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EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY VOLUME 42, NO 3, July 2018

# Evangelical Review of Theology

A Global Forum



WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

*Theological Commission*

Volume 42 No. 3 July 2018



WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

*Theological Commission*



0144-8153 (201807) 42:3;1-Y



## ABSTRACTS/INDEXING

This journal is abstracted in Religious and Theological Abstracts, 121 South College Street (P.O. Box 215), Myerstown, PA 17067, USA, and in the Christian Periodical Index, P.O. Box 4, Cedarville, OH 45314, USA.

It is also indexed in the ATLA Religion Database, published by the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606 USA, E-mail: atla@atla.com, Web: www.atla.com/

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This journal is available on Microform from UMI, 300 North Zeeb Road, P.O. Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346, USA. Phone: (313)761-4700

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# Evangelical Review of Theology

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Volume 42 • Number 3 • July 2018

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WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

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*Theological Commission*

Published by



ISSN: 0144-8153

Volume 42 No. 3 July 2018

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Printed and bound in Great Britain for Paternoster Periodicals  
by AlphaGraphics, 8-9 Vanguard Court, Preston Farm, Stockton-on-Tees, TS18 3TR

# On Evangelism and Social Action

Over the past few decades, evangelical thinking has matured beyond seeing evangelism and social involvement as incompatible. That view was understandable when the ‘social gospel’ was closely associated with Protestant liberalism and when many evangelicals viewed social collapse as a necessary precursor to the Second Coming of Christ. It is not justifiable today.

Nevertheless, changing circumstances force us to reconsider how personal evangelism and social concern fit together in the church’s mission, particularly if we view social concern as encompassing political engagement, not just acts of mercy.

As an American evangelical with professional political experience, I can acutely appreciate why evangelicals might be undergoing another round of self-examination on the dangers of social and political engagement. The unlikely pairing of evangelicals and Donald Trump is enough to make any head spin, regardless of whatever justifications might be given for it.

Granted, Daniel served Nebuchadnezzar faithfully; Esther served Xerxes and saved the Jews; Nehemiah was the king’s trusted cupbearer and earned the right to rebuild Jerusalem. But can we imagine Daniel campaigning for Nebuchadnezzar’s reelection, especially after the media reports on Nebby’s impulsive Twitter feed?

In this context, a fresh look at how the personal and social aspects of the church’s mission interrelate is certainly timely. Kenyan James Nkansah-Obrempong of the World Evangelical Alliance’s Theological Commission provides a superb biblical and theologi-

cal survey plus practical application to Africa. He thoroughly substantiates the firm conclusion that ‘If the Church does not want to become irrelevant to society, a holistic gospel is the answer.’

We then present two articles on very different social applications. John Anderson and Sean Milliken apply Christian truth to the agriculture industry and particularly to our view of animals, a frequently prominent topic in an age of growing animal-rights activism and vegetarianism. Thomas Schirrmacher comprehensively addresses the topic of slavery—which the Judeo-Christian tradition is often accused of undergirding—and shows that modern forms of slavery and human trafficking have never been acceptable to people who took Scripture seriously.

In evangelism, how we understand our mission to members of other faith traditions is among the most pressing questions. Indian scholar Sochanngam Shirik sensitively approaches this question through an examination of attempts by two theologians, Karl Rahner and Clark Pinnock, to reconcile the universality of God’s love with the particularity of Christ as the way of salvation. We also reprint a lucid book chapter, on the roles of the church and the Holy Spirit in salvation, by Canadian theologian Steven Griffin. This article nicely dovetails with Shirik’s essay by also interacting with Rahner.

Finally, Daniel Eng calls into question the frequent claim that Jews and Gentiles intermixed freely in the Antiochene church in Acts 11, and he probes the implications of his analysis for ministry and mission today.

—Bruce Barron, editor

# The Mission of the Church and Holistic Redemption

James Nkansah-Obrempong

## I. Introduction and Key Terms

The question of the mission of the Church and its relation to the Christian's role in society has been at the centre of the perennial debate on evangelism and social responsibility. Different Christian communities have looked at the problem from diverse standpoints. However, evangelicals seem to be reaching a consensus that both evangelism and social responsibility are inseparable elements of the Christian mission and must be integrated.

The theological and biblical ground for this position is the holistic nature of the gospel, which provides answers to all types of human questions and struggles—spiritual, material, mental and physical.

We must clearly define the key terms in our title. First, *mission* connotes vocation and calling. When used in Christianity, it refers to sharing and spreading the Christian faith in the world.

*Church* means a gathering of believers called together by the proclamation of the gospel and by the Holy Spirit from different communities and people groups (Rev 5:9), and bound to each other through Christ. The church is people standing in covenant

with God and with one another (1 Cor. 6:16). This gathering of God's people is meant to be a witness to the world, encouraging all humanity to fellowship with God.

The third word, *holistic*, carries the idea of looking at the whole rather than the constituent parts. Applied to the church's mission, holism means looking at the gospel of redemption in its entirety or complete form and in its multifaceted dimensions: physical, spiritual, emotional, psychological, political and social. This is critical because the gospel is God's answer for human sin, which has resulted in all the problems humanity is facing today—sickness, poverty, exploitation, greed, corruption and so forth. These problems require a holistic gospel of redemption to bring people to completeness, wholeness and maturity.

By *gospel*, I mean the good news of the redemption and restoration of God's creation, which comprises human beings and the created order. It is good news for the whole person—body, soul and mind—and not just for the soul. It is good news for the present and future, not just for the afterlife. The gospel redeems and transforms people, rescuing them from sin and all its effects so that they may become

what God intended them to be and glorify God.

The gospel provides salvation or *redemption*, which addresses all parts of human life holistically. Salvation brings the shalom of God into human existence and encompasses people's total well-being. The gospel, therefore, brings total transformation to the whole person.

This fact requires us to address the gospel's implications for the social, political and economic aspects of human life. The church and Christians are called to exhibit God's kingdom and spread its justice and righteousness in the world. This calling has enormous implications for the Church's mission in the world.

## II. Mission as Holistic

The church's mission must necessarily be holistic, or what the Micah Declaration of 2001<sup>1</sup> calls 'integral mission'. It must entail the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel, backed by deeds. The Micah Declaration states that integral mission does not mean 'simply that evangelism and social involvement are to be done alongside each other. Rather, in integral mission our proclamation has social consequences as we call people to love and repentance in all areas of life. And our social involvement has evangelistic consequences as we bear witness to the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.'

This statement tries to avoid claiming that either evangelism or social

responsibility is primary. Rather, it affirms the importance of both and holds the two together. The Bible holds this position as well.

### 1. Theological Foundations: God's Mission in the World

The Christian community's acts in proclaiming a holistic gospel that takes seriously the spiritual, material, social, political and economic aspects of life are grounded in God's own acts and mission in reconciling the world to himself through Jesus Christ.

God's acts in dealing with and redeeming humanity were always holistic; they concerned people's total development and well-being. Creation, God's first act, was intended to provide all that humanity needed to live and experience the fullness of life, or shalom. The reality of sin and its resulting effects imply that the gospel and the redemption that it brings us, if it going to be truly transformational and achieve the total restoration of humanity, must address these various human needs.

Our mission as a Christian community should be patterned after God's acts. Our calling to engage in holistic mission in a world ravaged by poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment, ignorance, high infant mortality, disease and many other woes is both theological and practical. One cannot concentrate only on the spiritual aspect of human needs and not take seriously the grave, despicable conditions in which people find themselves.

The primary grounding for the holistic gospel is theological and embedded in the character and nature of God, who works to transform the whole person. God's intention is to bless humans

<sup>1</sup> 'The Micah Declaration on Integral Mission', in *Justice, Mercy and Humility*, ed. Tim Chester (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2002), 17-23.

in all aspects of their lives. We see him blessing humans when he created them in Genesis 2 and 3. Again, God blesses Abraham and his descendants as well as the nations. His promise that in Abraham all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Gen 12) is an indication of his intentions for humanity.

God promised blessings to Abraham even before Abraham made any concrete decision to worship him. Such blessings are connected with creation and all the blessings that creation brings to humanity: 'abundance, fruitfulness and fertility, long life, peace and rest'.<sup>2</sup> These blessings are also the outcome of the gospel, the good news of God's redemption for humanity and creation. Jesus reiterated this point when he said, 'I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly' (Jn. 10:10). Interestingly, these blessings constitute what Africans understand salvation to mean: life in all its fullness. Both God and Jesus affirm the holistic nature of the gospel and redemption.

Christopher Wright has made a seminal contribution to the question of the church's mission in the world. Beginning with the Old Testament understanding of God and what he has called his people to be and do, Wright argues that all Christian missions should be holistic.

In the creation mandate, Wright points out, God gave humanity a mission that comprised caring for all creation—both fellow humans and the created order. Wright says:

The care and keeping of creation is our human mission. The human race exists with a purpose that flows from the creative purpose of God himself. Out of this understanding of our humanity flows our ecological responsibility, our economic activity involving work, productivity, exchange and trade, and the whole cultural mandate. To be human is to have a purposeful role in God's creation.<sup>3</sup>

Wright argues that both Israel's mission and the church's mission are grounded in the 'identity of the true and living God, YHWH' and the 'true identity of the crucified and risen Jesus'. The Church's mandate to preach a holistic gospel flows from the identity of God and Christ.<sup>4</sup> The true gospel must emphasize the uniqueness of the triune God, and that God's purpose is for humanity to come to recognize the triune God, to embrace, worship and glorify him alone and no one else. In addition, we see the holistic nature of God's act in Christ, reconciling the *world* to himself—humanity and the whole created order (2 Cor 5:17–21).

In light of this discussion, the old debate over which comes first—evangelism and social action—becomes academic rather than practical. Dyrness rightly points out that 'God's active presence [in the world] grows out of and expresses the inner reality' of his acts.<sup>5</sup> He argues that the key to this integration is God's Trinitarian character.

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<sup>3</sup> Wright, *Mission of God*, 65.

<sup>4</sup> Wright, *Mission of God*, 61–66.

<sup>5</sup> William Dyrness, *The Earth Is God's: A Theology of American Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), xiii.

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<sup>2</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 221.



Dyrness shows that our Enlightenment heritage has limited our sense of how we relate creation to humanity. Our dualistic tendency to separate the material from the spiritual has blinded us to the need to integrate the two aspects of human life. We have lost our appreciation for the physical world and the body, and we give more attention to the spirit than to the body. In contrast, God himself engaged with his physical creation and he still does. As Dyrness argues, 'The work of God in the world does not alienate our human work but rather makes it possible (John 14:12).'<sup>6</sup>

Our participation in helping humans to develop the abilities and resources needed to grow and live well is grounded upon God's own engagement in creation. We become co-creators with God in managing and utilizing creation for our human, economic, political and social development.

The incarnation lays the groundwork for our critical, transforming engagement in creation and society. Christ revealed God in human form to transform human communities by establishing God's shalom on earth and by promoting a just and righteous society where human beings have the opportunity to develop their potential so that they may glorify God. 'In Christ, God becomes part of creation ... and [is] identified with creation.' God has always committed himself to creation. 'Christ's work was to reveal the love of God for creation, by the Spirit, through Christ, to perfect creation.'<sup>7</sup>

The exodus event is a classic example of God's own acts in holistic mis-

sion. It brought the good news of salvation to people who were oppressed, impoverished, socially and politically ostracized, and economically disadvantaged. Different Christian communities have interpreted the exodus narrative so as to emphasize one particular dimension of the story: the political, the economic or the spiritual. Very few see all three areas and hold them together.

Those who spiritualize the exodus story neglect the historical context that forms the basis of the narrative, in which God delivered real people who had been subject to gross injustice, oppression and violence. This reductionist approach to Exodus tends to marginalize and overlook the political, economic and social features of the story. This non-holistic interpretation violates God's own understanding of redemption.

God did not ask whether to do evangelism or social action first. He dealt with the people's immediate plight and saved most of the spiritual instructions for later. He delivered the people from their immediate oppression and then provided water, food, land and safety in the desert. Only after all this did he subsequently give the Israelites his laws and make certain demands of them.

Moses' song in Exodus 15 celebrates this victory over the human and divine forces of oppression and injustice and proclaims the universal reign of God over the kingdoms of the world. God's actions deal with political oppression, economic injustice, social aggression and violence, and spiritual bankruptcy. These acts become the model for a holistic gospel that addresses the entire needs of human communities.

Basing his argument on the concept

6 Dyrness, *The Earth Is God's*, 15.

7 Dyrness, *The Earth Is God's*, 15.

of Jubilee, the time when land in Israel was restored to its original owners, Wright points out that Jubilee was 'an economic institution', focused on families and land. Jubilee addressed the social (kinship system), economic (Israel's land tenure system), and religious dimensions of Israel's spiritual life. At the centre of this was the land, which was the economic vehicle for the people's development. The land belonged to God, however, and so it was to be used for the benefit and well-being of the entire community.<sup>8</sup> Wright sums up the Jubilee concept in this way:

The primary purpose of the Jubilee was to preserve the socioeconomic fabric of multiple-household land tenure and the comparative equality and independent viability of the smallest family-plus-land units. In other words, the Jubilee was intended for the survival and welfare of the families of Israel.<sup>9</sup>

This economic reality of access to resources is grounded in the fact that the earth is God's and therefore humans must be given access to it so that they can develop and harness the available resources to meet their basic needs. In areas where few people own the land and most are landless, poverty has become the lot of many. Equitable distribution of and access to wealth and resources, 'especially land', in developing societies is necessary to 'curb the tendency of accumulation with its inevitable oppression and alienation'.<sup>10</sup>

Given this theological basis for God's action, our mission is to bring

salvation and restoration, which must be holistic, patterned after God's own actions. Any development that focuses only on the material and the physical but neglects the spiritual aspect is also inadequate. The nature of humanity as both material and spiritual requires a holistic gospel to address these dual human needs. Since sin affected the whole person, if humanity is to be restored, that restoration must affect the whole being.

And since most of the pressing issues affecting people in developing countries concern the physical body, the gospel must seriously address these physical needs. It is not acceptable for anyone to spiritualize these needs or to neglect them entirely. Any gospel that does not take the whole human condition seriously and address it in its entirety is inadequate and flawed. This is not the gospel Jesus preached, and it does not follow the model God has given through his own mission practice.

Having articulated the theological and anthropological foundations for a holistic gospel in developing nations, I will next provide some biblical examples.

## 2. Holistic Ministry in the Bible

Dualistic and Greek worldviews have influenced our understanding of how we as humans ought to relate spirit and body, the spiritual and the physical. The Greek idea that matter is evil and spirit is good pushes us to direct our Christian activities and ministry towards the soul rather than the body. Our Christian ministry fails to nurture the whole person—body, mind and soul/spirit.

<sup>8</sup> Wright, *Mission of God*, 290–93.

<sup>9</sup> Wright, *Mission of God*, 295.

<sup>10</sup> Wright, *Mission of God*, 297.

As a result of these Gnostic tendencies, human development, infrastructure and economic issues facing developing nations have not been high on the church's mission agenda. But for real spiritual growth to take place, the basic things needed for life must be provided. God is concerned about these needs and he has committed to providing for them—but he uses other human beings to do so. The Christian community becomes the extension of God's hand to ensure that people's needs are met.

The gospel has been holistic from the beginning of human existence. Before God created humans, he had already created the physical world and endowed it with all kinds of resources to meet humanity's material needs. Accordingly, the gospel addresses physical and mental as well as spiritual matters.

#### a) Holistic Missions: The Prophets

The Old Testament provides many illustrative examples. We have already mentioned creation and the exodus as acts of holistic mission. In those accounts, God was concerned with humans' socio-political, economic and physical well-being. He met their needs through his providence and through mighty acts of delivering Israel from oppression. God did not make a dichotomy between the Israelites' physical and spiritual needs, nor did he prioritize the spiritual before the physical; he ministered to them holistically. When they were hungry, he fed them. When they faced oppression and injustice, he protected them.

Wright, in a discussion of the church's practice and priorities, asks whether we should talk about the pri-

macy or the ultimacy of the gospel in mission. He cites Exodus 8 in his response:

God broke into the circle of Israel's need at the level of their economic exploitation and genocidal affliction at the hands of the Egyptians. Having *redeemed* them through the exodus ... , God went on to provide for their *physical* needs in the wilderness. Then he entered into a *covenant* relationship with them after revealing his name, his character and his law ... so that they would truly *know* him as the living God and *worship* him alone. Then he provided the place of his own dwelling where they could *meet* with him, and finally, the system of *sacrifices* by which they could maintain that relationship and deal with sin and uncleanness through the *atonement* God provided. All kinds of elements are involved in this total experience and the narrative that describes it. But *ultimately*, the goal was that God's people should know God and love him with wholehearted loyalty, worship and obedience. It is a rich and pregnant model for mission.<sup>11</sup>

God is a God of compassion and of justice. He calls humans to emulate his character and nature. Micah 6:8 stresses this point: 'He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.'

Issues of justice, mercy and faithfulness are central to the heart of God, and they deal with the material as well

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<sup>11</sup> Wright, *Mission of God*, 319. The emphasis is his.

as the spiritual. God expects Christians to demonstrate this kind of life in society.

The Old Testament prophets' ministry was holistic. They all expressed concern about three things: social justice, good governance expressed by political integrity, and spiritual well-being. They called the people to spiritual renewal, faith in God, and faithful obedience to his laws and commandments. They challenged the oppressors and the powerful who took advantage of the less powerful and less fortunate in the community. They defended the weak, the poor, the orphans and the widows who were mistreated and marginalized. They protected the land of the weak from the powerful, who through their power grabbed the land and reduced their victims to abject poverty.

The prophets did not simply preach God's salvation and his deliverance of people's souls; they also sought deliverance for the disadvantaged and oppressed. Both aspects of ministry were kept in balance, just like God's own actions.

There is no fixed prioritization of these considerations in God's dealings with humanity. What we do first—what human need we address first—will depend on the situation facing us. We must learn from God's own example.

Human problems are related to 'a complex web of interconnected factors' and a holistic gospel must be capable of responding to the full range of human needs. Any starting point might be appropriate for a particular situation, as determined largely by what is the most pressing or obvious need. But we must not consider our work complete until 'we have included within our own

missional response the wholeness of God's response to the human predicament—and that of course includes the good news of Christ, the cross and resurrection, the forgiveness of sin, the gift of eternal life.'<sup>12</sup>

#### b) Holistic Mission: Jesus' Style

Jesus' ministry was similarly holistic. The gospel that he preached called people to repentance and faith in God. Luke 4:18–19 sums up the focus of Jesus' ministry:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
Because He has anointed me  
To preach the gospel to the poor.  
He has sent me to heal the broken-  
hearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives  
And recovery of sight to the blind,  
To set at liberty those who are op-  
pressed;  
To proclaim the acceptable year of  
the Lord.

The elements that make up Jesus' understanding of his ministry address both the spiritual as well as the physical well-being of humanity. In actual practice, Jesus gave equal weight to his teaching and healing ministry because he was concerned about both people's spiritual and physical needs (Mt 8; Mt 17:14–21; Mk 1:21–24, 40–45).

On the physical side, Jesus healed the sick; he fed the hungry crowd twice in his ministry (Mt 14:13–21; 15:22–29; Mk 6:30–44). Jesus pointed out that God cares about what we eat and put on, so he would provide food and clothing for his people (Mt. 6:19–34).

Scripture tells us that Jesus was

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<sup>12</sup> Wright, *Mission of God*, 319.

moved by compassion for all the people he ministered to. When we are moved by compassion for the needy, we will not ask whether word or deed should come first; rather, we will move quickly to respond to felt needs. Jesus discussed using wisely the resources that God has given us, investing them so that they yield profit. God expects us to use these resources to build up society and promote the people's well-being (Mt 25:14–30; Lk 16:1–9).

Jesus identified two fundamental elements of the church's mission: the Great Commandment in Matthew 22:37–40 (love God and neighbour with our whole being) and the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19–20, which encompasses outreach, evangelism and discipleship—or preaching, baptizing and teaching. The Great Commandment outlines our task as involving devotion to God and social responsibility to our fellow human beings. Our love for God and neighbour cannot be separated. Likewise, the Great Commission emphasizes preaching the word so as to lead people to conversion, and then discipling believers to observe the commands of God and our social responsibility to society. This is achieved through both word and deed.

These two activities of the church are to bring about both spiritual renewal and social transformation in the communities the church serves. The church's mission is threefold: proclamation, edification and service. We must hold all three aspects together.

Jesus' ministry involved preaching, teaching and healing; he gave the same mandate to his disciples. He sent them out in Matthew 10:1 to do what he had been doing himself: preach, teach and heal. This ministry includes sacrificing

oneself for people in need. Proclamation must be seen in the context of service. Jesus' cared about the problems of the needy and those suffering; the church's mission must also be holistic (Lk 10:25–27; Mt 25:31–46; cf. Deut 10:17–19). The apostle James's definition of true religion was tied to doing acts of mercy and kindness (Jas 1:27; cf. 1 Jn 3:17–18).

The church's mission requires it to engage with society, addressing social injustices and moral decadence. The church is society's moral conscience. It should seek social justice and teach its members to be responsible citizens. It must affirm human dignity, as well as the sanctity of life, and uphold the moral order if it is being violated. This will often require challenging the status quo. At times the church must address the social, economic and political concerns affecting Christians and give them guidance on how to respond. This is all part of a holistic ministry that touches every facet of life. The Old Testament prophets and their New Testament counterparts give us direction as to what our engagement with civil society should look like.

The early Christians in the book of Acts engaged in holistic ministry. In addition to their spiritual nurture, they provided for the needs and welfare of the disadvantaged so that no person among them was needy (Acts 6:1–7).

Jesus encouraged us to have compassion on those in need around us and help them in whatever way we can. The story of the Good Samaritan drove home this message. Sometimes religious people become so spiritual that they overlook or ignore the needs and pain of the people around them. Jesus taught us to do as the Samaritan did.

Our discussion so far demonstrates that mission may not always begin with evangelism. However, mission is not complete if it does not ultimately call the sinner to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. The gospel has wide implications for the spiritual, socio-political and economic well-being of the people and societies around us.

We have laid the theological and biblical foundations for holistic mission; next I will show concretely how the early Christian missionaries to Africa preached a holistic gospel, with great impact on the communities they served.

### III. Early Christian Missions in Africa

Historically, conservative evangelicals have seen the physical, social, political, economic and educational needs of people in three different ways: as either secondary to, supporting or related to Christian mission.<sup>13</sup> For instance, in the early 1960s, evangelical mission was dedicated to winning people to Christ. The church's work at that time focused mainly on evangelizing the world and discipling the nations.

However, since Vatican II,<sup>14</sup> evangelicals, ecumenical Protestants, and Catholics have shown great concern for the poor, the oppressed and the power-

less. In line with the developments of Vatican II, the Lausanne Congress in 1974<sup>15</sup> moved the poor towards the top of its agenda and proposed a holistic gospel. 'Holism' came to be understood by some as ministry through word, deed and sign. Others saw holism as ministry to the whole person (spirit, mind and body), while some emphasized transformation of entire cultures and societies. Yet others saw holism as entailing a partnership between socio-political action and evangelism.<sup>16</sup>

Hesselgrave has outlined three basic theological approaches to holistic ministry in relation to the poor as understood by both conservative evangelicals and Catholic Christians in church history. He classifies the three as liberation theology, holism theology and prioritarian theology.

The liberationist takes a radical stance, drawing on the exodus motif as depicting God's own action in dealing with oppression and evil in human society. On this basis, liberationists embrace a mission 'to promote justice in society and establish Shalom on earth'.

Holism theology has two strands, revisionist and restrained. The revisionists' mission is 'to minister to society and individuals without dichotomizing between the physical and the spiritual or the body and soul/spirit'. The restrained version of holism, on the other hand, sees its mission as ministering 'to society and individuals socially and spiritually while giving certain priority to evangelism'.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> David J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 118.

<sup>14</sup> Austen Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988). See especially Section 64, Part II, Chapter 3, 'Economic and Social Life', and Chapter 4, 'The Political Community', on pages 968–85.

<sup>15</sup> See the *Lausanne Covenant*, available at [www.lausanne.org/lausanne-1974/lausanne-1974.html](http://www.lausanne.org/lausanne-1974/lausanne-1974.html).

<sup>16</sup> Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 120.

