to repent and come to him personally and so be reconciled to God and become part of his community of faith (Mt 4:17).

Salvation presupposes a conversion, a turning to God, and regeneration as we receive God's grace, resulting in a reorientation of life according to the new life revealed in Jesus Christ. For many if not most Evangelicals, baptism is the primary means by which God incorporates people into his Church (Mt 28:19). Once in the Church, it is expected that members of Christ's body will live out their Christian life in faithful service to him and one another.

### *B. Words of Encouragement to Each Other*

56. As **Evangelicals** we are encouraged by:

- The seriousness shown by Catholics in upholding the Apostles' Creed especially as it speaks of the glorious reality of the Triune God and his gracious work that brings about 'the remission of sins';
- The renewed emphasis in Catholic teaching on the biblical metaphors of the church as they also relate to salvation (e.g. the people of God, the body of Christ, the temple of the Spirit), the diminished role of past understandings of the church that seemed to exclude other Christians from the possibility of salvation (e.g. *societas perfecta, ark of salvation);* and the view that 'separated churches and ecclesial communities' are used by Christ as a means of salvation;
- The more recent focus of the church and her ministers on the ministry and preaching of the Word as an increasingly important aspect of Christian faith and life both corporately and individually;
- The communal dimension of salvation we see evidenced over against individualistic tendencies which have characterized some trends in Protestantism;
- The insistence on the centrality of conversion, the many Catholic initiatives to take the Gospel of salvation to the whole world, as well as the more recent emphasis on a personal encounter with Jesus Christ for salvation.

57. As **Catholics**, we are encouraged by …

- The Evangelical trust and confidence in what God has done for us in Jesus Christ and the continuous loyalty of Evangelicals to the biblical teaching regarding God's promise of salvation as a matter of primary importance;
- The recognition that the strong Evangelical focus on the saving character of Christ's death is coupled with an equally strong focus on his resurrection from the dead and the hope which comes from it;
- The Evangelical conviction that there is no such a thing as a completely private Christianity; in other words, their understanding of salvation as relational, linking conversion and regeneration by water and the Word, leading to new life in Christ; and the conviction that conversion to Jesus Christ necessarily entails incorporation into the Church;

- The Evangelical conviction that salvation is not reducible to such things as formal church membership, but summons forth an active life of discipleship;
- The Evangelical understanding that Christian faith leads to a strong commitment to evangelization and mission for the sake of the salvation of all.

### *C. Fraternal Comments and Questions of Concern*

58. As foregrounding for our questions, we as Evangelicals would like to, first of all, make the following observation. We have noted and appreciated the Catholic emphasis in our discussions on the love and mercy of God when dealing with the question of the assurance of salvation. We can see that Catholics are convinced of both the love of God and the mercy of God, as well as the fact that God takes sin seriously. Therefore, when Catholics are asked about whether they can be sure of salvation, they will respond in hope and trust but also with what appears to Evangelicals as uncertainty. The uncertainty stems from the fact, they tell us, of being confronted by almighty God who is transcendent and holy but also all merciful, and yet still before whom we are unworthy because of our sin; this is the cause for the Catholic reticence about language of assurance of salvation, whereas Evangelicals speak of their confidence in being saved. But Evangelicals have come to realize that when Catholics speak of hope, they do so in the context of Romans 5:1–5 and 8:24–25 where it speaks of a hope that does not disappoint which is grounded in Christ. We also understand that Catholics are also concerned that the doctrine of the assurance of salvation of which Evangelicals speak can be misused to imply that those who do not express such assurance do not have faith, which is indeed what some Evangelicals often mean to say.

59. As Evangelicals, we appreciate the insight into the mercy of God and the humility that Catholics express in the face of the holiness of God. We understand that they do not feel it is their place to speak for God in saying that they can be sure of their own personal salvation: they would consider this as presuming on God. When Catholics are asked whether they are saved, they often will say 'I hope', or 'I trust.' As Evangelicals, we have come to realize through our discussion that when Catholics say they hope they are saved, they are not necessarily saying 'I hope I can do something to please God' or 'I hope I'm good enough', but they may well be saying that they trust that God is love and that God is faithful, and they are putting their hope in that love and faithfulness which is beyond anything they or we deserve. This love is revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And they hope for salvation, then, because they have experienced the mercy of God through the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives, and trust in his promise. To say, however, that they are saved as an accomplished fact, we understand, would be perceived as presumption on their part and is not in line with Catholic teaching.

60. Evangelicals would still like to ask Catholics, however:

- What practical hope and comfort can you give to those with troubled consciences or those who have fear concerning their eternal destiny, if they can only offer hope (Abraham's 'hope against hope', Rom 4:18)? Can Catholics

live with the hope of the promise without the assurance of the fulfillment? What makes Catholics hesitate or doubt when we have the clear promises in Scripture that forgiveness is ours in Christ Jesus and that Christ himself wills our salvation (see Gen 3:15; Ex 15:2–3; Ps 62:2–3, 6–9; Is 53:3–12; Jn 3:16, 10:27–30; Rom 8:1–5, 26–39; 2 Cor 5:17–21; Eph 1:1–14, 2:8–10; 1 Thess 5:9–11; 1 Tim 2:4; as well as many others)?

- In the Second Vatican Council, you speak of the possibility of God offering salvation even to those who have not received the Gospel (*Lumen Gentium* 16) and that this belief is grounded in God's mercy. We Evangelicals have come to appreciate through our discussions the fact that you want to emphasize the mercy and love of God and that this view is grounded in the confidence you have that God loves all and wants all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:4). The fact that Scripture does say that God is love (1 Jn 4:8), that God will be all in all (Eph 1:23), and every knee will bow in heaven and earth and under the earth (Phil 2:10–11) do emphasize the mercy of God, which we would also want to emphasize. And yet we still wonder if saying something on which Scripture has not spoken, i.e., the view that even those who have not received the Gospel can be saved, could still be misconstrued by some Catholics to lead to the conclusion that there is no need to evangelize (Mt 28:19–20)?
- From the Evangelical point of view, Christ's forgiveness, in view of the Last Judgement and beyond, not only does away with sin as enmity against God but also all the consequences of sin. There is no further need for cleansing after death because that cleansing has occurred by Christ on the cross which we appropriate by faith. In our discussions, when Evangelicals heard Catholics speak of purgatory, we heard you speak about the transforming work of God's mercy that you believe goes on even after death, where the purging of the effects of sin still needs to occur before one approaches the throne of God. While we understand that you do not see this purging as meritorious, we still would like to ask on the one hand where this can be found in Scripture, but also why purgatory is still needed if Christ has redeemed us completely in both soul and body? In this connection, we would also like to ask: If you truly believe in an all-merciful and loving God who redeems us in Christ and that it is not by your merits that you are saved and salvation is given, why do you continue to use the language of the treasury of merit, satisfaction, and indulgences?
- As far as churches which baptize infants, we require preparation for baptism. We Evangelicals understand that Catholics too require preparation for baptism and spiritual formation for the parents of the children, which is very important. But we also understand that the family many times does not appear in church after the Baptism which seems to make Baptism simply into a work that is performed. We would like to ask what follow-up occurs when an infant is baptized? Is the impression given that Baptism is just simply a work that needs to be performed? We were glad to hear that there is an emphasis on catechesis which needs to occur with the baptismal family, but what is the role of discipleship in relation to Baptism? Is the Church doing enough after the child is

baptized to ensure disciples are being made? What is the role of the clergy in this as well as the larger Church community?

- We have come to understand in our discussions that the sacraments play a central role in salvation, especially Baptism and the celebration of the Eucharist. We also have discerned that the efficacy of the sacraments in the Catholic Church is largely bound and tied together with the sacraments of ordination and more specifically episcopal ordination. On the one hand, we are grateful to hear you saying that our sacramental acts do accomplish something, although you are unclear what that something is. We also want to reaffirm that we know you do recognize our baptisms as valid and do not require a rebaptism. Nonetheless, because you tie the efficacy and benefit of the sacraments to the episcopal orders we still need to ask: Does not the way that your church restricts the full benefit of church acts to the ordained clergy of the Catholic Church still end up devaluing and ultimately calling into question what, if any, benefit occurs for the salvation of members in Evangelical churches? In other words, if the sacraments are central to the life of the church, but the sacraments of Evangelical churches (at least those which have them) do not accomplish as much in our churches as they do in Catholic churches, does not that end up saying that our ministry is less effective than the ministry which occurs in the Catholic Church? This also becomes a key issue with regard to absolution. Can Evangelicals who confess their sins and receive forgiveness from their pastor—or from a fellow Christian in those without ordained clergy—know for sure that their sins are forgiven?

61. As foregrounding to our questions, we as Catholics would note that our conversations have brought us much clarity into the Evangelical understanding of the assurance of salvation. As Catholics, we had thought that when you spoke of having been saved, you were saying that there was nothing further to be done; that you had a 'once saved always saved' mentality; and that you believed that you could then do whatever you wished and it wouldn't affect your salvation. We have now come to understand that this moment of assurance of salvation is a decisive point to be followed by turning back to Christ day by day, trusting in him only and referring daily to what God has done for you by his grace. We have been grateful to learn that you stress the need to be diligent in daily living your faithfulness to Christ through repentance and faith.

62. We have also learned that Evangelicals distinguish between certainty and security. In terms of a morally rational self-awareness of Christians, there may never be a certainty of salvation in the formal sense, but a certainty which gives peace with God to the conscience burdened with temptations. This happens when with faith you boldly appeal to God's promise in his Word in the face of your own weakness and temptation. We had heard in your claim of assurance or certainty a presumption, perhaps even an arrogance, in the self-referential claim that 'you have decided' to follow Jesus and were thus saved. Now we hear your focus on the promise of God, and your trust in that promise, which places things squarely on Christ's shoulders. Your assurance doesn't come from yourself, but from the work

that God has done in Jesus Christ and in his paschal mystery. The Gospel is the Good News of the promise of salvation, and you trust God and his promises, and thus have assurance and certainty.

There is not as big a gap between Catholic language of trust and hope and Evangelical language of assurance as we had thought. We too believe that God wants to forgive and redeem us, that God the Son died to forgive us and to reveal a boundless mercy to us. We too have heard this promise in the Scriptures, have felt it stirring in our inmost being, and hear in the Gospel an invitation to live in joy because God is doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves, in all of this, we have found more common ground than we had anticipated.

63. Catholics nonetheless would like to ask Evangelicals the following questions:

- We often find the language that we hear from you—in the personal claim that 'I am saved' and in the hymn refrains 'Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine', and 'I have decided to follow Jesus'—seems to place the focus on the person's decision and personal conviction, and not God's decision. The subsequent question to others 'are you saved?' often lacks the nuance of the way in which God calls and converts us. In practice, how does this language move past a self-referential focus to place the emphasis on the great mercy and faithfulness of God?
- We have come to understand that there is some divergence among Evangelicals about whether or not you can lose your salvation and that there is no one definition of 'assurance of salvation". Addressing in particular Evangelicals who hold that the gift once received cannot be lost, how do you deal with those who tum away from the faith or don't seem to take seriously the daily challenge to be faithful to the Gospel? How do you deal with sin committed after giving your life to the Lord? And how do you interpret Heb 6:4–6, which speaks of turning away from the Gospel after having "tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come"?
- How does the confidence that comes with the assurance of salvation allow you, in your evangelizing efforts, to recognize with humility the many ways that God has been at work in the other (mindful that God's engagement with others is always larger than our efforts); in particular, what is an appropriate pastoral approach to those who do not claim the same assurance of salvation, although they confess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and profess the Gospel of salvation?
- When Catholics listen to Evangelicals, we understand the desire for an explicit biblical warrant for doctrines such as purgatory. We also understand that Evangelicals wish to affirm the efficacy of the saving action of Jesus' death on the cross. For Catholics, purgatory is the state of those who die in God's friendship, assured of their eternal salvation, but who still have need of purification to enter into the happiness of heaven. We believe that because of the communion of saints, the faithful who are still pilgrims on earth are able to help the souls in purgatory by offering prayers in suffrage for them, especially the Eucharist. While the explicit scriptural warrant for purgatory is in the book of Maccabees in the Septuagint (2 Macc 12:46), which is not accepted as

Scriptural by Evangelicals, there is reference in the Old Testament to punishment for sin even after one has received forgiveness (2 Sam 12:13–18). In the New Testament, as well as in the Old Testament (Ps 15:1–2), there is reference to the need for purification because nothing unclean will enter the presence of God in heaven (Rev 21:27 and Mt 5:48). Heb 12:22–23 speaks about a way, a process, through which the spirits of the "just" are "made perfect." 1 Cor 3:13–15 and Mt 12:32 affirm there is a place or state of being other than Heaven or Hell. While affirming the once for all saving power of the cross, which Catholics also affirm, might there be an openness from Evangelicals to the possibility of recognizing such an intermediate state of purification as compatible with Scripture? Could you understand the communion of saints as having a role to play in this period of purification?

- Regarding the possibility of salvation for the non-Christians, we have heard from you that Evangelicals do not want to presume on the mercy of God and extend hope beyond what Scripture explicitly states in this regard. We also appreciate and agree that the Gospel is to be proclaimed to all creatures, and share a sense of obligation and privilege to preach Jesus Christ to those who have never heard the Gospel message. Yet faced with those who died without having heard the Gospel preached, or heard it proclaimed in a way that lacked integrity, we would suggest that the great mercy revealed in the Paschal Mystery of Jesus' dying and rising gives us grounds for a profound hope that such persons should not be automatically excluded from God's salvific plan and they too can obtain eternal salvation through Jesus Christ. The Second Vatican Council noted that a sharing in the paschal mystery is made possible "not only to Christians but to all people of good will in whose hearts grace is secretly at work. Since Christ died for everyone, and since the ultimate calling of each of us comes from God and is, therefore, a universal one, we are obliged to hold that the holy Spirit offers everyone the possibility of sharing in this paschal mystery in a manner known to God" (*Gaudium et Spes* 22; cf. *Lumen Gentium* 16, *Ad Gentes* 7). While it is neither our mission nor our biblical calling to give a definite answer to what God will do, we trust that God's mercy is much greater than ours and dare to hope that God's offer of salvation will extend well beyond the parameters of the Church. This affirmation, however, does not exempt Christians from proclaiming the Gospel unto the ends of the earth; this mission remains of utmost importance. We would ask Evangelicals if the same paschal mystery which allows you to speak of an assurance of salvation for believers would not allow you to have a more hope-filled view of the possibility of God offering salvation to nonbelievers in a way that is known only to God?
- In our conversations, we have appreciated the emphasis Evangelicals place on eternal salvation, which of course is central to the Scriptures. And yet in our conversations, we often heard an emphasis on salvation in the next life without much consideration for the human condition in this life. Perhaps this was due to the limited number of topics discussed. Still, we would want to ask: does the fact that you are saved make any difference for this life (Is 58:6-7; Heb 13:1–3; Mt 25:31–46)? Could there be some benefit to balancing your

concern for the next life with Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God for this life with its concerns for social justice and the welfare of humanity? Might we look for transformation in the present world as well as the world to come?

- There is much to appreciate among Evangelicals with their vibrant worship life and the commitment many of the churches seek from their membership. We understand that there are differences among Evangelicals regarding the role of the sacraments in the life of the Church. There does seem to be at least some agreement that Baptism and the Lord's Supper play an important part in our Lord's teaching about the Church and the benefits they bring to the believer (Mt 28:19; Mk 16:16; Jn 3:3; Tit 3:4–7; Mt 26:26–29; Mk 14:22–25; Lk 22:14–23; Jn 6; 1 Cor 11:17–34).[22] Mindful of the differences between various Evangelicals about the place of the sacraments in the life of the Church, Catholics would want to ask differing questions to different Evangelical churches, including the following: Why have the sacraments lost their primary role, and what might you be missing by not celebrating the sacraments? How can they be recovered as gifts of God to his people as expressed in the New Testament? Do all forms of worship and sacred actions have the same value in your tradition? Is it contrary to the New Testament to define sacred actions as signs and instruments of salvation? Is the Sunday celebration of the Lord's Supper not a privileged place where the Gospel is heard and the faith is lived, proclaimed and professed? Could Evangelicals gain insight about the sacraments/ordinances by retrieving the teachings of the different Reformers? Could Evangelicals begin to study how these gifts of God might be put to a deeper and more prominent use in the life of the Church?

64. Catholics and Evangelicals rejoice in the gifts of salvation and the Church which God has given to the world he loves so much. They are gifts freely given, and freely received. The Scriptures tell us that from the beginning the Church has been a part of God's plan for salvation (Eph 1:4–10, 22–23). Christ has told us how he provides for his Church ensuring that the forgiveness of sins he won for us and for our salvation will always remain central to the purpose and message of the Church. Both Evangelicals and Catholics rejoice in the gift of the ministry of reconciliation which is given to the Church by Jesus Christ. "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12 NRSV). Having received this gift from the crucified and risen Lord, the Church is then entrusted and empowered by the Holy Spirit to deliver that message of hope and forgiveness to our world in desperate

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**22** Catholics understand that there are seven sacraments, all instituted by Jesus Christ our Lord, though the Church identifies Baptism and Eucharist as major sacraments. The sacraments are 'the masterworks of God' (St Augustine, *De civo Dei.* 22, 17), 'powers that come forth from the Body of Christ, which is ever living and life-giving' (CCC 1116; cf. Lk 5:17, 6:19; 8:46). The sacraments are for the Church and they make the Church, since 'they manifest and communicate … the mystery of communion with the God who is love, One in three persons' (CCC 1118). Catholics are convinced that in a sacrament, the Church does more than profess and express its faith; it makes present the mystery it is celebrating.

need of reconciliation with its creator. In the words of the Samuel J. Stone hymn sung by many Catholics and Evangelicals:

The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is His new creation
By water and the Word.
From heaven He carne and sought her
To be His holy bride;
With His own blood He bought her
And for her life He died.

## Conclusion

65. We are committed Christians—Catholics and Evangelicals—from Guatemala, Colombia, Brazil, the Philippines, Ghana/Kenya, Spain, Italy, Germany, Canada and the USA. We come from places where there are very good relations and places where the relations are marred by tension and mistrust. But we were entrusted to represent our own ecclesial traditions faithfully and to reflect the realities of Catholic and Evangelical relations around the globe. It became clear early on that Evangelicals represent a wide diversity of Christian communities. Each community had its own perspective to offer which, while challenging at times, also offered the opportunity to discover the rich and legitimate diversity of the people of God, as well as the bonds of communion.

66. One purpose of this consultation was to learn from one another and also to challenge one another in what we believe, teach and confess. A second purpose was to clarify the current state of relations between us and to provide a way forward that would help us to improve those relations where there are difficulties and to support and encourage those places where the situation is more positive. During the consultation, we also had the opportunity to see the deep and committed faith of our partner even as we also were able to share our own faith experiences in an open and candid way. We also sought to address issues of doctrine and practice, always attentive to the perspective of the local communities.

67. Over the past six years, we have built up trust with our dialogue partners, allowing us to address difficult issues in a frank but gracious way. We invite our churches to take time to engage in a process of study and reflection on the issues, challenges, and questions they will encounter in this document. Our consultation has learned that it is when we respect and treat one another in a Christian manner that our communities are able to make progress in our relationships with one another in Christ. In humility, we have learned that we must put aside our own self-assurances and focus on Jesus Christ, "the way, the truth, and the life" (Jn 14:6). We have also learned that we need to understand the words of the other as they are intended. We each came with preconceptions of the other, but we have opened up to listen to and discover how the other views the doctrines chosen for discussion in this consultation: Scripture and Tradition, and the Church and

salvation. We entered into new experiences and insights that we might not have had otherwise. Through these experiences, we have come to know one another and ourselves better.

68. Our consultation has confirmed that real differences remain between Evangelicals and Catholics about certain aspects of the life of faith, but also that we share convictions about Jesus that ground our call to mission. As well, our communities share similar convictions about the Christian life: Christ is forming us by the Holy Spirit into a faithful people called together and sent into the world to obey and serve Him by participating in his life and mission. The Lord calls us not only to enter into conversation but to live out the implications of that conversation. The unity he desires for his disciples is not a theoretical unity but a lived one, "so that the world may believe" (Jn 17:21).

69. In this concluding section, it is our intent to address local communities of Evangelicals and Catholics worldwide, mindful of very diverse contexts and states of relations. We would invite them to consider both the convergences noted in the text above and the areas of divergence and mutual questioning. Where there have points of agreement or convergence, we would invite local communities to ask: what does this then make possible for us? What can we appropriately and responsibly undertake together, without compromising our convictions, without overstating our current level of agreement? How is the Lord asking us to grow together at this moment in time?