<sup>17</sup> The Lausanne Covenant espouses this

Finally, prioritism theology holds the traditional stance that the church's mission is 'primarily to make disciples of all nations. Other Christian ministries are good but secondary and supportive.' Hesselgrave seems to have problems with the first two approaches and espouses prioritism, concluding that holism is inadequate and arguing for the priority of the gospel over all else.<sup>18</sup>

The evidence we have seen above seems to militate against Hesselgrave's conclusion, because it portrays God's mission and the gospel as holistic, addressing every dimension of human existence. Contrary to Hesselgrave's assertion that Jesus was primarily concerned with 'spiritual needs, not with meeting the physical, material or social needs' of the people,<sup>19</sup> the available evidence affirms that Jesus placed equal weight on both the spiritual and material needs of the people he ministered to.

The historical context of Africa as a continent that has experienced great humiliation through the slave trade, colonization by Western powers, exploitation of resources, gross poverty, disease, injustice, witchcraft, and demonic oppression and ignorance has made the theme of liberation very popular in African Christianity. This theme was championed by the native leaders who fought for the liberation of African countries from colonial oppression.

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kind of holism. The architects of the covenant struggled with the issue of social responsibility but preserved the priority that in the ministry of the church, evangelism is primary.

18 Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 120–25.

19 Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict*, 136.

Any gospel that does not address these socio-political aspects of human life in some way is simply inadequate.

A holistic gospel is critical for developing societies, especially in Africa since the African worldview does not allow the world to be divided into sacred and secular, physical and spiritual, body and soul/spirit. Life is seen as a whole. Accordingly, the gospel must address the whole of the African person and his needs. Salvation must address not only sin and the soul, but the body and the world in which people live.

For example, salvation, which means *life* in Africa, is seen in multifaceted dimensions. Larbi observes that this concept of life is not an abstraction but 'life in its concrete and fullest manifestations. It means the enjoyment of long life, vitality, vigour, and health; it means life of happiness and felicity.'<sup>20</sup> Life includes possessions, prosperity, wealth, children, peace and tranquillity, and freedom from all the forces that threaten one's safety and security.<sup>21</sup> This holistic view of reality requires that the gospel message must be holistic. The implications of the gospel message for our spiritual, mental, emotional, social, political and economic life must be emphasized and practised in our quest to develop communities.

In this regard, Africans have an excellent legacy and model from the early Christian missionaries who came to the continent. They not only preached

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20 Kingsley Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Edies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: Center for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies, 2001), 8–13.

21 Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 8–9.

the gospel to save souls but developed the whole person by establishing hospitals, schools and other endeavours. The preaching of the gospel in Africa and any developing nation should follow this legacy of developing the whole person. This holistic view of life is expressed by an African proverb: 'An empty sack cannot stand; a hungry stomach has no ears.'<sup>22</sup>

Africans believe that first things must be done first. Ensuring a person's safety and well-being comes before anything else. Any gospel that fails to address the stunning needs of developing nations will not reflect the character and nature of God who loves, cares and provides for the needs of his creation.

### 1. Early Missionaries and Development in Africa

The nineteenth-century missionary movement truly preached a holistic gospel. Its representatives engaged in health services, education, social services and vocational skill training, all while preaching the gospel and planting churches. In many cases, they were meeting the physical needs of the communities in which they served before any community members gave their lives to Christ. They became the hands, feet and eyes of God to the community. They demonstrated God's desire to provide for the needs of his people.

The missionaries built schools to develop the intellectual abilities of the people to whom they ministered. By teaching the people to read and write, they enabled Africans to read the word of God themselves, and many came to

believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Many leaders of the African independence movements in the early 1950s and 1960s were Christians and products of these missionary schools.

The mission agencies also built hospitals to cure diseases. They taught new agricultural techniques and dug boreholes to provide good drinking water for the people. They built other infrastructure like roads and community recreation centres. They opened high schools and vocational schools that trained men and women in employable skills so that they could improve their economic status, live a decent life and be in a position to provide for their families.

These early missionaries were seriously concerned about the development of the whole person. The gospel was their motivation for becoming involved in ensuring people's material well-being.

Unlike our Protestant evangelical ancestors, the more recent generations of evangelicals in Africa did not take the social and economic implications of the gospel very seriously. These generations of Christians were more concerned with saving souls and bringing people into the kingdom and paid less attention to material, psychological and emotional needs. This attitude caused some African governments to criticize the evangelical church as anti-social and anti-development in its outlook, and for not showing serious concern for natives' suffering.

We must overcome this dualistic attitude. The dichotomy between soul and body, material and spiritual must be rejected. It is rooted in Greek philosophical thinking that saw the material world as evil and spiritual things as

<sup>22</sup> Tokunboh Adeyemo, *Africa's Contribution to Christendom* (Nairobi: AEA, n.d.).



good. This dichotomy is unacceptable to non-Western minds, but more importantly, it is foreign to biblical teaching and theologically bankrupt. The body is not evil, it is part of God's design. We will have bodies in this life and in the life to come. Therefore, we need to take good care of our physical bodies as of our spirits. The body and the spirit are inextricably linked and both are indispensable. We all need bodies to be real persons; this is why God will give all humanity resurrected bodies in his new creation. Though a different kind of body, it will still be a body!

This dualistic trend has changed in recent years. Protestant denominations and newer evangelical churches, especially the Pentecostals, have adopted a holistic approach to the gospel. The so-called prosperity gospel embodies an attempt to deal with these deficiencies of the past. Thus, the church has become more aware of the needs of the people they minister to.

In their effort to address human needs holistically, churches have engaged in community development projects, established vocational training centres to provide basic trade skills for many young unemployed youths, opened homes for orphans, helped the poor and needy among them by providing basic food supplies, and given stipends and scholarships to help needy parents educate their children.

In addition to all these actions, the church makes great efforts to develop people's intellectual abilities. Many denominations have established more institutions of higher learning. Most of these institutions have taken seriously the social, economic and political implications of the gospel for human life and development. Christian institutions are

not only delivering theological education but also offering courses in other disciplines to develop the human and economic resources of their nations.

Others are engaged in providing primary health care for the poor. Churches run medical centres where they provide basic health services to those who cannot afford them. The more Christians understand the holistic nature of the gospel, the more they realize that they cannot preach the good news and remain indifferent to the needs and concerns of the people among whom they minister. How can one close his or her eyes to the immensity of the poverty, disease and sufferings in our world today and not do anything about them?

God never closes his eyes to human need and suffering. True love will always respond to human need. God sent Jesus Christ not only to address human sinfulness and bring salvation from sin, but also to heal our bodies and to give us abundant life, God's shalom.

## 2. Current African Realities

Africa is endowed with great natural and human resources, yet many of its countries are among the poorest in the world. It is ravaged by political tensions, democratic struggles, wars, poverty, hunger, disease, ignorance, high infant mortality, injustice, massive unemployment, unprecedented urbanization with inadequate infrastructure support, an influx of refugees as a result of political instability, bad governance, moral degradation and high indebtedness to the international community.

With the current limited resources available, African governments are stretched to the limit and cannot meet

all their obligations to their citizens. Governments are calling on Christian communities to assist with development activities that will alleviate the people's suffering. This call is an important one. It shows that governments expect Christian communities to do more than just take care of souls. Believers must respond by seeking to serve the plethora of human needs that confront many developing nations in the world today.

In this regard, it is prudent for the church to lead in these efforts, as it fulfills its mandate of accomplishing God's mission to bring about shalom for humanity. In faithfulness to our Christian heritage, the church in Africa must engage in the social, economic, political and human development of its people. However, all our lives and activities, whether spiritual, human, political or economic, must be placed under the Lordship of our Saviour Jesus Christ (Col 1:15–20).

### 3. The Daunting Task of the Church

Advocating for the holistic gospel places an enormous burden on the church. The humanitarian needs on the African continent are gigantic and daunting, requiring a huge amount of resources. One could easily get discouraged and give up. The church will need great human, material and financial resources to do this noble and great work, which it does not have.

What can we do, then, to preach and deliver a holistic gospel to Africa? The immensity of this work requires us to harness our resources—material, human and spiritual. This calls for partnerships, in which we recognize each

person's gifts and use them for the benefit of humanity and to advance God's mission on earth.

It is very important for the church to enter into partnerships with other institutions involved in development work. Our suggestion for entering into partnerships with other stakeholders, such as governments, non-governmental organizations and civil rights activists, in collaborative ventures has a biblical basis in 1 Corinthians 3:1–15.

The principle of partnerships was modelled by the apostles in Acts 6. Applying it will help to prevent duplication of our efforts and will avoid unnecessary competition within the Christian community.

#### a) Partnerships with Non-governmental Organizations

We must affirm the work that other organizations do in delivering basic human services to communities. We must show our solidarity with them by encouraging, visiting and praying for them, and by assisting them in any way possible. We can also learn and benefit from their expertise in areas where we are not competent. Following are some specific examples.

- Christian professionals' expertise can be harnessed to train people and communities in a wide variety of skills and fields, so that they can use the resources available to them to improve their lives. The goal is to help people create wealth. We may need partners who are experts in entrepreneurship, micro-financing and economic development to participate in such training as resource persons. Addressing poverty will require skill development in the

areas of micro-enterprises and entrepreneurship. Communities must be helped to develop the economic environment in which people can create wealth for themselves.

- Helping needy communities to maximize effective use of resources should be part of our spirituality as we engage the world as God's emissaries, seeking to make this world a better place for humanity to perceive God's love and his provision for their needs.
- We must maintain our prophetic voice and remain the voice of the voiceless. We must be the moral eyes of the nation and its communities, speaking against the evils and injustices perpetrated against the marginalized and vulnerable in our societies. In addition, we must set up an advocacy unit or collaborate with civil society organizations and others who share our vision so as to shine the light on the evils committed against the innocent. Finally, we must appeal to and challenge governments and influence policy makers to adopt policies that guarantee basic human dignity so that all can live well.
- We must advocate for basic infrastructure—health facilities, good drinking water, good sanitation—that promotes people's well-being. These basic amenities are critical. The church must team with health personnel to engage local residents and teach them basic health care issues, including how to protect themselves from preventable diseases that could easily kill them.

All these activities must be viewed as part of our spirituality. The apostle

James wrote that true religion involves showing mercy and compassion to those who are weak and vulnerable in our societies (Jas 1:27).

### b) Educational and Social Amenities

To address the problem of ignorance that still affects most African communities, education is critical. Christian communities should collaborate with national universities that have adult literacy programs to teach the community to read and write. Many Africans would enjoy more fruitful Christian lives if they could read and study the Bible themselves. Education will give others the opportunity to explore their gifts so that they can become a greater blessing to the communities in which they live and serve.

### c) The Relief Model

Relief work as a temporary measure to help needed communities could be encouraged. This model was practised in the early church when the church in Antioch sent relief to the Jerusalem church. Although many Christian organizations and non-governmental groups have used this model, it must be seen as temporary. We must also implement more permanent ways of helping people meet their own needs with the resources available to them.

More Christian organizations are looking to construct long-term development agendas that will equip communities to provide for themselves. This will prevent what has often happened with relief work: the dependency syndrome, in which recipient communities become dependent on others.

#### d) Advocacy

The church must lead in advocating for governments to develop good governance systems and accountability structures so that they can raise enough resources to develop their nation's infrastructure, schools, health facilities, economy and so forth to provide for the people's basic needs.

#### e) Policy Formulation

The church must advocate to and work with governments and civil society organizations to formulate economic policies that foster development in all areas of the nation and create a conducive environment for such activities to take place.

If the church does not want to become irrelevant to society, a holistic gospel is the answer. A holistic gospel will give credibility to the message and enhance the church's acceptance in society. We should not present ourselves as anti-development or against progress. Rather, the church should be concerned about human dignity. For humanity to live a dignified life, we must take the development of the whole person seriously.

A holistic gospel will enable the church to make the love of God and his concern for the well-being of humanity more obvious to the world. Compassion and mercy are essential attributes of God. Throughout the Bible, we see God providing for human needs whenever and wherever he encounters them, such as for Elijah, David, and the Israelites in the wilderness.

### IV. Conclusion

The true gospel must address the

whole person—body, mind and spirit. If we are going to preach the whole gospel, we must not just talk about the salvation of souls. If we stop there, our preaching is not holistic. We are also to love our neighbours as ourselves. Salvation is something that only God can grant, but once salvation is received, the whole gospel calls us into relationship with others and creation.

Too many preachers address the spirit and soul but say nothing about the body. When the church preaches a gospel that only saves the soul but doesn't feed the hungry, take in the stranger or clothe the naked, the Church is not preaching a holistic gospel (Mt 25:31–40).

A holistic ministry addresses all of creation, including issues like deforestation, air pollution, contamination of our rivers, and the extinction of animal species. God's message to the Israelites was comprehensive, addressing every facet of their lives and not just their spiritual relationship with him. The prophets and Jesus accused those who claimed to make spiritual things a priority and neglected the people's material and physical needs, declaring that such people were not following God's ways.

To me, the whole debate over whether to prioritize evangelism or social action is based on Western dualistic presuppositions. It is rooted in Western thinking that draws a dichotomy between the spiritual and the physical, a distinction that has its root in the Enlightenment tradition and has no place in African or biblical thought.

The gospel of Jesus Christ must transform the whole person—mental, emotional and psychological. Salvation is expressed by the biblical idea

of shalom, which encompasses a person's total well-being. Therefore, those who seek to communicate its message cannot separate it into two unrelated poles. The gospel must affect both the physical and spiritual life of the person who experiences its transforming power. The African view of life is holistic, with the material and spiritual realms interrelated. Any ministry that does

not deal with the entire African worldview will not be effective or transformational.

Jesus' ministry was holistic; he healed physical sickness, forgave sins, fed the hungry and commanded us to do the same. His ministry dealt with the whole person. Any holistic mission must follow the pattern given us by God and Jesus.

# A Biblical Perspective on Stewardship in the Context of Modern Livestock Production Practices

John D. Anderson and R. Sean Milliken

Agriculture links mankind to creation—and, by extension, to the Creator—in a more intimate fashion than nearly any other human endeavour. For most of human history, this connection was a shared experience for nearly all people, because producing food occupied the time and energies of the vast majority of the population. Since the advent of the Industrial Revolution, however, the proportion of people directly involved in agricultural production has been steadily declining.

Today, particularly in the developed world, only a small percentage of citizens have any direct connection to agricultural production. The US Department of Agriculture reported that in 2014 agricultural production accounted for only 1.4% of all US employment.

The dramatic modern increase in agricultural production efficiency has provided tremendous benefits to society as a whole. The release of untold millions of individuals from the daily

endeavour of food production has liberated immense human capital for other pursuits, from the creation of art to employment on a factory floor to the invention of computer microprocessors. Indeed, modern civilization has been largely founded on the phenomenal success of humankind in food production.

Because fewer people have a direct hand in agricultural production, new questions about agricultural practices have emerged. Although the improvements in productivity are indisputable—agriculture today yields unprecedented levels of output relative to the land and labour inputs involved—modern practices are increasingly inscrutable to those outside the industry.

Nevertheless, it is clear to all concerned, from the farm manager immersed in the day-to-day business of farming to the urban food consumer, that modern agricultural production bears little resemblance to the historic

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archetype of the farm, at least as traditionally envisioned. In fact, modern farming is about as far removed from farming's romanticized history as modern communication is from the Pony Express.

The most dramatic changes to occur in agriculture since mankind first domesticated the major plant and animal species have taken place over the last two generations as increasingly sophisticated mechanization, chemical inputs, genetic modifications and information technology have transformed commercial agriculture practices. Given this rapid revolution in agricultural production, Christians need to re-evaluate what it means to participate in agriculture in a God-honouring way. This is particularly true with respect to animal production, where high-intensity, large-scale production systems now dominate the meat, egg and dairy industries.

Addressing this issue fairly and honestly requires an understanding of agriculture that goes beyond mere technical issues. It requires an understanding of the role of agriculture in the created order and an appreciation of how humankind might bear the image of God in the practice of agriculture in general (and in livestock production, specifically) so as to communicate God's truth to the world and bring Him glory. These issues constitute the subject of this paper.

## I. Agriculture and the Cultural Mandate

God's revelation to mankind first describes Him as creative: 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth' (Gen 1:1). Although biblical

revelation indicates that God spoke the world into existence (Heb 11:3), it is also clear that his bringing forth creation involved something of a process. Traditionally, theologians have identified an order in the creative process within the economic Trinity: creation exists by the will of God the Father, through the mediating word of God the Son, by the agency of God the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the issue of intra-Trinitarian order, it is also clear that by the will of God, creation unfolded in physical time and space. At the very least, the six days of creation imply an orderly process. Moreover, Genesis 2 gives a more definite sense of God's active, creative processes within the world that he had made: watering the earth (v. 6), forming man (v. 7), planting a garden (v. 8) and making plants grow (v. 9).

Notably, we also see that mankind, the pinnacle of God's earthly creatures (Ps 8:5–8), is assigned an active role in the creative process—namely, an opportunity to participate with God by 'subduing' (Gen 1:28) the earth as his 'image-bearing co-regents'.<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:28 is often referred to as the cultural mandate. Exactly what this mandate entails for humanity in relation to the rest of the created order has been the subject of much study and debate. Mankind's call to rule over nature has generally been considered at least

<sup>1</sup> J. Lanier Burns et al., 'From Dust to Dust', in *Exploring Christian Theology*, vol. 2: *Creation, Fall, and Salvation*, eds. Nathan D. Holsteen and Michael J. Svigel (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 2015), 23; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 266–67.

<sup>2</sup> Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 24.

one constituent part of man's role in bearing the image of God. In Anthony Hoekema's formulation, man's dominion over nature is part of the *functional* aspect of bearing God's image (that is, what man does to reflect God's image) in contrast to the *structural* aspect, or how man reflects God's image ontologically or in his very being.<sup>3</sup>

Viewed though a contemporary lens, terms like 'subdue' and 'have dominion over' are easily misinterpreted as carrying connotations of exploitation if not outright abuse. Those connotations, of course, do not necessarily reflect the intrinsic meaning of the terms. Certainly, such an understanding of the cultural mandate is at odds with the purposes of a God who, it has been suggested, created the world out of an overflow of his intra-Trinitarian love.<sup>4</sup>

Traditional understandings of the cultural mandate have often focused on mankind's responsibilities. For example, Hoekema connects the Hebrew terms in Genesis 1:28 with the command 'to serve' and 'to care for' God's creation, noting that 'Adam, in other words, was not only told to rule over nature; he was also told to cultivate and care for that portion of the earth in which he had been placed.'<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Victor Hamilton compares the use of the terms 'subdue' and 'have dominion over' in Genesis 1:28 with other uses of this terminology in the Old Testament, concluding that the terms give implicit

but clear direction for care and responsibility, not exploitation.<sup>6</sup> Charles Ryrie specifically links the cultural mandate to agriculture, noting that the term 'subdue' comes from a Hebrew root meaning 'to knead' or 'to tread', which he interprets as a rather clear reference to cultivation or tillage.<sup>7</sup>

Overall, scholarship on the cultural mandate presents a balanced view of mankind's exercise of dominion over nature through responsible stewardship as an integral aspect of reflecting the image of God.<sup>8</sup> Alister McGrath summarizes this perspective by viewing mankind's role in creation as 'an affirmation of *responsibility* and *accountability* towards the world in which we live' (emphasis in original). In this light, agriculture is rightly understood as a God-ordained activity through which humanity can obediently live out God's instruction and reflect his character and his glory. Although, obviously, we cannot create things *ex nihilo* or impart life to the inanimate work of our hands, the practice of agriculture does afford humanity the opportunity to emulate, in a finite sense, the various dimensions of creativity displayed by the infinite, triune God: conceiving, implementing and beautifying.

The practice of agriculture, along with every aspect of creation, was affected by humanity's fall into sin. In fact, agriculture is singled out for special treatment in Adam's curse:

<sup>3</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 69.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Reeves, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 43.

<sup>5</sup> Hoekema, *Created in God's Image*, 79–80.

<sup>6</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 28.

<sup>7</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 232.

<sup>8</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Theology: The Basics* (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 46.



‘Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground’ (Gen 3:17–19).

The centrality of agriculture within the pronouncement of God’s judgement on Adam hints at its centrality in Adam’s pre-Fall role within creation. Hamilton, in arguing for the redemptive character of the sentences handed down by God, notes that with these curses God places ‘at the respective point of highest self-fulfilment in the life of a woman and man problems of suffering, misery, and frustration. These “sentences” are not prescribed impositions from a volatile deity. Rather, they are gifts of love, strewn in the pathway of human beings to bring them back to God.’<sup>9</sup> In other words, God’s judgement impacted Adam’s practice of agriculture (i.e. dominion through responsible stewardship) because that was precisely the activity that should have been most fulfilling for him—the means through which he most clearly imaged his Creator.

With the Fall, the image of God in mankind was fundamentally marred. Hoekema describes the situation after the Fall as one in which man retains the structural sense of God’s image (i.e. God’s image is still intrinsic to who man is) but has lost its functional sense (i.e. God’s image is not well reflected, if at all, in what man does).<sup>10</sup> Every activity of mankind is therefore subject to corruption because of the

Fall, making us constitutionally incapable of functioning fully in accordance with the image of the perfect Creator. This result has clear implications for the practice of agriculture. Hoekema powerfully describes the implications of sin for mankind’s relationship to the rest of creation:

Instead of ruling the earth in obedience to God, man now uses the earth and its resources for his own selfish purposes. Having forgotten that he was given dominion over the earth in order to glorify God and to benefit his fellowmen, man now exercises this dominion in sinful ways. He exploits natural resources without regard for the future: stripping forests without reforestation, growing crops without crop rotation, failing to take measures to prevent soil erosion. His factories pollute rivers and lakes, and his chimneys pollute the air—and nobody seems to care.<sup>11</sup>

Hoekema’s assessment is essentially accurate, albeit somewhat hyperbolic. In many times and places, people have indeed cared very much about soil erosion or deforestation or pollution. Today, many people care passionately about eliminating environmental pollution even if they fail to acknowledge the existence of a transcendent Creator, let alone their role as his image bearers. But Hoekema correctly observes that in all times and places, mankind since the Fall has faced a grave temptation to be exploitative, to destructively manipulate the created order for his own (mostly short-term) gain. Those who work in agriculture are not exempt

<sup>9</sup> Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 43.

<sup>10</sup> Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 83.

<sup>11</sup> Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image*, 85.

from this temptation. In fact, because of their intimate familiarity with the natural world, they may well experience this temptation most acutely.

## II. Biblical Stewardship and Modern Agricultural Practices

Any view of agriculture is strongly conditioned by broader cultural values. Consequently, there is no single perspective on agriculture to which we may appeal universally. Modern Western cultures have generally held the practice of traditional agriculture in high esteem. 'Traditional' agriculture has meant the small-scale production of a diversity of products, relying on natural methods and practices performed by family members who reside on the family farm.

This traditional notion of agriculture is commonly contrasted with industrialized agriculture, in which intensive production takes place in monoculture on a massive scale using highly specialized (often synthetic) inputs, a high level of technology, and reliance on a pool of hired labourers and managers. Critiques of these modern industrial agricultural methods are abundant in number and comprehensive in scope. A recent report by the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems (IPES-Food) includes a representative itemization of complaints:

Today's food and farming systems have succeeded in supplying large volumes of foods to global markets, but are generating negative outcomes on multiple fronts: widespread degradation of land, water and ecosystems; high GHG [greenhouse gas] emissions; biodiversity losses; persistent hunger and micro-

nutrient deficiencies alongside the rapid rise of obesity and diet-related diseases; and livelihood stresses for farmers around the world.<sup>12</sup>

Whereas the IPES-Food report focuses primarily on the ecological and sociological impacts of modern farming practices, others have drawn attention to the animal welfare implications of modern, large-scale animal production. Housing systems that confine animals to relatively small, unnatural spaces that limit movement and may impair expression of instinctual behaviours have come under particular scrutiny. Some states have passed legislation to ban certain confinement systems for chickens in egg production.<sup>13</sup>

Numerous corporations within the food service industry have committed to phasing out the use of products from facilities using close-confinement systems for chickens and hogs. Not coincidentally, some of the largest integrated agricultural firms in the world (including Tyson Foods, Smithfield and Rose Acre Farms) have committed to eliminating the use of certain close-confinement systems in their US farm operations.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> IPES-Food, *From Uniformity to Diversity: A Paradigm Shift from Industrial Agriculture to Diversified Agroecological Systems*, ed. Emile A. Frison and Nick Jacobs (Brussels: International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems, 2016), 3.

<sup>13</sup> The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) maintains a current list of state bans on various animal confinement systems at [www.aspc.org/animal-protection/public-policy/farm-animal-confinement-bans](http://www.aspc.org/animal-protection/public-policy/farm-animal-confinement-bans).

<sup>14</sup> For a current listing of firms at various points in the supply chain (farm, processing, retail, food service) that have made public

In the past, the general public rarely raised questions about agricultural production practices, but today these practices have become a pressing moral issue for some people. For example, Jonathan Anomaly has proposed policy interventions aimed at curbing 'morally repugnant' practices in modern animal production.<sup>15</sup> Such strong denunciations of widely employed commercial practices would have been considered radical and highly inflammatory until quite recent times.

Not surprisingly, proponents of modern agricultural practices have pushed back against Anomaly's moral condemnations. Norwood and Lusk's provocative response is typical of practitioners in the field of commercial agriculture:

Does the idea that food may come from a business with hired labor and a mechanized, streamlined production system make eating dinner less appealing? Do you think food produced on factory farms is less safe, less tasty, less nutritious, or less humane? Before answering, consider this thought experiment. Do you prefer that your medicine be made in a modern, sophisticated factory environment, or do you prefer buying from a married couple who drive to the city once a week to sell their homemade medicine?<sup>16</sup>

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commitments related to animal housing practices, see 'Corporate Commitments on Farm Animal Confinement Issues', <http://cagefreefuture.com/wp/commitments/>.

**15** Jonathan Anomaly, 'What's Wrong with Factory Farming?' *Public Health Ethics* 8, no. 3 (2015): 250.

**16** F. Bailey Norwood and Jayson L. Lusk, *Compassion by the Pound: The Economics of Farm Animal Welfare* (New York: Oxford Uni-

Norwood and Lusk's thought experiment effectively highlights a marked inconsistency in how consumers view food relative to other contemporary mass-produced consumer items, from medicine to cell phones.

Of course, a major difference between consumer views of medicine and of food is that food production is explicitly tied to notions of stewardship—not only of land and water but also of living, breathing, feeling animals. Norwood and Lusk acknowledge this important distinction between food and other consumer goods. They rightly point out, however, that animal husbandry practices have not been imposed by corporate fiat but have evolved in response to market signals originating in the freely made decisions of consumers.<sup>17</sup>

This is no small point. There has been no conspiracy by evil industrialists to push ethically dubious practices on an unsuspecting public. Rather, consumers in many cultures around the world have demanded a high volume and variety of consistent, low-cost foods, and companies have responded to the market signals thus created. Furthermore, contract farmer-growers have enthusiastically embraced these systems as a means of achieving economic stability and sustainability in their agricultural vocation.

Of course, recourse to market signals as an explanation of companies' behaviour does not offer moral absolutism to either producers or consumers. After all, robust markets of willing buyers and sellers incentivize the

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versity Press, 2011), 37.

**17** Norwood and Lusk, *Compassion by the Pound*, 38.

illegal drug trade, along with many other morally questionable and overtly exploitative activities from gambling to pornography to slavery.

To justify agricultural stewardship practices, we must appeal to a more rigorous, more normative standard of morality than simply the existence of a functioning market. By the same token, from the standpoint of biblical morality, condemning modern practices requires an appeal to a more rigorous standard than pre-industrial practice. After all, farmers prior to the Industrial Revolution were in no less a fallen state than modern farmers.

With respect to the stewardship of animals, Hiuser concludes that 'industrial animal production' is ethically problematic because it fails to respect farm animals' *logoi*—'the divine ideas or wills that God has for each created thing'.<sup>18</sup> To Hiuser, industrial animal production systems have three problems. First, such farms fail to help animals realize their *logoi*. Second, as a result, we fail to realize our own *logoi* as God's image bearers. Finally, we are actively undermining the *logoi* that God has in mind for animals.<sup>19</sup>

Hiuser's theological argument is consistent with the rationale usually offered in support of traditional agricultural practice (as opposed to industrial practice). Rollin summarizes the basic philosophy: 'Farmers once put animals into an environment that the animals were biologically suited for

and then augmented their natural ability to survive and thrive by providing protection from predators, food during famine, water during drought, help in birthing, protection from weather extremes and the like.'<sup>20</sup> The basic idea to which both Rollin and Hiuser appeal is that animals in production agriculture settings should still be able to behave in a manner consistent with their essential natures.

But what is an animal's essential nature? The question of what constitutes essential behaviour has been central to the debate over animal production practices for some time. Those who advocate for intensive, technology-based, confinement systems argue that as long as animals are safe, well-fed, warm and dry, their needs are adequately met. The notion that animals require, or desire, something akin to emotional fulfilment through expressive behaviours is dismissed as misplaced anthropomorphism.

Moreover, advocates of modern commercial agriculture regard as a dangerous instance of moral equivalency the notion that agricultural production efficiency should be compromised for the sake of something as inscrutable as animal emotions. After all, significant reductions in production based on debatable notions of animal well-being will ultimately hurt people—particularly those at the margins of society who will be most severely affected by the resulting reduction in availability and increase in food prices.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>18</sup> K. Hiuser, 'Maximizing Animal Theology: Maximus the Confessor on the Value of Non-Human Animals and the Human Calling', *Toronto Journal of Theology* 30, no. 2 (2014): 248.

<sup>19</sup> Hiuser, 'Maximizing Animal Theology', 252.

<sup>20</sup> Bernard Rollin, 'Farm Factories', in *The CAFO Reader*, ed. Daniel Imhoff (London: Foundation for Deep Ecology, 2010), 10.

<sup>21</sup> The charge of moral equivalency against the animal welfare movement does have some

On these terms, discussion of animal welfare issues in agriculture typically devolves into a stalemate, with each side encamped on its own moral high ground—animal welfare advocates championing humane treatment of animals and commercial agriculture advocates stressing food for the poor. Wendell Berry, however, thoughtfully stakes out a middle ground: ‘Agriculture must mediate between nature and the human community, with ties and obligations in both directions. To farm well requires an elaborate courtesy toward all creatures.’<sup>22</sup>

Berry thus rejects an either/or view of farm animal care versus food production in favour of a both/and philosophy; instead, we must be concerned about feeding the world *and* about caring well for our animals and all our natural resources. Viewed next to Berry’s notion of ‘elaborate courtesy’, the normal preoccupation with meeting minimum standards of care begins to look suspiciously self-serving. As Matthew Scully observes, ‘It’s not a good sign when arguments are turned to precisely how much is mandatory and how much, therefore, we can manage to avoid.’<sup>23</sup>

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credibility, as the movement has often argued from the principle of the moral equivalence of animals and people. For example, one advocate claims, ‘To create meaningful change [in animal agriculture production practices] we must see animals and nature as our equals.’ Christopher Manes, ‘Man, the Paragon of Animals?’ in *The CAFO Reader*, ed. Daniel Imhoff (London: Foundation for Deep Ecology, 2010), 52.

**22** Wendell Berry, ‘Renewing Husbandry’, in *The CAFO Reader*, ed. Daniel Imhoff (London: Foundation for Deep Ecology, 2010), 50.

**23** Matthew Scully, ‘Fear Factories’, in *The CAFO Reader*, ed. Daniel Imhoff (London: Foundation for Deep Ecology, 2010), 18.

If appropriate animal care is viewed as a reasonable obligation for farmers, an understanding of God’s nature and of man’s responsibility to reflect that nature can be a useful clarifying concept. One of the more intriguing aspects of God’s character revealed in Scripture is expressed in the Hebrew term *hesed*. Oswalt describes the somewhat enigmatic aspect of this particular divine quality, noting that it defies a clear English translation and, further, that it lacks clear parallels in other Semitic languages. Oswalt suggests that a rather obscure Hebrew word was adapted to express an understanding of love that was unique among ancient Semitic cultures.<sup>24</sup>

Seeking to more clearly delineate the concept, Oswalt defines the connotations of *hesed*, observing that it ‘conveys the idea of the intentional kindness, generosity or loyalty of a superior to an inferior, especially when it is undeserved’.<sup>25</sup> Garrett locates the unique aspect of *hesed* within the bonds of covenant relationship: ‘The quality of *hesed* is not simply a matter of fulfilling one’s duties to a covenant obligation; it is going beyond legal obligations to give kindness freely to those with whom one relates.’<sup>26</sup>

Although God’s *hesed* is generally directed toward people (in particular, the covenant people Israel), this aspect of God’s character is in some sense di-

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**24** J. N. Oswalt, ‘God’, in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings*, ed. T. Longman III and P. Enns (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 247.

**25** Oswalt, ‘God’, 247.

**26** D. A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, vol. 19A of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishers, 1997), 109.

rected toward all creation. In Psalm 36, God's demonstration of steadfast love (*hesed*) to creation seems to be explicitly in view: 'Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the mountains of God; your judgements are like the great deep; man and beast you save, O Lord' (vv. 5–6). Commenting on how God is revealed in the Psalms, Oswalt comments, 'God never acts out of keeping with the best interests of the cosmos that he created. Since God is unlimited in power, he certainly could do so, but the psalmists testify in wonder that this God of *hesed* never does.'<sup>27</sup>

The quality of *hesed* is of considerable utility as a guide to God-honouring creation care and has particular relevance to animal agriculture. Man stands in dominion as the pinnacle of earthly creatures. We are also stewards of an ancient relationship between livestock and people, in which animals occupy a position of obvious vulnerability. Rollin articulates the notion of an 'ancient contract' between people and animals—that is, the symbiotic arrangement intrinsic to traditional animal agriculture in which people care for animals and animal products supply human needs.<sup>28</sup> Acting consistently with the image of God in this situation requires the kindness, mercy and faithfulness that characterize God's relations with humankind.

To be sure, some go much further

in delineating man's obligation to animals, even challenging the notion that farm animal production can ever truly be humane. Sarah Withrow King contends, 'Animal welfarists ... will answer that it's ethical to eat animals if they have happy lives and painless deaths. ... I don't think that's good enough for Christians.'<sup>29</sup> Instead, King's argument leads her to call for faith-based veganism.

One potential implication of a theologically motivated veganism could be the conclusion that simply improving the living conditions and handling of animals destined for slaughter anyhow is ultimately pointless. King certainly seems to be headed in that direction. However, to abandon potentially meaningful improvements in animal welfare that seem consistent with Christian stewardship as traditionally understood, on the basis of a novel doctrine of stewardship whose biblical and theological foundations remain largely untested, is a questionable step. At a minimum, such an attitude ignores a significant spiritually formative aspect of animal care and dominion (Proverbs 12:10). Whereas the emotional connection between man and animal is often blunted in the production of food animals, most pet owners appreciate this connection intuitively. One must consider whether there is a substantive difference between the life of a farm animal and that of a companion animal. Or, to state it differently, should God's steward and image bearer owe any less care and appreciation to the farm animal than to the companion animal? We

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<sup>27</sup> Oswalt, 'God', 248.

<sup>28</sup> Bernard Rollin, 'The Ethics of Agriculture: the End of True Husbandry', in *The Future of Animal Farming: Renewing the Ancient Contract*, ed. Marian Stamp Dawkins and Roland Boney (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 9.

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<sup>29</sup> Sarah Withrow King, *Vegangelical: How Caring for Animals Can Shape Your Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 17.

doubt that any reasonable grounds for such a distinction can be found.

### III. Applying Christian Principles to Agricultural Practice

Unfortunately, for the Christian agriculturalist, it remains difficult to prescribe which specific animal care standards are consistent with the image of 'this God of *hesed*'. At a minimum, Christians engaging in agricultural practice should maintain a willingness to humbly engage in thoughtful reflection and dialogue concerning the use and care of animals. It should also be possible to identify God-honouring motives in our practice of agriculture.

On this point, some modern animal production practices do indeed appear to have a questionable provenance. Production systems featuring high-intensity confinement of livestock have not arisen primarily because of their superior performance in animal care (or their environmental and community impacts) but rather due to their greater efficiency (i.e. higher productivity per unit of input and, therefore, lower cost per unit of production).

We do not mean to imply that no animal welfare-related justifications for industrial-type management systems are possible. Modern, intensive confinement systems have often been justified on the grounds that animals are healthier and more comfortable and can be better cared for in confinement than in more natural settings. Nevertheless, the *reason* for adopting such systems has been increased efficiency and reduced cost, not any improvement in animal welfare. This conclusion is confirmed by the fact that even

the ostensibly welfare-based justifications for high-intensity systems typically cite metrics related to improved productivity, such as increased feed efficiency. Fraser et al. provide a good discussion of the limitations of this approach to welfare evaluation, which they term a 'functioning-based conception' of welfare.<sup>30</sup>

In general, animal care considerations have been dealt with in a *post hoc* fashion where livestock production systems have incorporated efficiency-enhancing practices. That is, efficiency has been the driver and animal care standards have subsequently been adjusted to accommodate the new, more efficient practices. Scully comments on this tendency:

We know man as he is, not only the rational creature but also, as Socrates told us, the rationalizing creature. ... The human mind, especially when there is money to be had, can manufacture grand excuses for the exploitation of other human beings. How much easier it is for people to excuse the wrongs done to lowly animals.<sup>31</sup>

For example, laying hens are not kept in battery cages because evidence suggests that they are better off in battery cages (setting aside the question of how 'better off' might be defined). Rather, they are kept in battery cages because production is more efficient in that system compared to the alternatives. Having adopted that system for

<sup>30</sup> D. Fraser, D. M. Weary, E. A. Pajor, and B. N. Milligan, 'A Scientific Conception of Animal Welfare That Reflects Ethical Concerns', *Animal Welfare* 6 (1997): 202.

<sup>31</sup> Scully, 'Fear Factories', 21.

its higher productivity, we then look for evidence that hens are not suffering in the system. Perhaps they truly are not; their physical performance can be quite impressive in such systems. However, this efficiency-first approach to management decisions is fraught with poor incentives with regard to animal care. Moreover, its driving motivations seem to offer a poor reflection of the character of God whose image we are called to bear.

Our core question—how does one participate in agriculture, and especially in modern, industrial livestock production, in a God-honouring way?—remains difficult to answer definitively. Partisans on both sides generally attempt to reduce the issue to a simple, all-encompassing binary: can Christians work in industrial-scale agricultural production in good conscience or not? Commercial agriculture advocates would, of course, answer with a definitive yes; indeed, they might be offended that the question is asked at all. On the other hand, a rising chorus of ethically motivated vegans would answer with an equally definitive no and would perhaps wonder why there is any need even to debate the issue.

A binary framing of this issue is unlikely to yield constructive dialogue. Instead, it simply encourages the retreat into partisan camps noted earlier. Asking whether Christians can work in industrial-scale agricultural production in good conscience seems analogous to asking whether Christian restaurateurs can sell alcohol in good conscience. Devout believers can disagree in good faith on various aspects of this issue. It is more productive, we think, to look for the positive obligations placed on believers who operate

within this particular marketplace.

As an obvious starting point, Christians should be at the forefront of developing industrial agricultural practices—or alternatives to such practices—that reflect the thoughtful, intentional, responsible stewardship to which we are clearly called.<sup>32</sup> In fact, Christian agricultural practitioners who are actively seeking to live out their faith in their professional field should be particularly well-equipped not only to grapple seriously with the moral dimensions of these issues but also to bring relevant expertise to bear on specific problems. They could also serve as honest brokers between contending parties (i.e. between traditional and commercial agriculturalists).

An additional obligation for Christians engaged in agriculture is to engage seriously in agricultural development internationally. If we who live in affluent countries, enjoying the benefits of highly modern commercial agriculture, are truly concerned about feeding and clothing the world's growing population, as well as following the way of Jesus, we should be investing

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<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, concern for stewardship of the natural world is now primarily associated with non-Christian (even anti-Christian) worldviews. Mary Poplin identifies and describes three non-Christian worldviews: pantheism, secular humanism and material naturalism. Elements of all three of these views are discernible in the modern environmental movement: reverence for earth as mother (pantheism), the scientism of global warming activists (material naturalism), and the utopianism of the more aggressive environmental quality advocates (secular humanism). Mary Poplin, *Is Reality Secular? Testing the Assumptions of Four Global Worldviews* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2014), 28–29.



resources, including the necessary human capital, to assist the poorest countries of the world in developing their own sustainable, self-sufficient agricultural industries. Efforts to expand our own existing operations so as to capture a larger share of anticipated market growth are less obviously motivated by genuine Christian compassion.

As concerned Christians and ministries continue to engage in international agricultural development work, they should carefully consider the theological and spiritual aspects of the agricultural methods and practices that they are establishing as part of that work. It is entirely possible that the developed world's adoption of industrial-scale agricultural methods has blinded us to the notion that our care for and dominion over animals are spiritually formative (Prov 12:10). As animal production practices and standards are transmitted to the developing world, this dimension ought to be considered alongside the more familiar economic, social and ecological concerns.

Of course, Christians should continually seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, asking God to search our motives and our actions to see if there is anything offensive within us (Ps 139:23–24), which in this context would mean any rationalization of behaving in an exploitative fashion towards God's creation for selfish gain. This last point, of course, is an obligation for all believers whatever their vocation, though it is a particularly crucial discipline for those involved in modern agriculture.

Finally, Christians who take seriously their role as God's image bearers should acknowledge that industrial-

scale agricultural practices can be morally problematic. A desire (even a sincerely held one) to 'feed the world' thirty years hence does not provide licence to manage animals in ways that are exploitative or inherently cruel, to compromise environmental quality, or to impose other negative externalities on surrounding communities. A desire to increase efficiency and maximize profits is even less of a justification. Serious, probing questions about the ethical dimensions of animal production systems should not be met with knee-jerk defensiveness but with a sincere willingness to dialogue on the basis of shared concern to ensure that our production systems are genuinely humane and just.

By the same token, Christians who are sceptical of industrial-scale agricultural practices must begin by presuming both good will and good intentions on the part of their fellow believers who are engaged in such practices. These sceptics should be willing to acknowledge that for the most part, we have grown into these systems in much the same way that we have grown into other aspects of modern life. Even when generally accepted aspects of our culture deserve to be challenged from a Christian perspective, we must recognize that participants in a culture often find it difficult to step outside practices to which they are accustomed and examine them critically.

It is exceedingly rare for human progress to proceed linearly along a path that is both economically and socially optimal. Rather, course corrections are frequently necessary, though seldom easy. In relative terms, we have still had very little time to develop our theology of creation care to address an indus-

trial mode of life, or industrial modes of agricultural production specifically. This generation is in the midst of that theological work. All parties involved in that endeavour should engage in it in good faith, with compassion, great understanding, patience and a healthy measure of Christian charity.

#### IV. Conclusion

When the Holy Spirit inspired the writers of Scripture to describe the qualities of God, one of the most profound and impactful images employed was that of a shepherd. In Psalm 23, the 'goodness and mercy' (*hesed*) that David anticipated for his life are illustrated by the image of the Lord as a divine shepherd. Jesus referred to himself as the Good Shepherd, willing to sacrifice even his own life for the benefit of his sheep. Of course, these passages are metaphorical descriptions of God. But they communicated clearly and powerfully to people in an agrarian society because those people were familiar not only with the function of shepherds but also with the archetype of a shepherd who would sacrifice himself for his flock. Modern industrial agriculture conveys a far different image for many people.

Contemporary challenges in industrialized agriculture highlight the importance of a faithful Christian witness in the field. As the battles between traditional and industrial agricultural practices multiply, a faithful and thoughtful Christian witness has much to offer. And much is at stake for the church as these issues command increasing attention from the general public. For example, a failure to address and humbly seek to rectify exploitative tendencies in modern agricultural practices will represent a failure to properly reflect the love, mercy and faithfulness of God in our care for creation. On the other hand, an improperly motivated rejection of modern, efficient agricultural practices similarly evinces a lack of concern for those at the margins of society who most intensely experience material need. In either case, the Christian witness may be compromised by unreflective action (or inaction). Christians involved in agriculture should be particularly equipped—and thus bear great responsibility—to navigate these complex issues with both professional competence and personal integrity, serving God and their fellow man well in the process.

# Slavery in the Old Testament, in the New Testament, and History

Thomas Schirmmacher

## I. The Old Testament

### 1. The Term 'Slave' in the Old Testament

The term *slave* in Bible translations is given to misunderstanding, because it is all too easy to mistakenly read the cruel slavery of the Greeks, Romans, Muslims, Europeans and Americans into the Old and New Testaments. For this reason, to describe what was allowed in the Bible, one should rather speak of 'bonded labour' (albeit only for real debts), 'labour service', or with Georg Huntemann 'servanthood work'.<sup>1</sup>

The legal position of a slave/servant in Israel, over against the position of slaves among other peoples, was extraordinarily good. 'The lot of slaves does not appear to have been particularly harsh.'<sup>2</sup> This is demonstrated in the fact that there is no word for 'slave', but rather the same word that was used for 'worker'. 'The Bible uses

the same word, *'ebed*, for servants as well as for slaves, such that it is often difficult to determine which meaning is meant in a particular section.'<sup>3</sup>

Leviticus 25:6 distinguishes between four dependent types of labour: the manservant (slave), maidservant, hired worker and temporary resident.<sup>4</sup> In other passages, a distinction is made between the salaried hired worker and the temporary resident (Lev 22:10; 25:40).

### 2. Slaves' Rights in the Old Testament

Even prior to the covenant at Sinai,<sup>5</sup> one reads in Job 31:13-15: 'If I have denied justice to my menservants and maidservants when they had a grievance against me, what will I do when God confronts me? What will I answer when called to account? Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did

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<sup>3</sup> 'Slavery', 566.

<sup>4</sup> Hans Walter Wolff. *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1977), 289.

<sup>5</sup> I assume that the Book of Job reports from a time prior to or during Abraham's life. See Henry M. Morris, *The Remarkable Record of Job: The Ancient Wisdom, Scientific Accuracy, and Life-Changing Message of an Amazing Book* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988).

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<sup>1</sup> Georg Huntemann. *Biblisches Ethos im Zeitalter der Moralrevolution* (Hänsler: Neuhausen, 1996), 89.

<sup>2</sup> 'Slavery', in Isaac Landman, ed., *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 9 (New York, 1948), 566.

not the same one form us both within our mothers?'

A central social meaning is attached to the fact that in the Sabbath commandment, servants/slaves were also expressly freed from work for the day (Ex 20:10; 23:12; cf. Deut 5:14–15). In this context it should also be considered that in the Old Testament the masters of the slaves (as well as the rulers and the local masters) and their families always worked as well and that in the Bible, work is part of what gives a person dignity. Gustav Warneck observes in this regard, 'Christian mission demonstrates via word and example that the brand of shame that is seen upon work due to slavery rests upon a divine command.'<sup>6</sup>

A slave/servant in the Old Testament was not a possession of his or her master without rights, as in Greek, Roman, Islamic or modern colonial slavery.<sup>7</sup> Rather, the servant had full rights in the presence of a judge. As Job made clear, this is the case because the servant is just as much created by God as every other person. Also, because the servant is an image of God, he or she may not be infringed upon (Job 9:6). For this reason, 'If a man beats his male or female slave with a rod and the slave dies as a direct result, he must be punished' (Ex 21:20).

<sup>6</sup> Gustav Warneck, *Die Stellung der evangelischen Mission zur Sklavenfrage* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1889), 67.

<sup>7</sup> On the history of slavery, see Susanne Everett, *Geschichte der Sklaverei* (Augsburg: Bechtermünz Verlag, 1998); Milton Meltzer, *Slavery: A World History* (New York: Da Capo, 1993, originally published in two volumes in 1971–1972), abridged as *All Times, All Peoples: A World History of Slavery* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980).

As John Murray presented rather fittingly, in the Bible the master does not own the slave/servant but rather his or her work.<sup>8</sup> For that reason, a slave could have his own possessions (e.g. 1 Sam 9:8; 2 Sam 9:10, 12; 16:4; 19:18). That was the only reason why, should the occasion arise, he could buy his own freedom (Leviticus 25:29–30 would have applied to slaves).

Generally speaking, there were numerous protective measures relating to slaves/servants.<sup>9</sup> No master was to 'rule ... ruthlessly', either over slaves (Lev 25:43, 46) or over hired workers (Lev 25:53). A slave in Israel was to serve for six years at most (Ex 21:2; cf. Deut 15:12, 18). If he wanted to offer lifelong service, the slave had to conclude an eternal covenant with his master (Deut 15:16–17). This condition demonstrates once again just how great the relationship of trust between master and servant could be. Israelite slavery could not have been so bad if some people voluntarily chose to make it a lifelong arrangement.

A slave/servant could be corporally disciplined as one's own children were (which in Europe was also common with employees until around 1900), but if he suffered harm, for instance by losing an eye or a tooth, he had to be freed (Ex 21:26–27). After the end of the period of slavery, the master had to give the slave/servant enough property so that he could establish his own existence: 'And when you release him, do not send him away empty-handed.

<sup>8</sup> John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 97–98.