70. There are limits to what can be said in response to each of these questions. Furthermore, there will be differences from place to place. What is possible in Canada may not be possible in Guatemala; what is possible in Germany may not be possible in Spain.[23] We also recognize that it took our international consultation years of getting to know each other and engaging in discussion before some of these convergences could be confirmed. If at first glance in your local situation, significant steps forward do not seem possible, or the convergences named seem problematic, we would encourage you to ask each other the questions you have and to discuss them; and we would nevertheless encourage you to ask what small steps are possible here and now. In all of this, we are mindful that reconciliation is always the work of God, not us; but the Lord has invited us to play our part in our reconciliation towards one another.

71. In those areas where our conversation has noted convergences, we would invite you to ask the following questions:

- In light of those convergences, how is it possible to cooperate in building up the common good and strengthening the community? Are there things that are critical for our communities to do together now?

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**23** In some parts of the world, Catholics and Evangelicals speak of engaging in 'common mission'. By this they are not speaking about planting churches together, but rather, jointly pursuing humanitarian objectives, working together for justice, peace, human rights, and the common good. In other parts of the world, Evangelicals and Catholics would be very uncomfortable with language of common mission.

- In light of social and moral upheaval in the world around us, and of the world's need to hear the Gospel of Christ, how can we responsibly witness together to our shared values, addressing some of the social and political questions in our world that we are facing today? Should we take the opportunity of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation to reflect together afresh on what the Gospel means for us and how it brings good news to our needy world?
- While for some Evangelicals and Catholics, praying together is not seen to be acceptable, many would want to ask: Are there any times and places where it would be appropriate for us to pray together? If yes, what ought to shape our common prayer?

72. We would also invite you to ponder the divergences and questions which our document has noted. As we have stated, divergences and remaining questions need not signify the end of our relations, but can fruitfully set the agenda for future discussions. While convergences may appropriately lead us to common action and growth in our relations, further clarity about convergences and divergences alike can lead us to study, especially at a local level, so that what we hold in common and what separates us might be better understood. A key feature of this document was the mutual questioning in a spirit of striving to understand. Some of these questions we asked could be fruitfully discussed on a congregational level; others might be better discussed in ministerial associations or in seminaries and theology faculties. The questions that we have asked each other are not exhaustive. We have asked them in part to stimulate discussion, self-understanding, and learning, about the other, and about ourselves.

73. Perhaps we haven't been asking your questions at all. Perhaps your local experience suggests more convergences than we have named; perhaps less. We encourage you to ask further questions in your own context, using the methodology which we used. We invite you to consider gathering together a group of interested Evangelicals and Catholics in your area to hold a series of discussions on matters of importance in your own contexts. It needn't be complicated. Choose a subject that you would like to address, of mutual interest, and invite participants to offer presentations or share on what is being discussed. Enter into the process with your convictions, but also with humility and an open heart. Ask each other questions, and listen deeply to the responses of your conversation partner. Look for areas where you can encourage each other, where you can learn from the other. Try to answer each other's questions, and ask new questions. Pray that the Holy Spirit guide your conversations. The World Evangelical Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity would be grateful to hear the results of your conversations.

74. Finally, we invite you to view dialogue and consultation as a way of engaging your faith, and as a standing together before Christ. Christ is the truth and the fullness of truth can only be found in him. We invite you to consider joining us in pledging ourselves to mutual conversation, consolation, and continuation in admonishing and encouraging one another to remain faithful to the Word who gave us his word that he would be with us to the end of the age (Mt 28:20).

75. "Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen" (Eph 3:20–21).

## Dialogue Participants

### *Catholic Church*

Monsignor Juan Usma Gómez, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Vatican/Colombia, Coordinator (2009–2016) *[P S D]*
Most Reverend Donald Bolen, Archbishop of Regina, Canada, (2009–2016) *[S D]*
Monsignor Gregory J. Fairbanks, Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, Philadelphia, USA (2009–2016)
Ms Beatriz Sarkis Simões, Focolare Movement, Brasil (2009–2016)
Most Reverend Rodolfo Valenzuela Núñez, Bishop of La Vera Paz, Guatemala (2009–2016)
Dr Nicholas Jesson (Local Participant), Ecumenical Officer, Catholic Diocese of Saskatoon, Canada (2015–2016)

### *Evangelicals*

Rev Prof Dr Rolf Hille, WEA Director of Ecumenical Affairs, Germany, Coordinator (2009–2016) *[P S D]*
Rev Dr Leonardo De Chirico, Alleanza Evangelica Italiana, Italia (2009–2016)
Rev José De Segovia Barrón, Alianza Evangélica Española, España (2009–2013)
Rev Prof Dr Joel C. Elowsky, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO (LC-MS), USA, (2009–2016) *[S D]*
Rev Prof Dr Timoteo D. Gener, Asian Theological Seminary, The Philippines (2009–2016)
Rev Jaume Llenas, Alianza Evangélica Española, España (2014–2016)
Rev Prof Dr James Nkansah-Obrempong, Vice-Chair, WEA Theological Commission, Kenya (2009-2016)
Rev Prof Dr Claus Schwambach, General Director, Faculdade Luterana de Teologia in Sào Bento do Sul, SC, Brasil, (2009–2016)
Rev Dr Salomo Strauss, Evangelical Church of Württemberg, Germany (2009–2016)
Rev James Kautt (Observer), International Christian Church Tübingen, Germany/USA (2009–2014)
*P: Planning Committee; S: Steering Committee; D: Drafting Committee*

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# Public Witness in Secular and Multi-Religious Societies: The Dialogue between the World Evangelical Alliance and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

Rolf Hille

## 1. A Fruitful but Difficult Story of Dialogues

The scene today is not very different from almost 40 years ago. In 1980, the Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance invited two bishops of the Roman Catholic Church to speak a word of greeting at the WEA general assembly meeting in Hoddeson, England. This led to a heated debate with representatives of the Italian Evangelical Alliance, which withdrew its membership from the World Evangelical Fellowship (WEF), and the Spanish Evangelical Alliance, which suspended its membership.

As a result of this incident, the WEF (now WEA) Theological Commission appointed a task force, which published a document entitled 'Roman Catholicism: A Contemporary Evangelical Perspective', under the direction of Dr Paul G. Schrotenboer.

At the annual meeting of the conference of Christian World Communions (CWC) in October 1988, it was agreed that an official dialogue between theologians of the WEF and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) should take place to promote greater mutual understanding and relationships. Five rounds of dialogue ensued, ending in 2002. This was the first time that a joint comprehensive document under the heading of *koinonia* (fellowship) between Evangelicals and Catholics was written and then published for further theological studies.

Another round of dialogue between the WEA and the PCPCU, convened by PCPCU president Walter Cardinal Kasper and me began in 2009 and was completed in 2016. We held six five-day working sessions. The resulting document, published in this volume, covers

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two main areas of theology: 'Scripture and Tradition' and 'The Church and Salvation'.

Even now, the Spanish and Italian alliances continue to oppose further rapprochement between the WEA and the Roman Church. This is particularly painful because representatives of both the Spanish and Italian alliances participated in the dialogue. In fact, when selecting Evangelical participants, the WEA was careful to have a majority of its representatives come from countries where Catholics clearly have a dominant position as a majority church, also including Brazil and the Philippines.

Overall, in this renewed dialogue process, we paid strict attention to achieving the greatest possible international representation. The sessions took place around the world—in Brazil, Italy, the US, Guatemala, Germany and Canada. In all these places, the dialogue group also met with local Evangelical and Catholic Christians to become informed about relationships between the two groups at the grassroots level.

We also conducted two surveys. Evangelicals sent a questionnaire to all national alliances, asking how local relations with the Catholic Church are shaped. Likewise, the Catholics wrote to all national conferences of bishops about their relationship to Evangelicals.

It became clear that—internationally speaking—there are big differences. There are areas where one or the other side experiences discrimination. In other regions, ecumenical dialogue has produced a continuous friendly interaction and cooperation between Evangelicals and Catholics.

Through these methods, the dialogue group sought to avoid developing naive theories that bypass realities on the ground. (The questionnaires are not reproduced in this issue of *ERT* but appear at the end of the original document.)

Methodologically, the dialogue group has broken new ground. As we stated in paragraph 14:

> The way forward was for us firstly to map out convergences, building on previous consultations, and on the basis of our respective teachings and practices; secondly, to name aspects of the other tradition which give us encouragement, where we rejoice in seeing God at work, and where we may learn from the other; … thirdly, with the help of the dialogue partner, to formulate questions to each other in a respectful and intelligent way (hence the term 'fraternal'), thus identifying issues we were not able to resolve in this round of consultation, which still need to be addressed by our respective communities. … With prayer and a desire to be true to our calling and our convictions, we have posed questions that are intended to stimulate further discussion between Catholics and Evangelicals that will spill over into our own respective communities where we would like to see the conversation continue.

## II. Why Maintain a Continuous Dialogue with the Catholic Church?

The Roman Catholic Church, with a membership of more than a billion peo-

ple, is by far the largest and most influential church in the world. If, as Evangelicals, we want to address Catholics evangelistically and testify about our faith to them, we need a constructive relationship with one another. Every form of shared public responsibility as well as cooperation in social projects also demands mutual openness to each other.

Meanwhile, Christians today face great challenges worldwide. On one hand, we have to deal with complete secularization, especially in Western countries, where the major mainline Christian Churches traditionally live. This situation permeates all areas of culture, including the mass media, education systems and universities, as well as the arts and entertainment industry. Catholics and Evangelicals alike have the task of carrying out their mission in a new way, connected to an apologetics that addresses the arguments of modern atheism and agnosticism in an intellectually honest and sustainable way.

In addition, we experience multi-religious societies worldwide in which churches often play only a marginal role. In these contexts, Christians need to be able to engage in interfaith dialogue to witness effectively to their faith. In countries where Christians are discriminated against or even persecuted, the majority population does not ask, 'Are you a Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican or Baptist?' but merely 'Are you a Christian?'

These experiences, in both secular and multi-religious contexts, compel Christians from all churches to work together and to share common witness with the public. Any emphasis on confessional differences makes the situation of Christians of any denomination difficult. However, this willingness to listen to one another, pray together, and realize common projects in a variety of areas does not imply that any form of institutional union between Catholics and Evangelicals is sought.

In the document presented here, the preliminary remark 'The Status of This Report' clearly underscores that the text is not an official doctrinal document binding on either the Catholic Church or the WEA, but a study paper that the participants recommend to their constituents for thorough reading and discussion at all levels.

Some Evangelicals, as a kind of threatening backdrop, have been given the impression that the WEA could become somehow integrated into the Roman Church on a long-term basis through dialogue. That is completely outlandish. The dialogue is about understanding each other better and cooperating as much as possible. And we urgently need exactly such progress in ecumenical relations.

## III. The Theological Questions Negotiated in This Round of Dialogue

My colleague, Dr Joel Elowsky, a regular participant in the dialogue process and a key contributor to the drafting of the final document, discusses in his contribution to this issue of *ERT* the progress made and the remaining difficulties with regard to the main themes of dialogue. The two main areas, as noted, were holy Scripture and church tradition, and the role of the church in the mediation of salvation.

With regard to the first topic, it became apparent that, for Catholics, tra-

dition is defined in such a way that it, in principle, should not be questioned. This applies to both the dogmas about the infallibility of the pope and the mariological teachings. For the Catholic Church, these are part of the inalienable stock of the faith. So far, there is no starting point in this respect as to how the existing differences in doctrine can be overcome.

On the other hand, the Evangelical participants have positively noted with joy a new relationship of the Catholic Church to the Bible. In particular, we spotlighted the promotion of personal Bible reading, communal Bible study in home cell groups, and intensive involvement in Bible translation as well as Bible distribution. This is not a trivial matter considering that, according to Evangelical conviction, the word of Scripture brings about the realization of the truth and also conversion.

With regard to the church's role in the process of salvation, the mediating function of the ordained priesthood, especially with regard to the administration of the sacraments, is indispensable to the Catholic Church. Therefore, this doctrinal problem requires further intensive discussions to explore possible approaches. The Evangelical side should, however, also consider self-critically the questions raised by Catholics, namely that many Evangelicals invoke a pronounced individualism and do not take seriously the visible or institutional form of the church of Jesus Christ.

These doctrinal differences indicate that our path of dialogue still has many steps ahead of it. However, the accusation, often voiced by Evangelical critics, that the Catholic Church is incapable of any reform because of its self-understanding is not true. Although the Roman Church cannot revoke any officially established doctrinal decision of the Magisterium, it can indeed gain new insights and also fix these in a magisterial way, thereby modifying earlier formulations of dogma.

This is particularly evident in dealing with the Tridentine Council. Through the Second Vatican Council, Trent's Counter-Reformation decisions appear in a new light. Those who speak with Catholic theologians can quickly see that, in practice today, priority is given to the results of the Second Vatican Council. This means that the Catholic Church, while it looks back to the past and maintains a commitment to previously formed dogma, is also open to future developments and new insights.

## IV. The Chance for Common Witness with Respect to the Challenge of Protestant Liberalism

For me, the talks also revealed another important perspective beyond being ecumenically very fruitful and important. There is a chance that Evangelicals and Catholics in practical cooperation could develop a common witness both to the secular world and to the liberal traditions within Protestantism.

The churches that emerged from the Reformation of the sixteenth century experienced a profound change during the Enlightenment era of the eighteenth century. Rationalism radically challenged the credibility of the Bible. The Apostles' Creed is no longer seriously understood by many modern theologians as a salvation-historical

fact and summary of the gospel, but is accepted only in a figurative sense.

In the document that we have drawn up, Evangelicals and Catholics share a common commitment to the apostolic creed in accordance with the binding text of Scripture, and in accordance with the WEA statement of faith. This includes the conviction that Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit and therefore possesses the highest authority for all questions of life and doctrine. The document emphasizes the Christological and Trinitarian tenets of the ancient Church and the justification of the sinner by grace through faith. It continues to emphasize the mission of all Christians to proclaim the saving gospel to those who have not yet given their lives to Jesus Christ.

The same commonality applies to current ethical challenges. As the joint document states:

> The redefinition of marriage to include same-sex unions is more and more common. The dignity and sanctity of human life at all stages is under attack. Euthanasia, assisted suicide, abortion, and some genetic and reproductive technologies threaten and undermine the basic understanding of what it means to be human. This in turn has repercussions for the primary foundation of society—the family. (paragraph 8)

Such a clear statement could not be made, for example, in the context of liberal Protestantism, such as by the World Council of Churches. This fact raises the question of whether the doctrinal and denominational gap between Evangelical and liberal Protestants today is significantly greater than that between us and the Catholic Church. That is despite all the remaining dogmatic differences with the Catholic Church, which, of course, must be seriously discussed and clarified.

In many key areas, public testimony on fundamental issues of faith and morality shows a promising commonality between Evangelicals and Catholics. We should continue to develop this deeper unity. In this way, we can consolidate our convictions in critical engagements with the liberal tendencies within our own denominations and effectively counter the dissolution of Christian doctrine on questions of faith and ethics.

ERT (2018) 42:2, 136-141

# Pursuing a Hermeneutic of Trust in Evangelical–Catholic Dialog

Joel Elowsky

The most recent consultation between the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) and the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU) took place over seven years spanning several continents. Its goal was not to produce a document expressing agreement, but to foster true dialog and conversation in an environment characterized by trust rather than suspicion.

Therefore, the resulting document is not so much a statement as the beginning of a conversation. It is designed not only to help the two sides understand each other better, but also to offer questions and challenges that might promote further understanding and conversation at the local level.

From the start, we agreed that we would not craft a 'top-down' document that would gloss over disagreements to provide a veneer of unity. Rather, our purpose was to foster an environment in which we could talk candidly but also fraternally with people with whom we have real disagreements. We hope that the same thing will also happen at the grass-roots level as Evangelicals and Catholics use our document as a model for how to begin or to continue talking to one another.

The initial points of the consultation focused on social issues on which Evangelicals and Catholics could for the most part agree. On social justice, abortion and co-belligerency in the cultural wars, Evangelicals and Catholics could offer each other mutual support without too much difficulty. Many of these issues had been discussed in previous dialogs or in other venues.

The leaders of the consultation then decided to go in a different direction for our subsequent work together, probing areas where both sides knew there was significant disagreement. This of course would also entail significant risk. We felt, however, that Evangelicals and Catholics need to start talking with each other about the more substantive theological issues that divide us.

We have since come to realize that there are some who view *any* such discussion of theological issues—with an ear towards a sympathetic understanding of the other—as already giving too much away and departing from the spirit of the Reformers themselves, who were quite assertive in their condemnations. Yet we were heartened by the realization that the Reformers of

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the sixteenth century were willing to affirm areas of agreement even as they also highlighted areas of disagreement.

## I. Scripture and Tradition

The relationship between Scripture and Tradition was one of the foundational disagreements during the Reformation. Luther's emphasis on the three *solas—sola Scriptura, sola gratia, sola fide*—was at the heart of this disagreement.

Luther knew that the word *sola* ('alone') was a non-starter for Roman Catholics on any of these points; for Catholics, Scripture needed tradition, grace needed human effort, faith needed works. Already in the mid-1530s, Luther had called for a council to deal with these issues. He thought a council might be called in the late 1530s, and the Schmalkaldic League was organized for just such an action, with Luther composing the Schmalkald Articles in 1537 in preparation. But Luther would not see such an event in his lifetime.

As Luther's death was drawing near, Pope Paul III[1] called the Council of Trent in 1545 to deal with the challenges of the Reformation, resulting in what has been called the Counter-Reformation. The Council's fourth session, on Scripture and Tradition, emphasized the disagreement perhaps even more sharply than the Reformers had done.

The Reformers and the Catholics disagreed on the very nature of Scripture itself. Trent included in its list of canonical Scripture the Deutero-canonical books, referred to as the Apocrypha by both the ancients and the Protestants. The Protestants had excluded the Apocrypha from the authoritative texts of Scripture and felt justified in doing so on the basis of Scripture and church history.[2]

The Council of Trent defined the old Vulgate Latin edition of the Bible as the authoritative text and translation of the Catholic Church.[3] Luther and other Evangelicals, in the meantime, had been going back to the original Greek and Hebrew, translating them into German and other present-day languages.

Other canons in Trent's fourth session drew the strongest objections from Evangelicals, however. These canons asserted that no one should presume to interpret the Scriptures 'contrary to that sense which is held by the holy mother Church, whose duty it is to judge regarding the true sense and interpretation of holy Scriptures, or judge regarding the true sense and interpretation of holy Scriptures, or even contrary to the unanimous consent of the Fathers'.[4]

The first decree of the Council's fourth session stated that the church, 'following the examples of the ortho-

**1** The council lasted through the time periods of two other popes, Pope Julius III and Pope Pius IV.

**2** The Protestant response regarding the inclusion of the Apocrypha or Deutero-canonical books in the canon was that the ancient church had always made a distinction between these books and the canon utilized at Nicea and other subsequent councils and synods.

**3** This was promulgated in the First and Second Decrees of the Fourth Session of the Council of Trent, 8 April 1546. Henry Denzinger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma,* trans. Roy J. Deferrari (Fitzwilliam, NH: Loreto Publishers, 1954, rpt. 2004), 244–46.

**4** Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 245.

dox Fathers, receives and holds in veneration with an *equal affection of piety and reverence*[5] all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament, since one God is the author of both, *and also the traditions themselves*, those that appertain both to faith and to morals, as having been dictated either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Spirit and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession.'[6]

In essence, Trent placed Scripture and tradition on the same authoritative footing, largely (it would seem) in response to the Protestant Evangelicals' pitting of Scripture against the Church and against traditions that had developed over time as part of the church's faith and life. The battle lines that had been drawn during Luther's time were now etched in stone in the Council's canons: *sola scriptura* versus *scriptura et traditiones*. And there they have largely remained through Vatican II and up to the present day. Vatican II's *Verbum Dei* 9 reiterates Trent's assertion that 'both sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of loyalty and reverence.'[7]

## II. Suspicion or Trust

The WEA–PCPCU consultation document does not gloss over this history or over the disagreements of the past or the present.[8] It does, however, deliberately choose not to approach either side of the debate with a hermeneutic of suspicion—which frankly has been the *modus operandi* between Catholics and Evangelicals for most of the 500 years we have spent apart.

Some people felt that even this step—i.e. operating from a hermeneutic of trust—was already a betrayal of the gains that the Reformation had won, especially in countries where Catholic hegemony still holds sway. But the hermeneutic of trust did not betray our continued recognition that we operate with different canons and understandings of Scripture.

We also came to realize, after talking candidly with one another in a spirit of trust that developed over seven years, that we held many things in common, such as the inerrancy of Scripture and its efficacious nature,

**5** The Latin reads *pari pietatis affectu ac reverentia suscipit et veneratur.* See J. Neuner and J. Dupuis, eds., *The Christian Faith: In the Doctrinal Documents of the Catholic Church* (New York: Alba House, 1996), 96.