<sup>9</sup> Wolff, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments*, 290–95.

Supply him liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you' (Deut 15:13–14). The reasoning for this, expressed next to the reminder that Israel was once itself oppressed as slaves, is of great importance: 'Do not consider it a hardship to set your servant free, because his service to you these six years has been worth twice as much as that of a hired hand [that is, arguably, the profit gained and the salary saved]. And the Lord your God will bless you in everything you do' (Deut 15:18). The work of a slave is worth his wages. The wage consisted mostly in working off debts; however, it was also expressed in the form of a generous endowment to establish the slave's future.

Next to this was a 'right of redemption' (Lev 25:48) for slaves/servants, who had to be set free when they themselves or someone else bought their freedom (Lev 25:47–55). There even existed a 'redemption duty' upon the 'uncle' or the nephew, that is to say, the closest relatives ('his closest blood relative'; Lev 25:49).

This right of redemption suggests that slavery was a state that should be ended as soon as possible. Paul writes similarly: 'although if you can gain your freedom, do so' (1 Cor 7:21)—a statement that he refused to make about marriage.

A slave could be named as an heir, which as a rule occurred via adoption (e.g. Gen 15:2–3; 1 Chron 2:34–35<sup>10</sup>) and indeed not only in the case of childlessness, but rather also in the place of

the biological heirs (Prov 17:2). Abraham had a servant named Eliezer (Gen 15:2), who was 'the chief [or oldest] servant in his household' and was 'in charge of all he had' (Gen 24:2). What trust Abraham placed in his slave/servant! This servant of Abraham was charged with searching out a wife for Isaac, his future master (Gen 24). Furthermore, the slave/servant could become an heir by marrying a daughter who was to receive an inheritance (1 Chron 2:35). Thus, complete upward mobility was possible for a slave.

A slave/servant was circumcised (Gen 17:12–13; Ex 12:44) and with that action was completely accepted into the covenant with God. He took part in the Passover (Ex 12:44) as well as in sacrifices and fellowship meals (Lev 22:11). He was to expressly rejoice in worship (Deut 12:12, 18; 16:11, 14).

One of the most astounding commands regarding the limitations on slavery is in Deuteronomy 23:15–16: 'If a slave has taken refuge with you, do not hand him over to his master. Let him live among you wherever he likes and in whatever town he chooses. Do not oppress him.' Hans Walter Wolff writes in this connection, 'This law is, as far as the ancient Orient is concerned, unique.'<sup>11</sup>

Since God wants men to be free, as Leviticus 25:39–43 shows, slavery was not generally viewed positively and was to be avoided if at all possible. The poverty of a person was not to be exploited in order to bring him under a condition of slavery. For this reason, Amos (2:6) strongly rebukes the sell-

10 W. S. Bruce, *The Ethics of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1895), 187–88.

11 Wolff, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments*, 293.

ing of the poor. Gentile slaves are an exception in Leviticus 25:44–46.

I do not wish to imply that the Old Testament already understood the legal protections present today for those who are employed and dependent. However, the Old Testament set itself apart from its surrounding environment in terms of legal protection for dependent employees and was far ahead of its time in this morally sensitive area. In no case did Old Testament slavery correspond to later European and Islamic slavery. The way in which Christian slave-owners in the American South used the Old Testament up into the nineteenth century was misguided and unjustified. If slave-owners had held to the Old Testament, they could not have held their slaves, due simply to the fact that the slaves had been obtained through robbery and had no right to become free.

### 3. Releasing Slaves in the Old Testament

The release of a slave was considered a good thing. The liberation of Israel from slavery in Egypt was still remembered, as simultaneously a liberation from spiritual slavery in Egypt and from the visible slavery of compulsory labour (Ex 13:3, 14; 20:2; Deut 6:12; 7:8; 8:14; Ps 81:6–8; Jer 11:4; 34:13; Micah 6:4). This becomes particularly clear in the reasons provided for the protective regulations for slaves in Leviticus 25: 'Because the Israelites are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt, they must not be sold as slaves. Do not rule over them ruthlessly' (Lev 25:42–43). 'For the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the

Lord your God (Lev 25:55).

Freeing a slave was above all called for when the reason for the enslavement was unjust: 'Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?' (Is 58:6). The actual year of freedom was the Year of Jubilee. (Jesus quoted this text in Luke 4:16–22 together with Isaiah 61:1–4 at one of his first public appearances, proclaiming that the fulfilment of the year of freedom had begun with him.)

The most comprehensive chapters on proclaiming freedom are found in Jeremiah and Nehemiah. In Jeremiah 34:8–22, a 'covenant' was made under King Zedekiah to release all slaves in the course of the Year of Jubilee, that is to say, to 'proclaim freedom' (Jer 34:17). When the 'leaders' take back their slaves, their sin brings God's anger on them (34:19–22). In the process, God expressly reminds them of his law of the Year of Jubilee (34:14–15, 17) and of the liberation of Israel from Egyptian slavery (34:13).

There were also times other than the Year of Jubilee when slaves were set free, as the second Old Testament report of a large-scale release of slaves shows. Nehemiah 5 reports a major action to forgive debt by the wealthy, by which many slaves were given their freedom and additional people were prevented from becoming slaves.

In summary, we can say that the Jews 'differentiate themselves from all peoples of antiquity ... in that they had the most highly advanced protective legislation for slaves.'<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Elisabeth Herrmann-Otto, *Sklaverei und*

#### 4. The Death Penalty for Slave Thieves and Slave Traders

There was no situation in which it was legal to bring someone into slavery through theft or sale. The death penalty was the punishment for such actions: 'Anyone who kidnaps another and either sells him or still has him when he is caught must be put to death' (Ex 21:16).<sup>13</sup> 'If a man is caught kidnapping one of his brother Israelites and treats him as a slave or sells him, the kidnapper must die. You must purge the evil from among you' (Deut 24:7).

This instruction by itself firmly and clearly condemns Greek, Roman, Islamic and the varieties of modern colonial slavery. Practically all the blacks in North and South America became slaves by abduction. The slave traders and their financiers in genteel banking houses and aristocratic families assaulted the lives of others and thus, according to Old Testament law, forfeited their own lives. Gary North points out correctly that this condemnation applied not only to the brutal slave hunters, but also to the respectable English and American citizens who financed the slave trade.<sup>14</sup>

#### 5. How an Individual Become a Slave?

So how did someone (legally) become a slave according to the Old Testament?

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*Freilassung in der griechisch-römischen Welt* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2009), 203; cf. 203-9.

<sup>13</sup> Gary North, *Victim's Rights: The Biblical View of Civil Justice* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), 65-84.

<sup>14</sup> North, *Victim's Rights*, 79.

One could become a slave by obligating oneself to remain a slave for life (Ex 21:5-6) or by being born as a slave (Gen 14:14; 15:3; 17:12-13, 27; Ex 23:12; Lev 22:11). Both ways, however, presupposed already existing slavery. This also applied to the purchase of non-Israelite slaves (Lev 25:44-45; Gen 17:12-13, 27; 37:28-36; 39:1). Here the issue is likewise the sale of slaves who in some other manner had become slaves. Normally only the following individuals could (involuntarily) become slaves/servants:

**Prisoners of war** (Num 31:7-12; Deut 20:10-14; 21:10-14; Gen 14:21). According to Deuteronomy 20:11, Israel always had to first offer peace to a besieged city, which then meant 'forced labour', that is, slavery with all its associated rights. If peace were refused, the Israelites sought to destroy the city. Given this situation, slavery was therefore an act of grace. This type of slavery is no longer possible in New Testament times, because in my opinion God no longer gives any people a command to destroy a city.

**Individuals unable to pay debts.** Here lies the focal point of Old Testament slavery, in which one sought to work off a debt to another.<sup>15</sup> In this case, a person could resort to putting himself in a position of slavery (Lev 25:39-55; Deut 15:12-15; cf. Ex 21:2-6) or give his children over into slavery (Ex 21:7-11; Neh 5:5) and then also, of course, could redeem his family or himself later. In 2 Kings 4:1 a 'creditor' takes two sons of a woman as slaves.

However, the process of slavery

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<sup>15</sup> Paul Volz, *Die Biblischen Altertümer* (Wiesbaden: Fourier, 1914, rpt. 1989), 505.

was not only a burden but also social welfare for an individual who due to no fault of his own became bankrupt. 'As elsewhere in the old Orient, slavery attributable to debts, in which the family would then get involved, was not actually a penalty; rather, it was civil law compensation to the creditor from the debtor for his inability to pay.'<sup>16</sup>

This Old Testament system must not be confused with debt servanthood today. Nowadays, debts are wrongfully caused and cannot be repaid, such as when fictitious user fees for tools in India exceed wages. In the Old Testament, we are dealing with real debts that had to be duly paid off or worked off.

**Criminal offenders.** In addition, an individual unable to pay his debts could be placed into slavery by a court order. Insofar as criminal offenses are concerned, slavery fulfilled the function that financial penalties and imprisonment should have today. This applied especially to thieves (Ex 22:1-3; Lev 25:40). Exodus 22:2 states, 'A thief must certainly make restitution, but if he has nothing, he must be sold to pay for his theft.'

## II. The New Testament

Many have been concerned about the fact that the New Testament asks slaves/servants to work particularly well and honestly for their masters (Tit 2:9-11; Eph 6:5-9; Col 3:22-4:1; 1 Tim 6:1-2; 1 Pet 2:18-25; 1 Cor 7:21-24). However, the justification is important:

'not only when their eye is on you and to win their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men' (Col 3:22). In other words, the actual employer is not the person who pays the wages, but God! The slave knows that in God's eyes his work is good and worthy. Was this approach designed to put the slave simply at the master's whim? Hardly.

Additionally, the New Testament turns against the slave trade. Michael Parsons writes, 'It should be emphasized that the New Testament writers did not overlook the errors of slavery. The Pauline list of lawbreakers includes slave traders (1 Tim 1:9-10). John includes slavery in his analysis of the errors which permeated Babylon, whereby the city would be judged (Rev 18:13).'<sup>17</sup>

The sharp admonitions given to masters can be understood only if based on this framework. The admonitions reminded the masters of their lawful responsibilities, because God does not look at a person's standing: 'Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favouritism. Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven' (Colossians 3:25-4:1).

The same Paul who encouraged slaves to work well and to prove their Christian faith as slaves also wrote, 'Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. Were you a slave when you were

<sup>16</sup> J. Scharbert, 'Strafe: II. Biblisch', col. 1099 in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, ed. Josef Höfer, Karl Rahner et al. (Freiburg: Herder, 1986), vol. 9.

<sup>17</sup> Michael Parsons, 'Slavery and the New Testament: Equality and Submissiveness', *Vox Evangelica* 18 (1988): 90.



called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave' (1 Cor 7:20–22). In Philemon, in fact, Paul vehemently seeks the freedom of a slave.<sup>18</sup>

In sum, Paul clearly recommends the emancipation of slaves and even fights for it. However, belief in God re-prioritizes one's values. It is not work that makes life valuable, but rather the Creator and Redeemer who gives the work. The penetrating power of Christianity consists in the fact that by pointedly calling upon the righteousness of God, it calls for and promotes righteousness. Even when outward freedom is denied, in thankfulness towards God our call to stop being a slave to sin continues and is not dependent on external circumstances. Internal freedom can and should precede external freedom. Yet the New Testament follows the Old Testament's rejection of slavery in the forms that we know from Greek, Roman, Islamic or modern colonial history.

### III. Slavery and Christians: From the Early Church to Abolition

The early church unsettled the Roman world and Hellenistic civilization, in which slavery was an inherent part of the structure of society.<sup>19</sup> It did this by

making it possible for slaves to have complete participation in their congregations and by setting slaves free or buying their freedom on a large scale.<sup>20</sup>

'With the demand for equality before God, which always taught Christians to see in other Christians only another individual with whom one was a slave of the Lord, the lowest standing became the standing of the Christian.'<sup>21</sup>

'Slaves were even able to become clerics, indeed even bishops.'<sup>22</sup> The most famous example is Bishop Kallist (d. 222 AD), who rose from slavery to become Bishop of Rome.<sup>23</sup> 'All the Roman bishops up to Victor I (189–198) may very well have been former slaves or Orientals.'<sup>24</sup>

Freeing slaves counted in the early church as a good work, Christians were publicly engaged in efforts relating to

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(Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2009); Stefan Knoch, *Sklavenfürsorge im Römischen Reich: Formen und Motive* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2009); Elisabeth Herrmann-Otto (ed.), *Unfreie Arbeits- und Lebensverhältnisse von der Antike bis in die Gegenwart: Eine Einführung* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 2009).

**20** Henneke Gülzow, 'Soziale Gegebenheiten der altkirchlichen Mission', in Heinzgünter Frohnes and Uwe W. Knorr, eds., *Die Alte Kirche* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1974), 227–28.

**21** Henneke Gülzow, *Christentum und Sklaverei in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt, 1969), 173.

**22** Adolf Harnack, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (Wiesbaden: VMA-Verlag, 1924), 193.

**23** Gülzow, *Christentum und Sklaverei*, 146–72.

**24** Johannes Neumann, 'Bischof I: Das katholische Bischofsamt', in Gerhard Krause and Gerhard Müller, eds., *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 6 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1980), 659.

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**18** Herbert M. Carson, *The Epistle of Paul to the Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 21–24.

**19** Elisabeth Herrmann-Otto, *Sklaverei und Freilassung in der griechisch-römischen Welt*

the destiny of slaves,<sup>25</sup> and slaves had full rights in the church.<sup>26</sup>

Gary North argues that slavery actually found its end in Christ on the cross but that only in the course of the Christian church's development did this realization grow.<sup>27</sup> This view should not be dismissed. The Christian faith has made various contributions to history that are not traceable back to an expressed biblical command or prohibition, such as time off from work on weekends, the end of the degradation of women, and the prohibition of child labour.

Even though the abolition of slavery in the Christian world took considerable time, the issue was disputed frequently over the centuries. For example, 'The Synod of Châlons in France declared the following in 650 AD: "The highest piety and religion demands that Christianity be completely freed from the chains of slavery." In 922 AD the Koblenz Synod in the East Frankish Empire came to the resolution that the sale of a Christian was to be considered murder.'<sup>28</sup>

'The first legal book in history to reject servitude and—a *fortiori*—slavery is the *Sachsenspiegel* (literal English translation is "Saxon Mirror"), dated 1235 AD. It was composed by Eike

Repgow. In it the lack of freedom is seen as an injustice which by practice of habit comes to be seen as just. Jesus' teaching on paying taxes to Caesar indicates that a coin belongs to the person whose picture it bears; since man bears God's image, he belongs to God and no one else.'<sup>29</sup>

During the European conquest of Latin America, the Pope (unsuccessfully) spoke out on behalf of the natives' human dignity and against their enslavement.<sup>30</sup>

With this background, we can understand why Protestant world missions and missionaries such as David Livingstone or Elias Schrenk engaged in massive efforts to end the slave trade and slavery. This form of slavery had absolutely nothing to do with what was allowed in the Old Testament. The anti-slavery movement in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did not primarily take its arguments and inspiration from human rights convictions but from religious beliefs.<sup>31</sup>

European involvement in the slave trade began in 1444 when a Portuguese expedition unloaded 235 slaves from Mauritius in Lagos, Nigeria. In 1510, the first fifty black slaves were brought from Spain to Haiti to work in the silver mines, and in 1619 the first

25 Gülzow, *Christentum und Sklaverei*, 173–76.

26 Harnack. *Die Mission und Ausbreitung*, 192–95; Gülzow, *Christentum und Sklaverei*, 76–146 reviews the question of slavery in early Christian documents and churches in detail, on the basis of the few available sources.

27 Gary North, *Tools of Dominion: The Case Laws of Exodus* (Tyler, TX: Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), 186–87.

28 Egon Flaig, *Weltgeschichte der Sklaverei* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2009), 157.

29 Flaig, *Weltgeschichte der Sklaverei*, 158.

30 Flaig, *Weltgeschichte der Sklaverei*, 164–65; Thomas Schirrmacher, *Rassismus* (Hänsler: Holzgerlingen, 2009), 59; Matthias Gillner, *Bartolomé de Las Casas und die Eroberung des indianschen Kontinents* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1997).

31 Jozef Punt, *Die Idee der Menschenrechte: Ihre geschichtliche Entwicklung und ihre Rezeption durch die moderne katholische Sozialverkündigung* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1987), 168.

slaves came to what is now the United States.

The transatlantic slave trade was a business triangle in which cheap goods, hard liquor and weapons from Europe were often exchanged for slaves from Africa, which were in turn exchanged for American colonial goods.<sup>32</sup> It was taken for granted that some of the slaves would die; they were valued and treated as goods, not as people. Between 1450 and 1900, one to two million slaves died during approximately 50,000 passages by ship.<sup>33</sup>

#### IV. The Role of Evangelicals in the Abolition of Slavery

From one day to the next, the British gave up 800,000 slaves in 1834.<sup>34</sup> How did this happen? Along with other economic and social factors, evangelical revivalism was significantly involved in bringing an end to slavery.<sup>35</sup> This

applies to the legal abolition of slavery in Great Britain as well as to the anti-slavery movement in the US.<sup>36</sup>

In 1688, Quakers in England and the US first demanded that all slaves be released. By 1780, all Quakers had released their slaves.<sup>37</sup> George Whitefield and John Wesley, who set Methodist revivalism in motion in England and the US, fought vehemently against the 'sin' of slavery. Wesley published *Thoughts upon Slavery* in 1774. Beginning in 1784, Methodists excommuni-

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Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006, esp. 333–450; Eric Metaxas, *Amazing Grace: William Wilberforce and the Heroic Campaign to End Slavery* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007 (unfortunately without footnotes). In the USA: Gilbert Hobbs Barnes, *The Anti-Slavery Impulse: 1830–1844* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1964); Mark A. Noll, *Das Christentum in Nordamerika. Kirchengeschichte in Einzeldarstellungen 4* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verl.-Anstalt, 2000), 114, 121–123; Donald G. Matthews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality 1780–1845* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 3–28 (on the Methodist split in the USA over the question of slavery). On both Great Britain and the USA: Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 205–41; Alvin J. Schmidt, *Wie das Christentum die Welt veränderte* (Gräfelfing: Dr. Ingo Resch, 2009), 325–48; Flaig, *Weltgeschichte der Sklaverei*, 199–201.

<sup>36</sup> S. Dave Unander, *Shattering the Myth of Race: Genetic Realities and Biblical Truths* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2000), 24–26, 36–40.

<sup>37</sup> On the leading role of the Quakers in Great Britain and the US, see John Wolfe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Wilberforce, More, Chalmers and Finney* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 198–99; Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition*, 200–235; Brown, *Moral Capital*, 391–450.

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<sup>32</sup> Christian Delacampagne, *Die Geschichte der Sklaverei* (Darmstadt: Wiss. Buchges, 2004), 112–24.

<sup>33</sup> Jochen Meissner, Ulrich Mücke and Klaus Weber, *Schwarzes Amerika: Eine Geschichte der Sklaverei* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung, 2008).

<sup>34</sup> Seymour Drescher, *Abolition: A History of Slavery and Antislavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 265.

<sup>35</sup> The most important literature on the role of Evangelicals in the anti-slavery movement is as follows. In Great Britain: Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition 1760–1810: The Story of the First American Revolution for Negro Rights* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1975); J. R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787–1807* (London: Routledge, 1998); Christopher Leslie Brown, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel

cated slaveowners.

In England, many friends of Wesley who were involved in politics became active in opposition to slavery. The most famous of these was William Wilberforce (1759–1833).<sup>38</sup> Others worthy of mention are Thomas Clarkson<sup>39</sup> and the former slave trader John Newton, who wrote a book against the slave trade<sup>40</sup> as well as ‘Amazing Grace’, which became the anthem of the anti-slavery movement.

Religious advocates for the abolition of slavery outdid modernists, such as the leaders of enlightened and revolutionary France, in this regard. Egon Flaig explains, ‘Those who carried on this battle are not to be found in Enlightenment philosophy; where one makes a find is in the spiritual realm of Protestant minorities.’<sup>41</sup> In contrast to the situation in France, scientific racism could not make progress in places where a strong evangelical movement insisted that all people had descended from a single progenitor, Adam, and were thus equal.<sup>42</sup>

**38** John White, ‘Christian Responsibility to Reform Society: The Example of William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect’, *Evangelical Review of Theology* 32, no. 2 (2008): 166–72; Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism*, 159–227; Metaxas, *Amazing Grace*. Wilberforce’s evangelical theology is expressed best in his book *Real Christianity* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1982).

**39** See in particular Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery*, 70–95.

**40** John Newton, *Thoughts upon the African Slave Trade* (London: J. Buckland and J. Johnson, 1788).

**41** Flaig, *Weltgeschichte der Sklaverei*, 199–200.

**42** George M. Fredrickson, *Rassismus: Ein historischer Abriss* (Hamburg: Hamburg Edi-

*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), the most famous abolitionist book in the US, was written by the daughter of the famous evangelical revivalist preacher Lyman Beecher. And this was not even the most radical book against slavery written by its author, Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811–1896).<sup>43</sup>

Alvon J. Schmidt estimates that in the US, two-thirds of the anti-slavery movement consisted of Evangelicals.<sup>44</sup> Jochen Meissner writes that ‘the Evangelical-sectarian origins of many European settlements in the territory of the present-day USA offered fertile ground for the spread of ideas which condemned slavery.’<sup>45</sup>

Evangelicals in Great Britain led the first large anti-slavery campaign in history, beginning in the 1780s. Their efforts demonstrated for the first time how a political minority without influence can assert its human rights concerns by mobilizing a population. In one of their campaigns, they collected about a million signatures.<sup>46</sup>

*Along with all the moral considerations, slavery was also not a profitable contributor to the economy; rather, in economic terms it produced a loss.* If slaves had been replaced by oxen, tools and a feudal levy system at the time when sugar cane plantations sprang up, the revenues and the profits would have

tion, 2004), 69–70.

**43** Ellen J. Goldner, ‘Stowe, Harriet Beecher’, in *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism*, vol. 3 (Detroit: Thomason Gale, 2008), 101–2.

**44** Schmidt, *Wie das Christentum die Welt veränderte*, 330–44.

**45** Meissner et al., *Schwarzes Amerika*, 198; see also p. 202.

**46** Drescher, *Abolition*, 202, 209, 220, 229.

**William Wilberforce** became a representative in the British House of Commons in 1780. He converted to evangelical Protestantism in 1784 on a trip through continental Europe and founded the Abolition Society to elevate morals and especially to abolish the slave trade. In a parliamentary meeting in 1789, Wilberforce, along with William Pitt, petitioned for the first time in the House of Commons to abolish the slave trade. Again in 1792 a petition was filed, this time successfully. Yet implementation was prevented due to war and the situation in the colonies. Not until 1807 did an act of Parliament end the British slave trade. Slave traders within the British sphere of control were viewed as pirates and punished. The US followed suit, and beginning in 1808 the slave trade was forbidden.

At that point Wilberforce set his

sights on implementing this prohibition in the rest of the civilized world. Upon his urging, Lord Castlereagh successfully raised the issue at the Congress of Vienna, eventually achieving agreements in which France, Spain and Portugal obligated themselves to forbid the slave trade.

After the slave trade was abolished, Wilberforce moved to ostracizing and eliminating slavery itself. In 1816, he presented a motion in Parliament to reduce the number of slaves in the British West Indies. The government began considering the emancipation of all slaves in 1823, and Wilberforce delivered impassioned speeches throughout the fierce debate until, in 1825, he had to retire due to health reasons. He died in 1833 and was buried in the church of the British crown, Westminster Abbey.

been much higher.<sup>47</sup> Slaves could not earn anything. Any additional effort was pointless, and thinking for themselves was of no benefit. Rather, in the best case, it was only of value to the master. 'During all of human history, slaves' passivity always led to the downfall of the system that made use of their services.'<sup>48</sup>

In 1776 the abolitionists received additional support from an unexpected

direction—a standard work of economics, Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*. Smith came to the conclusion that slavery was uneconomical, on the one hand due to the fact that it ruined the country, and on the other because the subsistence of slaves was more expensive than that of a free worker. However, he made it clear to which basis slavery, according to his own conviction, could be traced back: 'The pride of mankind misguides man to enjoy domination ... he will generally prefer the services of a slave to the services of a free man.'<sup>49</sup>

The American South, with its slave-based society, was economically poor in contrast to the slave-free North, even

<sup>47</sup> For details, see Henry Hobhouse, *Fünf Pflanzen verändern die Welt* (Frankfurt: DTV, 1987), 97; cf. the concrete calculations for a sugar plantation in Susanne Everett, *Geschichte der Sklaverei* (Augsburg: Bechtermünz Verlag, 1998), 74–75.

<sup>48</sup> Hobhouse, *Fünf Pflanzen verändern die Welt*, 233.

<sup>49</sup> Everett, *Geschichte der Sklaverei*, 137.

though some large plantation owners wallowed in wealth.<sup>50</sup> This should, however, not lead to the assumption that slavery was abolished because it was already in decline. More recent research shows that slavery was at a high point with respect to its profitability for those participating in it and that the number of transported and engaged slaves was higher than ever before. Additionally, slavery was abolished at the time when British pride was at its highest level.<sup>51</sup>

The abolition of slavery was advanced primarily by moral purists to whom the supposed economic consequences paled in comparison to the human dignity of those affected by slavery.<sup>52</sup> The French Revolution, meanwhile, left slavery in the colonies untouched and put down uprisings by slaves. Thus the Enlightenment did not make any significant contribution to the abolition of slavery.<sup>53</sup>

In 1975, Roger Anstey argued that evangelicals were so strongly opposed to slavery because they understood conversion and redemption to be a transfer from the slavery of sin into the freedom of the gospel, and for that reason they could only view slavery negatively.<sup>54</sup>

Christopher Leslie Brown writes in his monumental history of the abolition of slavery, *Moral Capital* (2006), that the role of evangelicals has been largely overlooked since Anstey's com-

prehensive investigation.<sup>55</sup> Seymour Drescher, author of a monumental history of the anti-slavery movement, agrees, noting that Wilberforce's role was especially suppressed.<sup>56</sup>

One reason for this failure to acknowledge evangelical contributions is that from about 1975 to 2000, the abolition of slavery was mainly accounted for in economic and social terms. Only since then did the view come to predominate which says that slavery was abolished at the time of its high point, that without the anti-slavery movement it would have still been able to continue for a long time, and that the decisive reasons were not primarily economic but rather derived from intellectual history.<sup>57</sup>

Additionally, evangelical women played a central role in the anti-slavery movement, because it was primarily an uprising of lay people and not of ecclesiastical or political office holders.<sup>58</sup>

William Gervase Clarence-Smith has depicted how the great religions of the world stood in reference to the abolition of slavery.<sup>59</sup> The first large-scale rejection of slavery occurred in the Protestant world. On the Catholic side, several popes opposed slave trading, but even in the papal states there were slaves. Not until 1839 did Pope Gregory VI turn against the trading of slaves (but still not against slavery in

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<sup>55</sup> Brown, *Moral Capital*, 342–45.

<sup>56</sup> Drescher, *Abolition*, 335–37, 377–80; see also Wolffe, *The Expansion of Evangelicalism*, 195–96.

<sup>57</sup> Meissner et al., *Schwarzes Amerika*, 174.

<sup>58</sup> Brown, *Moral Capital*, 343ff.

<sup>59</sup> William Gervase Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 219–34.

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<sup>50</sup> Everett, *Geschichte der Sklaverei*, 233–35.

<sup>51</sup> Drescher, *Abolition*, 121.

<sup>52</sup> Drescher, *Abolition*, 205–6, 331.

<sup>53</sup> Drescher, *Abolition*, 161–65; Meissner et al., *Schwarzes Amerika*.

<sup>54</sup> Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition*, 157–83.

itself). Finally, in 1888, when Brazil became the final Catholic country to abolish slavery, Pope Leo XIII turned against slavery itself and condemned Islamic slavery. Orthodox churches needed even longer to come to this view.<sup>60</sup>

In Buddhism (as in most Eastern religions), there was as in Christianity predominantly an early shift from slavery to serfdom. More official Buddhist rejections of slavery began only in the nineteenth century.<sup>61</sup>

## V. Slavery in the Islamic World

Slavery by Europeans was surely bad, but slavery in Islam was vastly more brutal. 'The largest slave traders and owners of slaves in history were the Arabs.'<sup>62</sup> Whereas many descendants of European slaves survived, the slaves of Islamic peoples were seldom able to increase and thus perished. As a result, many people think that only Western peoples held slaves. In contrast, as Tidiane N'Diaye writes, 'While the transatlantic slave trade lasted four hundred years, Arabs plundered the African continent south of the Sahara for thirteen hundred years. The largest portion of the millions of deported Africans died as a consequence of inhumane treatment and systematically used castration.'<sup>63</sup>

Egon Flaig says of Islamic slavery that it was the largest such system in world history: 'This first world economic system ... called for a steady and enormous influx of slaves. It was also for this reason that permanently fighting wars and incessantly attacking non-Muslim neighbors was of decisive importance.'<sup>64</sup>

N'Diaye explains that 'Arab Muslims plundered black people groups from the seventh up into the twentieth century', holding a monopoly on African slavery for almost ten centuries before the Europeans arrived and deporting almost ten million Africans.<sup>65</sup>

Moreover, Muslims were also quite willing to enslave Europeans. This was part of the reason for Europe's panic when the Turks stood before Vienna. From 1580 to 1680, an estimated 7,000 Europeans were enslaved every year and carried off to the Maghreb states.<sup>66</sup>

The centuries-long theological debate about the appropriateness of slavery that occurred among Christians never took place in the Islamic world.<sup>67</sup> N'Diaye suggests the reason for this absence: 'Simply stated, in the Arab-Islamic world a tradition of critique or even of self-criticism has simply been always missing, especially when it has to do with non-refuted practices of Islam.'<sup>68</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, 223–28.

<sup>61</sup> Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, 229ff.

<sup>62</sup> Walter Krämer and Götz Trenkler, *Lexikon der populären Irrtümer* (Frankfurt: Eichborn, 1997), 288.

<sup>63</sup> Tidiane N'Diaye, *Der verschleierte Völkermord: Die Geschichte des muslimischen Sklavenhandels in Afrika* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Row-

ohlt, 2010), 12.

<sup>64</sup> Flaig, *Weltgeschichte der Sklaverei*, 87.

<sup>65</sup> N'Diaye, *Der verschleierte Völkermord*, 211.

<sup>66</sup> Flaig, *Weltgeschichte der Sklaverei*, 28.

<sup>67</sup> Flaig, *Weltgeschichte der Sklaverei*, 199; Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*.

<sup>68</sup> N'Diaye, *Der verschleierte Völkermord*, 203; for rare exceptions, see Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, 232–34.

Western authors tend to treat the history of Islamic slavery with a velvet glove, and the topic is simply ignored by Muslim authors. Muslims have long denounced Christian slavery, but they usually forget to mention their own. At the World Muslim Congress in Mogadishu in 1964–1965, thirty-three Islamic countries maintained that they could not have fellowship with countries that operated imperialistically and supported the un-Islamic institution of slavery; however, in this connection they mentioned only Western countries and ignored their own cases.<sup>69</sup>

## VI. Conclusion

The Old and New Testaments did not

totally outlaw slavery in all circumstances, but their comprehensive provisions for the legal protection of servants and maidservants, as well as the right to be redeemed through the use of a slave's own possessions or by others, fundamentally distinguish the slavery accepted therein from the slavery of the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries and certainly from the illegal forms of slavery, primarily child labour and sex trafficking, that continue today.<sup>70</sup> Despite many twists and turns, Christians eventually reached the clear understanding that modern slavery was abhorrent to God and that all slaves should be set free.

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<sup>69</sup> Clarence-Smith, *Islam and the Abolition of Slavery*, 1–2.

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<sup>70</sup> On slavery in the contemporary world, see Thomas Schirrmacher, *Human Trafficking: The Return to Slavery*, 2nd ed. (New York: World Evangelical Alliance, 2017).



# Axioms of Universality and Particularity: A Critical Assessment of Karl Rahner and Clark Pinnock with Applications to Contemporary Mission

Sochanngam Shirik

Christians have always had to balance seemingly opposed tenets, such as the sovereignty of God and the free will of human beings, or the already and not-yet dimensions of eternal life. In doing so, over the centuries, believers have plotted paths that safely avoided doctrinal extremes. This is an important task; because all our beliefs are interrelated, we must find ways to affirm both poles of all such antinomies without compromising any of the other tenets we affirm.

Karl Rahner and Clark Pinnock also attempt to hold together two fundamental axioms, neither of which can be compromised: God's universal love for all humanity and the particular expression of his love in Christ's atoning work.<sup>1</sup> Rahner's approach affirms the

ability of other religions to mediate saving grace;<sup>2</sup> Pinnock proposes the possibility of the Holy Spirit's unmediated application of saving grace to the unevangelized.<sup>3</sup> Although their methodologies differ, the two theologians agree that the benefits of Christ's atoning work can be applied to the unevangelized because of what Pinnock calls the faith principle.<sup>4</sup>

Both Rahner and Pinnock argue that it is illogical and certainly unfair to make conscious acceptance of the atoning work of Christ the only way to salvation even for those living in con-

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1 Clark H. Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy: The Finality of Jesus Christ in a World of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 17; Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 5, trans. Karl-Heinz Kruger (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1966), 123.

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2 Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 10, trans. David Bourke (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1972), 46; Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 5:121.

3 Clark H. Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 199.

4 Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 106, 157, 168. Although Rahner does not use that term, the basic idea is present in his writings; see *Theological Investigations*, 10:45–46.

texts where Christianity has not had a historical presence.<sup>5</sup> After all, how can one trust in an unknown source of salvation? Instead of conscious acceptance of the work of the unknown Christ, they say, those who have not been presented with the gospel of Christ must exhibit an appropriate penitent response to God's objective demands that *are* known to them. Thus, one does not have to affirm and accept Christ's atoning work explicitly; instead, that work can be implicitly appropriated.

In this paper, I consider whether Rahner and Pinnock successfully hold together the two axioms of God's universal love and the particularity of Christ's atonement (hereafter simply 'the two axioms') as the means of salvation. I argue that although both theologians raise vital issues regarding the unevangelized, their emphasis on the faith principle, which emphasizes the possibility of implicit appropriation of Christ's work, de-emphasizes the importance of Christ as the explicit object of faith. Unintended consequences include the division of Christ's church into two distinct communities and the compromising of the inseparable operation of the triune God.

Rahner and Pinnock are representative of a broader stream of thought on the issue of how one receives salvation, known as *inclusivism*.<sup>6</sup> Although

inclusivism is not a monolithic position, I treat Rahner and Pinnock as representing an inclusivist position, each with a distinctive emphasis of their own. After explaining how Rahner and Pinnock attempt to address the two axioms, I offer a critique of their views and conclude with applications to Christian mission.

## I. Rahner and Pinnock on Universality and Particularity

Rahner and Pinnock reconcile the two axioms by positing the *implicit* exercise of faith to appropriate the benefits of Christ's atonement. Atonement, in simplest terms, is God's work through Jesus Christ, which culminated in his death on the cross for the redemption of creation. Let us consider precisely how Rahner and Pinnock attempt to apply the redemptive work of Christ on the cross to sinners.<sup>7</sup>

### 1. Rahner: Structural Inclusivism

Peter Schineller makes a helpful distinction between exclusivism and Rahner's version of inclusivism. He observes that whereas exclusivists see Christ and the church as both constitutive (i.e. indispensable and normative)

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inclusivism and restrictivist inclusivism, in his book *Christianity and World Religions: Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 19–25.

<sup>7</sup> For further discussion of this point, see David Hilborn, 'Atonement, Evangelicalism, and the Evangelical Alliance: The Present Debate in Context', in *The Atonement Debate: Papers from the London Symposium on the Theology of Atonement*, ed. Derek Tidball, David Hilborn, and Justin Thacker (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 15–34.

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<sup>5</sup> Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 5:121–23.

<sup>6</sup> See Christopher W. Morgan, 'Inclusivism and Exclusivism', in *Faith Comes by Hearing: A Response to Inclusivism*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 32–35. Gavin D'Costa identifies two types, structural

and exclusive mediators of salvation, Rahner, paradoxically, sees them as constitutive but not exclusive.<sup>8</sup> Rahner argues, 'It is only in Jesus Christ that this salvation is conferred, and through Christianity and the one Church that it must be mediated to all men.'<sup>9</sup> However, in contrast to exclusivism, Rahner holds that salvation is possible outside the explicit confession of Christ because every human, regardless of his or her spiritual condition, is endowed with God's 'supernatural existential' grace that enables and prompts the individual to reach out to God.<sup>10</sup>

Rahner's seemingly contradictory affirmations—of salvation through Christ and the church, following the Roman Catholic tradition, on one hand and of openness to other religions on the other hand—compelled him to develop a new understanding of the church.<sup>11</sup> He reasons that since God loves even those who have not heard the gospel and since everyone must be saved through the church, there must be some other way by which the unevangelized can become part of God's church.<sup>12</sup> Those who are already in the process of moving towards the true religion, Christianity, thereby, in Rahner's view, become part of the faith

community as anonymous Christians.<sup>13</sup>

Here Rahner is building on the idea of catechumens.<sup>14</sup> Just as catechumens' desire for baptism is counted as salvific in the event of their failure to perform the act due to no fault of their own, unevangelized persons' desire for the church (*votum ecclesiae*) is counted as salvific. Even though Rahner refers mainly to the Roman Catholic Church when he speaks of the 'church', his proposed group of anonymous Christians refers to people who have never heard the gospel, not Christians of other denominations. For him, once a person comes to encounter the gospel, that person's fate is determined by how he or she responds to the gospel and no longer by how he or she yields to the inner prompting of grace.<sup>15</sup> But until then, the unevangelized theists are Christians who have not yet confessed Christ explicitly.

Rahner believes that theists can be anonymous Christians because grace is available both within and outside the church. He explains, 'And hence we have every right to suppose that grace has not only been offered even outside the Christian Church ... but also that, in a great many cases at least, grace gains victory in man's free acceptance of it, this being again the result of

8 J. Peter Schineller, 'Christ and Church: A Spectrum of Views', *Theological Studies* 37, no. 4 (December 1976): 550–53.

9 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 10:31.

10 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 10:34–35.

11 Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 6, *Concerning Vatican Council II*, trans. Karl-Heinz Kruger and Boniface Kruger (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1974), 391.

12 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 6:391.

13 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 6:391–92.

14 Catechesis was a practice in the early church wherein people who had expressed their desire to follow Christ (the catechumens) underwent a rigorous process of discipleship. For an insightful discussion, see Alan Kreider, *The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 133–84.

15 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 5:121.

grace.<sup>16</sup>

Two assumptions undergird this claim. First, Rahner conflates grace and nature. For him, the natural man is endowed with a 'supernatural existential' ability,<sup>17</sup> an implicit grace ingrained in every human being that enables any of us to transcend our finitude and reach out to God without any additional, external infusion of grace. He believes that the creation is somehow endowed with grace by which humans can respond to God directly through the mediation of the Spirit, even without encountering Christ.<sup>18</sup>

Rahner's second assumption underlying his belief that one can access salvific grace outside the church<sup>19</sup> is that other religions can serve as a structure through which grace is mediated. For him, other religions are lawful religions like Israel, since they possess 'supernatural, grace-filled elements'.<sup>20</sup> He defines a lawful religion as 'an institutional religion whose "use" by man at a certain period can be regarded on a whole as a positive means of gaining the right relationship to God and thus for the attaining of salvation, a means

which is therefore positively included in God's plan of salvation'.<sup>21</sup>

Non-Christian religions like Israel (Rahner considers Israel a religion) contain errors yet are still capable of possessing a salvific significance. Until people come into contact with the gospel, non-Christian religions serve as a legitimate medium by which they can live in relationship to God in their particular situations.<sup>22</sup>

For Rahner, one can be part of God's 'unofficial church' by implicitly appropriating God's grace through available religious structures before he or she becomes part of the 'official church'. Once an 'unofficial' church member encounters the gospel, he or she can become part of the official ecclesial faith community by epistemologically embracing Christ's atoning work.

## 2. Pinnock: Modal Inclusivism

Pinnock, distancing himself from Rahner's structural inclusivism, labels his position 'modal inclusivism'.<sup>23</sup> He explains that his view 'does not claim that God *must* or always *does* make positive use of religion in drawing people. ... God *may* use religion as a way of gracing people's lives and that is *one* of God's options for evoking faith and communicating grace'.<sup>24</sup> But as with

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16 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 5:124.

17 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 10:36–38.

18 Daniel Strange, *The Possibility of Salvation among the Unevangelised: An Analysis of Inclusivism in Recent Evangelical Theology* (Carlisle, UK and Waynesboro, GA: Paternoster Press, 2001), 104.

19 When Rahner speaks of the church, he seems to have two categories in mind: visible and invisible. He says that people must be saved through the (visible) church, but he also says that grace is also available outside the church by which they can implicitly become members and be saved.

20 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 5:121.

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21 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 5:125.

22 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 5:127–31.

23 Pinnock also refers to his position as 'cautious inclusivism' to distinguish it from Rahner's version. Clark H. Pinnock, 'An Inclusivist View', in *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World*, ed. Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 99–100.

24 Pinnock, 'An Inclusivist View', 100.

Rahner, Pinnock's theological articulation is also driven by his conviction of God's love and desire for all to be saved.<sup>25</sup>

To harmonize the two axioms, Pinnock trusts in the principle of universal accessibility. He reasons, 'If God really loves the whole world and desires everyone to be saved, it follows logically that everyone must have access to salvation.'<sup>26</sup> However, instead of seeing other religions as the primary means through which God applies his grace, Pinnock considers the Holy Spirit capable of directly applying the blessing of atonement even to those outside any religious influence.<sup>27</sup>

By the 'faith principle', Pinnock means that 'people are judged on the basis of the light they have received and how they have responded to that light.'<sup>28</sup> To establish his point, Pinnock first corrects what he views as a Calvinist misunderstanding of the doctrine of election. Contra Calvinism, he says, 'Election has nothing to do with the eternal salvation of individuals but refers instead to God's way of saving the nation.'<sup>29</sup> He reasons that 'exclusivity, in the sense of restrictiveness of salvation', has no place in Christian doctrine since God has corporately elected all humanity.<sup>30</sup>

Coupling this idea of the corporate election of all humanity with the uni-

versal presence of the Spirit, Pinnock establishes a basis for universal access to salvation. He recognizes that 'the mission of the Spirit is oriented to the goals of incarnation [and that the] Spirit's mission is to bring history to completion and fulfillment in Christ.'<sup>31</sup> However, he does not grant any shift in how the Spirit operates even after the incarnation or resurrection, nor does he differentiate the work of the Spirit within and outside the Church. For him, the Spirit's operation continues to surpass the domain of the Church and the sphere of the Son.<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, access to grace is less of a problem for Pinnock because where the Son is absent, the Spirit continues to work. Due to this conviction, Pinnock is reluctant to adopt the term *filioque* ('and from the Son') even though he does not oppose its doctrinal concept. He believes that *filioque* tends to promote Christomonism,<sup>33</sup> the heretical view that Christ is the sole representation of God. For Pinnock, the work of the Spirit should not be limited to one segment of history; the Spirit continues to exercise its role of universal mediation even where the Son is absent. In this way, one can receive the blessing of atonement available through the Spirit by exercising implicit faith in God.

Both Rahner and Pinnock indicate that what God requires of the unevangelized is a positive response to the revelations to them. Therefore, the ontological work of Christ's atonement does not have to be epistemologically

25 Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 18.

26 Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 157.

27 Pinnock, 'An Inclusivist View', 100.

28 Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 158.

29 Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 25.

30 Pinnock, 'Divine Election as Corporate, Open, and Vocational', in *Perspectives on Election: Five Views*, ed. Chad Owen Brand (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2006), 313.

31 Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 194.

32 Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 196.

33 Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 196.

embraced. But whereas Rahner stresses the efficacy of other religions in securing salvation, Pinnock emphasizes the direct mediating ability of the Holy Spirit.

## II. Critical Dialogue with Rahner and Pinnock

In my dialogue with Rahner and Pinnock, I will rely most heavily on two voices from the same pair of denominations as these theologians: Gavin D'Costa (Roman Catholic) and Daniel Strange (Baptist). Certainly, Rahner and Pinnock have much to offer the Christian community in many areas of mission and theology. My focus here, however, is to point out a seeming missing link in their theological assessment.

### 1. The Separation of the Redeemed Community

Rahner's attempt to solve the conflict between the axioms of universality and particularity by developing a concept of anonymous Christians is a result of his distinctive hermeneutic, which is not without problems. The paradigmatic application of the lawful yet corrupted 'Israelitic religion'<sup>34</sup> to the New Testament unevangelized ignores the fact that Israelites were people under God's covenant whereas people of other religions are not. In responding to God, Israelites were responding to a specific revelation from God; Rahner's anonymous Christians are not.

Rahner also draws a parallel between lawful pre-Christian religions (Old Testament saints) and contem-

porary non-Christian religions (anonymous Christians).<sup>35</sup> This parallel seems to have inspired Pinnock and many inclusivists to develop the idea of pre-messianic Christians. But again, the comparison ignores salvation history. No Old Testament saints became God's people through, and by remaining in, their pagan religions.

Pinnock, therefore, is rightly sceptical of Rahner's positive affirmation of other religions. He believes that Rahner's approach arose more from his view of sacramental orientation, which even Vatican II did not recognize as a legitimate theological move.<sup>36</sup> Pinnock's point seems to be that since Roman Catholics believe that grace is mediated through sacraments, Rahner has gone a step further and treated non-Christian religious structures as sacraments.

Rahner's construal of the Spirit's mediation of grace through the desire for the church (*votum ecclesiae*) falls short of both historical practice and his own tradition. The catechumens to whom I referred earlier in this paper were people who had expressed their commitment to following Christ. Even though they were not yet baptized and thus not official members of the church, they were converts in the liminal state; according to Origen, they had left the bondage of Egypt and crossed the Red Sea even though they had not yet crossed the Jordan.<sup>37</sup>

According to Alan Kreider, one of the first duties of catechumens was to 'hear the gospel'—which he interprets

<sup>35</sup> Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 5:126-130.

<sup>36</sup> Pinnock, 'An Inclusivist View', 99.

<sup>37</sup> Kreider, *Patient Ferment*, 153.

<sup>34</sup> Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 5:126.

as most likely referring to learning ‘the rules of faith’, not just listening to the gospel for the first time.<sup>38</sup> The catechumens thus were permitted to go where unbelievers could not go, even though they did not participate in all aspects of Christian worship, as conversion was a long process taken seriously by the early church.<sup>39</sup>

Gavin D’Costa, a contemporary Roman Catholic theologian, argues that the desire for baptism among the catechumens implies an explicit knowledge of God and Christ that is not present in non-Christians, and that therefore the two cannot be equated.<sup>40</sup> He argues that Rahner’s affirmation of non-Christian religions, *per se*, as vehicles for salvation is not drawn from the Roman Catholic tradition.<sup>41</sup>

Is Rahner’s idea of ‘supernatural existential’ grace, mentioned above, biblically viable? The idea is somewhat ambiguous and has understandably fostered different interpretations. J. A. Di Noia, a Roman Catholic theologian,

provides a helpful explanation, differentiating between Augustine and Thomas Aquinas as to how they viewed the relationship between nature and grace. Whereas Augustine tended to place a wedge, so to speak, between nature and grace, Thomas was more inclined to see nature subsisting in, though not conflated with, grace.<sup>42</sup>

In line with Thomas’s vision, Di Noia argues, Rahner attempts to navigate between ‘extrinsicism’ (the Augustinian view that God’s grace is imposed on nature from outside) and contemporary alternatives that tend to conflate grace and nature.<sup>43</sup> Rahner recognizes the innate capacity of human beings, by virtue of being human, to transcend themselves and reflect on God. He attributes this innate human ability to divine grace, because grace is ‘the direct presence of God, the dynamism directed towards participation in the life of God’.<sup>44</sup>

But contrary to some progressive theologians and other interpreters, Rahner acknowledges that this natural knowledge of God must be supplemented by the supernatural knowledge of God that comes from ‘categorical revelation’—an expression of natural knowledge that climaxes in the revelation of Jesus Christ.<sup>45</sup> This careful

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38 Kreider, *Patient Ferment*, 153.

39 Kreider, *Patient Ferment*, 154, 176. This practice of catechesis started after the first century AD as greater numbers of pagans began to convert to Christianity. In the first century, while the apostles were alive, Christianity was more closely tied to Judaism, and thus Judaism served as a catechesis.

40 D’Costa, *Christianity and World Religions*, 22.

41 Gavin D’Costa, *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity: Faith Meets Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 101–5. The logical stretch of Rahner’s claim goes from *to* to *through* to *in spite of*: God reveals *to* and *through* other religions, and he also reveals *in spite of* Christianity. Indeed, such is the argument of Ryan Patrick McLaughlin, ‘Jonah and the Religious Other: An Exploration of Biblical Inclusivism’, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 48, no. 1 (2013): 83.