**6** Denzinger, *Sources of Catholic Dogma*, 244 (emphasis mine).

**7** It precedes this statement by noting, 'Hence there exists a close connection and communication between sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture. For both of them, flowing from the same divine wellspring, in a certain way merge into a unity and tend toward the same end. For Sacred Scripture is the word of God inasmuch as it is consigned to writing under the inspiration of the divine Spirit, while sacred tradition takes the word of God entrusted by Christ the Lord and the Holy Spirit to the Apostles, and hands it on to their successors in its full purity, so that led by the light of the Spirit of truth, they may in proclaiming it preserve this word of God faithfully, explain it, and make it more widely known. Consequently it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws her certainty about everything which has been revealed.'

**8** See the paper I wrote for one of the consultation meetings, published as Joel C. Elowsky, 'Scripture and Tradition in an Evangelical Context', *Concordia Journal* 42, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 41–64, available online at https://issuu.com/concordiasem/docs/cj_winter_2016_final.

i.e. that it accomplishes what it sets out to do in leading us into all truth. We both agreed that we expect no further revelation than what Scripture has revealed, and we agreed on the canon of the New Testament, while remaining in disagreement about the extent of the Old Testament text.

We even began to notice statements in which Catholics said that Scripture is 'the highest authority in matters of faith'.[9] Growing up in what I might characterize as an anti-Catholic home, I would never have believed that Catholics had said such things, let alone placed them in official statements. It was also heartening to see that the Catholic arguments we encountered in the consultation were based primarily on Scripture and not on Tradition. There are copious citations of Scripture throughout the document.

We as Evangelicals came to realize that a renaissance is taking place among many in the Roman Catholic Church who recognize that Scripture needs to play a more central role in faith and life—and that laity and clergy alike desire this to be so. And we rejoiced in that, even as we also expressed some reservations in our 'Fraternal Questions of Concern', noting that other official Catholic statements seem to contradict the high view of Scripture that we witnessed in the consultation.

We also had to acknowledge that Catholics, in a spirit of trust and humility, were able to challenge Evangelicals concerning the authority operative in our own interpretation of Scripture. They pointed out that we do not operate with a magisterium or tradition as our guide. This is true. But what *does* serve as authority for Evangelicals when differing interpretations of Scripture arise, we were asked?

Scripture interprets Scripture, we typically say. But our Catholics counterparts observed that we have Evangelicals on opposite sides of issues quoting Scripture and coming to contradictory conclusions on many issues, such as the sacraments, charismatic gifts or decision theology. How do we respond? What serves as the arbiter for interpretation of Scripture when there mutually exclusive interpretations of Scripture are offered among Evangelicals?

Tradition, liturgy, sacraments, church fathers—we came to recognize that these are foreign concepts among a fair number of Evangelicals. Catholics in the dialog sought to create better understanding about some of these issues. But a hermeneutic of distrust remained at this point among some who believed that the core doctrine of salvation was at stake. They perceived the sacraments, the liturgy, and tradition as taking away from the *solas*—adding something we must do (e.g. liturgy or sacraments) to our faith, or including other authorities (Tradition or church fathers) alongside the authority of Scripture.

The Catholics pointed out an obvious but largely unstated issue that the WEA itself must grapple with: the WEA 'brings together Christian communities with a common statement of faith, but also with great diversity' (paragraph

**9** *Ut unum sint* ('That They May Be One'), encyclical letter of Pope John Paul II, 25 May 1995, paragraph 79, available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25051995_ut-unum-sint.html.

41 of the statement). This diversity, though in many ways a strength of the WEA, also makes agreement on issues such as the sacraments and ecclesiology seem almost impossible among Evangelicals.

All members of the consultation, though, acknowledged that the Lord's supper and baptism are not only mentioned in Scripture but occupy a prominent place in Christian faith and life in the early church.

## III. The Pattern of the Consultation: Affirmation and Questioning

In our conversations, we tried to follow the pattern that the Reformers themselves used in such documents as the Augsburg Confession, which in its opening articles affirms agreement with the Roman church on various issues. We also followed the Reformers' example of prioritizing areas of disagreement that are essential to the Gospel.

Furthermore, we recognized that those coming from the Catholic tradition might have something to teach Evangelicals, especially concerning blind spots that may have developed with regard to ecclesiology, conversion and the doctrine of salvation. But we also felt that we would be better heard by our interlocutors if we asked questions instead of issuing statements. The goal of such questions was to seek genuine clarification and move the conversation forward; we did not ask 'gotcha' kinds of questions designed simply to show how the other side was wrong, and we did seek to offer words of encouragement where appropriate.

For instance, the evangelical emphasis on individual faith and conversion was challenged by Catholics, who noted the benefits of being called into the community of the church where our faith can be strengthened and built up. In response, we Evangelicals indicated that we were encouraged by 'the communal dimension of salvation we see evidenced [by Catholics] over against individualistic tendencies which have characterized some trends in Protestantism' (paragraph 56).

The Evangelical impression of Catholic piety has long been that membership in a parish and attendance at mass were sufficient for salvation. But we found that Catholics were just as disturbed as Evangelicals over the trend of viewing church membership itself as salvific if that membership is not followed up by a life of discipleship (paragraph 57).

We had an especially heartening conversation on the issue of certainty of salvation. Catholics, on one hand, perceived Evangelicals as holding to a 'once saved, always saved' mentality, which the Catholics interpreted as a form of presumption. From the Catholic perspective, it seems as if Evangelicals think that they can sin with impunity because God will always forgive. Evangelicals, for their part, challenged Catholics as to why they talked only about their 'hope' and not their 'assurance' of being saved, especially given the abundance of promises found in Scripture that provide such assurance (paragraph 60).

The tension in evidence here was between the Evangelical over-familiarity with God, where Jesus is more like a coach or best friend, and the Catholic distance from a God who stands at a remote distance as judge and expects

good works for someone to be saved. Both views, which are common among laity and clergy, need to be probed further.

The questions with which we challenged each other can perhaps serve as a diagnostic tool in challenging some of the easy assumptions under which both Evangelicals and Catholics operate at times. How should pastoral care handle troubled consciences or secure sinners, for instance? Such questions are directly relevant to the grass-roots level of what ordinary Catholics and Evangelicals experience.

Other questions concerning the language of merit found among Catholics, as well as the Catholic teaching on the sacraments and their efficacy with respect to episcopal ordination, would certainly need further discussion and clarification for Evangelicals. But in the same way, the Evangelical understanding of ecclesiology and ministry and Evangelicals' varied views of the sacraments and ordinances need further clarification too. Catholics also challenged the Evangelical emphasis on decision theology, which they viewed as placing the onus of assurance on the believer's decision rather than on God's promises.

Finally, further discussion is needed on the meaning of the possibility of salvation outside the church or outside of faith. Evangelicals are glad to hear that Catholics are open to the former, but concerned that Catholics might believe the latter (paragraph 60).

## IV. Conclusion

No one who reads this document fairly can pretend that the real differences between Evangelicals and Catholics in doctrine and practice are being papered over or minimized. Papal infallibility, the Marian dogmas, purgatory, and other developments in Catholic Tradition still appear, from an Evangelical viewpoint, contrary to the clear witness of Scripture, and we raised these concerns clearly in our questions to Catholics.

But the document also provides Evangelicals with a constructive challenge to explore more fully what we believe and what we practice. Are we as consistent as we think we are? How does Scripture really function as our authority? How do we view the church in relation to our salvation? The consultation members hope that the conversation will not only continue but become deeper as God's people are guided by Scripture and as the Holy Spirit continues to work in and through his church.

ERT (2018) 42:2, 142-149

# Evangelicals, Roman Catholics, and Re-evangelizing Europe

Thomas K. Johnson

## I. The First Evangelization and European Identity

I want to start this discussion in what some might take to be an odd place: What makes Europe European?

Since antiquity, Europeans have claimed that Europe is distinct from Asia, but the dividing line between them has never been fully clear. The better commentators always acknowledge that if there is a line or border between Europe and Asia, that border is primarily cultural, not physical. And that observation makes a difference when we think about the goal of evangelizing Europe, especially considering that Christian evangelism is part of what created Europe as we know it today, as a culture or family of cultures.

I would suggest that Europe is Europe (and not west Asia) largely because of the first evangelization of the region, which started in southern Europe in the first century and extended across most of Europe between the years 500 and 1300. Though many themes in Christian theology and ethics played a role in creating Europe, it was especially Christian philosophical notions regarding humanity, rationality, and progress that both created Western civilization and caused it to flourish.

In making this statement, I do not intend to deny Greco-Roman contributions to Europe. But even those classical notions were introduced to much of Europe by missional Christian scholars serving in medieval monasteries, cathedral schools, and then Christian universities. Europe is European largely because of the worldview communicated during the first evangelization of Europe. Trust in human dignity, rationality, and progress was the fruit of evangelization.

This worldview-driven development was very practical. The era, once called the Dark Ages by secularists, was really an era of tremendous technological growth. Between 500 and 1300, one saw the widespread application of watermills and windmills, the effective use of horses for agriculture and travel, the development of deep ploughs that revolutionized farming, and the invention of eye glasses, compasses and clocks. This technological growth was simultaneous with the Christianization of Europe. Sociologist Rodney Stark commented:

> All of these remarkable developments can be traced to the unique Christian conviction that progress was a God-given obligation, entailed in the gift of reason. That new

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technologies and techniques would always be forthcoming was a fundamental article of Christian faith. Hence, no bishops or theologians denounced clocks or sailing ships—although both were condemned on religious grounds in various non-Western societies.[1]

This development was also theoretical. The multi-faceted link among Christianity, rationality and recognizing human dignity became a distinguishing characteristic of European thought as it developed during and after the decline of the Roman Empire.

On a theoretical level, this positive link can be observed in thinkers such as Augustine (354–430), Anselm (1033–1109), and Aquinas (1225–1274), who were simultaneously God-fearing believers and also elite philosophers using methods derived from antiquity. The biblical–classical synthesis that they represented incorporated selected themes from multiple sources in classical Greek and Roman ethics, metaphysics, and pedagogy, but all these were applied within a biblical framework and a biblical view of the human condition. These principles undergirded European society for a millennium, and they retain some influence today.

## II. European Identity and the Second Evangelization

But meanwhile, because of widespread illiteracy, corruption, power politics, bad theology, and the accretion of traditions, the Christian message became too intertwined with obedience to the visible Church (which in Western Europe meant the Roman Catholic Church), and that church, facing little competition, had veered far off course by medieval times. Martin Luther's challenge to that church, 500 years ago, was urgently needed. This led to the second evangelization of Europe, flowing from the Reformation in its multiple forms.

The new Protestants rediscovered grace, justification by faith, the liberty of the gospel and the power of the Bible. Although it would be unfair and inaccurate to say that Catholics totally rejected the true Christian faith, they responded defensively as an institution (through the Counter-Reformation and Inquisition), with strong opposition to what they considered Protestant heresies.

Nevertheless, in an important way, Europe became more European under the influence of both the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. With two major, competing versions of Christianity now in existence, both used rationality and education to defend their version of the faith. Thus, faith-driven rationality became even more clearly a distinctive aspect of European society.

This pattern was especially true in the Protestant regions of Europe. The Protestants thought everyone should read the Bible, and this conviction had massive cultural results. The Bible was translated into many European languages, leading to standardized versions of those languages, and then everyone was taught to read. Standardized languages and universal education, including sending girls from

**1** Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* (Random House: Kindle Edition, 2007), locations 896–900.

poor families to school, was a product of the Reformation. Other major developments in Europe were fuelled by the Reformation as well. Indeed, some scholars trace a direct line from justification by faith alone to democracy.

Even when farthest apart, Protestants and Catholics still shared a huge amount religiously: belief in the Trinity, in the Incarnation and Resurrection, and that the Bible is an inspired book from God. Nevertheless, the rivalry between them was too intense, perhaps because of a lack of other competitors. During the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, neither Islam nor secularism was competing for the hearts and minds of Europeans; even if not personally walking by faith, most Europeans were culturally Christian. The question was simply whether to be Catholic or Protestant. In this context, the antagonism between Catholics and Protestants remained very high from the sixteenth through the mid- or late nineteenth century.

I see secularism as beginning around 1650, in the context of overheated antagonism between Catholics and Protestants. The rise of secularism was partly fuelled by the perception that the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European wars were a product of the Protestant–Catholic rivalry. I think that this perception is one-sided; there were several motives for those wars other than religion, especially power politics mixed with greed. But this perception was and still is one of the drivers of secularism in Europe. In the twenty-first century, while teaching humanities at a major European university, I heard very bright students argue that Protestants and Catholics would restart the wars of religion unless both sides were restrained by totally secular governments.

Although the Enlightenment sowed the seeds of secularism, not all its leading thinkers were atheists. Some were practicing Christians, and some, such as John Locke, quoted the Bible frequently. Generally, the religion of the early Enlightenment was deism, the idea that God was the great watchmaker who set the world in motion but is not currently involved in the world.

Deism allowed Europeans to keep many of the key convictions that made Europe European, such as a high appraisal of human dignity, rationality and education, while rejecting both sides in the Protestant–Catholic rivalry. Most deists had no place for the competing doctrines of salvation, sacraments, and spiritual authority; they preferred a vague religiosity without specifically Protestant or Catholic beliefs.

But Enlightenment deism was not stable. Though it was initially grounded in arguments for the existence of God, people raised in a deist culture tended to lose their trust in rationality. In this way, deism led to thinkers such as Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, key representatives of post-Enlightenment secularism. They were not only atheists and outspoken in their antagonism to Christianity; they also rejected the earlier notions of rationality and human dignity that Christianity had contributed to European culture. Instead, they promoted moral relativism. In this way, secularism is closely tied to my perception that some distinctives of European civilization are at risk, and that the key assumptions that make Europe European are in question.

Trust in rationality and human dignity arose in Europe as organic parts of

the broader Christian worldview. Now, without the specifically theological parts of that worldview, many Europeans want to continue trusting in rationality and human dignity, but it is not clear that the cultural fruit can thrive without the theological tree on which it grew. This situation has massive effects on both our evangelistic efforts as well as on everything that happens in the public square. I will give one example from each setting.

In the modern public square, without the biblical creation account, people have terrible difficulties saying where human rights come from, and therefore they end up with all sorts of competing ideas about what rights people have. Communists say one has whatever rights the state gives; postmodernists say, in a certain sense, that rights come from the self, based on his or her interests.

An example from evangelism: I know a European woman who came to faith as an adult after being educated in a communist school. At first it seemed impossible for her to fathom why Jesus was significant, since her life was a cosmic accident as a part of blind evolution and religion was the opiate of the people. After she started to accept that she might be created in the image of God, she could imagine why Jesus and salvation might be significant. She had to believe in human dignity before she could believe in Jesus. Then she trusted Jesus and was baptized. For her, coming to believe in human dignity was part of being evangelized.

Can trust in human dignity and rationality continue without the Christian tree on which it grew?

## III. A New Evangelization with Catholics?

Against this cultural backdrop, which arose from parts of the Christian worldview but which perceives its own secularization as partly arising from Protestant–Catholic rivalry, we have to take up the question of Evangelical–Catholic relations when we discuss a new evangelization of Europe. The competition with both Islam and secularism makes the differences between Protestants and Catholics seem less glaring, and the value of collaboration seems greater.

Of course, as evangelicals, that doesn't mean we ignore theological differences or call people Christians unless they profess Jesus as Savior. But it does mean looking harder for ways to build bridges to and collaborate with an organization that maintains the sanctity of every human life, the value of Christian marriage, the centrality of Jesus Christ to all of life, and a great determination to oppose the persecution of Christians worldwide.

### 1. The nature of the global Catholic Church

Sociologically, there is a big difference between Protestants and Catholics. We have splintered into a thousand denominations; the Catholics have remained under one extremely big tent. That doesn't mean that Catholics are any more united than Protestants; it just means that there is a great variety in flavours of Catholics within one organization.

We have a Catholic Church with a conservative wing, a liberal wing, and an evangelical wing. We have charismatic Catholics who are virtually indis-

tinguishable from Pentecostals except that they attend mass and say the Ave Maria. Some Catholics sound almost like me, quoting Martin Luther about the relationship between God's moral law and the gospel, but there are also Catholics who deny the Virgin Birth and Catholics who worship statues.

Because of the history of Protestant–Catholic conflict, we must avoid the strong, condemning language that Protestants once used about Catholics. We should not call the Pope the antichrist, even if one or two popes might have qualified. We should not call the Catholic Church the "Whore of Babylon." Both of those terms were, I believe, a result of heated conflict, not the result of careful biblical exegesis.

But we should know that some Catholics use very strong theological language to condemn others within the Catholic Church. Some Catholics think many other Catholics are either not Christians at all, or at least not very good Christians. I was surprised the first time a prominent Catholic leader told me privately he thought the Catholic Church is largely apostate and made up mostly of Sadducees and Pharisees; I will not be surprised the next time. Yet at the same time, this man may fear for my salvation, since he thinks there might be no salvation outside the Catholic Church.

Some Catholics still sound as if they believe in works salvation; others speak as if members of other religions will be saved. There are Catholics who would like to return to using more Latin but also Catholics who would like their church to endorse gay and lesbian marriage. There are Catholics who love evangelicals, but others sound as if they are afraid of us.

Thirty-five years ago, I heard an evangelical theologian describe the Catholic Church as a nine-ring circus in which most of the performers do not know what is happening in the other eight rings—or if they do know, they probably do not like what is happening in the other rings. When I studied Catholic theology under a liberal priest at a secular university, he seemed to present the entirely different types of Catholic theology as if they were equivalent meals on offer at a buffet, like different types of spiritual meat, even though they were contradictory.

But in this confusing church situation, there are also hundreds of millions of dear Catholics who look to Jesus for their salvation and love their Bibles. Some, even Pope Francis, preach justification by faith alone. They are our brothers and sisters in Christ.

This immense variety within the Catholic Church is mediated to evangelicals by widely different church-state relations and by widely different demographics. For example, there are regions in several countries where Catholicism dominates local social life, leaving evangelicals marginalized and perhaps facing discrimination. On the other hand, I have heard reports of Evangelical pastors and Catholic priests becoming prayer partners while in prison together under communism.

In several countries, it has become normal for Catholics and evangelicals to work together in all sorts of social, political, and educational activities, usually without blurring the religious identity or church membership of the individuals involved. As just one example, I have met evangelicals who are teaching in Catholic schools, and Catholics teaching in evangelical schools,

without reports of tension.

The nature of the Catholic Church's understanding of authority, as it has evolved over time, raises one important problem, the implications of which we must fully grasp. The Catholic Church cannot repudiate its previous statements as easily as we Protestants can. They cannot undo the Council of Trent or other statements, even if they would like to. To understand individual Catholics with integrity, therefore, one must listen carefully to what they say, not simply associate them with everything their church has ever said. Many Catholics have not considered what is in their historical documents, just as some evangelicals have not yet studied the Westminster Larger Catechism. Even Catholic leaders say things in their sermons that seem to be different from traditional Catholicism.

## 2. Principles of cooperation

As evangelicals, we need criteria for cooperation. With regard to evangelization, the key criterion is the same for Catholics as for any people. If we hear them confess Christ clearly, we can consider evangelizing alongside them; if we do not hear them confess Christ, we should evangelize them!

If we take Scripture seriously, we must observe a principle clearly articulated in 1 John 4:2–3: 'This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.' On this basis I recognize many Catholics as fellow Christians.

If we apply that principle to our current situation and ask how we should act toward the Catholic Church and its members, I think we will come to this conclusion: yes to joint Evangelical–Catholic mission or re-evangelization of Europe when that means representing the Bible, the Christian worldview and Christian ethics, but no to joint church planting or sacramental worship, let alone ecclesial unity.

This path of seeking to understand Catholics, affirming their genuine faith in Christ where we find it and looking for areas of potential cooperation without minimizing the theological differences that keep us institutionally separate, is one that we evangelicals have followed for at least the last 40 years. In 1977, John R. W. Stott led a team of evangelicals in an Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission, leading to a publication under this title in 1986. In our interactions with senior Roman Catholics, we have followed, to the very best of our abilities, the principles articulated at that time. I encourage you to find the text online and study it. The headings from that text indicate that the participants discussed possibilities for common witness in seven areas:

- Bible translation and publishing
- Use of media
- Community service
- Social thought and action
- Dialogue
- Worship
- Evangelism

The dialogue participants carefully discussed the problems of joint evangelical–Catholic worship. Together, the evangelical and Catholic teams strongly encouraged Christians of both varie-

ties to join in prayer and Bible study in each other's homes, and they affirmed the practice of occasionally visiting each other's worship services. But they recognized that differences regarding the sacraments make it impossible for evangelicals and Roman Catholics to join each other in sacramental worship.

When we work with Catholics, we must disabuse ourselves of the simplistic notion that if these people really knew the gospel, they would come out of the Catholic Church. The situation is not the same as in Muslim countries, where converts to Christianity risk being imprisoned or killed by a revenge mob. But there are similarities. Catholic believers have family, community and cultural ties that may make it personally difficult, risky or not strategic for them to withdraw from the Catholic Church. Moreover, many of them, if well connected within the evangelical wing of the Catholic Church, may be experiencing great fellowship and spiritual growth where they are.

We appreciate that making common cause with Catholics is a sensitive issue for many European evangelicals. Some have ancestors who were persecuted by Catholics. Some of you may still face Catholic opposition in a few areas. Some of you may have left the Catholic Church after making a personal commitment to Jesus Christ because you did not hear the gospel in the Catholic Church; you may react negatively to any effort that may seem to acknowledge Catholics as fellow believers.

We understand your concerns and welcome your input. It helps to keep us on course theologically. We would ask only that you take the time to become well informed and not base your public comments on speculation or misinformation. Though I cannot present statistical proof of this belief, I believe that a return to the Bible is occurring in the Catholic Church today, and I am sure that the liberal wing of Catholicism is in sharp decline.

## IV. What We Can Do Now

**1. We must practice visible Christian love toward Roman Catholics, especially in areas where there is persecution of Christians or where there is a history of conflict between Protestants and Catholics.**

In John 13:34–35 Jesus said, 'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.' Francis Schaeffer was right, I believe, to say that Jesus has given the watching world the right to evaluate our claim to be disciples on the basis of our observable love for other Christians.

I believe this to be true even if those other Christians happen to be Catholics. Therefore, it is necessary to look for ways for evangelicals and Catholics to practice visible love from the top to the local level, to confirm our discipleship. And such love should acknowledge and address the history of Protestant–Catholic conflicts.

Not all of us can imitate Thomas Schirrmacher and take our coffee breaks with the Pope, but many of us can have lunch with a Catholic priest or other Catholic activist or educator. This should lead to constructive conversations. I am not afraid that many of us will become Catholics, nor do I

expect many Catholic priests or activists to become evangelicals. The goal should simply be visible love that documents our honest discipleship.

**2. We need a broad-ranging evangelical–Catholic joint effort to articulate the philosophical foundations of society, not only within Western civilization, but also on behalf of the persecuted churches outside the West.**

At the end of the 2015 Tirana consultation on discrimination, persecution and martyrdom of Christians, the participants, who included representatives from the Vatican, the World Evangelical Alliance, the World Council of Churches and the Pentecostal World Fellowship along with other Christians, issued a statement. This statement included a very serious to-do list, articulating what Christians need to do in response to the extraordinary persecution of Christians in our time. In one line we called on all educational institutions to 'develop opportunities and tools to teach young people in particular about human rights, religious tolerance, healing of memories and hostilities of the past, and peaceful means of conflict resolution and reconciliation'.

This task is largely unfulfilled. It is urgent, I believe, that we develop large-scale joint evangelical–Roman Catholic publishing and educational programs to articulate the philosophical principles that created Western civilization. Such an effort would require no changes in theology and no joint participation in the sacraments. Such efforts should have three goals:

- In a pre-evangelistic manner, promote the credibility of the Christian worldview;
- Strengthen the foundations of Western civilization, hopefully securing our freedoms into the future; and
- Change the situation for persecuted Christians in some situations, especially where the results of such Evangelical-Catholic educational cooperation can extend beyond the West.

To reach its full potential, such an educational program would have to be implemented in more languages than just European ones. Right now, I am thinking of Arabic, Mandarin, Russian, and Vietnamese. Those possibilities make it worth a serious investment of time, talent, and treasure.

As a baby step in this direction, two of my recent books, both dealing with human rights, were jointly published by the World Evangelical Alliance and a Vatican-based think tank. I see this as a proof of concept, demonstrating that such efforts are possible. But these books are only in English so far, and this is not 1 percent of what should be done. Beyond baby steps, we need to run an ultramarathon and do so in several major languages.

We must be somewhat cautious in our expectations for cooperation with Catholics. I would be very surprised if the Vatican calls [European Evangelical Alliance executive director] Thomas Bucher next week and applies to join the European Evangelical Alliance. But there seem to be many millions of dear Christian brothers and sisters in the Catholic Church. Many share our basic worldview, even if we have theological differences. We should seek real fellowship and see what we can do together towards re-evangelizing Europe.

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# Potential Land Mines in Protestant-Catholic Dialogues

John Bugay

As a former long-time Roman Catholic and now a practicing Evangelical believer, with a great deal of experience interacting with individuals on both sides of the Protestant–Catholic divide, I have come to take a guarded view of many of the documents that have come out of various ecumenical discussions.

And I have a guarded sense about the document reproduced in this issue as well. That is to say, I am generally not optimistic. But the format of the document (and of the discussion itself) lends itself to perhaps some optimism.

In any event, I would urge the Evangelical participants in such discussions to be aware of some of the peculiarities of these discussions over time. In this essay, I hope to show some consistent patterns and practices of Roman Catholic dialogue methods in the distant and recent past, to point them out in the current document, and then to offer some words of caution to those Evangelicals who are in dialogue with Roman Catholics.

## I. Claiming the Very Thing That's in Question

The Reformed theologian Francis Turretin wrote in the seventeenth century that the Roman Catholic Church,

> (although they are anything but the true church of Christ) *still boast[s] of their having alone the name of church* and do not blush to display the standard of that which they oppose. *In this manner, hiding themselves under the specious title of the antiquity and infallibility of the Catholic church, they think they can, as with one blow, beat down and settle the controversy waged against them* concerning the various most destructive errors [they have] introduced into the heavenly doctrine.[1] (emphasis added)

The Roman Catholics of the seventeenth century were simply relying on the debate tactic of defining the terms of the conflict. Although at Vatican II the Catholic Church made a number of apparent changes, its doctrine of the Church underwent only minor modifications.

Officially, according to the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium*:

1 Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, (Geneva, 1679–1685), vol. 3, pp. 2–3.

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> Christ, the one Mediator, established and continually sustains here on earth His holy Church, the community of faith, hope and charity, as an entity with visible delineation through which He communicated truth and grace to all. But, *the society structured with hierarchical organs and the Mystical Body of Christ, are not to be considered as two realities*, nor are the visible assembly and the spiritual community, nor the earthly Church and the Church enriched with heavenly things; rather *they form one complex reality which coalesces from a divine and a human element. …*
>
> This Church constituted and organized in the world as a society, *subsists in the [Roman] Catholic Church,* which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him.[2] (emphasis added)

This means that the one and only church,[3] 'structured with hierarchical organs', is uniquely joined to Christ, in an ontological sense, as 'one complex reality', and that the visible—but very real—manifestation of this one complex reality (the structure of pope and bishops) will exist 'for all ages'.[4]

In fact, in a more recent (2007) document issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Protestant churches are, at an official level, not considered churches at all.[5]

## II. The Roman Catholic Apologetic after Trent: Foster Scepticism

Most of the polemics that I have encountered between Protestants and Catholics at a popular level have their roots in, and are echoes of, the sixteenth-century polemical battles. There is a particular character to these types of discussions, and it has its roots in a form of ancient scepticism revived in the Renaissance era.

After the Council of Trent (1547–1563), and borrowing not from theological but from Renaissance writers, Roman Catholics, and especially the Jesuits, developed a strategy of employing a radical form of scepticism known as Pyrrhonism. This strategy was first attributed to the ancient Greek philosopher Aenesidemus (c. 100–40 BC)[6]

**2** Pope Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium* (1964), paragraph 8, available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

**3** *Unitatis Redintegratio*, paragraph 1, available at http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html.

**4** Pope Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium*, paragraph 8.

**5** According to Catholic doctrine, these Protestant 'ecclesial communities' do not enjoy apostolic succession in the sacrament of orders and are therefore deprived of a constitutive element of the Church. Due to the absence of the sacramental priesthood, they have not preserved the genuine and integral substance of the Eucharistic Mystery and thus cannot, according to Catholic doctrine, be called churches in the proper sense. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church*, available at http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20070629_commento-responsa_en.html.

**6** Richard Popkin, *The History of Scepticism: From Savonarola to Bayle* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), xviii.

and his followers, but many Counter-Reformers (and especially Jesuits) such as Francis de Sales, Robert Bellarmine, and others proposed attacking Reformation doctrines with Pyrrhonist scepticism as a way of undermining the Protestant reliance on Scripture. As Richard Popkin explained:

> The attack begins with the problem of the criterion raised by the Reformation: how do we tell what is the rule of faith, the standard by which true faith can be distinguished from false faith? …
>
> The argument begins by asking the Calvinists, 'How do you know, gentlemen, that the books of the Old and New Testaments are Holy Scripture? The question of canonicity raises a particular difficulty. If the Calvinists hold that Scripture is the rule of faith, then how are we to judge which work is Scripture? … But even if one could tell which book is Scripture, how could one tell what it says, and what we are supposed to believe? …
>
> If the Calvinists say, in their own defense, that they are reading Scripture reasonably and drawing the obvious logical inferences from what it says, then they are obviously targets for 'the machine of war'. First of all, any alleged reading is uncertain and may be mistaken, unless there is an infallible rule for interpretation.[7]

This response, expressing scepticism about Scripture, with the suggestion that the Protestant can find certainty only through 'an accepted, and unquestioned, faith in the Catholic tradition',[8] became a stock response on the Roman Catholic side and remained so for centuries. Such an appeal to scepticism is evident even today.

Much more recently, the Lutheran theologian Oscar Cullmann described the Roman Catholic response to his ground-breaking book *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr* (1953, updated 1962). In that work, a thorough historical, exegetical and theological investigation of Peter's role in the earliest church, Cullmann concluded that Peter was the referent of 'this rock' in Matthew 16:17 and was foundational to the early church, but only for a period, until James, the brother of the Lord, assumed leadership in Jerusalem, after which Peter concentrated entirely on his missionary work.[9] Cullmann further concluded that there was not any evidence supporting the notion of 'apostolic succession' with respect to a 'Petrine ministry'.[10]

Interestingly, he commented later, very few Catholic writers addressed his conclusion directly. Rather, 'in most of the Catholic reviews of my book on my book on St. Peter, one argument especially is brought forward: scripture, a collection of books, is not sufficient to actualize for us the divine revelation granted to the apostles.'[11] His Roman Catholic interlocutors were bringing that same Pyrrhonic scepticism and

**7** Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, 67–69.

**8** Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, 74.

**9** Oscar Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, Martyr: A Historical and Theological Study*, 2nd ed., trans. by Floyd Filson (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1962), 229.

**10** Cullmann, *Peter*, 239.

**11** Oscar Cullmann, 'The Early Church', foreword to Cullmann, *The Tradition*, trans. by Floyd Filson (London: SCM Press, 1956), 57.

precisely the same argument about Scripture into the twentieth century.

## III. Vatican II and Documents with Multiple Meanings

Although the discussions since Vatican II have definitely taken on a softer flavour, they have represented only a slight giving up of formerly held ground, and in unexpected directions.

Vatican II occurred in the wake of some of the most significant infighting within the Catholic Church in centuries. A dispute over modernism in the early twentieth century led to internal conflicts between the Neo-Thomist camp, which had been at the vanguard of Church teaching and thought since the Council of Trent, and the Nouvelle Theologians, the group accused of modernism.

The Protestant theologian David Wells, in his 1972 work *Revolution in Rome*, described how this dispute played out at Vatican II:

> This council actually endorsed two very different theologies and sometimes the differences could not be hidden. Neither side would accept ambiguity nor allow compromise. As a result, on some points the documents speak with two voices—one conservative and one progressive. …[12]
>
> When the Council was successful, both viewpoints were represented in one statement which obviously meant different things to different people. …
>
> There were times, however, when no reconciling statement could be found, and attempts to induce a surrender by one side or the other failed. In those cases, the Council would only endorse both positions with professional aplomb as if their mutual incompatibility were no longer glaringly obvious.[13]

In another example, a young theologian named Joseph Ratzinger (later Pope Benedict XVI) described this 'double-meaning' method regarding the so-called 'explanatory note' added to the end of the Vatican II document *Lumen Gentium* by Pope Paul VI. Ratzinger wrote:

> The end result, which is what we are concerned with, would be the realization it did not create any substantially new situation. Without doubt the scales here were further tipped in favor of papal primacy as opposed to collegiality.
>
> But for every statement advanced in one direction the text offers one supporting the other side, and this restores the balance, leaving interpretations open in both directions … The consequent ambiguity is a sign that complete harmony of views was neither achieved nor even possible.[14]

We can see a more recent example of similar ambiguity in the discussions that have followed Pope Francis's publication of *Amoris Laetitia* and the unclarity as to whether his statement about offering communion to divorced

**12** David Wells, *Revolution in Rome* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 27.

**13** Wells, *Revolution in Rome*, 28–29.

**14** Joseph Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights of Vatican II* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1966), 170–71.

and remarried Catholics represents a change in policy.[15]

This tendency to use the same word in multiple ways extends to the very name 'Catholic Church'. The late Richard John Neuhaus, founder and editor of the publication *First Things*, aptly titled a chapter in one of his books 'The Church We Mean When We Say "Church" '.[16]

## IV. Land Mines in Combination

These tendencies evident in Roman Catholic dialogue—making bold claims that define the terms of the debate, introducing scepticism regarding Protestant doctrines, and the use of double meanings in words and phrases—lead to yet another type of land mine: an imbalance in the dynamic that does not favour the Protestant side.

In fact, Protestant interlocutors may find themselves having tacitly accepted a particular Roman Catholic meaning, in a statement where two or more possible meanings may be inferred, without having intentionally done so.

The Reformed theologian Anthony N. S. Lane described this imbalance in his work *Justification by Faith in Catholic–Protestant Dialogue*. He quoted a private email from a colleague:

> [Because of their emphasis on salvation as participation in a diverse communion] Catholic ecumenists … tend to be generous in their reading of the Protestant tradition: their vision of ecumenism is such that they would not want to read Protestants as simply repeating Catholic teaching, but rather as different, *and thereby enhancing the diversity of the salvific communion*—all they need to establish is that there is enough common ground for us to be able to recognize each other as Christians.
>
> Protestants, given a conception of Christianity less interested in communion and more in conviction, are more concerned with verbal agreement.[17] (emphasis added)

Lane is suggesting that the Catholic participants in any agreement are capable of fitting language derived from Protestant convictions into the overall Catholic system of beliefs. In doing so, they also, in a definitional way, incorporate these Protestants into the Catholic Church.[18]

**15** The issue at hand is whether Catholics who have been divorced and remarried without an annulment can receive the sacraments of confession and communion if they do not live in complete sexual continence ('as brother and sister'). That was the firm rule prior to *Amoris Laetitia*. A footnote seems to give pastors some leeway to make their own individual decisions, and some national conferences of bishops are taking that view. One cardinal, at least, has suggested that this is a new development. Others are suggesting that this interpretation is not in keeping with what has always been taught. And the pope has not responded to a question from the Dubia seeking clarification, signalling that he intends not to clarify, but to perpetuate the ambiguity. In December 2017, the document was added to the Official Acts of the Apostolic See, *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*.

**16** John Richard Neuhaus, *Catholic Matters* (New York: Basic Books, 2006), chapter 1.

**17** Anthony N. S. Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic–Protestant Dialogue: An Evangelical Assessment* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 126.

**18** See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 836, accessible at http://www.scborromeo.org/ccc/p123a9p3.htm#836.

## V. The Format of the WEA-PCPCU Document

The format of the document produced by the World Evangelical Alliance representatives is somewhat unusual, in that it contains robust sections of unanswered questions from each side. This format was agreed upon so as to encourage wide discussion of various aspects of the document. The format is applied to a series of topic: the Scriptures, apostolic tradition, the relationship between Scripture and tradition, and the gift of salvation in the church.

Paragraph 14 further elaborates this method of consultation:

> We were not in the business of compromise and negotiation, but rather of respectful and frank conversation, aware that nothing other than a deep honesty, graciously articulated, would serve our communities well. When we gathered, we sought to be faithful to Jesus Christ even when we encountered disagreements. The way forward was for us firstly to map out convergences, building on previous consultations, and on the basis of our respective teachings and practices; secondly, to name aspects of the other tradition which give us encouragement, where we rejoice in seeing God at work, and where we may learn from the other; thirdly, with the help of the dialogue partner, to formulate questions to each other in a respectful and intelligent way (hence the term 'fraternal'), thus identifying issues we were not able to resolve in this round of consultation, which still need to be addressed by our respective communities.

This seems to be a very laudable way to address these different topics. But even though the document seeks to foster discussion, given that some of the more important definitions are left unstated here, this open discussion may end up leading, as Anthony Lane suggests, to a situation in which Protestants may tacitly agree to something to which they had no intention of agreeing.

## VI. Examples of Potential Land Mines within the Document

One example of these convergences may be found in the introductory paragraph of the document. The two sides agree:

> Being joined to Christ through faith, each person is personally associated with Christ and becomes a member of his body. But what is the Church, and who belongs to the Church, which is his body? We take consolation in knowing that the Lord knows his own and his own know him (Jn 10:14). *Evangelicals understand that through the power of the Holy Spirit, the very moment one enters into a relationship with Christ through a personal commitment in confessing Jesus as Lord and Savior (Mt 16:16) and is baptized, one belongs to the Church*, the community which he established (Mt 16:18). (emphasis added)

Now, do the evangelical participants wish to agree, right off the bat, that evangelicals who enter a relationship with Christ through a personal commitment, confess Jesus as Lord and Savior and are baptized belong to the Church that 'subsists in the Catholic Church, which is governed for all

time by the successor of Peter and by the Bishops in communion with him'? The document does not clarify which 'Church' the writers are referring to. Nor does it address the fact that the Roman Catholic Church officially does not recognize evangelical churches as authentic churches—in view of which, for the Catholic participants, 'Church' can mean only the Catholic Church.

Admittedly, in a document produced by an earlier round of evangelical–Catholic dialogue in 2002, each side articulated its definition of the word 'church'. However, there is no link from this document to the earlier document, nor is there any acknowledgement of differing definitions.

The Catholic Church certainly holds that evangelicals, and all baptized Christians, in fact 'belong' to the Catholic Church.[19] As Anthony Lane suggested, the Roman Catholics in this discussion would be happy to have the Protestants concede that they 'belong' in the sense that various Catholic doctrines have defined. Needless to say, Protestants would not be inclined to make this concession.

Similarly, regarding the canon of Scripture, paragraph 21, again in a 'Common Ground' section of the document, notes, 'In the first centuries, the Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, recognized and received from among many writings these 27 books as the canon of the New Testament'. Do the evangelicals wish to concede here that the Church 'governed by the successor of Peter' was the one that received the New Testament? That would be consonant with what the Jesuits of the sixteenth century were suggesting, but not with an evangelical understanding of Scripture or of who has the authority to interpret it.

And again, in paragraph 54, in a 'Common Ground' section on 'Salvation and the Church', both parties again affirm, 'The Church, then, is God's gift to the world'. That paragraph goes on to state, 'The Church and its ministers are in service to this salvation wherever the marks of the true Church are found'. Do the evangelical participants really want to pledge their service to the 'true Church' as Catholic doctrine understands it?

Finally, the sceptical appeal of the sixteenth-century Jesuits appears almost word for word in paragraph 48, where the Catholic side asks, 'Without reference to a magisterium, how do Evangelicals maintain unity and guard against internal conflict in their interpretation of Sacred Scripture?'

My intention is not to disparage this document or these discussions. However, significant risk is inherent in affirming common ground on key topics where no definitions are provided—especially when one side has promulgated elsewhere a definition according to which evangelical churches are not even considered true churches at all, but only 'ecclesial communities'. In such a situation, how can it be said that genuine agreement has occurred?

**19** *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 836.

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# Apprentices or Pupils? An Analysis of Teaching in the New Testament

Russell L. Huizing and Kye James

In the last hundred years, teaching in Western culture has passed through a monumental shift, transitioning from a pedagogical foundation of apprenticeship to one of pupilship.[1] Although the two approaches are complementary and not mutually exclusive, each one has particular strengths and weaknesses.[2]

For instance, an apprenticeship approach to teaching creates a far more relational environment due to the interaction between apprentice and master.[3] Apprenticeship provides specific direction and purpose through direct role modelling. However, it can also limit learning opportunities and can be exploited to undergird an unjust social order.[4] On the other hand, pupilship, according to Yilmaz, offers academic forms of training to the masses and allows people to fully pursue their potential;[5] however, given the wide variety of academic options available, it can also lead to a stifling uncertainty and sometimes distances the educator from the student.

This research analyses evidence from the New Testament to assess the impact of both types of pedagogy on the life of the early church, whose central mission required both teaching (Mt 28:20) and teachers (1 Cor 12:28). The Great Commission of Matthew 28 stresses making disciples under the authority of and in communion with Jesus, and this command is accomplished

**1** Scott Christman, 'Preparing for Success through Apprenticeship', *Technology & Engineering Teacher* 1, no. 72 (2012): 22–28.