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42 J. A. Di Noia, ‘Karl Rahner’, in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997), 125.

43 Di Noia, ‘Rahner’, 126.

44 Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 6:51, 9:36–37.

45 Alister E. McGrath, ‘Karl Rahner’, in *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Thought*, ed. Alister McGrath (Cambridge, MA: 1993), 540–41.

delineation allows Rahner to bridge, in Di Noia's view, 'the continuity between human nature as divinely constituted in creation and human beings transformed by grace'.<sup>46</sup>

Rahner seems to have successfully navigated the polarity between transcendence and immanence about nature and grace.<sup>47</sup> However, he goes a step further with his principle of the 'transcendental existential', which permits the independent materialization of grace apart from any external divine intervention for all those who open themselves to this mystery, regardless of their exposure to the gospel.<sup>48</sup> Grace in this sense is not confined to the church and its sacraments; rather, grace is embedded in the fabric of history.<sup>49</sup>

This approach is different from the Reformed concept of common grace that operates on all spheres of life. It is even different from the Wesleyan understanding of prevenient grace. Although prevenient grace accommodates the concept of the universal operation of God's grace to the degree that all humankind is believed to be endowed with divine grace to respond to or reject God's gift of salvation, prevenient grace must point towards the redemptive act of Christ on the cross to materialize salvation. Prevenient grace grants a restored ability to respond to

God's provision of redemption through Christ, not a restored relationship.<sup>50</sup> In other words, when one considers the role of human action, one must equally emphasize the *single activity* of God.<sup>51</sup> Not so with Rahner. For him, the ability to respond to God is intrinsically embedded in humankind, such that people not exposed to the gospel can also, on their own, find God. Although he would attribute the self-transcending capability of humankind ultimately to God, he also leaves room for an active self-transcendence,<sup>52</sup> paving the way for his concept of anonymous Christians.

Quoting another Catholic, Han Balthasar, who has delivered 'a most biting attack' on Rahner's concept of anonymous Christians,<sup>53</sup> D'Costa argues that Rahner's view on this issue presents the 'danger of conflating nature and grace, and reducing revelation to a pre-determined anthropological system'.<sup>54</sup> Although Karen Kilby has contended that Balthasar's critique arises from misunderstanding and caricature of Rahner's position, I find his view on this particular point (and consequently D'Costa's) valid.<sup>55</sup> Rahner, in implying that the natural human can respond to

<sup>46</sup> Di Noia, 'Rahner', 126.

<sup>47</sup> See Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, 1:287–346.

<sup>48</sup> Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 16, trans. David Morland (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 40–41.

<sup>49</sup> Bruce Demarest, *The Cross and Salvation: The Doctrine of Salvation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1977), 61.

<sup>50</sup> Christopher Payk, *Grace First: Christian Mission and Prevenient Grace in John Wesley* (Toronto: Clements Academia, 2015), 60–62.

<sup>51</sup> Kenneth J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2007), 76.

<sup>52</sup> Simon Maria Kopf, 'Karl Rahner on Science and Theology', *Philosophy & Theology* 29, no. 2 (2017): 327.

<sup>53</sup> Karen Kilby, *Karl Rahner: Theology and Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 116.

<sup>54</sup> D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions*, 21.

<sup>55</sup> Kilby, *Karl Rahner*, 118.



God without any external prompting of grace, minimizes the transcendental empowerment from God that natural man needs.<sup>56</sup> For Rahner, transcendental revelation is infused into human nature to such an extent that humans have the intrinsic capacity to decide their destiny. Although some Christians, such as a Wesleyan or an Arminian, might agree with Rahner that humanity has now the capacity to choose their destiny, they differ from Rahner in affirming that such ability is a gift made possible because of the atoning work of Christ on the cross and that humankind's destiny is still decided based on how they respond to God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ.

Another reason why D'Costa denies Rahner's position, and inclusivism in general, is that inclusivism tends towards pluralism by separating truth—ontology (what is true), ethics (what is right), and epistemology (how we know)—from the mediator, Christ, and his church.<sup>57</sup> Rahner, in allowing other religions to mediate grace, thereby undermines Christ's role as the epistemological foundation for salvation.

Thomas Noble follows D'Costa's path in critiquing Rahner's separation of ontology, ethics and epistemology. Noble inquires into how the issue of epistemology is resolved if an unevangelized good Muslim or Hindu can be saved without knowing Christ. He asked, '[One may] be united to Christ through the universal action of grace (ontology), and he may show that in his moral life (ethics), but how can one say

the epistemology is included if he does not *know* Christ?'<sup>58</sup>

D'Costa's commitment to the epistemological and ontological necessity of Christ's atonement for salvation is not without its own problems, as he resolves the chasm by appealing to the possibility of postmortem evangelism and conversion. But the point here is that D'Costa connects ontology, epistemology and ethics to Christ whereas Rahner's inclusivism does not. Rahner divides the church into two groups: Christians who embrace Christ through explicit confession and Christians who embrace Christ unknowingly through implicit faith.

We should not allow Rahner's optimistic attempt to bridge the axioms of universality and particularity to compromise our Trinitarian theology or our ecclesiological orientation. What God does in this dispensation, he does through the redeemed community of God, which is the bride of Christ. As D'Costa correctly points out, 'The Holy Spirit's presence within other religions is both intrinsically Trinitarian and ecclesiological.'<sup>59</sup> We agree with D'Costa when he asserts that '*as far as we know* the conditions of salvation require *solus Christus, fides ex auditu, and extra ecclesiam nulla salus* [salvation is by Christ alone, faith comes from hearing, and there is no salvation outside the church]' (emphasis in original).<sup>60</sup> We will focus further on the issue of

<sup>56</sup> Strange, *The Possibility of Salvation among the Unevangelised*, 93–105.

<sup>57</sup> D'Costa, *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity*, 22.

<sup>58</sup> T. A. Noble, 'Only Exclusivism Will Do: Gavin D'Costa's Change of Mind', *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 48, no. 1 (2013): 66.

<sup>59</sup> D'Costa, *The Meeting of Religions and the Trinity*, 110.

<sup>60</sup> D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions*, 23.

the Trinitarian economy in examining Pinnock.

## 2. Separating the Inseparable Operation of the Trinity

My most significant qualm with Pinnock's modal inclusivism is that he takes a Christological approach from a pneumatological paradigm. Pinnock's refusal to distinguish the economic work of the Holy Spirit before and after the incarnation overlooks the triune economy in the progress of redemptive history. The Bible depicts the Trinity in such a way that each person occupies a distinctive yet unified role. For instance, only the Son is incarnated, and only the Holy Spirit is distinctly manifested to the believers at Pentecost, but each person of the Trinity is involved in the action of the other. This unique yet unified role is firmly established and specific to redemptive history.

The role of the Spirit in this current age, as far as the Bible reveals to us, is intricately linked to the ministry of Christ. The Bible explicitly commands us to preach Jesus, since eternal life comes from believing in Jesus as Lord and Saviour (John 20:31). However, Pinnock argues that 'the saving grace of God can be effective through a person's relationship to God as creature in advance of conversion to Christ.'<sup>61</sup> Pinnock thus claims that even in the absence of Christ, one can relate to God in a salvific manner. Such attribution of the Spirit's saving role in the absence of the Son ignores the Christological emphasis of Scripture.

Daniel Strange, a Baptist theologian

who has extensively engaged and continues to engage with Pinnock,<sup>62</sup> points out that 'the Spirit cannot point to Christ where Christ is not known.'<sup>63</sup> He acknowledges that in any involvement of the divine person, at any redemptive event, the whole Trinity is involved, because each person indwells the others entirely. Therefore, to know the Son is to know the Father and the Spirit.<sup>64</sup> However, Strange argues, Pinnock cannot claim that knowing the Spirit is knowing the Son, since in Pinnock's theology the Son is absent. It is *only* in knowing Christ that we begin to know God's trinity.<sup>65</sup>

I find Strange's argument credible here because even though evangelicals have entertained a nuanced understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, they have unanimously upheld the principle of divine simplicity. The oneness of the Godhead cannot be collapsed into a single entity (which leads to modalism) nor can the Trinity be separated into three distinct personalities (which leads to tri-theism). Where any one member of the Trinity is present, the other two are also.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Strange's engagement with Pinnock started with his dissertation research, later published as *The Possibility of Salvation Among the Unevangelised*. He again interacts with Pinnock substantially in his *Their Rock Is Not like Our Rock: A Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), followed by many articles.

<sup>63</sup> Strange, *The Possibility of Salvation among the Unevangelised*, 247.

<sup>64</sup> Strange, *The Possibility of Salvation among the Unevangelised*, 231.

<sup>65</sup> Strange, *The Possibility of Salvation among the Unevangelised*, 232.

<sup>66</sup> Robert Letham, 'The Triune God, Incarnation, and Definite Atonement', in *From Heaven*

<sup>61</sup> Pinnock, 'An Inclusivist View', 106.

Moreover, the Bible also indicates that we relate to God primarily through our acceptance of the Son. Must one know the precise nature of the relationship of the triune God to know God? No. But is it necessary to present the triune God by focusing on the redemptive work of Christ on the cross for others to come to faith? I think the answer to this question is yes. Pinnock, by arguing that Christ's work can save ontologically through the mediating grace of the Holy Spirit appropriated by implicit faith, unnecessarily dissects the triune economy.

Does Pinnock's implicit faith principle concur with the revealed biblical picture of faith? I think not. In the biblical account, faith has God as an object (Heb 11:6—in the New Testament, faith is centred on Christ), good works as the evidence (James 2:14–26), and God's Word as the criterion or foundation (Rom 10:17). Although Pinnock accommodates the first two aspects, he ignores the basis for them. We know about God, Jesus' work, and the role of good works from the revealed text of Scripture. This affirmation does not undermine the role of the Holy Spirit in understanding the Word, but it emphasizes that the Spirit and the Word work in conjunction, not in contradiction. Faith, as presented in the Bible, is never a faith without content.

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*He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 440. Letham explains the doctrine of divine simplicity as the belief that 'God is not divisible into parts less than the whole of who he is [such that] each of the three Trinitarian persons is the whole God, and all that can be said to be God is present in each person.'

Even the implicit faith of Old Testament saints like Job, to whom Pinnock appeals,<sup>67</sup> focuses on submitting to God as revealed to them, not faith without any content. Herbert L. Swartz, commenting on faith in the synoptic Gospels, makes an observation that is applicable to all of Scripture: 'As for the ancient Israelites so for the new people of God, faith means primarily confident trust based in God's promise and as understood through his Word' (emphasis added).<sup>68</sup> Faith in itself is not sufficient to save us. As John Frame puts it, faith is the means or instrument by which we reach out to God's grace.<sup>69</sup> But in both the Old and New Testaments, saving faith always has specific content tied to God's special revelation.<sup>70</sup>

Can one, in defence of Pinnock, argue that he allows for an explicit confession of Christ's sacrifice, albeit in the next life, for the pre-messianic believers—the unevangelized who implicitly exercise faith? He does indicate that even though all may have the opportunity to repent after death, not all will have the desire to do so. One's desire will be consonant with one's life here. Thus, while the multitude of pre-messianic believers will embrace Christ, the wicked will not change their

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<sup>67</sup> Pinnock, 'An Inclusivist View', 119.

<sup>68</sup> Walter A. Elwell, *Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 237.

<sup>69</sup> John M. Frame, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2013), 955.

<sup>70</sup> For a helpful discussion of this topic, see Steven J. Wellum, 'Saving Faith: Implicit or Explicit?' in *Faith Comes by Hearing: A Response to Inclusivism*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 142–83.

mind.<sup>71</sup> Although Pinnock's attempt to reconcile the epistemological and ontological necessity of atonement by postponing the fate of the unevangelized to the next life has appealed to many evangelical scholars, a postmortem encounter still does not solve the difficulty of the two axioms. It just delays the predicament.<sup>72</sup>

### III. Theological Assessment

I have indicated that Rahner and Pinnock's attempts to solve the axioms of universality and particularity fail to do justice to the biblical narrative. I have drawn on other scholars, primarily D'Costa and Strange, in support of this critique. At the same time, I have noted the tenuous nature of solutions that rely on the doctrine of postmortem conversion. D'Costa's concept of a postmortem encounter with Christ rests mainly on the Roman Catholic understanding of Jesus' 'descent into hell'.<sup>73</sup> This position, however, has its own weaknesses.<sup>74</sup> Even Pin-

nock, who also believes in the idea of a postmortem encounter, admits that the biblical evidence for this view 'is not abundant'.<sup>75</sup> John Sanders asserts regarding 1 Peter 3:19–4:6, a pivotal text for the doctrine of postmortem encounter, 'I am intrigued ... but not persuaded that the text teaches postmortem evangelization'.<sup>76</sup>

But despite the uncertain nature of this alternative explanation, D'Costa's critique of Rahner remains valid. Noble, a Wesleyan, shares D'Costa's view, contending that Rahner must provide some explanation of how the evangelized come to be saved at some point; since his model does not seem to resolve this difficulty in this life, the only explanation would be a postmortem conversion.<sup>77</sup> Even a Catholic universalist theologian like Gerald O'Collins, who has great respect for Rahner, finds the concept of anonymous Christians unsatisfactory.<sup>78</sup> Rahner does have

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but are the logical outcome of synthetic reading of Scripture. D'Costa must prove biblically that the descent into hell is theologically sustainable for his thesis to stand. However, his claim is unconvincing. Ronald Nash questions how one can defend a doctrine of such importance based on a few debated biblical passages while ignoring clear teaching that death comes first and then judgment (e.g. Heb 9:27). Gabriel J. Fackre, Ronald H. Nash, and John Sanders, *What about Those Who Have Never Heard? Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 134.

**75** Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 169.

**76** John Sanders, 'Response to Fackre', in Fackre, Nash and Sanders, *What about Those Who Have Never Heard?* 105.

**77** Noble, 'Only Exclusivism Will Do', 66, 70.

**78** Gerald O'Collins, *Salvation for All: God's Other Peoples* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 259.

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**71** Pinnock, *A Wideness in God's Mercy*, 170–171.

**72** One evangelical who has approached this issue of implicit faith and postmortem conversion is Kevin Paul Kinghorn, a Wesleyan, in *The Decision of Faith: Can Christian Beliefs Be Freely Chosen?* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 162–87.

**73** D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions*, 161–211.

**74** D'Costa, a Catholic, anticipates objections from evangelicals like Wayne Grudem, who argues that the doctrine of descent into hell was neither explicitly taught in Scripture nor unanimously embraced by the early church Fathers. D'Costa argues (in *Christianity and World Religions*, 164) that the hypostatic union, the Immaculate Conception, and purgatory are also not explicitly taught in the Bible

some supporters, such as Joseph Wong, who argues that the idea of anonymous Christians could contribute to healthy religious dialogue between Christianity and Eastern traditions.<sup>79</sup> But the criticisms lodged by D'Costa seem hard to refute.

As for Daniel Strange's response to Pinnock, it is compelling to the extent that one is sympathetic to his Reformed stance. Strange espouses a more classical Trinitarian approach, but many scholars today question whether this is the right way, let alone the only way, to approach the doctrine of the Trinity. Those more open to the concept of the social Trinity, such as Pinnock, or the relational Trinity may be reluctant to embrace the Trinitarian implications of Strange's argument, although I do not see a convincing reason how they can deny his conclusion.<sup>80</sup>

On the other hand, theologians such as Damayanthi Niles and Amos Yong would not find Strange's paradigm attractive because it does not allow the Holy Spirit to act independently of, though consistently with, the Father and the Son. Niles would instead be open to the 'mystery and majesty of

God'<sup>81</sup> and Yong to Irenaeus' concept of the 'two hands of the Father' in which both the Son and the Spirit play distinct roles without being constrained by the Christocentric Trinitarian approach.<sup>82</sup>

The second assumption underlying Strange's approach is the denial that God is under obligation to make salvation accessible to everyone.<sup>83</sup> Strange maintains this position because he believes that the means and the end of salvation cannot be separated. For him, the means is the message of the gospel through the proclamation of God's people.<sup>84</sup> As far as the explicit biblical revelation is concerned, Strange argues, one is not obligated to provide a justification for the universal accessibility of the gospel, as salvation is offered only in Christ through the proclamation of the gospel.

Whether one subscribes to Strange's wholesale Reformed paradigm (if there is such a thing) or not, I believe that his Christocentric-Trinitarian emphasis can be affirmed. Timothy Tennent

<sup>79</sup> Joseph H. Wong, 'Anonymous Christians: Karl Rahner's Pneuma-Christocentrism and an East-West Dialogue', *Theological Studies* 55, no. 4 (December 1994): 609–37. Kilby, *Karl Rahner*, 115–28, claims that Rahner's accusers have misunderstood him.

<sup>80</sup> For different views on this subject, see Oliver Crisp and Fred Sanders, 'Introduction: Issues in the Doctrine of the Trinity', in *Advancing Trinitarian Theology: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 14–16; Thomas H. McCall et al., *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 13–16.

<sup>81</sup> Damayanthi Niles, 'It Is Time to Dance with Dragons', *International Review of Mission* 100, no. 393 (November 2011): 273–74.

<sup>82</sup> Amos Yong, *Discerning the Spirit(s): A Pentecostal-Charismatic Contribution to Christian Theology of Religions* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 61–63. Yong's Pneumatocentric theology follows a path set forth by Wong in 'Anonymous Christians', as Yong acknowledges.

<sup>83</sup> Strange, *The Possibility of Salvation among the Unevangelized*, 305–6.

<sup>84</sup> Daniel Strange, 'Slain for the World? The "Uncomfortability" of the "Unevangelized" for a Universal Atonement', in *From Heaven He Came and Sought Her: Definite Atonement in Historical, Biblical, Theological, and Pastoral Perspective*, ed. David Gibson and Jonathan Gibson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 599–600.

recognizes that an overemphasis on a pneumatological approach, such as Yong's, violates the Christological focus of the Bible.<sup>85</sup> For Tennent, any articulation of Christian theology must occur within a Trinitarian frame, and a Christocentric-Trinitarian approach best accounts for the biblical paradigm.<sup>86</sup> In making this claim, Tennent echoes Lesslie Newbigin, who was concerned for enabling Jesus to be understood and interpreted in such a way as to fit within the pre-understanding of other worldviews. Therefore for Newbigin, even though he remained agnostic about the destiny of the unevangelized, placing Jesus within the Christian worldview, which by necessity is Trinitarian, guards against ambiguity and upholds the uniqueness of Christ and Christianity.<sup>87</sup> We exalt the triune God when we exalt Christ.

#### IV. Applications to Mission

As I stated at the beginning of this paper, all our beliefs are interrelated, so adopting a theological position in one area affects many other views. This is true with Rahner and Pinnock. We have seen how Rahner's view of the 'supernatural existential' affects his concept of salvation. It is also relevant that Rahner lived and wrote during a time when Christianity, particularly Catholicism, was in transition. What Phil-

ip Jenkins calls 'the next Christendom' was already beginning to take shape by the mid-twentieth century.

Rahner, like others, recognized the unfeasibility of the Roman Catholic Church's exclusive claim that outside the church there is no salvation. He needed to find a way to reconcile his roots as a Roman Catholic and his conviction that God's saving activities could not be restricted to the Roman Catholic Church alone. To do so, he compared the transition from European/American Christianity to world Christianity with the first-century transition from 'Judaean-Christianity' to Gentile Christianity.<sup>88</sup> He argued that this latter transition entailed a theological and cultural caesura in which many old practices were abolished and new ones adopted.<sup>89</sup> Likewise, he continued, this new era of Christianity, which he saw as being inaugurated by Vatican II, calls for a reinterpretation of dogma.<sup>90</sup>

There is no doubt that Rahner accurately perceived the dawn of a new Christian era. However, to account for the historical unfolding of Christianity as he did overlooks some crucial biblical concepts, as discussed above. The theological reinterpretations in which Rahner engaged to accommodate changing times end by compromising Christian ecclesiology as understood both by the Roman Catholic Church and many evangelical Christians.

The tendency for theological modification in one area to affect other areas is observed in Pinnock's theological

**85** Timothy C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 216–17.

**86** Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 223.

**87** Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 26–27.

**88** Karl Rahner, *Concern for the Church* (New York: Crossroad, 1981), 85.

**89** Rahner, *Concern for the Church*, 84–85.

**90** Rahner, *Concern for the Church*, 84–86.

articulation too. His theological shift was so starkly visible in his writings and lectures that one of his students, Paige Patterson, wrote, 'But with Pinnock, one never knows which Pinnock we are hearing. Do we listen to "early Pinnock", "middle Pinnock", "late Pinnock", or just the "contradictory Pinnock" of his latest book on [inerrancy], *The Scripture Principle*?'<sup>91</sup> Adrian Rogers, Pinnock's colleague, seconded this critique,<sup>92</sup> and Pinnock himself acknowledged a shift in position.<sup>93</sup>

Some would argue that Pinnock and Rahner became less parochial and more inclusive in their theological perspectives and would thus view their shifts as a positive development, but others are less pleased. In retrospect, we can see Pinnock's shift from a more exclusivist position to an inclusivist view as connected to his loss of full confidence in the inerrant Word of God.<sup>94</sup> In this case, a shift in his view of Scripture caused him to reconsider other areas and make further adjustments. This fact reminds us to be cautious in how we articulate our beliefs, but it also reinforces the importance of anchoring our theology on the revealed Word of God, even where its statements may seem uncharitable and illogical to

some critics. The idea that salvation is found only through the confession of Christ and repentance from sin may be unpopular in some places, but it is also a core feature of biblical revelation.

Even those who argue that the two axioms must be sustained together without emphasizing one over the other can end up leaning towards one of them. For example, D. Preman Niles, a Sri Lankan theologian, contends that we must hold together in tension the evidence of God's presence in the lives and religions of people of other faiths and our calling to witness to what God has done in Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world and all its people.<sup>95</sup> But he goes on to argue that it is colonial and parochial to insist that people can find their way to the messianic banquet only through the church.<sup>96</sup> Niles is seeking to bridge the gap between people of different religions, but his declaration that the Christian church's claim to uniqueness is parochial represents a theological presupposition of his own, a significant reinterpretation of the particularity of God's redemptive work from the history of Israel through the incarnation of Christ. In other words, he does not hold the two axioms together at all; instead, he favours one by imposing his theological understanding.

The second lesson we can draw from this debate concerns the need for our mission to be Trinitarian by presenting Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. We must uphold the doctrines of *homoousion* (each person of the Trin-

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91 Paige Patterson, 'Response', in *The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy, 1987* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1987), 92.

92 Adrian Rogers, 'Response', in *The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy, 1987* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1987), 101–5.

93 Clark H. Pinnock, 'What Is Biblical Inerrancy?' in *The Proceedings of the Conference on Biblical Inerrancy, 1987* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1987), 74.

94 Patterson, 'Response', 92.

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95 D. Preman Niles, *From East and West: Rethinking Christian Mission* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2004), 7.

96 Niles, *From East and West*, 9, 121–22.

ity possesses the same essence), *autotheos* (each is God in his own right), and *perichoresis* (each dwells in the other). We must also avoid the error of Christomonism that neglects the work and power of the Holy Spirit, for none can come to Christ without the convicting ministry of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). And we must avoid the pneumatocentric approach that in effect banishes Christ to the periphery. Salvation is from the Father through the Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. We must not separate the inseparable operation of the Trinity.

Third, our mission must be Christocentric. This does not mean emphasizing the Son to the neglect of the Father and the Spirit, but a Christ-centred theology is faithful to the biblical text. In the divine economy and in salvation history, each person of the Trinity has a defined and irrevocable role (*taxis*). In this current dispensation, the divine economy exalts Christ. Salvation comes from accepting Christ as Saviour and Lord, 'and there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved' (Acts 4:12).

Fourth, as far as we know, salvation comes by explicitly confessing Christ as one's Lord and Saviour. We must therefore not separate the ontological from the epistemological necessity of Christ's atonement. If faith comes from hearing and hearing through the word of Christ (Rom 10:17), and if people cannot hear without someone preaching (Rom 10:14), it is incumbent upon us to preach the gospel. Going beyond this to propose alternate means of attaining salvation is speculation.

Fifth, there exists only one community of God that is redeemed by

the blood of Christ. This community is formed as people confess Christ and submit to his lordship. Our goal is to proclaim the message of Christ by inviting others into this inclusive yet exclusive community. We must, therefore, be cautious of uncritically affirming such movements as 'churchless Christianity'.