**2** Clark Backus, Kevin Keegan, Charles Gluck, and Lisa M. V. Gulick, 'Accelerating Leadership Development via Immersive Learning and Cognitive Apprenticeship', *International Journal of Training & Development* 2, no. 14 (2010): 144–48. doi: 10.1111/j.1468—2419.2010.00347.x

**3** Chris Echeta, 'The Traditional Pottery and Social Engineering: Beyond the Apprenticeship Façade', *Journal of Sustainable Development* 11, no. 6 (2013): 98–104. doi: 10.5539/jsd.v6n11p98.

**4** Echeta, 'Traditional Pottery', 101.

**5** Kaya Yilmaz, 'The Cognitive Perspective on Learning: Its Theoretical Underpinnings and Implications for Classroom Practices', *Clearing House* 5, no. 84 (2011): 204–12. doi: 10.1080/00098655.2011.568989.

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through going, teaching and baptizing.[6] Whereas 'going' is part of everyday life and 'baptizing' is regulated by the ritual elements surrounding the practice, 'teaching' can have less distinctly defined boundaries, being reshaped in any given cultural context.

For instance, in a contemporary American context, the concept of teaching is most often associated with the practice of imparting knowledge, typically in a formal or informal classroom environment.[7] Although skills may be involved in this exchange to some extent, for the most part Americans think of teachers as engaging in cognitive enhancement of their pupils.

In contrast, as one moves along the spectrum from cognitive enhancement to skills acquisition, the learner moves from pupil to apprentice.[8] But the use of apprenticeship has shrunk significantly in Western culture over the past 150 years, causing teaching to become much less associated with apprenticeship.

When Christian scripture speaks of teaching, is it speaking of pupils, apprentices, or both? Given the global influence of Western religious organizations and their definition of teaching, the answer to this question is critical. If our conception of teaching is based on cultural conceptions rather than a New Testament model, this departure from Christian tradition could have far-reaching consequences.

## 1. Pupil, Apprentice or Both?

In this research, we defined pupilship as an exchange of information between a teacher and student to provide cognitive enhancement for practical purposes.[9] Apprenticeship was defined as an exchange of skills through active participation between a master and apprentice for the sake of proficiency acquisition.[10]

A review of the Christian literature on teaching suggests a rather mixed interpretation of the relevant concepts. Some interpreters understand New Testament teaching as pupilship. Typically, they define church teaching as the public instruction of doctrine and view teaching primarily as cognitive.[11] To some people, believers should be taught the principles of Scripture as though it were a manual.[12] In other words, once believers have placed their faith in Jesus, they should receive instruction that fosters intellectual understanding, much like teaching in the educational realm.[13]

**6** Steve S. Kang, '"Your Kingdom Come": Practical Theology as Living out Three Great Pillars of Christianity', *Christian Education Journal* 1, no. 8 (2011): 114–29.

**7** Yilmaz, 'Cognitive Perspective', 209.

**8** Christman, 'Preparing', 23.

**9** Yilmaz, 'Cognitive Perspective', 205.

**10** Robert L. Saucy, 'Women's Prohibition to Teach Men: An Investigation into Its Meaning and Contemporary Application', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 1, no. 37 (1994): 79–97.

**11** Ed Glasscock, 'The Biblical Concept of Elder', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 573, no. 144 (1987): 66–78; Cornelius Krahn, 'Office of Elder in Anabaptist—Mennonite History', *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 2, no. 30 (1956): 120–27.

**12** Edgar Krentz, '"Make Disciples": Matthew on Evangelism', *Currents in Theology and Mission* 1, no. 33 (2006): 23–41.

**13** Krentz, 'Make Disciples', 23; Ronald E. Osborn, 'The Meaning of Presbyter in the United Church', *Mid-Stream* 1, no. 8 (1968): 88–105.

Such an interpretation creates a dichotomy, in that the content of teaching is distinguished from the embodiment of that teaching.[14] From this perspective, all leaders must have the ability to teach believers in a pupilship manner.[15] This role is distinguished from the 'proclaiming' role aimed at unbelievers.[16] Follower and leadership development in ecclesial contexts has called for drawing leaders from a pool of teachers,[17] who are adept in their intellectual understanding of the faith and in the ability to transfer this knowledge to pupils[18] in a public, classroom-like environment.[19] The ability to exercise classroom-based teaching skills becomes, in this model, the primary indicator of readiness for higher leadership.[20] Although this perspective does not overlook the importance of embodying what is taught, the embodiment is a result of teaching rather than a form of the teaching.[21]

Others understand teaching in the New Testament as more reminiscent of apprenticeship. In this approach, the follower is involved in many aspects of the discipler's life, such that the disciple begins to mimic the discipler.[22] Saucy describes this understanding as rooted in a Jewish mind-set that aims at a change in lifestyle rather than simply the impartation of knowledge.[23] Thus, a biblical approach to teaching from this perspective would require an observation and practice of the behaviours, emotions and thinking modelled by Jesus.[24] Follower and leadership development in church contexts within this paradigm has emphasized the need for teaching to explicitly include embodiment of what is to be learned.

A literature review also finds those who follow a middle ground in this debate, arguing that learning should encompass both Christian education and praxis.[25] From this perspective, teaching includes both specific instruction and expected responsive activity.[26] Thus, discipleship is concerned with both the disciple's activity and his or her knowledge about the activity.[27] This approach views effective teaching as producing both comprehension of in-

**14** Derek Penwell, 'The Changing Role of Elders in the Disciples of Christ', *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 2, no. 35 (2000): 63–82.

**15** Penwell, *Changing Role*, 81.

**16** Daniel W. Ulrich, 'The Missional Audience of the Gospel of Matthew', *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 1, no. 69 (2007): 64–83.

**17** Krahn, 'Office', 124.

**18** Osborn, 'Meaning', 88.

**19** Glasscock, 'Biblical Concept', 70.

**20** Penwell, 'Changing Role', 63; Ulrich, 'Missional', 64.

**21** Penwell, 'Changing Role', 63; Ulrich, 'Missional', 83.

**22** Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., 'The Great Commission', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 130, no. 519 (1973): 258–67.

**23** Saucy, 'Women's Prohibition', 82.

**24** Roy B. Zuck, 'Greek Words for *Teach*', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 122, no. 486 (1965): 158–68.

**25** Mortimer Arias, 'Rethinking the Great Commission', *Theology Today* 47, no. 4 (1991): 410–18; Oscar S. Brooks, 'Matthew 28:16–20 and the Design of the First Gospel', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 10 (1981): 2–18.

**26** D. Edmond Hiebert, 'Expository Study of Matthew 28:16–20', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 149, no. 595 (1992): 338–54.

**27** C. S. Keener, 'Matthew's Missiology: Making Disciples of the Nations (Matthew 28:19–20)', *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 12, no. 1 (2009): 3–20.

formation and proper conduct.[28]

The present research sought to identify which of these three approaches—a pupilship approach emphasizing knowledge, an apprenticeship approach emphasizing activity, or a combination of the two—is best supported by the relevant textual data.

## II. Content Analysis Methodology

To analyse the meaning of teaching in the biblical context, we applied content analysis, relying on the work of two leading researchers in that discipline, Krippendorff and Neuendorf.[29] For Neuendorf, content analysis is the

> quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method (including attention to objectivity—intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicability, and hypothesis testing) and is not limited as to the types of variables that may be measured or the context in which the messages are created or presented. (p. 10)

With a long history including ecclesiastical, media, psychological, historical and political applications, content analysis provides a research method that is prescriptive, analytical and methodological.[30]

One important element of content analysis involves identifying indices or measurements of particular phenomena occurring within the text.[31] These indices historically have included frequencies, attributions and qualifications.[32] Using multiple methods of analysis assists in triangulating the results,[33] since any one index alone can produce skewed results.[34]

Neuendorf recommended a nine-step process for content analysis: (a) theorizing and rationalization, (b) conceptualization, (c) operationalization, (d) coding development (using humans and/or computers), (e) sampling, (f) providing human coding training, (g) coding, (h) calculating human coding reliability, and (i) tabulation and reporting.[35] This process comports well with Krippendorff's components of content analysis, which include data making (utilization, sampling, recording), data reduction, inferencing and analysing.

Once the conceptualizations of constructs have been drawn from a theoretical foundation, hypotheses or research questions can be developed to drive the research.[36] The variables contained within that theoretical premise must be translated into units within the text that can be measured. These can be physical, syntactical, referential, propositional or thematic units

**28** David A. Mappes, 'Moral Virtues Associated with Eldership', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 160, no. 638 (2003): 202–18.

**29** Klaus Krippendorff, *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, vol. 5 (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1980); Kimberly A. Neuendorf, *The Content Analysis Guidebook* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2002).

**30** Krippendorff, *Content*, 2.

**31** Krippendorff, *Content*, 26.

**32** Krippendorff, *Content*.

**33** John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methhods Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2009), p. 38.

**34** Krippendorff, *Content*, 26.

**35** Krippendorff, *Content*, 50–51.

**36** Neuendorf, *Content*, 48.

within the text.[37] Any measurement instrument(s) developed to assist in the coding of data must be developed with an eye towards reliability and validity.[38] This model was used for both the quantitative and qualitative analysis.

## 1. Testing word domains

Words have distinct meanings, but those meanings are connected with other words that have similar or supplementary features, in what can be called a domain.[39] Of course, a single word can also have multiple, diverse meanings (e.g. the word 'point' makes my point). Louw and Nida's *Greek-English Lexicon* is unique in setting up lists of words in a semantically driven way based on their meanings, similar in concept to a thesaurus. Thus, a single word may show up in a number of different semantic domains since it carries multiple diverse meanings. Words related to multiple domains can be defined in a given context by means of the presence of other similar or supplementary domain words within the same context.

When a word is identified with a domain of meaning, one can associate it with other terms that would be considered similar in meaning. Louw and Nida identified 93 diverse meaning domains, each with various sub-domains. The words associated with those domains are then each numbered. For instance, 'God' (*theos*) is listed as word 12.1, or the first word under domain 12 (Supernatural Beings and Powers). The word 'Lord' (*kurios*) is listed ninth in the same domain and thus is 12.9. Louw and Nida attempted to arrange the words of each domain in order from the more general to the more specific.

For the analysis of the New Testament term 'teaching' (*didaskō*), two domains were identified representing apprenticeship and pupilship. Louw and Nida do not present a set of words specifically associated with apprenticeship, but the words within the domain of Guide, Discipline, Follow (domain 36) and the subdomain of Follow, Be a Disciple (36.31–36.43) are similar to "conforming one's behaviour to a system of instruction or teaching."[40] For pupilship, the words within the domain of Learn (domain 27) and the subdomain of Learn (27.1–27.26) were used since these categories represent the terms associated with acquiring information.[41]

To identify the population of relevant pericopae, all 97 instances of the use of *didaskō* and its cognates in the New Testament were listed. The boundary of each pericope was indicated based on the sections demarcated by the New Revised Standard Version. Although, of course, the section headings were not part of the original text, they are useful pericope markers and are located with relative consistency across most contemporary English versions.

The apprenticeship domain words that appeared in these pericopae

**37** Krippendorff, *Content*, 55.

**38** Neuendorf, *Content*, 94.

**39** J. P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida (eds.), *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988).

**40** Louw and Nida, *Greek-English*, 470.

**41** Louw and Nida, *Greek-English*.

were the nouns *mathētēs* (36.38), *huios* (36.39), *teknon* (36.40), *mathētria* (36.41) and *summathētēs* (36.42) and the verbs *mathēteuō* (36.31 and 36.37), *akoloutheō* (36.31), *parakoloutheō* (36.32), *exakoloutheō* (36.33), *peithomai* (36.34) and *arneomai* (36.43). The pupilship domain words that appeared in these pericopae were the nouns *mathētēs* (27.16), *grammata* (27.21), *grammateus* (27.22) and *idiōtēs* (27.26), the adjectives *logios* (27.20), *agrammatos* (27.23), *amathēs* (27.24) and *apaideutos* (27.25), and the verbs *manthanō* (27.12 and 27.15), *paralambanō* (27.13) and *odēgeō* (27.17). The other words contained in these two sub-domains were not present in these pericopae.

Within each pericope, we calculated the number of times that one of the related domain terms was used. Since pericopae were selected based solely on the use of *didaskō* and then the related domain terms were calculated within that pericope, we anticipated that a relationship would appear between *didaskō* and the domains. As might be expected, sometimes a particular pericope contained only apprenticeship items, sometimes only pupilship items, and sometimes both. To evaluate which domain was more likely to be associated with *didaskō*, a paired-samples *t*-test was conducted. The results indicated that the mean for apprenticeship domains ($M = 1.23$, $SD = 1.41$) was significantly greater than the mean for pupilship domains ($M = .85$, $SD = 1.41$, $t(80) = 2.56$, $p < .012$). The standardized effect size index, $d$, was .27. The 98% confidence interval for the mean difference between the two ratings was .08 and .68.

These results indicate that the word *didaskō* was associated with apprenticeship domain items 27% more than with pupilship domain items. When the data were analysed by genre, the differences in both the gospels and the New Testament's lone history book (Acts) were not statistically significant. However, the epistolary genre yielded results barely outside the 95% confidence interval, with a mean for the apprenticeship domain ($M = 1.21$, $SD = 1.44$) greater than the mean for the pupilship domain ($M = .42$, $SD = .69$, $t(18) = 2.04$, $p < .056$, $d = .70$).

This analysis establishes that for New Testament writers, there is a stronger relationship between *didaskō* and apprenticeship than between *didaskō* and pupilship. This finding does not mean that every use of *didaskō* imports only apprenticeship into its context. In actual practice, apprenticeship entails some pupilship and vice versa. However, if we think in terms of shades of meaning, it appears that apprenticeship coloured the New Testament understanding of *didaskō* more than pupilship.

## 2. Coder analysis

Although the quantitative analysis provides some indication of the weight of a word's association, meaning cannot be statistically determined. Rather, the meaning of words is determined by how the original author used them in their original context.

By way of illustration, consider this remark that parents often make to children: 'It is not what you said, it is how you said it.' Whereas the word domain testing described above focused on the 'what you said' portion of that statement and yielded quantitative results, the coder analysis focuses on the 'how

you said it' portion and derives qualitative results. The two aspects are intermingled in every communication, including biblical texts.

To conduct a proper analysis at this level, human readers who can code the meaning of each use of the word in question are required. The coders must balance their familiarity of the material being measured with the ability to properly measure the data.[42] To ensure quality performance in this article, co-author Kye James, winner of the Toccoa Falls College Greek Student of the Year award, was selected to do the coding.

Coder analysis should not be conceived in a strictly quantitative framework. In identifying each pericope as focusing on apprenticeship, pupilship and/or both, the coder sought to determine the original author's intent. To accomplish this, the coder analysed all 97 pericopae in their original language prior to knowing the quantitative results, so as to avoid bias.

The coder used a qualitative meta-analysis process,[43] pooling all the results of the qualitative analysis together to identify new insights that are not immediately apparent in any single passage. In this way, the coder sought to grasp the unified voice of Scripture on the topic rather than analysing the particular perspective of any one biblical author or genre. The next section presents overall results while referring to specific passages as examples.

## III. Discussion of Qualitative Results

The generally established worldview in the first century ran counter to Christian teaching about such pedagogical essentials as the nature of man, the ultimate purpose of knowledge and education, and the role or existence of a higher power and its part or lack thereof in the learning process, which used *didaskō* self-referentially. However, the 97 relevant passages in which *didaskō* and its cognates appear become more interpretable when one applies the definition of apprenticeship exemplified by Saucy rather than the definition of pupilship represented by Yilmaz, aligning with the earlier quantitative results.

This distinction is particularly pronounced in three specific texts (Mk 4:2; Jn 9:34; Acts 5), which strongly suggest an approach to producing disciples that looks more like apprenticeship than pupilship. It is also notable in the Great Commission (Mt 28:19) and Paul's discourse on the variety of spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:12ff).

As Backus et al. recognized, the two approaches are complementary from a leadership development perspective, as both ideally include 'immersive learning and cognitive apprenticeship'.[44] The term *cognitive apprenticeship* is a significant and innovative one to which we will return in the concluding remarks of this section. This view of complementarity is easy to affirm, yet it has not been generally accepted and applied in the educational system on which Christian training institutions in the West have modelled themselves in recent decades.

**42** Krippendorff, *Content*, 133.

**43** Ladislav Timulak and Mary Creaner, 'Experiences of Conducting Qualitative Meta-Analysis', *Counseling Psychology Review* 28, no. 4 (2013): 94–104.

**44** Backus et al., *Accelerating*, 144.

Many Christians today may be operating under assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning that are debilitating their spiritual lives, just as many pastors and Christian educators may have made fundamental missteps in the ultimate purpose and methodology of their teaching. Increasingly, we expect, it will be necessary for us to choose between two vastly different educational paradigms—the Western cultural one and the Christian one.

Most Western educational systems are paradigmatically geared towards pupilship at the expense of apprenticeship. Probably, few readers of this article have ever been apprentices in the strict sense of the word, but all of them have been pupils. Given that tendency, many Christians today are operating with false assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning, and therefore about what they should teach and to whom and how they should learn.

Western culture as a whole views education, and especially learning, as a means of cognitive enhancement towards a developmental stage at which a person is able to acquire necessary skills. It does not tend to view learning as equipping people to genuinely interact with the world, to understand themselves and others, and to live in a right relationship with God. In the Western system, learning is approached as a means to an end (usually money and happiness) rather than a source of personal growth, and acquiring information becomes a pragmatic concern rather than a personally vested interest.

Approaching Christian discipleship in such a way is very dangerous. The truly Christian educator is not primarily interested in an exchange of information that may lead to acquiring skill, attaining one's dreams, finding one's best life or attempting to evoke God's blessings. Rather, he or she is concerned with *teaching a lifestyle* through effective modelling that leads to living as God intended. Undoubtedly, this includes the exchange of information, and therefore the fullest expression of the biblical meaning of *didaskō* incorporates aspects of both. Ultimately, though, the Christian is called primarily to a lifestyle that is enhanced through knowledge, not an understanding that leads to a lifestyle. This priority necessarily makes the pupilship of a believer subordinate to apprenticeship.

Some discussion of New Testament passages should make the distinction more concrete. In Mark 4:2, perhaps the most instructive passage on the topic, the word *didaskō* appears twice: 'and *He taught* them many things in parables, and *in His teaching* He said to them …'. Pupils are not instructed through parables. If Jesus intended for his followers to be more like pupils than apprentices, he went about the task in entirely the wrong way. These people had a hard enough time believing that Jesus was divine when he told them so outright, let alone when they had to determine the meaning of parables that served to conceal the truth from many: 'This is why I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand' (Mt 13:13 ESV).

Mark explains that Jesus intentionally left the parables unexplained, except to his disciples: 'With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it. He did not speak to them without a parable, but

privately to his own disciples he explained everything' (Mk 4:33–34). In this case, *didaskō* refers to teaching that may provide nothing to the hearer in terms of information or cognitive growth. And this is certainly not an isolated incident, since parables were Jesus' most consistently used educational tool.

This passage suggests that Christ placed very little value on creating a system of dictated information in his effort to produce disciples. He was primarily interested in making people consider the way they lived by changing the way they think, not by the delivery of new information. That is the essence of *didaskō* in this passage—an effort to change the thinking process, not just the content of one's thoughts. Mark 4:33–34 also emphasizes that Jesus put his fullest efforts into people with whom he had an intense relationship and for whom he was an intentional role model.

Notably, though, Mark 4:34 presents the Greek verb *epeluen* ('explained') instead of *didaskō* as Jesus interprets the parables for his disciples—a style of didactic teaching much more akin to contemporary pupilship than the original delivery of the parables was. That is, Mark uses a different word for Christ's explanation to his disciples than for his teaching of the crowds. Only the disciples, not the crowds, seem to be considered as pupils. So it is reasonable to assume that Greek writers understood a natural distinction between the public *didaskō* and a more technical explaining reserved for one's closest students.

This reading of the passage by itself does not warrant reconstructing the teaching methods of any established church body. Parables cannot serve as definitive demonstrations of New Testament teaching. The neglect of *didaskō* in favour of *epeluen* in the more intimate setting, though, indicates that in the vernacular of the time, *didaskō* was a specific manner of communicating from a position of authority rather than the establishment of any kind of relationship.

However, the relationship that Jesus had established with his disciples included both public teaching and more intimate explaining, suggesting that while *didaskō* itself may have encompassed pupilship, in its New Testament usage it is not meant to be understood as relational or even successful outside the purview of an established apprentice relationship.

John 9:34, at first glance (in English, at least), seems to provide a different perspective: 'Answering, they said to him: "You were born entirely in sin, and *you* [would] *lecture* us?" ' Kohlenberger, Goodrick and Swanson here render *didaskō* as 'lecture', one of only two instances where they deviate from their normal 'teach' (the second case is also noteworthy and will be discussed below).[45] The blind man's confrontation with the elders in John 9 is a rather unique glance into the inner workings of the Pharisaic–Sadduceean court. But it also yields revealing observations about the meaning of *didaskō* and the increasing influence of a Western mind-set on contemporary English translations.

From the entirety of John 9, it is

**45** John R. Kohlenberger, Edward W. Goodrick, and James A. Swanson, *The Exhaustive Concordance to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

obvious that the young, formerly blind man does not carry any educational authority, which would be necessary to initiate a pupilship relationship with his audience. In fact, he says nothing about Christ or about his experience beyond what is absolutely necessary, until his sharp rebuke at the end of the story. That rebuke, labelled by the elders as *didaskein* ('teaching', or 'lecture' according to Kohlenberger et al.), contains absolutely no new information! The young man is simply reviling the Jewish leaders quite openly for their lack of understanding.

This text is certainly not intended as a guide to diplomatic teaching style, but it suggests again that *didaskō* represents the kind of authoritative position the blind man was assuming (or was perceived as trying to assume) over the elders. The word does not primarily signal the transmission of information here but an expressed interest in generating a lifestyle change—a purpose that could speak volumes to fledgling Christian educators, though it came as an offense to the members of that court.

The Pharisees' rage arose from their clear perception that an uneducated blind man was presenting himself as more enlightened and experienced than they were, not from his attempt to educate them about things they already knew about and openly denied. Again, the natural usage of the word, without any linkage to specific doctrinal content, suggests that the nature of *didaskō* is more naturally in line with the modern concept of apprenticeship than with modern pupilship, as it seeks to draw on the authority of the teacher to create a follower relationship.

Perhaps more broadly applicable is the usage of *didaskō* in the book of Acts. For example, Acts 5 contains the word *didaskō* and other cognates four times, all with reference to Peter and John's forbidden teaching in the temple. 'They entered the temple at daybreak and began *to teach*' (5:21b); 'Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and *teaching* the people' (5:25b); 'We strictly charged you not *to teach* in this name' (5:27a); 'And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease *teaching* and preaching that the Christ is Jesus' (5:42).

As Ulrich highlights, teaching (*didaskō*) and preaching (*karussō*) are described here as different tasks with different responsibilities.[46] In fact, according to Acts, the Sanhedrin never forbade Peter and John to speak or to preach, but only to teach. There is a profound difference. The Greek *karussō* can refer broadly to any type of proclamation or publication, including 'Hail Caesar!' or the declaration of a new edict by a ruler.[47]

Some historical common sense is also helpful here in recognizing the difference between the meanings of the two terms. Everyone in Jerusalem who had any shred of public influence knew about Jesus Christ, especially considering the recency of his public trial and execution. The people of Jerusalem must have still been talking frequently about the man whom many of them greeted as their hoped-for Messiah two

**46** Ulrich, 'Missional'.

**47** W. E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words: With Topical Index*, edited by Merrill F. Unger and William White (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996).

months earlier. Everyone knew Jesus and what he was about. Telling people not to talk about Jesus in public would have been about as useful as telling them not to talk at all.

Our point is that the Sanhedrin had no need to prohibit people from learning about the man Jesus, or from discussing his life and what he did. Their concern was to prohibit *following* him—something that apprentices by their very nature must do, unlike pupils.

Peter and John were not itinerant evangelists knocking on doors and speaking to nominal Christians; they were entrenched in a deeply religious society that had very little to do and to discuss beyond their beliefs about God and his law. In the temple, they were not encountering people who needed instruction on the tenets of Judaism, including Messianic prophecy, or about current events. Moreover, Peter and John certainly had not attained any type of formal status among the people as respected educators, given that one of the main strikes against them was their 'uneducated, common' nature (Acts 4:13).

Therefore, the teaching performed by the apostles in this passage—or in their subsequent ministry—cannot be described as an exchange of ideas with the purpose of rote instruction, and certainly not as the simple proclamation of truth. Rather, their teaching is a call to action and to a complete change of lifestyle, from imitating and following the Pharisees to imitating and following Christ. This would readily be recognized as a call to apprenticeship by people familiar with apprenticeship as a way of life and means of education.

Seen in this way, the disciples' teaching is transformed from simple public speaking into an invitation to an organic relationship. Their purpose was to persuade their listeners, through both logic and emotional appeals, to change how they lived and, more specifically, to imitate the apostles and the recently crucified Jesus. This principle has enormous implications for the proper motivations and purposes of Christian education.

The two passages mentioned earlier in this article, the Great Commission and Paul's discourse on spiritual gifts, further cement this principle. Jesus commands his followers to disciple all nations by baptizing them—initiating a relationship with God—and teaching them how to relate to God, namely, by 'obeying all that I have commanded' (Mt 28:19; cf. Acts 1:7–8). The only imperative in the Great Commission is *mathēteusate* (make disciples). This imperative is modified by the three participles *poreuthentes* (going), *baptizontes* (baptizing) and *didaskontes* (teaching), which capture the entirety of the responsibilities involved in making disciples.

The disciples' assignment here is to mediate the establishment of a relationship between unbelievers and Christ, and to ensure its maintenance by teaching them to observe his commandments. Those two elements, the call to individual relationship and the call to obedience by imitation, are the practical core of any apprenticeship; in contrast, they are tertiary elements of pupilship, attained only by pupils who have a vested interest in becoming like their mentor, at which point the relationship will metamorphose into something more akin to an apprenticeship at any rate.

Paul, in his list of spiritual gifts in 1

Corinthians 12, identifies at least nine separate categories of gifts: teaching ('For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit', v. 8), faith, gifts of healing, gifts of miracles, prophecy, spiritual discernment, tongues, interpretation of tongues, and helps or service (1 Cor 12:4–11, 27–29). Two key points should be observed here. First, the gifts, taken together, constitute all the necessary aspects of the life of the church, some being more necessary than others (1 Cor 12:31). These gifts include but are not limited to teaching. Therefore, for people who have received Christ's imperative of making disciples, the impartation of knowledge and/or wisdom is not sufficient to enable other Christians' development. There is an aspect of Christian life that must be lived in community in order to be learned.

Second, Paul makes a peculiar distinction between *sophias* (wisdom) and *gnōseōs* (knowledge) in verse 8. Earlier in 1 Corinthians, Paul has made this distinction clear: *gnōskō*, in a religious sense, is available to every Christian as a kind of foundation (8:1), though it is highly doubtful that Paul intended to say that any Christian could learn *all* relevant knowledge. On the other hand, the application of that knowledge, i.e. wisdom, is not available to all. Wisdom is reserved for those brothers and sisters whom Paul calls 'strong' (cf. Rom 15:1), whereas the lack of wisdom characterizes the 'weak' (1 Cor 8:7-11).

In 1 Corinthians 12, those two categories of learning are both referred to as *logos* ('word' or 'utterance'), though they occur separately and presumably through differently gifted individuals. This means that there is a body of knowledge considered Christian, commonly called doctrine or dogma (*didaskalia*, from *didaskō*), which a person may possess but which does not equip that person to actually live like a Christian (1 Cor 1:18–31, 2:6, 8:1). Certainly, many people today would fit that description. It is essential, as an indispensable component of Christian education, for the learner to move beyond a place of informed consent—the beginning of the relationship—into one of informed practice. The defining factor appears to be the maturity of the individual's relationship with Christ and the quality of his or her imitation of Christ, not the sum total of the individual's factual knowledge.

In summary, the New Testament's general use of *didaskō* appears most consistent with what we referred to earlier as cognitive apprenticeship—a constructionist pedagogy grounded in the assertion that 'learning is not just a cognitive process but involves knowledge gained by applying and testing the knowledge in relevant real-life environments.'[48] Sociologists, psychologists and educators have much to offer Christian pedagogy in developing a framework for enabling this process to occur as naturally as possible. The meaning domain of *didaskō* in the New Testament, when investigated according to the semantic categories of Louw and Nida, is a pedagogical framework that more closely resembles appren-

**48** Francine M. Bates, R. Waynor William, and Joni N. Dolce, 'The Cognitive Apprenticeship Model: Implications for Its Use in Psychiatric Rehabilitation Provider Training', *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 1, no. 78 (2012), 5–10.

ticeship than the primarily pupilship-driven modern incarnation of education.

Careful work is needed to properly synthesize the insights of educational theorists and psychologists with a balanced biblical view of the means and purpose of Christian education. However, this research suggests that the truest sense of the New Testament conception of teaching also requires us to distance ourselves from too closely reflecting predominant cultural conceptions of education today.

## IV. Conclusion

Preaching in Western culture is generally equivalent to the words delivered by a pastor during worship gatherings. However, the New Testament word for preaching, *kerygma*, is closer to the idea of evangelism in which all believers are exhorted to engage (e.g. Rom 10:14–15; 1 Cor 1:21; 1 Tim 3:16). In the same way, if Christian teaching is nudged too far towards pupilship by its surrounding culture, then the structure of church leadership development may be significantly altered. The potential result of this imbalance is the cultivation of followers who are full intellectually but whose lives are emaciated with regard to acting upon their cognitive information.

At another extreme, mistakes in educational theory can be expressed through mistakes in content and method. If the church accepts certain pedagogies and andragogies wholesale without biblical scrutiny, the ramifications for the church and its engagement with the culture around it can be extensive and debilitating. Such effects can be seen today.

Carelessness about how to interpret and apply the New Testament's concept of teaching ministry is tantamount to ignoring altogether the command to make disciples by teaching. Word meanings change slowly and can morph into something completely different from their original intention. One implication of this research is that the church must continually challenge itself to find words that properly communicate to contemporary hearers the original meaning of the biblical text.

Similarly, to the extent that teaching is a measure of leadership (1 Tim 3:2), its definition must be properly understood within the process of selecting church leaders. Frequently in the Western ecclesial context, we appoint spiritual leaders based on their observed ability to teach pupils. To some, a weakness in teaching pupils represents a weakness in spiritual leadership. We do not wish to demean the importance of didactic teaching, but if Scripture's emphasis leans more towards the apprenticeship style of teaching, how many current leaders might be found wanting in this ability?

Consider two possible church leaders. One has a strong track record of teaching pupils in a classroom setting but little if any experience in shaping fellow believers through apprenticeship. The other has a strong track record of apprenticing Christians to maturity but is weak in classroom teaching skills. Which leader would the New Testament writers prefer? Our research suggests that they would place a stronger emphasis on apprentice-based discipleship than on classroom instruction. Although the two overlap, the measure of a leader should be weighted more towards the former

than the latter.

Likewise, to the extent that ecclesial leadership contributes to general organizational leadership, an emphasis on apprenticeship and mentoring rather than pupilship training is of significant importance. Corporate training has recognized the benefits of pairing individuals with those who can provide direction in a mentoring or apprenticeship relationship. A stronger emphasis on apprenticeship within the ecclesial context as a framework for discipleship would contribute to an understanding of follower development in general. Based on the results of our analysis, it would seem wise to carefully examine the mentoring literature and identify insights from that field that are consistent with Scripture and applicable to cultivating church leaders. This step could encourage our spiritual leaders to focus more intently on a mentoring style of discipleship relationships rather than simply on instilling information in their followers.

Although we do not claim that our research is entirely conclusive, it does at least present a strong argument that the primary purpose of Christian educational ministry should be a call to a lifestyle, not to the acquisition of information. We are by no means dismissive of pupilship, but we contend that it is insufficient by itself and, in many situations, should be secondary to apprenticeship. Applying this understanding to our discipleship activities could strengthen the spiritual lives of Christ's followers, the leadership and organization of his church, and ultimately the quality of our obedience to his Great Commission.

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# Overcoming Invented Ogres: African Traditional Religions and World Religions in African Christian Perspective

Jim Harries

This article seeks to challenge theological educators from the West, and those who use Western languages and resources, in their educational interaction with African and other majority-world students. It advocates for education rooted in indigenous rather than Western ways of understanding. As its primary illustration, the article shows how the categories of 'African traditional religions' (ATRs) and 'world religions' (WRs) turn out to be Western inventions with an incomplete grasp of reality. The implicit categorization of other 'religions' with respect to Western Protestant Christianity have become a major bias of which Western missionaries should be aware when they seek to share Christ outside their own comfort and competence zones. I address these issues from extensive experience in theological education.

## I. Introducing the Problems of Inter-Cultural Truth

In many cases, cross-cultural difficulties arise from situations of incommensurability in translation.[1] I will present a few examples that build a foundation for my broader argument. Because they arise as a result of how indigenous languages are used in indigenous cultures, it may be hard for people not familiar with those cultures to understand them. To the extent such a difficulty exists, it reinforces the very rationale for this article.

In the West, truth is something that aligns with objective reality. In other

**1** 'Cultural keywords [that] act as "focal points" for complex sets of culturally specific values … are very hard, if not impossible to translate without a great deal of paraphrasing.' John R. Taylor and Jeanette Littlemore, 'Introduction', in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Cognitive Linguistics*, edited by Taylor and Littlemore (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 4.

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parts of the world, however, translations of the English word *truth* often refer to what works or is productive. For example, some years ago I encountered a Tanzanian newspaper called *Msema Kweli* (Teller of Truth) that contained incredible stories of the exploits of witches. Being in Swahili kept the newspaper at arm's length from Western scrutiny.

In the West, the concept of love is inseparable from biblical notions of sacrificial giving of oneself for others. African translations of love are likely to be much more pragmatic, i.e. 'I scratch your back, you scratch mine'. David Maranz articulates this idea well with regard to friendship.[2]

In English, life is usually a quality that is either present or absent (i.e. something is either alive or dead). In contrast, other languages translate the word as a quantity of which one can have more or less. Hence, a common African greeting in African languages would be translatable back into English as 'Are you alive?'

Marriage in the West is a kind of legal union, but elsewhere in the world it may be a conventional or resource-based union (for example, if cattle are exchanged as part of the marriage contract).

In Western English, the term *supernatural* means something beyond the natural. But the term can be used elsewhere (and in my experience it is widely used in Kenya) to indicate something incredible to a people who really have no notion of the existence of a 'natural' world, i.e. one devoid of divine content. Kenyan people use the term 'supernatural' as a translation of indigenous words like the Swahili *miujiza* or 'amazing things'. *Miujiza*, in their minds, have nothing to do with being either aligned with or beyond laws of nature.

Finally, in the West the notion of what is 'real' is closely linked to physical objects composed of a combination of elements such as nitrogen and oxygen. As a result, the West makes a clear separation between real and unreal. This dualism does not exist in other worldviews.

## II. Teaching ATR at an African Bible College: Why Africans Used My Syllabus

In 1998, a Bible college in western Kenya asked me to teach a course on ATRs. The request was surprising. I would have expected a native African to be teaching that course. I considered the invitation an honour. I thought that teaching African people about their own traditions would help me to gain greater insight into what makes African people tick.

Much engagement between Africans and Westerners is on the white man's territory—using a European language, discussing funds coming from the West, meeting at a Western-sponsored mission station, etc. This was my chance, I thought, to circumvent that problem by talking with African students about their own religious self-understanding.

I did feel that I had a better grasp of ATRs than many other Westerners. By 1998, I had already spent about ten years engaging very closely with African people, using their languages

**2** David Maranz, *African Friends and Money Matters: Observations from Africa* (Dallas: SIL International, 2001), 63–64.

and resources on a daily basis. Now I wanted to build on this foundation.

I divided the aspects of ATRs, as I understood them, rigorously into about thirty different topics. I arranged the topics into a logical order and devised discussion questions, drawing on published literature on ATRs. I taught the course for two years. It was indeed an enlightening experience.

When I relinquished the course, something surprising happened. The African who was taking over from me asked for a copy of my syllabus. I gave it to him. Then he asked for copies of my handouts, which I dug up and provided. Lo and behold, when this African teacher turned in his syllabus for teaching ATRs, it was almost identical to mine! I did not say anything; I had no objection to his use of my syllabus. But I did ask myself: why has an African borrowed my syllabus, designed by a Westerner, to teach his own people about their own cultures, traditions and religions?

Gradually, I came to understand the reason. Without a doubt, my African colleagues knew African religion, in the sense of what Africans do and believe, better than I did. What they did not know was how to communicate this information in a form that is acceptable to Western scholarship. Doing so was necessary because the students' exams would be based on American standards. Many exams were coming directly from the USA.

Given that situation, discussing their customs and traditions in a way that would be neither comprehensible or correct for Westerners would have been of little help. The students' primary need was not to understand ATRs in a generic sense; they already had that information. Rather, they had to communicate what *the West* considers ATRs to be, so that they could pass their exams and earn credit. They had to understand ATRs as Westerners understand them.

I, as a Westerner, had been trusted to provide the right inputs about their own traditions that would give Africans credibility in Western eyes. They could not trust themselves to do this. Their own implicit knowledge of ATR was almost irrelevant. What they needed to know is how the West understands ATRs.

## III. Teaching World Religions and 'Teaching through Europe'

A few years later, I was asked to teach WRs at the same Bible school. I planned this course in much the same way as the ATRs course, although this time by necessity drawing less on personal experience.

My explanations of WRs came from Westerners. This was unavoidable, as the available books were by Westerners and even the very notion of 'world religions' arose in the West.[3] As a Westerner, I noticed that, to a large extent, the books explained how WRs differed from my own European way of life.

In delivering the course, I was surprised to discover that as I tried to make my African students aware of the pitfalls of WRs, I was instead render-

**3** Tomoko Masuzawa, *The Invention of World Religions: How European Universalism Was Preserved in the Language of Pluralism* (London: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

ing WRs attractive to them. I became particularly aware during a field trip that my explanations of WRs were on a different page from my students' pre-existing notions. Many of my students had some prior experience of engaging with Hindus and Muslims. Their own experience seemed to give them an understanding on a very different level from what I was endeavouring to articulate.

I gradually came to realize what was happening. My explanations of WRs were, in effect, explaining how they differ from Western Protestantism. An implicit assumption was that, in areas in which WRs did not explicitly differ from 'us' (Westerners), they were the same as us. I was endeavouring to teach my African students about WRs on the basis of an inaccurate assumption that they (my students) and I were the same.[4]

When I described features of WRs that might appear exotic to a Western observer, my African students were tending, from their own experience, to see things very differently. It was as if I needed to first teach my students to be Westerners, to enable them to see where I was coming from, before they could grasp my points.

Even when I explained things that to me as a Western Christian were clearly wrong, such as some Eastern notions of reincarnation or the failure to acknowledge God at all in Chinese religions, my students did not necessarily perceive such wrongness at all. Instead, they were often attracted by the very things that I was classifying as wrong, especially when the people involved seemed to be prospering.

## IV. World Religions and the Theologization of African Traditional Religion

In contrast to practitioners of WRs, Africa is said to have 'traditional religion' and hence ATRs are not treated as WRs. I soon discovered that scholars in general considered WRs to be more advanced than 'traditional religions'.[5] This discovery helped me to understand why, when I taught about WRs that to me were inferior (to Western Protestantism), my explanation could easily be interpreted as suggesting that they were superior (to ATRs).

In fact, I came to see that in one sense, I was teaching WRs as if they were slightly corrupted versions of a very intellectualized and deeply studied Protestantism.[6]

**4** I expound on this point in more detail in 'Anthropology's Origins, Christianity, and a Perspective from Africa', *On Knowing Humanity Journal*, 1, no. 1 (July 2017), 33–34. Anthropologists have long struggled to ensure that scholars do not make inaccurate generalizations about non-Western societies. This was supposedly to avoid scholarly bias. Yet *not* making such generalizations can itself induce bias by implying an assumed similarity without justification.

**5** Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions,* 3–4.

**6** Scholars who researched WRs were overwhelmingly of Protestant origins. This has led to an ongoing situation in which 'religious studies' globally, which supposedly explores various religious traditions objectively, always does so from a Western, Protestant vantage point. (Carole M. Cusack, 'Vestigial States: Secular Space and the Churches in Contemporary Australia.' George Shipp Memorial Lecture given at the Workers Education Authority (WEA), 72 Bathurst Street, Sydney, 1 October 2015, 4). The role of Catholicism and the dis-

In my depiction of WRs, they had orderly practices, teachings and doctrines that had brought many of their adherents prosperity and progress. On the other hand, there were the Africans in front of me, steeped in superstition, worship of spirits, fear of witchcraft, and poverty! But was this contrast always true, and is it always true now?

Vishal Mangalwadi has considered in depth the religious origins of contemporary prosperity in India. He argues that modern India's public life has arisen from Christian influence.[7] Christianity inspires its adherents to great feats. What has traditionally ruled India in pre-Christian days, Mangalwadi tells us, was not the desire to serve God, but terror.[8] India today remains plagued by massive poverty.[9] The same was true when the British arrived there, or India might not have been so easy to conquer.