Lastly, as we carry out the Christian mission, we must maintain a posture of humility and dependence on God. As far as we know, salvation comes only by explicit confession of Christ, but that statement does not fully resolve the issue. As John Sanders rightly asks, if we are willing to entertain the possibility that infants can be saved without explicit faith in Christ, why end there? Could God employ other extraordinary means to bring people to salvation?<sup>97</sup> While seeking to eliminate inconsistencies in our theology, we must also remain humble and open to correction and modification as new evidence emerges.

## V. Conclusion

Rahner and Pinnock represent two distinctive approaches to reconciling God's universal love of God for all people and the particular expression of that love through his Son. Rahner stresses the ability of non-Christian religions to mediate saving grace, while Pinnock emphasizes the direct mediating ability of the Holy Spirit. Both appeal to implicit faith as means of receiving salvation. Even though both raise some critical issues about the

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<sup>97</sup> John Sanders, *No Other Name: An Investigation into the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 287–305.



status of the unevangelized, their positions risk dichotomizing the redeemed community and compromising the inseparable operation of the triune God by undermining the explicit knowledge of Christ as the object and ground of faith. Therefore their approaches to reconciling the two axioms, unless reworked in a more biblically faithful way, do not seem viable.

# The Holy Spirit and the Church as the Ordinary Means of Salvation

Steven Griffin

## I. Introduction

The American historian of religion Darryl Hart has observed that whereas sixteenth-century Protestants like John Calvin and Martin Luther assumed that the Church was ‘an objective medium of grace outside of which there was no ordinary possibility of salvation’, later Protestants like Jonathan Edwards and Charles Hodge came to think of it as an essentially ‘subjective, invisible quality shared by the truly converted’.<sup>1</sup> The impact of this shift on the modern evangelical movement should not be underestimated.

Many followers of Jesus today assume that ‘a personal relationship with Christ’ might begin and be maintained with little or no reference to the Church. Faith statements of not a few denominations define the church primarily, if not exclusively, in invisible terms. And the ordinary language we

use to speak of the means to be saved suggests an exaggerated concern to avoid confusion between the Church and salvation.

One example will suffice. On a Sunday morning some years ago in a large international, evangelical church in Southeast Asia, I took note of these words from one of the elders: ‘Salvation does not come through the Church, but through a relationship with Jesus.’ Just the following Sunday, as my family and I were being welcomed into that congregation, another elder read a statement that conveyed something rather different:

The Church is of God, and will be preserved to the end of time, for the conduct of worship, the due administration of His Word and Sacraments, the maintenance of Christian fellowship and discipline, the edification of believers, and the conversion of the world. People of every age and circumstance stand in need of the means of grace which it alone supplies.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> D. G. Hart, ‘The Church in Evangelical Theologies, Past and Future’, in M. Husbands and D. Treier, eds, *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 25.

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<sup>2</sup> Taken from *The United Methodist Hymnal*:

While the point made on the first Sunday was surely meant to safeguard the truth that the Church is not the source of salvation, or that salvation is obtained through the mere performance of ceremonies, sadly it reinforced the all-too-common notion that a relationship with Jesus is an essentially unmediated, Church-free affair. In the end, the precise way in which one was to approach the means of grace supplied by the Church *alone* without recourse to the Church as some sort of means of grace was left unclear.

Protestants are not alone in undermining the idea that sinners should not expect to be saved apart from the Church—that is, apart from that visible community that is gathered by, and sent into the world through, the proclamation of God's Word and celebration of the Gospel sacraments.<sup>3</sup> Embracing the notion that non-Christian religions are taken up and fulfilled in the revelation of God in Christ, Karl Rahner spoke on behalf of those who are prepared to consider these, to varying degrees, valid ways of salvation. That is, on the assumption that non-Christian religions contain 'supernatural elements arising out of the grace which is given to men as a gratuitous gift on account of Christ', the Christian could

approach members of those groups as 'anonymous' Christians who in and through their respective traditions participate in the same salvation.<sup>4</sup>

With more pluralistic assumptions about the religions, i.e. without assuming that the religions find their fulfilment in Christ, but still speaking in Christocentric terms, Raimon Panikkar spoke for those who would see the religions as complementary, drawn by Christ towards a single end which has not yet been revealed. Thus Panikkar claimed that we cannot say 'how Christianity will look when the present Christian waters and the Hindu river merge into a bigger stream, where the peoples of the future will quench their thirst—for truth, for goodness, for salvation'.<sup>5</sup>

Even if we do not follow Rahner and Panikkar in this matter, however, we tend to think of the Holy Spirit not primarily as one who is sovereign in relation to the nations, with the liberty to confront or fulfil this or that element within culture 'from above' or 'from without', through means of his choosing, but rather as the One who works directly and immediately 'from below' or 'from within', i.e. in the heartbeat of religion itself. Hence the tendency to overlook the ways in which the religions have a way of distorting 'the light that gives light to everyone' (Jn 1:9) and, as Pope Benedict XVI pointed out in *Dominus Iesus*, to disregard the

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*Book of United Methodist Worship* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 1993), 45.

<sup>3</sup> According to John Calvin, 'Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists.' *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans. F. L. Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 1023.

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<sup>4</sup> K. Rahner, 'Christianity and the Non-Christian Religions', in *Theological Investigations*, vol. V. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1966), 121, 131–33.

<sup>5</sup> R. Panikkar, 'The Unknown Christ of Hinduism', in *Christianity and Other Religions* (Glasgow: Collins, 1980), 144.

'superstitions and errors' in them that 'constitute an obstacle to salvation'.<sup>6</sup>

Under the circumstances, a more *Chalcedonian* way forward is called for if we are to understand the relationship between the Church and salvation rightly. That is, we must strive neither to confuse realities that have their own integrity nor to separate realities that are meant to be held together. Thus, on the one hand, the Church and salvation are not to be confused, for to say that the Church is God's ordinary instrument of salvation is not to imply that God is bound by the regular outward means, for he may save through external means of his choosing those outside the Church who call on him for mercy.

As J. I. Packer explains, although the Bible 'sets forth Jesus Christ as the only Saviour from sin', we are not permitted to set limits 'to the dealings of the merciful God with individuals, even within non-Christian religions'.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, to drive a wedge between the two realities is to imply that 'life in Christ', or 'life in the Spirit', might be regarded as something quite separate or distinct from 'life in the Church'. It is one thing to acknowledge that 'God had some friends in the world outside

the commonwealth of Israel', as Heinrich Bullinger put it when he wished to account for those who might, through necessity or human weakness, obtain salvation apart from the regular sacramental life of the church (*Second Helvetic Confession* 17). It is quite another, however, to encourage the idea that the salvation that according to Peter in Acts 4 is found only in Jesus might be sought apart from the visible, apostolic fellowship of prayer, worship, teaching and remembering that we meet in Acts 1–2, and that is the creation of the 'Lord and life-giver' (Nicene Creed) that Jesus himself promised.<sup>8</sup>

If the Church, through its ministry of Word and sacraments, is to serve as the Holy Spirit's ordinary means to give new life to sinners and to keep them in Christ's fellowship, then at the most basic level the Church is called to be a visible sign of Christ's Kingdom. Just what sort of sign, however, remains a central question, because some proposals fall short of attributing to the Church a properly instrumental role in salvation.

Restrictivists propose a model of the

<sup>6</sup> Mark Heim's proposal raises a similar problem regarding standards for discernment of truth and error in the religions. He argues that what God has in mind is not one particular religious end for all (i.e. 'Salvation'), but multiple ones ('salvations'), all of which are rooted in the same salvific purpose of God. See Heim, *The Depth of the Riches: A Trinitarian Theology of Religious Ends* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 77.

<sup>7</sup> J. I. Packer, *The Thirty-Nine Articles: Their Place and Use Today* (Oxford: Latimer House, 1984), 73.

<sup>8</sup> Proponents of a 'pneumatological' approach to the religions will no doubt object to my 'ecclesiocentric' assumptions. However, to the extent that the former approach rests on a view of the economy of the Spirit as something quite distinct from that of the Son (based in part on a rejection of the *filioque*), its trinitarian (and Chalcedonian) framework will require further study. In practical terms, the proposal to discern the work of the Holy Spirit within non-Christian religions without reference to Christ and his Church remains problematic. See e.g. K. E. Johnson, 'A "Trinitarian" Theology of Religions? An Augustinian Assessment of Several Recent Proposals' (Ph.D. Thesis, Duke University, 2007), chapter 4.

church as *ark of salvation* that effectively collapses salvation into the Church. So the Council of Florence (1442), for example, argued that ‘those not living within the Catholic Church, not only pagans but also Jews and heretics and schismatics, cannot participate in eternal life, but will depart “into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels”, unless before the end of life the same have been added to the flock.’

Proponents of the pluralist thesis reduce the church to an *illustration* of the salvation that is at work in all cultures under different names, and in so doing they collapse the Church into salvation—in which case the latter is understood generically as transformation from self-centredness to God-centredness.<sup>9</sup>

Proponents of the fulfilment or inclusivist thesis suggest that the church is to be seen as a *vanguard* of a salvation that is latent in human cultures and therefore not fundamentally served by the Church, but only named by it. As Rahner put it, the Church is that ‘historically tangible vanguard and the historically and socially constituted explicit expression of what the Christian hopes is present as a hidden reality even outside the visible church’.<sup>10</sup>

A properly *instrumental* role of the Church in relation to salvation comes into view when we come to the Roman Catholic model of the church as *sacrament* of salvation, as expounded by Popes Paul VI, John Paul II and Ben-

edict XVI. In what follows, I offer an overview and appreciation of that model from a Protestant perspective with a view to considering the relevance of the matter for Christian unity and mission.

## II. The Church and the Fullness of Salvation

In *Lumen Gentium* (1964), or the ‘Dogmatic Constitution on the Church’ that expounds the Church’s role in relation to the nations, Pope Paul VI sets forth at the outset a sacramental model, according to which the Church serves as the light of Christ in the world in the power of the Holy Spirit. Being in Christ who is ‘Light of nations’, the Church bears brightly on its countenance the light of Christ, and as such is held to be a ‘sign and instrument’ of salvation, understood as union with God and with the whole human race (1). Through the Holy Spirit’s outpouring (2), and being indwelt, empowered, equipped, directed, and aided by the same Spirit (3), the Church as a ‘structured’ society is neither confused with nor separated from the mystical Body of Christ (8); rather, what is invisible is built up by what is visible, under the Holy Spirit’s direction (8).

In this way, the Church is to be held as the ordinary means of salvation, for whoever comes to know that God has made it indispensable for man’s salvation may not seek to be saved apart from it: ‘Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved’ (14).

While appropriating the classical *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* in this way,

<sup>9</sup> See John Hick, ‘A Pluralist View’, in D. Okholm and T. Phillips, eds., *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 43.

<sup>10</sup> Rahner, ‘Christianity’, 131–33.

*Lumen Gentium* did not overlook the fulfilment theme.<sup>11</sup> In fact, some have found that the 'spirit' of Vatican II encourages the idea that non-Christian religions might function as 'legitimate paths of salvation for their members.'<sup>12</sup> Some support for this is suggested in Article 16, which acknowledges that elements of truth and goodness which may be found in non-Christian religions are to be reckoned as 'preparation for the Gospel'. However, the same article affirms, as Paul explains in Romans 1, that 'often men, deceived by the Evil One, have become vain in their reasonings and have exchanged the truth of God for a lie, serving the creature rather than the Creator'.

It is for this reason that H. Van Straelen argues that in *Lumen Gentium* the positive elements within non-Christian religions are considered to be forms of preparation for the Gospel at best, since 'natural religion cannot be more than a groping for the truth', and that in Acts 17 pagans in general are seen to be on the wrong path.<sup>13</sup> On this

point van Straelen differs rather sharply from Karl Rahner, who suggested that in the modern era we need no longer share Paul's pessimism regarding the salvation of non-Christians.<sup>14</sup>

Whatever the case, it is clear that in their writings on the subject Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI would not seek like Rahner to get beyond Paul's supposed first-century cultural limitations when it came to the fact of other religions. On the contrary, by upholding the Second Vatican Council's reluctance to speak of non-Christian religions as ways of salvation, and in seeking to expound the nature of the Church as described in *Lumen Gentium* as the 'sacrament' of salvation, they demonstrated that their aim was to clarify the way in which the Church remains central in God's plan to save sinners, even in cases where individuals have no apparent contact with the Church.

To establish the Church's instrumental role in salvation, in *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) John Paul II notes, in the first place, the threat which the pluralist thesis represents for that conviction. He challenges the idea that salvation might be reduced to a benefit which remains 'within the confines of the kingdom of man' (i.e. within strictly human efforts for liberation), for by

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11 Since they believed that the world was already permeated by the Gospel message, defenders of the axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* had in mind those who had fallen away from the Gospel having heard it, and not the status of non-Christians or their religion as such. See Gavin D'Costa, 'Extra ecclesiam nulla salus Revisited', in *Religious Pluralism and Unbelief: Studies Critical and Comparative* (London: Routledge, 1990), 130.

12 J. Dupuis, *Toward a Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 170.

13 H. J. J. M. Van Straelen, *The Church and the Non-Christian Religions at the Threshold of the 21st Century: A Historical and Theological Study*, trans. R. Nowell (London: Avon, 1998), 270, 275. Van Straelen adds that the seeds of Logos theology (in e.g. Justin Martyr) sup-

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ports the idea that 'some philosophers had reached insights which contain a partial truth. But the idea of canonizing pagan religions was totally alien to them' (276).

14 Van Straelen, *The Church and the Non-Christian Religions*, 271, citing K. Rahner, *Mission and Grace: Essays in Pastoral Theology*, v. 3, trans. by C. Hastings (London: Sheed and Ward, 1966), 6. Van Stralen notes that the council did not accept Rahner's position (277).

restricting the work of the Church to the promotion of peace, justice and dialogue which is aimed merely at mutual enrichment, the so-called theocentric approach to the religions effectively collapses the Church into the Kingdom, thereby reducing the Church to a mere sign of salvation (17).

In the second place, against a fulfilment thesis found in the *vanguard* model of the Church in relation to salvation, he insists that dialogue with members of other religions is to be 'conducted and implemented with the conviction that *the Church is the ordinary means of salvation*' (55, emphasis in the original). Thus the Church is sent to the ends of the earth by the Holy Spirit, who is the 'principal agent of the whole Church's mission' (21), with the confidence that '*she alone* possesses the fullness of the means of salvation' (55, emphasis in the original) and that those who are finally saved apart from it will enjoy a 'mysterious' relationship with the Church that is mediated by the same Spirit and based on Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, but in ways known to God alone (10).<sup>15</sup>

In *Dominus Iesus* (2000), Pope Benedict XVI (as Cardinal Ratzinger) develops John Paul II's concerns with his affirmation that 'God has willed that the Church founded by him be the instrument for the salvation of all humanity' (22). He begins with a sharp critique of the relativistic assumptions

which guide the pluralist approach to the religions. Those who understand the fundamental truth regarding the definitive character of the revelation of Jesus Christ to be superseded, he notes, are motivated by the erroneous presupposition that what might be true for some might not be for others, or that the Incarnation represents 'a mere appearing of God in history' (4). Here we recall John Paul II's insistence that 'Christ is none other than Jesus of Nazareth' (*Redemptoris Missio* 6).

Benedict XVI's challenge to the inclusivist proposal is made with reference to the nature of the sacraments. Thus, while God may use 'some prayers and rituals' of other religions to prepare individuals to receive the Gospel, these are not to be understood as coming from God in the same sense that the sacraments convey, *ex opere operato*, the benefit to which they point. The distinction between the two kinds of external things is based on the fact that while the latter serve as efficacious means to apply the benefit of Christ's sacrifice to the believer by faith, the former are inevitably mixed with other rituals that stand in the way of salvation to the extent that 'they depend on superstitions or other errors' (*Dominus Iesus*, 21).<sup>16</sup>

To the theme of *fulfilment* understood in a qualified way Benedict XVI adds the theme of *fullness* of salvation that is made available in and through the Church. In this way, the classical *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* remains true,

<sup>15</sup> As Van Straelen argues, 'The fact that the followers of other religions can receive God's grace and be saved by Christ apart from the ordinary means which he has established does not thereby cancel the call to faith and baptism which God wills for all people' (*The Church and the Non-Christian Religions*, 280).

<sup>16</sup> See also Pope Francis on the Holy Spirit's use of elements within non-Christian religions as preparation for the Gospel but in non-sacramental ways in *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013), 254.

for the fullness of salvation is held to be available only in sacramental fellowship with the Catholic Church. Benedict XVI recalls from *Lumen Gentium* that the Church is the 'universal sacrament of salvation', mystically inseparable from Christ (20), and called to announce 'the necessity of conversion to Jesus Christ and of adherence to the Church through Baptism and the other sacraments in order to participate *fully* in communion with God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit' (22, emphasis mine). Moreover, while it is acknowledged that adherents of other religions 'can receive divine grace, it is also certain that *objectively speaking* they are in a gravely deficient situation in comparison with those who, in the Church, have the fullness of the means of salvation' (22, emphasis in the original).

In Benedict XVI's teaching, it is specifically to the Church that is in fellowship with Peter and those overseers considered to be his successors that one is to look for the fullness of salvation. It is clear, however, that fullness is to be understood only in relation to Christ. That is, it is only as the Church finds itself *in Christ* that it enjoys the fullness of the means of salvation. This is based on the truths that, as Paul says in Col 2:9 that the fullness of divinity dwells in Christ (*Dominus Iesus*, 5), that the fullness and centre of salvation is found in Christ (13), and that the Church possesses 'the fullness of Christ's salvific mystery', being one with Him (16). Here Benedict introduces a welcome Chalcedonian affirmation: 'just as the head and members of a living body, though not identical, are inseparable, so too Christ and the Church can neither be confused

nor separated, and constitute a single 'whole Christ' (16).

To the Christological basis of the Church's identity Benedict XVI adds the qualification that the Church remains a pilgrim people. In *Truth and Tolerance*, he encourages a view of religions—including Christianity—as dynamic, not static, entities. Thus he suggests that we do well to approach religions not so much as realities which exist in 'one single form', but as a complex of traditions which may or may not be related to the Gospel.<sup>17</sup>

For instance, Benedict explains that in our day Islam can be encountered in forms which reflect 'a certain proximity to the mystery of Christ' as well as destructive ones.<sup>18</sup> Since the *direction* of a religion is more important than its shape in a given moment, Benedict XVI includes Christianity among the religions which are not to be canonized as they already exist, as if to excuse the faithful 'from any deeper searching'.<sup>19</sup> In light of this he can assert that 'salvation does not lie in religions as such, but it is connected to them, inasmuch as, and to the extent that, they lead man toward the one good, toward the search for God, for truth, and for love.'<sup>20</sup>

17 J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions*, trans. H. Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 53.

18 Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 53–54.

19 Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 54.

20 Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 205. A similar dynamic is at work in Gavin D'Costa's quest for the 'ecclesial significance of the presence of other religions'. Given that according to *Redemptoris Missio* 29 the Spirit's universal work is 'not to be separated from his particular activity within the body of Christ, which is the Church,' D'Costa suggests that



### III. The Church and the Assurance of Salvation

It is from Benedict XVI's claim that salvation does not lie in religions as such that a Protestant appreciation of papal contributions to the topic might take its point of departure, for there is much to welcome and affirm in that body of teachings. The first is the model of the Church in relation to salvation that comes into view. As a *sacrament* of salvation, the proposal which we have surveyed presents to us an image of the Church as that *city set on a hill* (Mt 5:14–16). The people whom Jesus describes as 'light of the world' are called through their good works to let their light shine for all to see. And lest the glory be attributed to that city—lest the nations assume that the light that saves is to be found in the city's own resources—Jesus declares, 'Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.' At the same time, the image of an established city speaks to the truth that salvation is *here* and *now*; that insofar as it finds its identity in Christ, the Church becomes the Holy Spirit's means to draw sinners to the light of Christ's fellowship.

In the second place, the teaching that the Church is God's *ordinary* means to save sinners echoes an important theme found in the Reformed tradition. Bullinger wrote that just 'as there was

no salvation outside Noah's ark when the world perished in the flood, so we believe that there is no certain salvation outside Christ, who offers himself to be enjoyed by the elect in the Church' (*Second Helvetic Confession* 17). Similarly, the *Westminster Confession of Faith* would speak of the visible Church as 'the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation' (XV.2).

Implicit here is the refusal, in the words of Lesslie Newbigin, both 'to limit the saving grace of God to the members of the Christian Church' and to reduce the matter of salvation to a question 'about our destiny as individual souls after death'.<sup>21</sup> As important as such personal assurance is, Benedict XVI is surely right to insist that salvation is not to be reduced to a question about who finally gets into heaven. Rather, Christians are justified in asking 'what heaven is and how it comes upon earth', since 'future salvation must make its mark in a way of life that makes a person 'human' here and thus capable of relating to God.'<sup>22</sup>

In the third place, Benedict XVI introduces into the discussion regarding the Church's sacramental nature a welcome distinction between prevenient grace and special (or efficacious) grace. Without assuming that salvation takes place strictly within the sphere of religion,<sup>23</sup> he is nevertheless confident that God may use elements within non-Christian religions ('some prayers and rituals', as noted above) as forms

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the Spirit's work in the world is ecclesiological in the sense that it is through non-Christian religions that the Holy Spirit wishes to challenge, develop and deepen the Church's devotion to God. See D'Costa, *The Meeting of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2000), 12, 108, 117.

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21 L. Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 182, 179.

22 Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 205.

23 Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 53.

of preparation for the Gospel. However, the promise of efficacious grace is not attached to these external things, which are in any case ambiguous on their own.<sup>24</sup> In this way, Benedict XVI can draw the distinction between those who, on the one hand, enjoy the fullness of the means of salvation in the Church and those, on the other, who may be saved apart from it but who are in 'a gravely deficient situation', since it is only to the sacraments that God attaches the promise of saving grace.<sup>25</sup>

This last point is particularly welcome, for it introduces the theme of confidence based on God's *promise* that is central to Protestant reflection on the relationship between the Church and salvation. That tradition has tended to recognize the devastating nature of sin in the lives of individuals, and on that basis has acknowledged the sinner's need to embrace God's promise personally, and therefore to enjoy the assurance of God's pardon. In light of this emphasis, the Protestant has been drawn not primarily to the Church as a *city on a hill* that mediates the fullness of salvation, but rather as a *herald* that announces the promise of a salvation

<sup>24</sup> To these external things we could add elements which lie outside the sphere of formal religion, such as the hospitality shown to Joshua's spies, whom Rahab welcomed 'by faith' (Heb 11:31).

<sup>25</sup> Chalcedonian logic applies here too: just as we should not confuse common (or prevenient) grace with saving grace, neither should we distinguish them radically. As Richard Mouw says, for all we know, 'much of what we now think of as common grace may in the end time be revealed to be saving grace.' See Mouw, *He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 100.

that, while anticipated in the here and now, belongs properly to *the city which is yet to come* (Heb 13:14).<sup>26</sup> As John Webster put it:

the active life of the church is best understood, not as a visible realization or representation of the divine presence but as one long act of testimony—as an attestation of the work of God in Christ, now irrepressibly present and effective in the Spirit's power.<sup>27</sup>

As a model which approaches the Church as the Holy Spirit's means to assure sinners of their salvation, the Protestant model complements the sacramental one in three main ways. The first has to do with the Church's nature as a sign and of the salvation that it signifies. While the *herald* model has, here and there, tended to reduce the Church to a sign that 'simply points' to the city that is yet to come, and therefore to undermine the sacramental model,<sup>28</sup> properly speaking

<sup>26</sup> In developing ecclesial models this way, I am indebted to A. Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1987).

<sup>27</sup> J. Webster, 'The Visible Attests the Invisible,' in *The Community of the Word: Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology*, ed. M. Husbands and D. Treier (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 96.

<sup>28</sup> 'Testimony is astonished indication. Arrested by the wholly disorienting grace of God in Christ and the Spirit, the church simply *points*. It is not identical or continuous with that to which it bears witness, for otherwise its testimony would be self-testimony and therefore false. Nor is its testimony an action which effects that which it indicates; the witness of the church is an ostensive, not an effective, sign; it indicates the inherent achieved effectiveness which the object of testimony has in itself' (Webster, 'The Visible', 106).

it announces benefits from God which are present as well as future. In this way, it is to be approached, in Newbigin's words, as a 'sign, instrument, and foretaste of God's redeeming grace'.<sup>29</sup> Thus salvation is precisely all about how heaven 'comes upon earth' (Benedict XVI), for it is, following Newbigin once again,

the completion of God's whole work in creation and redemption, the summing up of all things with Christ as head (Eph. 1:10), the reconciling of all things in heaven and earth through the blood of the cross (Col. 1:20), the subjecting of all hostile powers under the feet of Christ (1 Cor. 15:24–28).<sup>30</sup>

A related concern about the Protestant model is that with its emphasis on the personal encounter with God in Christ it tends to render the Church an *occasional*, less than historically continuous, reality: 'practically a series of totally disconnected events' brought about through the ministry of the word and sacraments (Newbigin).<sup>31</sup> However, to the extent that Christianity is concerned not simply with events in history, but also with the meaning of those events, then historical continuity would properly be sought in the Church's confessing tradition as a means to safeguard the integrity of that interpretation.