Nevertheless, implicit in the logically ordered and systematically structured way in which I described Hinduism to my students was my presentation of it as a prosperity-generating religion. Although that approach might have been consistent with my students' observation that Hindus in Kenya tended to be much more prosperous than local Africans, the assumption ignores ways in which Hindus have taken advantage of an economic structure that was built by Westerners (on the back of Protestantism). The idea that Hindus could prosper economically on the basis of their own beliefs, without Western intervention, might thus be no more than a misleading myth.

In another example, Tomoko Masuzawa writes the following about Buddhism:

> The newly recognised tradition [of Buddhism] won designation as a world religion, of course, solely on the strength of the original, 'true Buddhism', sometimes called 'primitive Buddhism' or even 'pure Buddhism'—available only to European [Christian Protestant] scholars who read the ancient texts—and not on account of any of its later corrupt forms, that is the localized, nationalized, and indigenized Buddhisms actually found in modern Asia.[10]

On this basis, Buddhism as described in WR textbooks is based on an idealistic Christian Protestant interpretation of ancient texts, not on what early explorers found being practiced in today's so-called Buddhist lands.[11]

But now—how to teach WRs? I needed to teach them as African people might perceive them. How can I know how Africans might perceive Buddhism? I am not aware of even one book on WRs as perceived by traditional Africa'. Interestingly, I had occa-

tinctions between Catholic and Protestant Christianity are also worthy of discussion, but I must leave these issues for further research.

**7** Vishal Mangalwadi, *The Book That Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilisation (*Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011), xx.

**8** Mangalwadi, *Book That Made,* 28.

**9** One in five of the Indian population lives below the poverty line. See 'India's Poverty Profile', The World Bank, 27 May 2016, http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/infographic/2016/05/27/india-s-poverty-profile.

**10** Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions,* 131.

**11** Philip C. Almond, *The British Discovery of Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 13.

sionally come across oral comparisons between Islam and Christianity. Muslims are inferior, African Christians had told me, because they cannot drive out demons. I do not usually find this information in texts on WRs. Maybe I should write a book on WRs as perceived in Africa! However, European and Protestant thinking have already become so pervasive that it would be difficult to do so.[12]

My native people (Europeans) had been influenced by centuries of Christianity. When they encountered other religions, they interpreted them through a Christian lens.[13] Thus I was teaching about WRs as if they were slightly misled, perverse versions of Western Protestantism! No wonder my students were confused.

What was hardly explicit for me at the time has been confirmed by much reading, such as Masuzawa's book.[14] The strong parallels between my descriptions of WRs and my articulation of Western Protestantism meant that, to many of my students, I was promoting WRs as legitimate alternatives (or complements) to Christian belief.

If Western scholarship has so distorted WRs, then what of ATRs? The vocabulary that I was using to describe ATRs in English had originated in a very Christianized Europe. I had no choice but to use Christian or 'post-Christian' (i.e. influenced by Christianity) terms to describe what African people were doing. In doing so, I was equipping African students to describe their practices and traditions *as if* they were Western and Christian.

(Indeed, African scholars these days recognize that it is becoming increasingly difficult to draw a clear line between ATR and Christianity.[15] African people go to people whom they call pastors, and who lead congregations one day in seven, wear collars, and quote the Bible, for help in dealing with threats of witchcraft. Some of those pastors may be promoting means of dealing with witchcraft that hardly differ from those previously prescribed by so-called witch doctors.)

I was thus in effect sanitizing what was African, or at least helping my students to articulate who they are in ways that would appear sanitized. Thus, insofar as there were aspects of ATRs that might have been contrary to Christianity, I was enabling them to be concealed from view.

## V. So What?

Having looked at how concepts of religion are shaped or distorted in the course of inter-cultural engagement between the West and Africa, I now want to consider the implications of what we have discovered, especially for missionary service and for the church.

**12** In saying that European and Protestant thinking have become so pervasive, I am not saying that they have become hegemonic. Many African people's thinking is deeply rooted in their own traditions. Yet their articulation of their thinking cannot help but be influenced by Western Protestantism, which substantially underlies the education systems and languages used in Africa.

**13** See for example Almond, *British Discovery,* 2–3.

**14** Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, xiv and 107–20.

**15** Caleb O. Oladipo, 'African Christianity: Its Scope in Global Context,' in *Wealth, Health, and Hope in African Christian Religion*, edited by Stan Chu Ilo (London: Lexington Books, in press), 6.

In our contemporary world, following the identification of eleven or so religions as WRs, we have a bipartite division of 'religions'.[16] On one hand, we have WRs, which are considered 'on board' with Christianity. That is to say, Christianity was the first to be recognized as a WR; other religions considered comparable to it were later added to the list. Because Christianity, especially Western Protestantism, initially defined the category of WRs, WRs are broadly speaking considered to be similar to, or at least in some way equivalent to, Christianity.

*This implied similarity seems to indicate that Christian believers should respect WRs as mature and sophisticated equivalents to native European practice.* By implication, it also follows that religions not falling into the category of WRs, such as ATRs, are inferior and less similar to Christianity than are WRs.

The concepts of both WRs and ATRs have been profoundly influenced by Christianity. WRs have, by their classification as somehow parallel to Christianity, acquired (in literature produced or influenced by the West) an advanced status. Other religions not viewed as WRs, such as ATRs, are also packaged in a Christian-oriented format for presentation to the West, but are considered primal and inferior. In both cases, the framework for understanding and evaluating other religions is not indigenous (relative to their own practitioners); rather, they are understood in terms of their implicit relationship with Western Christianity.

As we have noted, however, an important difference is that WRs, unlike ATRs, are treated as 'equivalent' to Christianity. This equivalence, at least in some circles, implies a requirement that Christians respect WRs as being equals in some ways.

One consequence of this perception is that rather than seeking to bring the adherents of WRs to Christ, some Christian bodies enter into dialogue with them.[17] This dialogue may achieve mutual respect, but it also further heightens the WRs' legitimacy as equivalents to Christianity. In contrast, ATRs and other traditional religious groups are appropriated by Christianity, not seen as appropriate subjects for inter-religious dialogue.

We might ask, then, where the Christianization of ATRs is leading them. If my analysis is correct, then the impact of Christianity on ATRs is very different from its impact on WRs, because WRs are already considered somehow equivalent to Christianity whereas ATRs are not. Therefore, contemporary mission tends to respect WRs but aims to transform ATRs.

According to this logic, Christians should dialogue with WRs rather than seeking to convert them.[18] ATRs, on

**16** Masuzawa's list of WRs (see *Invention of World Religions*, 3, 262) includes Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Jainism, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism and Sikhism.

**17** See also Muthuraj Swarmy, *The Problem with Interreligious Dialogue: Plurality, Conflict and Elitism in Hindu-Christian-Muslim Relations* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

**18** For an example, see the World Council of Churches document 'Dialogue with People of Living Faiths', www.brill.com/files/brill.nl/specific/downloads/31740_Brochure.pdf. When inter-faith dialogue endorses other WRs' identity, the stance is often contrary to the historic claims of Christianity.

the other hand, are available for conversion to Christianity, and indeed the evidence shows that much of Africa is taking this step: 'Christianity is now perhaps the most salient social force in sub-Saharan Africa.'[19] While praising God for this development, we may also feel that it is a gross injustice for even the instruction given in a theological college to define WRs in such a way as to legitimize their resistance to the Gospel.

Furthermore, African Christianity as understood in the West is created as it is described. People describing African Christianity using English are either Western Christians or Africans who have been taught by Western Christians.[20] As a result, Christianity so described is different from Christianity as lived. To the extent that lived Christianity in Africa does match Westerners' descriptions, one reason is that the African church still remains heavily dependent on the West for its continuity. The need for charity from the West translates into pressure driving African Christians to imitate Western Christianity as a means of facilitating ongoing good relationships with donors.

Here is one practical example of how African Christianity is created as it is described. African Christians are, of course, grateful for the grace of God through Christ. In the West, people understand that feelings of gratefulness are of themselves valuable. Thus, for instance, children are told to say 'thank you'. The expression of thanks is itself considered a kind of payment for a service rendered; no further reciprocation is required or expected. Many African languages now have terms to translate 'thank you'. Careful study reveals, however, that some indigenous languages had no such term. The Swahili terms for 'thank you' (*asante* and *shukran*) are both of Arabic origin, as is the term used in the Kikaonde language in Zambia. The term for 'thank you' in the Kenyan Dholuo language, *erokamano*, implies 'so be it'.

Why did these languages initially have no word for 'thank you'? Because in African patron–client systems, thanks is not expressed through mere words of appreciation, but through praise and gift exchange. Western interpretations assuming that African Christians are thankful to God in the Western Protestant sense are therefore somewhat inaccurate. The reality in Africa is something more akin to the prosperity gospel, consistent with the patron–client perspective. When God is seen as the patron, then he should disperse material rewards in exchange for praise. In Africa, God deserves praise, not 'thanks'. Those who praise him deserve gifts in return.

Both ATRs and WRs present a deceptive front, especially to the West, and especially when communicated in English. For WRs, the deceptive front is the supposed existence of a *religion*, which is actually an invention mod-

**19** Paul Gifford, *Christianity, Development and Modernity in Africa* (London: Hurst and Company, 2015), 11–12.

**20** Many, if not all, internationally respected (i.e. those with a voice in the West) African theologians have been trained in or by the West. Even as Africans, they are obliged to articulate their own Christian traditions as if they are Western in nature.

elled on Protestant Christianity.[21] WRs are systems that have been artificially designed in opposition to Christianity. In such a case, to try to get to what is truly happening in people's hearts, a Christian missionary must consider how to side-step the WR discussion (how to do this will be discussed below). Because they have not had a WR, much of Africa is, in contrast, aspiring to be Christian.

The difficulty faced by missionaries in Africa is that because the continent is frequently described using Western Christian language, it has the misleading appearance of already being Western-Christian (more on this below). A Westerner must be discerning to know what is actually going on. Westerners seeking to engage an African community authentically can overcome these difficulties more effectively if they are equipped to work in non-Westerners' own languages.

A missionary working in Africa must be concerned about redressing an imbalance with regard to ways in which African people's practice has been too closely identified with Western Christianity. A foreign missionary who wants to engage with people where they are needs to get 'under their skin'. This requires greater attention to what is happening indigenously, in terms that are indigenous (and not in Western terms, like the dominant discourse on ATRs).

The simplest and most straightforward, although perhaps still not very easy, way of doing this is by working with African people in their own languages. Conventions have been built up over decades or even centuries that align indigenous African practices with what are considered 'equivalents' in the West. Relying on those conventions is generally far from adequate. It is thus vitally important to begin to build up an understanding that is true to local contexts and reflects local categories and practices, to learn and use an indigenous language.[22]

Both ATRs and WRs, when expressed in English, are not fully accurate representations. Most (if not all) scholars would concede a degree of inaccuracy or even bias, but they usually fail to realize how much bias is introduced and maintained by the use of English to describe non-Western people. It seems that the reason for this lack of perception is exactly that the differences are rendered invisible by the use of English.

In turn, Westerners also often fail to realize the impact of this resulting bias on how Christian mission work is understood. The biases introduce misunderstandings that undercut the purpose and the urgency of mission work. The so-called prosperity gospel is just one particularly visible example of the outcomes to which I refer here: gospel teachings that sound spiritual when in English incorporate, when expressed in African languages and interpreted

**21** Masuzawa, *Invention of World Religions*, describes how the invention of WRs occurred in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**22** Attention to categories of language use is a part of recent focus in cognitive linguistics; for example, see Daniel Sanford, '2.6 Bybee's Usage Based Models of Language', in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Cognitive Linguistics*, edited by John R. Taylor and Jeanette Littlemore (London: Bloomsbury: 2015), 110, who points to the centrality of category in understanding.

through African cultures, the material with the spiritual.

Both ATRs and WRs, as known to the West, are systems that make sense when expressed in European languages, especially English. They are, after all, interpretations of other people's traditions made with the purpose of communicating to English speakers. Westerners draw on the Western logic that attempts to comprehend what initially seems very strange and unfamiliar by comparing it with the familiar—usually something Christian.

It follows logically, I believe, that because descriptions of WRs and ATRs work according to a certain Western logic, they will *not* work according to the non-Western logic of either African people, Hindus or Buddhists. (Recall my examples of discrepancies between English and African terms presented earlier.) The very 'structure of European languages' dictates ways of thinking, as Woodley says.[23]

The reason why adherents of so-called WRs maintain the WR discourse in English is not that it is functionally effective in describing who they are or how they think or operate. Typically, the reason is that the West offers generous rewards, in the form of resources and opportunities, to those who can articulate, debate and expound on either WRs or ATRs in ways that make sense to the West. There are great incentives for non-Westerners to demonstrate that they have appropriated Western ways of expressing who they are.

Because the concepts of ATRs and WRs work only when one uses European languages and European logic, it follows that they will not make sense if communicated using indigenous languages. That is, Hinduism as articulated in languages indigenous to Hindu people will not be the same as Hinduism as known in the textbooks. The same applies to ATRs. In practice, this linguistic dependency means that when indigenous languages are used according to indigenous logic, both ATRs and WRs can be said to disappear. When WRs or ATRs are identified as being the opposition faced by a Christian missionary, the resulting cultural reorientation is rather revolutionary.

The above paragraph is hard to explain to Western people who speak only English and other languages that have a similar Western cultural context. An illustration of the implications for denominational relationships may be helpful, however. A Lutheran missionary visiting a Mennonite church in Africa is likely to perceive issues arising from different doctrines held by the two churches, arising from their historical relationship in Europe. Indigenous African Christians taught about the two denominations' peculiarities, however, may perceive differences at the intellectual level, but probably not at the heart level.

Thus, indigenous African Christians who appropriate the gospel into their own ways of life using their own languages are likely to be much less aware of denominational issues that divide Westerners. For example, because Mennonite Christians in Africa are less likely than their Western compatriots to uphold pacifism as a foundational doctrine, they will be less affronted by cooperation with churches that are not

**23** Randy S. Woodley, *Shalom and Community of Creation: An Indigenous Vision* (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2012), 62.

pacifist. For those who have not studied Western Christian history, which is written in European languages, pacifism may simply not be perceived as a relevant issue.[24]

From my three decades of personal experience in Africa, I have found that I need to be wary of doctrinal clashes only when teaching at churches where foreign missionaries continue to have a controlling influence, and when using English. After the missionaries have withdrawn (along with their funding), and if indigenous languages are used, many old doctrinal clashes of European origin simply fade out of sight.

The fact that WR and ATR discourses do not make sense when translated into non-European languages has major ramifications that go beyond the scope of this article. It means that they will also not make sense to non-Western people reading European languages, if that reading is based on the presuppositions underlying their own worldview. This is why Western education (not limited to the realm of religion), taught in Western languages, cannot function properly in African countries.[25]

## VI. Related Concerns

My exposition as presented above has several additional ramifications.

First, the confusion between Christianity and WRs described above has major implications for Westerners' understanding of what is happening around them, because they are presented with views of WRs that resemble Christianity. Because WRs are studied using historically Western and Christianized languages, by people who are long accustomed to Christian ways, they are portrayed as if they are Christian.

I do not mean, of course, that Buddhists or Muslims are said to believe in Christ. Rather, Buddha and Muhammed are assumed to be Christ-like. Writings about Buddha (and Hinduism, Islam, etc.) all presuppose things about these other religions that derive from Western Christianity. Buddhism, Hinduism and Islam are seen as filling the same space for other people as Christianity fills for Westerners. In other words, as indicated earlier, they are (very misleadingly) considered equivalent to Christianity unless stated otherwise.

As Troeltsch observed,[26] this has made it difficult to make a clear logical case for Christianity in the West. The resulting confusion has encouraged some Westerners to ditch their Christian monotheistic origins in favour of a sort of polytheism in which a multiplicity of gods (including the deities of Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism) compete for supremacy, sowing considerable disorder and theological doubt. This problem plagues Western societies today. Agnosticism and atheism can be the ultimate fruit of such confusion.

**24** I derive this insight, in part at least, from a personal conversation with a Mennonite believer in Tanzania in 2008.

**25** In practice, such education generates dependency by the people being taught on those who grasp foreign ways of thinking.

**26** Ernst Troeltsch, 'Christianity and the History of Religion,' in *Religion in History*, translated by James Luther Adams and Walter F. Bense (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991 [1897]), 77–86.

Calhoun et al.[27] make a strong case that the West is unique in its view of 'godlessness' and secularism. According to Western secularism, 'the "lower," immanent or secular, order is all that there is and … the higher, or transcendent, is a human invention.'[28] This is the basis of Western godlessness. When Indians use the term 'secular', they mean something very different. For them, secularism does not posit the absence of 'religions', but principled ways in which the state engages with religions.[29] Indian secularism 'accepts that humans have an interest in relating to something beyond themselves, including God.'[30] So also, other peoples around the world understand the secular and religious spheres differently from the West.

The God that many in the West do not believe in is a supernatural God.[31] That is to say, the West holds the notion that if God were to exist, he should be supernatural.[32] In contrast, Cassaniti and Luhrmann, when conducting research on religion in Thailand, used a translation of 'supernatural' to represent God for Thai people; their representation made no sense to a Thai monk.[33] There is apparently no notion of the supernatural in Thailand, but does that mean that Thai people do not believe in God?[34]

Second, when African scholars use English, they enable Westerners to 'keep a check' on what they are doing and saying. This applies particularly to written work, as Westerners are keen to find out what majority-world theologians are writing, which they assume reflects their thinking. Many are keen to correct such writing. To a lesser extent, this tendency applies even to oral discourse, which can be transcribed or heard, by Westerners.

This situation becomes problematic when people make judgements, as they often do, in the absence of full contextual knowledge, including full understanding of the African language on the scene. This easily results in the draw-

**27** Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, 'Introduction', *Rethinking Secularism.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 3–30.

**28** Charles Taylor, 'Western Secularity', in *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 33.

**29** Calhoun et al., 'Introduction', 23.

**30** Rajeeve Bhargava, 'Rehabilitating Secularism', in *Rethinking Secularism*, edited by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer and Jonathan VanAntwerpen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 105.

**31** Even Richard Dawkins considers 'only *supernatural* gods [to be] delusional'. Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 36.

**32** Jim Harries, *The Godless Delusion: Europe and Africa* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017), xxi.

**33** Julia Cassaniti and Tanya Marie Luhrmann, 'Encountering the Supernatural: A Phenomenological Account of Mind', *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* 2 (2011): 38–39.

**34** Gary Deason explains that the insistence that God be 'supernatural' arose after the Reformation, i.e. before many of the scientific discoveries that subsequently 'raised the bar' for what God had to do to convince people that he existed. See Deason, 'Reformation Theology and the Mechanistic Conception of Nature', in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science*, edited by David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (London: University of California Press, 1986), 173–78.

ing of premature conclusions, which in turn makes African theologians reluctant to communicate honestly.

Ironically, and sadly, Western critics rarely seem to realize that what they are overhearing from Africans is an intimate part of a more complex whole. The 'whole'—that is, the complete lives of African people, including their beliefs and practices in relation to Christianity—is largely invisible to the West. It is rooted in indigenous African languages and obscure rituals. When African theologians make proclamations about their faith in English, they are responding to things that remain invisible to the West. It is often not helpful to try to judge their pronouncements in the absence of full contextual knowledge.

I am suggesting that African Christian theologians should be permitted to freely discuss issues that concern them without fear of premature judgement from the outside. A major barrier to this freedom is the widespread use of European languages in Africa, which immediately opens African discourse to contextually ignorant foreign critiques. This is another reason why African theology should be engaged in an African language.

Westerners who are qualified to evaluate such discourse are those who have immersed themselves in use of the same language. This immersion will, along the way, enable those Westerners to pick up essential contextual information. Other Westerners could then engage not with occasional texts in English extracted from unknown African contexts, but with an existing body of texts (oral and written) that form a part of a contextually rich discourse, articulated to them by fellow Westerners who have immersed themselves in that discourse.[35]

Such use of an African language would enable Westerners to grasp a context other than their own. This degree of understanding is impossible in English, because English presupposes Western and not African categories.

Third, the above considerations do not imply that we must now translate theological and other texts into the thousands of languages reputed to be in use in Africa today.[36] Using this frightening prospect as an excuse to avoid African languages altogether has inadvertently perpetuated Western ignorance regarding Africa. Western scholars do not need to learn a thousand African languages; they ought to begin with one. In very practical terms, perhaps university departments in the West could select one African language and then focus on training Western experts in its interpretation.

This proposal raises another issue that also deserves attention: any African language that became the focus of study in the West would thereby be enriched. In the current system of international scholarship, wealth and opportunity would flow to the owners of that particular language. The presence

**35** I suggest that those interpreting African discourse to Westerners need to be Westerners, because learning should move from the known to the unknown. Therefore, Westerners should become immersed in Africa and then interpret what they learn to fellow Westerners; conversely, the best explanation of the West to Africa would come from Africans who have been immersed in the West. See Harries, *Godless Delusion*, 136.

**36** Africa has 2,144 languages according to Ethnologue, 'Languages of the World', https://www.ethnologue.com/region/Africa.

of such a prize would make the choice of which African language to teach highly politically charged. This is probably another reason why African languages are neglected: Africans could not agree on which language Westerners should learn. In patron–client Africa, where jealousy is translated into witchcraft, major efforts are always made to avoid giving someone else an advantage over oneself.[37]

The West's powerful but decentralized university system cannot solve the need for detailed study of African contexts. Instead we need 'vulnerable missionaries' who commit to using local languages *and resources*, seeking not to materially enrich a particular African people through aid from the West but to communicate the gospel in an effective way, and to enlighten the West.[38]

## VII. Conclusion

My reflections on teaching ATRs and WRs in Africa have eventually led me into a profound critique of contemporary understandings of the Christian missionary task. My primary conclusion is that, wherever possible, missionary endeavours outside the West should use indigenous languages and indigenous presuppositional foundations. Only in this way can invented barriers to gospel penetration, such as the concepts of ATRs and WRs, be accurately perceived and averted.

The pervasive parallel identification of other WRs and Christianity is foundationally problematic. Widespread use of Western languages is hindering the articulation of profound African theology. Use of African languages by Westerners would enable them to begin to hear African theology authentically.

We do not have to start translating Christian theological works into every African language, but Westerners seeking to serve God in theological or missionary work in Africa should begin by learning to communicate in and listen carefully to one African language and then work from that starting point.

**37** Jim Harries, 'Witchcraft, Envy, Development, and Christian Mission in Africa', *Missiology: An International Review* 40, no. 2 (2012): 129–39.

**38** For more on 'vulnerable mission' see vulnerablemission.org.

# Books Reviewed



# Book Reviews

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*The Church: A Theological and Historical Account*

Gerald Lewis Bray

Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016
ISBN 978-0-8010-3086-4
Pb., pp 278, bibliog., index.

*Reviewed by Paulo C. Oliveira, PhD student, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, USA*

*The Church* is neither a comprehensive history of the church nor an exposition of its doctrines. Rather, Bray, distinguished professor of historical theology at Knox Theological Seminary—driven by frustration with disunity in the Christian community—presents an historical account of the church's development and doctrinal ruptures, with the hope that greater mutual understanding will help Christians recognize their similarities and overcome obstacles to unity. This book represents Bray's contribution to the church's self-understanding in the light of ecumenical aspirations.

Bray begins by examining the church's inception and deals with the question of whether Jesus should be considered the church's founder. He evaluates nuances of the term *church*; not inclined to define it theologically, sociologically or semantically, he simply calls Jesus the founder of the 'society' that worships. Bray treads carefully to avoid identifying any original model that could sanctify a particular religious structure or Christian tradition as the ideal or original New Testament prescription.

The book's second chapter identifies the transition from disciples to apostles as the church continues to mature, adjust and develop. Bray concludes that the primitive church had a sense of mission at its very core but left behind no church model or theoretical ideology in the form of institutions and doctrinal dogmas.

The third and fourth chapters trace the

development of the Western church. Its acceptance by the Roman Empire, Bray asserts, allowed the church to hold councils through which its self-consciousness reached maturity. Furthermore, this status paved the way for the emergence of the medieval Roman 'Imperial Church', which receives the greatest attention in the book's fourth and longest chapter. The great schism between East and West is narrated, as well as the rise of ecclesiastical institutions closely linked with state powers. Major configurations of church structures and institutions either developed or solidified during this period, reaching their apogee before the decline of the Roman imperial church, with the Protestant Reformation delivering the deepest wound.

In the next two chapters, Bray covers the different groups of Protestant reformers and movements that further fractured the Christian church. He points out that all of them kept the historical creedal confession 'one, holy, catholic, and apostolic' but assigned different meanings to it. Consequently, Christian communities differ in their understanding of what it means to be the church, leading to the proliferation of new church institutions, models and tendencies, especially among Protestants. Bray contends that these differing interpretations of the four classic marks portend further fragmentation within the Christian community.

Finally, Bray suggests a way forward, addressing the question of what the church should be. The author does not naïvely expect unity anytime soon—in fact, he predicts additional ruptures in what he calls the 'disarray' of Protestant churches—but proposes a realistic option of 'mutual recognition'. Current divisive issues are addressed, including women's ordination, same-sex relationships, challenges to the doctrine of creation and fall, and others.

The degree to which the author's ecumenical motivation guides his choice of material and the structure of his narratives is a matter of speculation. What is certain is that readers receive a highly Western-oriented account that follows the traditional patristic, medieval and Reformation historical categories. This approach may foster understanding among Western Christian communities and educate other readers concerning key historical realities. However, it falls short with regard to engaging a wider contemporary audience in the global church. Historical accounts, developments and divisions outside the West receive little attention. Perhaps Bray could consider a sequel focusing on the church outside the West. In addition, some Protestants may feel uneasy with the author's assessment of the Reformation.

Overall, the book is very well written and easy to follow. The methodology chosen allows the narrative to flow smoothly as Bray opens windows into classic moments of disagreement and comments on how they have influenced the contemporary condition of the Christian community. Its suave style, while dealing with intricate historical and doctrinal developments, reveals significant scholarly sophistication and certainly contributes to the ecclesiological and ecumenical conversation. Anyone interested in Western church history will benefit from the work, and it also supplies great material for students of ecumenism. As a scholarly accomplishment that is readily accessible to non-specialized audiences, it can certainly facilitate a wider conversation on the current state and future of the church.

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## *The Voice of God in the Text of Scripture: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*

Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (ed.)

Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016
ISBN: 978-0-310-52776-3
Pb., pp. 208, index

*Reviewed by Michael Borowski, ERT Review Editor and Lecturer in Systematic Theology and Ethics at Martin Bucer Seminary and the University of Applied Sciences for Public Administration Nordrhein-Westfalen (Germany)*

After conferences on the Trinity, the incarnation and the atonement, the fourth Los Angeles Theology Conference (2016) focused on the Christian doctrine of Scripture. The resulting publication, part of the 'Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics' series, contains ten chapters in which theologians from different backgrounds contribute to a doctrine of Scripture from their various angles.

In the somewhat formative chapter 1, Daniel J. Treier argues that the church's tradition exhibits an overall consensus regarding the one, unified form of the Word of God, and that this consensus stands in coherence with the self-presentation of Scripture itself. Treier briefly addresses numerous contemporary trends concerning diverse aspects of the nature of Scripture (e.g. canonical shaping, diversity of biblical models), hermeneutics and philosophy (e.g. speech-act philosophy, virtues), and dogmatics (e.g. soteriological or theological frameworks). He presents this review as a 'vital backdrop for engaging Scripture as God's textual medium of self-communication'.

Treier also touches on the turn from a Christological analogy (Scripture as both divine and human) towards a Trinitarian approach, which he then sketches to some degree by addressing five claims of textual communication. He closes by elaborating on theological challenges deriving from this proposition.

The following chapters unpack the general approach by addressing various themes related to the doctrine of Scripture. Stephen Fowl interacts with Hebrews, aiming for a better understanding of the formation of the reader listening to God. John Goldingay takes on a similar task while interacting with the Old Testament, as does Amy Plantinga Pauw with wisdom literature.

Myk Habets discusses the concept of 'retroactive reading', or treating Scripture not as written word but as spoken word. Erin Heim considers the nature of metaphors and their use in Scripture to convey information from a particular perspective. Jason McMartin and Timothy H. Pickavance attack the thorny question of how to react to contradicting positions in exegetical matters.

William J. Abraham's chapter expands the focus with a more general assessment of postmodernism and modern theology, calling for a renewal of biblical studies as the foundation of theological work. In the last two chapters, Daniel D. Lee deals with Barth's view of Scripture, and Ryan S. Peterson with the formation of human identity and Scripture.

This collected volume, like most such books growing out of conferences, is a symphony in which different voices fulfil different functions. If you are concerned about evangelical theological methods and the role that Scripture plays within them, this may be a symphony worth hearing. The orchestra is certainly well cast, and the symphony is quite suitable for a time in which the overall style of

music and public tastes are changing dramatically (both Treier and Abraham indicate reasons for this change). This book presents a welcome opportunity to listen carefully to what is changing from an evangelical theological perspective.

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## *Roman Catholic Theology and Practice: An Evangelical Assessment*

Gregg R. Allison
Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014
978-1-4335-0116-6
Pb., pp. 493, index

*Reviewed by Patrick Mitchel, Senior Lecturer in Theology, Irish Bible Institute, Dublin, Ireland*

Gregg Allison begins by telling of his experience in ministering with and to Roman Catholics while serving as professor of Christian theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. From this experience, the book's framework emerges—one of intrigue and critique.

Intrigue refers to Allison's interest in exploring commonalities and parallels between Roman Catholic and evangelical theology that should be recognized and appreciated. Critique reflects the book's second (and main) concern: to 'underscore the divergences between Catholic and evangelical theology'. Allison wishes to avoid two pitfalls: a biased and ill-informed interpretation of Catholicism on one hand, or an 'ambiguous presentation' that minimizes differences to promote some sort of 'lowest common denominator' ecumenism on the other hand.

To achieve this goal, Allison structures his analysis around the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, and eleven of the fourteen chapters begin with extensive summary (without comment) of Catholic teaching and practice. In each case, he then provides an assessment from his own evangelical perspective. The result is a thorough appraisal of Catholic theology as a whole, rather than a narrow focus on a few familiar areas of contention.

Allison's interpretative approach to Catholicism as a 'coherent, all-encompassing system' is heavily dependent on the work of Leonardo De Chirico (who calls this a 'landmark book' on the back cover). It contends that too often Protestants have demonstrated a rather naïve and piecemeal approach to understanding Catholicism. Rather, they should recognize the systemic faults of Catholic theology, which grow out of two roots: (1) the overly optimistic Roman Catholic understanding of the interdependent relationship between nature and grace, and (2) the Catholic Church's self-understanding as the extension of Christ's incarnation.

Allison's analysis affirms limited but important areas of theological agreement between evangelicalism and Catholicism (e.g. the Trinity, resurrection, certain aspects of prayer and marriage and so on) but identifies a very long list of incompatibilities.

This is a serious, fair-minded analysis of Catholic doctrine and practice on its own terms. Many significant criticisms are developed in detail, and any evangelicals (if there are any) who believe that the Reformation is, in effect, 'over' need to engage with Allison's arguments.

On the other hand, as Allison acknowledges, whereas it is relatively easy to identify official Roman Catholic doctrine, offering an assessment from the viewpoint of 'evangelical theology' is not straightforward. There is no evangelical magisterium, after all.

Allison's presentation of 'a typical expression of evangelical theology' is of a conservative Reformed variety. There is no intrinsic problem with this; you have to start from somewhere, and there are occasional footnotes acknowledging different evangelical theologies. However, I am not sure why the word 'Reformed' is not owned up front. The problematic implication is that 'Reformed' is assumed to be synonymous with 'evangelical', even though the latter is a good deal wider than the former.

Similarly, in Allison's extended discussion of justification, the 'New Perspective' is dismissed in a footnote. The discussion of justification offered is classic 'Old Perspective' (a forensic act, the declaration of forgiveness of sin and imputation of righteousness). Again, this is a perfectly reasonable approach but only if made explicit. The impression given is that Allison is air-brushing out an issue of major interpretative importance in relation to Catholicism because it does not fit with an assumed prior definition of 'evangelical'.

Third, the book's doctrinal focus on the Catholic Catechism means that virtually nothing is said about wider changes in Catholic–evangelical relationships that were outlined by Noll and Nystrom in 2005 and have continued especially under Pope Francis. Understandably, no book can do everything, and Allison clearly defines the scope of his work at the outset. But it does mean that this book presents a purely theological analysis of evangelical and Catholic doctrines. Theology matters, of course, but you will need to look elsewhere for broader assessment of social, cultural and relational shifts in Catholic–evangelical relationships.

Finally (and linked to the previous point), De Chirico's systemic analysis, while well aware of Vatican II and the 1999 Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ), affirms that these milestones have not altered the Church's fundamental structure. This means that criticisms like Allison's are, in effect, virtually impervious to any changes within contemporary Catholicism, unless the Catholic Church repudiates centuries of Church tradition. Since this repudiation is rather unlikely, those persuaded by Allison will continue to argue that the Reformation divide is as deep as ever. Meanwhile, those who see change happening within Catholicism via reinterpretation of past dogma, as well as significant shifts in attitudes towards evangelicals, will tend to take a different path.

The gulf between these two positions within evangelicalism is wide, as shown by De Chirico and Greg Pritchard's 2016 public exchange of papers with Thomas Schirrmacher (the World Evangelical Alliance's Associate Secretary General for Theological Concerns) and Thomas Johnson (the WEA's Ambassador to the Vatican).

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## *Business Ethics in Biblical Perspective: A Comprehensive Introduction*

Michael E. Cafferky

Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015
ISBN 978-0-8308-2474-8
Cb., pp. 487, index, graphs

*Reviewed by Steven C. van den Heuvel, postdoctoral researcher at the Evangelische Theologische Faculteit, Leuven, Belgium*

Scandals in business keep emerging around the world, creating a renewed urgency regarding the development and

upholding of business ethics. It is vital for Christians to be part of this discussion. Thus this book is both important and timely. Cafferky teaches entrepreneurship and business ethics at Southern Adventist University in the US.

The book is strong in describing the contemporary ethical challenges that face business leaders across the globe. Cafferky uses real-life examples and is comprehensive in scope, addressing issues in consumer behaviour, management, accounting, finance, marketing and global business.

Furthermore, Cafferky thoroughly describes all the major contemporary approaches to ethics, from the Rawlsian rights tradition to the virtue tradition. Here, he is at its strongest, making excellent use of a wide variety of academic sources on ethical challenges facing businesses. Thus the book is a good starting point for those wishing to acquaint themselves with the current state of the art in business ethics.

In contrast, Cafferky's development of his own perspective is a lot weaker. In chapters 1 to 4, he lays out his 'biblical perspective' on business ethics. This claim to offer a biblical perspective is already quite problematic. There is a general hesitancy to describe one's claims as 'biblical' in theological circles, stemming from the realization of our human limitations in grasping the word of God. Cafferky does not seem to share this hesitation; he is quite outspoken in his theological claims.

Unfortunately, he is not so thorough in developing his biblical approach. In chapter 3, for example, Cafferky identifies twelve major themes from the biblical story, such as 'cosmic conflict', 'creation', and 'redemption' (p. 81). He gives no real explanation as to why these themes are chosen as opposed to others; there is no critical weighing of alternatives.

This problem is intensified when Cafferky begins to discuss the individual biblical themes. With regard to creation, for example, he claims that Jesus Christ is the Creator (rather than the Father), a contention that certainly calls for more theological explication than he provides. Cafferky claims that as a consequence, 'Everything that humans do involves something that came directly from the hand of Christ. Accordingly, humans will enjoy all that he has made but will also treat his possessions with respect. This is the basis of respect for the property of others' (p. 86).

This is a rather peculiar way of arguing for the right to possession of private property, and it certainly requires further explanation. One could also argue the reverse, namely that the recognition of the world as Christ's creation relativizes the claim to individual ownership of possessions.

Additionally, there is no real connection to the field of biblical theology. In an endnote, Cafferky lists a number of biblical theologies that he consulted, ranging from Gregory Beale's *A New Testament Biblical Theology* to Walter Brueggemann's *Theology of the Old Testament*. There is considerable variety among these biblical theologians, and Cafferky does not indicate how he dealt with this variety.

Despite the relative weakness of its underpinnings of biblical theology, this is still a good introduction to business ethics and a reasonably well-developed Christian approach to the field, particularly in an American context. Moreover, the binding and printing are of high quality, making it fit to be used intensively, both personally as well as in group settings. Exercises and discussion

questions at the end of each chapter facilitate the book's use by study groups.

All in all, this book is a worthwhile purchase for Christians seeking to discern wisdom in the face of ethical challenges in business.

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## *Catholic and Protestant Translations of the Imitatio Christi, 1425–1650: From Late Medieval Classic to Early Modern Bestseller*

Maximilian von Habsburg

London and New York: Routledge, 2016

x + 355 pp.

*Reviewed by H. H. Drake Williams III, Associate Professor of New Testament at Evangelische Theologische Faculteit Leuven, Belgium, and Professor of New Testament at Tyndale Theological Seminary, Amsterdam, the Netherlands*

*The Imitation of Christ* is one of the most popular books of Christian literature and is considered a Christian classic. Within a hundred years of its publication, more than 800 manuscripts of the book existed. During the time of the Reformation, it was the most printed book other than the Bible. It remains the most widely read Christian devotional book.

This study examines what led to the book's widespread popularity. Von Habsburg explores the fascination with *The Imitation of Christ* across geographical, chronological, linguistic and confessional boundaries. Instead of attributing its popularity to any particular quality of universality, he proposes that the book's key virtue was its appropriation by different interest groups, which then led to its popularity.

In his first three chapters, von Habsburg summarizes the content of *Imitation* and places it within the context of late medieval devotion. He notes that the work has a profoundly inward-looking spirituality that is inspired by the Scriptures and is Christocentric. Believers must recognize their weak condition before God before embarking upon their own spiritual pilgrimage. Adversity is a constant companion.

Once sin is recognized, one can be illuminated, express contrition, and then receive the necessary grace to progress. Although struggle persists, one should aim for perfection by following Jesus as the pattern. The saints who humbled themselves and imitated Christ by suffering, some to the point of death, are upheld as examples of virtue. The Christian life proceeds by self-examination and silence. The partaking of the Eucharist is also a significant practice for imitating Christ. The New Testament provides the basis for knowing and imitating Christ's assertions.

Exploring the context in which *The Imitation of Christ* emerged, von Habsburg connects it with the *devotio moderna*, which was interested in devotional material related to the Bible. As this movement was centrally located within Europe, the writer of *Imitation* had access to Dutch, French and German works. *The Imitation of Christ* was relevant to both secular and monastic contexts. It appealed to the Brethren of Common Life and to the laity. Furthermore, this movement was interested in copying manuscripts. Von Habsburg builds an argument that the propulsion provided by the *devotio moderna*, rather than the universality of the ideas presented within the book itself, led to its popularity. The arrival of the printing press further enabled its circulation.

In chapters 4 through 7, Von Habsburg

provides a detailed description of the publication and then the translation of the book during the period from 1470 to 1620. He begins with the original manuscript, which likely came from Thomas à Kempis (1380–1471) rather than Gerard Groote (1340–1384) and then was translated into English, French, Dutch and German to satisfy the devotional needs of hungry laity. After that, it was copied into many further manuscripts in Latin. The universal accessibility of Latin within learned circles allowed the work to be read widely.

Von Habsburg highlights the first Protestant translation of the book, by Caspar Schwenckfeld in 1531. Schwenckfeld, a Radical Reformer, was much less interested in externals and more interested in true Christian conduct. Although he omitted section four, the part of the book that concerns the Eucharist, he was nevertheless interested in placing this practical devotional resource into the hands of his followers.

In chapter eight, von Habsburg examines the place of *The Imitation of Christ* in the Protestant world. Even though Protestants viewed the doctrine of transubstantiation as idolatrous, purgatory as unscriptural, priestly mediation as unnecessary, and the idea of imitation as leaning towards works-righteousness, the book still had appeal within Protestant circles. Reasons for this somewhat surprising acceptance included its focus on the interior life, acceptance of suffering, Christocentricism, scriptural roots, and practical implications of the gospel.

Von Habsburg discusses numerous Protestants who were attracted to the book, including Zwingli and Bullinger, although most of them, like Schwenckfeld, omitted the section on the Eucharist. The author rightly notes that *The Imitation of Christ* could be used to promote and reinforce either a sacramental or a non-sacramental view of the church.

The final three chapters detail the book's place within Jesuit circles. It would have fit well with early Jesuit theology, and Ignatius of Loyola was fascinated with it, as von Habsburg explains in depth.

Finally, Von Habsburg provides a 52-page catalogue of all Latin and vernacular editions of the *Imitatio Christi* from about 1470 to 1650, listing the language, date, place, printer, number of sections included, author, and references for each edition published. This is a superb resource for further studies on *The Imitation of Christ.*

Von Habsburg makes a good case for the historical factors that contributed to the popularity of this classic devotional work. In doing so, however, he may have undervalued the appeal to timeless Christian themes that resonate with many Christians from many backgrounds today. Many Christians in later times have been deeply influenced by *The Imitation of Christ*, including John Wesley and Thomas Merton.

Von Habsburg's study will be of great value to readers interested in the history of late medieval and early modern times; the theology of the Jesuits, Ignatius of Loyola, or the Reformed figures who valued *The Imitation of Christ*, or the important theme of imitation as a devotional practice. It is also a helpful starting point for considering the appeal to imitation within modern Christian ethics.

# Contents



Paternoster: Thinking faith

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