The second way in which the Protestant model complements the Roman Catholic one has to do with the importance of assurance in the life of

the believer. Here again the Church's nature as a sign is relevant, for apart from being 'the light of the world', the Church is also called to be 'the salt of the earth' (Mt 5:13–16). If the 'scattered' identity is established through the Holy Spirit's sending of the Church as witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), the image of salt highlights the temporal dimension of that work (to the end of time as we know it). This is because salt introduces the virtue of anticipation, for it serves to preserve.

Paul says, 'Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person' (Col 4:6), indicating that godly conversation requires the kind of restraint that is proper to listening and waiting. And this virtue is linked, in turn, to holding on to God's promise: 'For I know whom I have believed, and I am convinced that he is able to guard until that day what has been entrusted to me' (2 Tim 1:12; see also Job 19:25, Rom 5:2). It is in the light of faith understood as 'a most firm trust and a clear and steadfast assent of the mind' with regards to God's promise that Bullinger speaks of the Church as the only certain means of salvation (*Second Helvetic Confession* 16 and 17).

Called to be both salt and light in the world—to taste as well as to see 'that the Lord is good' (Ps 34:8)—the Protestant model's conception of the relationship between word and image suggests a third way in which it complements the sacramental model. The Psalmist's declaration that 'the unfolding of [God's] words gives light' (Ps 119:130) reminds us that illumination depends on God's Word (rather than the other way around), and reflects

<sup>29</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 233.

<sup>30</sup> Newbigin, *The Gospel*, 178–79.

<sup>31</sup> L. Newbigin, *The Household of God* (New York: Friendship Press, 1954), 48.

the logical priority of sound over sight which we find throughout in Scripture.

With the Word Incarnate now removed from our sight, as long as the pilgrim 'is in this mortal body', as Augustine put it, 'he is far from the Lord; so he walks by faith, not by sight' (2 Cor 5:7).<sup>32</sup> On this basis, the *herald* model of the Church serves as a safeguard against the notion that God's chosen instrument (the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, or the Church itself) might be understood simply to contain within itself that to which it points, thereby inviting the faithful to confuse the instrument with the Source.

To this necessary reduction of the sacrament from 'container-sign' to *instrumental* sign we might add the reduction of the rite of ordination, on which the sacramental model rests in part. While it is one thing to affirm baptism and the Lord's Supper as sacraments, since by faith, and on the authority of Christ's promise, they mediate what they signify, it is another to attribute sacramental status to the ordained ministry and other lesser signs which 'have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God' (Article 25 of the *Thirty Nine Articles*).

As such, a Protestant may very well appreciate and welcome the concern for historic continuity to which the papacy bears witness without having to assume that it is primarily the See of Peter that the Church is to consider as its focus and instrument of unity. In the Protestant model, it would be primarily to faithful overseers in council, such as

we meet in Acts 15, that the Church would look to as the Holy Spirit's outward means to keep his people in fellowship.

#### IV. Conclusion

In conclusion, having suggested some of the implications of our survey for Christian unity, what might the lessons learned here mean in practical terms for the Church's message in the world? To review, we have understood salvation as everything that God has done, is doing, and will do to bring all things under Christ's lordship. We have understood the Church as the society throughout the world that professes faith in Christ as Lord and that remains in the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers. Finally, we have affirmed that the Church is God's ordinary instrument of salvation. I think that three practical implications follow.

First, with the focus in salvation being on the whole objective, historical movement of God, once we have sensed that God has called us into fellowship through the ministry of his people, we are not to expect or to look for salvation apart from that fellowship. In positive terms, we are to announce with confidence that the reconciliation of all things under Christ's authority is to be worked out in history precisely through the fellowship that He has provided in the Church; by the same token, we are to preach that individuals may find assurance that they belong to Christ precisely in that fellowship. Individuals who, as far as we can tell, are intellectually incapable of embracing the truth that they belong to God are not thereby left out, and nei-

<sup>32</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998), XIX.14.

ther are those individuals who, as far as we can tell, have never been given the opportunity to embrace the hope of the Gospel, simply the lost. If they were, then God would be bound by human instruments (both external and inward) in reaching them.

Second, the truth that God may reach some through extraordinary means does not mean that for some individuals salvation is relatively easy (since, for example, they were born into a Christian family), but hard for others because they have more cultural barriers to negotiate along the way. 'Strive to enter through the narrow door' (Lk 13:24) applies to all. Moreover, the fact that God may reach individuals in an extraordinary way—since Jesus promises in the same passage that there will be surprises—does not mean that God is reaching them apart from Christ. To be reached is to be reached by God in

Christ, because all salvation is in Jesus Christ, through him, and for him; and if anyone is saved without ever hearing of Jesus, it will be because God's love, mercy and forgiveness were made known through a means that we'll know about only on the other side.

Third, and finally, the evangelistic proclamation of the Church will not be motivated by a sense of panic (which is the logical implication of *restrictivism*), but by an experience of the love of the Father that compels believers to invite others to know the same forgiveness and freedom that they have experienced. Such forgiveness is never less than urgent, because we are miserable sinners as long as we do not receive divine pardon, and because the promised freedom will have a wider impact that cannot be measured on this side of Jesus' return in glory.

# The Antioch Assumption: Did Jews and Gentiles Actually Worship Together in Antioch?

Daniel K. Eng

The church in Antioch is often identified as an exemplary first-century community, in light of the city's elevated status as a centre of ministry and the significant inception of the term *Christian* there. Those who view the Antioch Christian community as paradigmatic for a local church today often claim that Antioch had a single assembly that contained both Jews and Gentiles gathering together.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the popularity of the claim that the early Christians in Antioch made up one mixed assembly, this assumption cannot be substantiated from the text or from historical records. Af-

ter reviewing the state of Jews in Antioch, this article examines both the account in Acts and Paul's confrontation of Peter at Antioch as described in Galatians. It addresses two questions. First, was the early Jesus-following community in Antioch made up of both Jews and Gentiles? Second, did believers make up a single assembly or were they grouped into multiple communities in Antioch?

## I. Jews in Antioch

Jews in Antioch were a distinct entity with distinguishable sects. As further discussed below, they shared a common identity distinct from other locals, but their internal diversity led to the existence of homogeneous subgroups of Jews.

Jews held a unique identity in Antioch. Jewish mercenaries had assisted Seleucus in his founding of Antioch and were thus honoured with citizenship and the same privileges that the native Macedonians and Greeks enjoyed. Jews still held these privileges during the time of Josephus, including

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Curtiss Paul DeYoung et al., *United by Faith: The Multiracial Congregation as an Answer to the Problem of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 28, 35; Mark DeYmaz, *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments, and Practices of a Diverse Congregation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007), 21–22; Ken Hemphill, *The Antioch Effect: Eight Characteristics of Highly Effective Churches* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 21. However, this article's intent is not to disparage the overall positive value of these books.

the right to practise their own religion.<sup>2</sup> Thus the local Antiochenes recognized the Jews as a distinct and legitimate entity ever since the foundation of the city. Together, Jews shared a distinct minority experience in Antioch. Monotheistic Judaism functioned as an exception in the city, which Libanius called 'a dwelling place of the gods'.<sup>3</sup>

The 45,000 Jews living in Antioch during the reign of Augustus created pocket communities, most notably near the Daphne Gate.<sup>4</sup> Although some were prosperous, most Jews in Antioch were labourers such as slaves, day workers, and poor rural farmers.<sup>5</sup> They belonged to the class of natives and foreigners and were not viewed by many locals as genuine or potential citizens, regardless of their actual legal citizenship.<sup>6</sup> They were distinguished by their working-class status and their tendency to stay within their communities. Jews most likely clustered around a synagogue, which served as a *collegium* for the local Jews. Collegia were voluntary

urban associations during the Hellenistic period, typically religious clubs and professional organizations. Because of the existence of collegia and their desire to retain their identity, Jews experienced a slow rate of acculturation.<sup>7</sup>

Despite sharing a common minority experience, Jews likely formed distinct homogeneous groups in the city, as indicated by a wide range of Jewish ideology found within documents from Antioch. Evidence shows at least four different Jewish groups in Antioch, ranging from those on the fringe of Judaism to religious traditionalists. Thus, even within the Jewish quarter of the city, Jews remained within separate groups.<sup>8</sup>

Some Jews were Greek-speaking while others spoke Aramaic. Nearby, the major synagogue in the upper-class suburb of Daphne, the Matrona Synagogue, must have been ornate to serve wealthy inhabitants, whereas the synagogues of the Jewish peasants in the city were likely much simpler.<sup>9</sup> There is evidence of twenty to thirty synagogues in Antioch during the first century, each sharing a common social

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2 Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 12.119 and *Jewish Wars* 7.3.44.

3 Libanius, *Orations* 11.115.

4 Wayne Meeks and Robert Louis Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era*, Society of Biblical Literature Sources for Biblical Study 13 (Missoula, MT: Society of Biblical Literature, 1978), 8.

5 Bernadette J. Brooten, 'The Jews of Ancient Antioch', in *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, ed. Christine Kondoleon (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 29–30; Thomas Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of the Ways: Early Jewish-Christian Relations* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 23.

6 Carl H. Kraeling, 'The Jewish Community at Antioch', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 51 (1932): 138.

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7 Magnus Zetterholm, *The Formation of Christianity in Antioch* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 29–31, 69.

8 For more on Jewish separatism, see E. P. Sanders, 'Jewish Associations with Gentiles and Galatians 2:11–14', in *The Conversation Continues: Studies in Paul and John in Honor of J. Louis Martyn*, ed. Robert Tomson Fortna and Beverly Roberts Gaventa (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1990), 180–85.

9 Brooten, 'The Jews of Ancient Antioch', 33. John Chrysostom mentions only two synagogues (*Adversus Judaeos* 1.6), one in the city and the other in Daphne, perhaps because the Aramaic-speaking synagogues were outside his social context.

origin and/or ideology. Although some welcomed Gentiles interested in Judaism, others did not.<sup>10</sup>

Judaism in Antioch attracted many non-Jews, as many Greeks became part of Jewish gatherings.<sup>11</sup> In fact, Antiochene Jews held a distinct reputation for successful proselytizing. Nicolas, an Antiochene proselyte, was one of seven church leaders in Jerusalem chosen by the apostles (Acts 6:5). Gentiles called God-fearers, non-proselytes drawn to the fellowship of the Jewish community but not fully committed to the Torah, were likely in the synagogues and meetings.<sup>12</sup>

In summary, historical accounts indicate that Antiochene Jews shared a common working-class status and a minority experience within a Hellenized and polytheistic environment. However, there were also distinct Jewish groups in local synagogues with different ideologies.

## II. The Account in Acts

The account in Acts does not indicate that early Jesus-followers in Antioch formed a single community composed of both Jews and Gentiles. However, the text does offer some signs that point to the movement in Antioch being Gentile.

<sup>10</sup> Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 90–92.

<sup>11</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 7.3.45.

<sup>12</sup> They were often unwilling to go as far as male circumcision. See Judith Lieu, *Neither Jew nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2002), 31. Also see Kraeling, 'Jewish Community at Antioch', 147.

## 1. The makeup of the early community of believers in Antioch

The claim that both Jews and Gentiles were among the converts described in Acts 11 is strictly conjecture. Although the passage clearly indicates that Gentiles turned to the Lord, there is no mention of any Jewish converts.

First, the language of Acts 11:21 points to the converts being Gentiles. The reader is informed that the new converts 'turned to the Lord', showing that their faith was accompanied by response. This phrase is much more closely associated with Gentile conversion (see Acts 14:15; 15:19; 26:18; 26:20) than with Jews' conclusion that Jesus was the Messiah. Whereas Jewish Christians turned to Jesus as their awaited Messiah, Gentiles turned to God from polytheism and paganism. The evangelists appear to have aimed this mission towards Gentiles, as there is no reference to preaching Jesus as the Messiah (see Acts 2:36; 5:42; 8:5; 9:22).<sup>13</sup>

The identity of the new converts remains unclear. The text indicates that the Hellenists who received the gospel were Greek-speaking Gentiles of Antioch. The term *Hellēnistēs* in Acts 11:20 stands in contrast to the Jews in 11:19.<sup>14</sup> Some scholars hold

<sup>13</sup> See Beverly Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2003), 179.

<sup>14</sup> *Hellēnistēs* is the same term used for Hellenistic Jews in 6:1 and 9:29. However, the contrasting language in 11:20 indicates that these 'Hellenists' are not Jews. This distinction may explain the variant reading *Hellēnas* (P74,  $\aleph^2$ , A, D\*). See James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,



that they were mostly or even exclusively<sup>15</sup> God-fearers already associated with the collegium of the Jewish synagogue and interested in Judaism. The God-fearers were especially open to the Jesus movement, as many were already ‘fringe-participants’ in the synagogue.<sup>16</sup> Some go further and suggest that the converts were already Jewish proselytes.<sup>17</sup> Ultimately, the Christian evangelists experienced fertile terri-

tory among non-Jews because of the environment created by Jew-friendly Gentiles and the collegium system.

Second, the omission of any sign of positive results of the evangelists’ outreach to Jews in Acts 11:19 is remarkable. There is no indication of any converts coming from the synagogues, or of the Gentile converts interacting with any Jewish converts. The large number of professing Gentiles is starkly contrasted with the omission of any indication of similar success among Jews.

This silence becomes even more remarkable when one examines the pattern of preaching and conversion exhibited elsewhere in Acts. Prior to this account, the text displays a distinct pattern: the gospel of Jesus was preached and listeners believed.

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2009), 298. Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer point to the anti-Jewish sentiment growing in Antioch in 39–40 CE, in their book *Paul between Damascus and Antioch: The Unknown Years* (London: SCM Press, 1997), 183.

**15** Jürgen Becker, *Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles*, trans. O. C. Dean, Jr. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 149; James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Peterborough: Epworth Press, 1996), 154.

**16** Becker, *Paul*, 149.

**17** I. Howard Marshall, *The Book of Acts: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 201.

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**18** *Kath’ hēmeran* is an idiomatic expression for ‘every day’. See Martin M. Culy and Mikeal Carl Parsons, *Acts: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2003), 47.

Passage	Setting of Preaching	Description of Success
Acts 2:41, 47	Jerusalem	Three thousand received the word and were baptized; the number of saved individuals was increasing daily <sup>18</sup>
Acts 4:4	Peter at the temple	Many believed
Acts 8:12, 17	Philip in Samaria	People believed, were baptized and received the Holy Spirit
Acts 9:31	Saul’s preaching in Judea, Galilee and Samaria	The church increased in number
Acts 10:44–45	Peter preaching after his encounter with Cornelius	The Holy Spirit came on those who heard, including the Gentiles
Acts 11:19	Scattered believers in Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch spoke to Jews only	(No indication of result)
Acts 11:20–21	Men of Cyprus and Cyrene spoke to Hellenists	A great number became believers and turned to the Lord

Compared to the pattern of other passages, the absence of any indication of success in Acts 11:19 is notable. There is no description of Jewish converts in the place where one expects to find them.

Third, the identity of Antiochene believers as 'Christians' suggests that the group was characterized as Gentile. The designation began with the year-long teaching of Barnabas and Saul in Antioch, as many more came to know the Lord (11:24–26). Within this context, believers were first called Christians (11:26) by outsiders. They had developed a new identity.

Whereas the Greek term *Christos* would represent a designation of a prominent office to a Greek-speaking Jew, it would simply be a name of a prominent figure to an outsider unfamiliar with Jewish messianic expectations. Thus, the new designation was likely constructed from the name of the group's perceived leader; that is, followers of Christ were called Christians just as followers of Herod were called Herodians.<sup>19</sup> Outsiders (likely detractors) probably coined the term, since they saw this group of believers as distinct from Jews.<sup>20</sup> The term *Chris-*

*tians* likely refers to Gentile believers, since they required a new designation, especially if the churches were ethnically homogeneous.

Furthermore, a group of both Jews and Gentiles would not appear novel enough to outsiders to warrant a new name, since the synagogues were already attracting Gentile God-fearers. In other words, the phenomenon had to be markedly different to warrant a new designation. Markus Bockmuehl maintains that the term refers to 'Gentile believers in Christ whose public image could no longer be most obviously identified in association with pagan cults or sympathizers of the Jewish community'.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, this new designation indicates distinguishability, a 'distinct and visible identity vis-à-vis Judaism',<sup>22</sup> rather than a sect of Judaism. With the distinct identity and novelty of this group,<sup>23</sup> the new term indicates that it could not be categorized as Jewish or

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*twined: A History of Jews and Christians from the Babylonian Exile to the Advent of Islam* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 310–11.

<sup>21</sup> Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 82; cf. C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 548. Paul Trebilco maintains that the word 'Christians' in Antioch described a mixed community, citing Acts 11:19–20, 15:1–35 and Galatians 2:11–14. See Trebilco, *Self-Designations and Group Identity in the New Testament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 278. However, it is not evident from these passages that Jews and Gentiles formed established mixed communities.

<sup>22</sup> Horrell, 'The Label Christianos', 364.

<sup>23</sup> Alexander J. M. Wedderburn, *History of the First Christians* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 69.

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<sup>19</sup> For the etymology of using the *-ianos* suffix to indicate appurtenance, see Elias J. Bickerman, 'The Name of Christians', *Harvard Theological Review* 42, no. 2 (April 1949): 116–19. Also see F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 228.

<sup>20</sup> Lieu, *Neither Jew nor Greek?* 192; David G. Horrell, 'The Label Christianos: 1 Peter 4:16 and the Formation of Christian Identity', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126, no. 2 (2007): 363–64. Raymond Brown and John Meier, *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983), 35; Leo Dupree Sandgren, *Vines Inter-*

associated with a synagogue.

Fourth, given the existence of the collegium system in Antioch and the divisions among Jews, the omission of any indication of a mixed group appears significant. With Antiochene Jews meeting in local communities based on doctrine and ideology, they themselves were not identifying as a single entity. Being in the same community as Gentiles would be even more remarkable and seemingly worth highlighting, but the text does not indicate this.

In light of the text's emphatic indication of a successful effort to reach Gentiles and the new identity of Antiochene believers as Christians, the account in Acts clearly points to a significant Gentile believing community in Antioch. However, though Luke had ample opportunity to describe Jewish converts, he did not where he would have been expected to do so. Thus, from the silence in the Acts account, it would be a great leap to conclude that a significant contingent of Jewish converts accompanied the Gentile believers at Antioch at this early stage.

## 2. Did Antioch have one church or multiple communities?

Given the dearth of evidence, it is challenging to determine the number of distinct Christ-following groups in Antioch. However, there is some support for a plurality of communities among the Antiochene believers.

The term *ekklēsia*, which occurs in Acts 13:1 in reference to Antioch, has a range of meanings, from describing a single local community to designat-

ing all believers in Christ.<sup>24</sup> Within a city, as in Acts 13:1, it can refer to individual gatherings or a local group of believers consisting of individual house churches. Thus, one must rely on other signs to determine whether there was a single community or a plurality of communities in Antioch.

The vastly different conversion experiences between Jews and Gentiles suggest the existence of differing identities and, therefore, multiple groupings. A Jew who believed in Jesus as the Messiah was not exchanging one symbolic universe for another but embraced 'a new orientation within the same symbolic universe'.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, a Hellenistic Gentile convert would have to drastically change his or her belief system from polytheism to worshipping one God—a profound worldview shift.

If, as many scholars hold, the gospel of Matthew was written in the second half of the first century in the context of Antioch, the usage of *ekklēsia* in Jesus' charge to Simon Peter (Mt 16:18) points to an understanding of how the term was used in the local context. In this passage, the designation of Peter as the rock on which the *ekklēsia* would be built does not apply to a single local assembly but carries a much broader sense. Furthermore, the existence of a gospel account written primarily to Jews points to a distinct community of Jewish believers, distinguishable from

<sup>24</sup> Ekkehard Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century*, trans. O. C. Dean, Jr. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 262.

<sup>25</sup> Zetterholm, *Formation of Christianity in Antioch*, 6.

the Hellenists.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, the later designation of Ignatius as bishop of Antioch overseeing all believers in the city suggests the presence of a plurality of communities. As he himself wrote that ‘there is one bishop, there is one assembly’,<sup>27</sup> his efforts to achieve uniformity of worship and doctrine indicate the need to unify an array of different Christ-following groups.<sup>28</sup>

The secondary literature contains some arguments in favour of a plurality of house churches in Antioch, grouped homogeneously. Virginia Corwin contends that there were several Christian churches in Antioch, based on documents of differing religious ideologies:

Even within the same section of the city national groups in all likelihood tended to keep to themselves. In so divided a population there were almost inevitably several small Christian churches of different religious and perhaps social backgrounds, meeting in houses in different parts of the city and exposed to diverse influences. Their theological tendencies continued at variance because they rarely met together.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Sandgren, *Vines Intertwined*, 266, 315–17 argues for the existence of a traditionalist group of Jewish believers in the late first century. See Daniel W. Ulrich, ‘The Missional Audience of the Gospel of Matthew’, *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 69, no. 1 (January 2007): 78.

<sup>27</sup> In Ignatius’ *To the Philadelphians* 4, the purposeful repetition of ‘one’ (*heis*) calls for unity: one Eucharist, one flesh of Christ, one cup, one altar, one bishop.

<sup>28</sup> Susan Ashbrook Harvey, ‘Antioch and Christianity’, in *Antioch: The Lost Ancient City*, ed. Christine Kondoleon (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 40.

<sup>29</sup> Virginia Corwin, *St. Ignatius and Christian-*

Similarly, Bruce Chilton describes the first Gentile believers in Antioch as having approximately a dozen house groups, with no more than forty members per meeting.<sup>30</sup> Hengel and Schwemer propose a plurality of house communities in the large city of Antioch, comparable to the multiple gatherings in Rome.<sup>31</sup>

A glance at the literature from church leaders and missiologists also finds some of them contending that the church in Antioch was actually a plurality of communities. Though recognizing that his view is ‘not politically correct’, C. Peter Wagner argues that the *ekklēsia* in Antioch was actually a series of networks that followed ethnic lines. He maintains that the Jewish believers in Antioch were extremely ethnocentric, teaching that Gentile converts would have to become Jews—submitting to the Torah and undergoing circumcision—to worship God in their synagogues. The church in Antioch had formed several years before the Council of Jerusalem, and thus the Jewish believers would not have explored the theological implications of Peter’s encounter with Cornelius.

Wagner argues that the Hellenistic Jewish evangelists intentionally brought the gospel to the Gentiles only, ‘not requiring them to become Jews in order to be saved’. The significant size of the city leads Wagner to believe that there was little to no social contact be-

*ity in Antioch* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1960), 49.

<sup>30</sup> Bruce Chilton, *Rabbi Paul: An Intellectual Biography* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 2004), 109.

<sup>31</sup> Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch*, 196–97.

tween the network of house churches in the Jewish section of the city and the new churches in the Gentile quarters.<sup>32</sup>

Everett Harrison similarly argues for separate communities of Jewish and Gentile believers in Antioch. For him, the text's silence concerning calls for the circumcision of Gentile converts implies that, unlike in the Jerusalem church, the response to the gospel came from Gentiles.<sup>33</sup>

Thus, there is much room for different assertions regarding how the believers in Antioch were organized. Unequivocal claims that the believers made one community of both Jews and Gentiles are untenable. The text leaves this question unanswered.

By the time of Ignatius of Antioch, 'the church' in Ephesus, Smyrna and Philadelphia was actually a number of house churches. As bishop of Antioch, Ignatius believed that the church should not necessarily meet in 'one physical location but ... one metaphysical location' under the authority of a bishop. When Ignatius refers to a common assembly, we should interpret read the singular term *church* in this way.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Wagner likens these distinct networks to the contemporary networks of Korean American, Hispanic American, and African American churches in the Los Angeles area. Any social relationships across networks would be secondary to the relationships with fellow Jews or fellow Gentiles. See C. Peter Wagner, *Acts of the Holy Spirit* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2000), 247–49.

<sup>33</sup> Everett Falconer Harrison, *The Apostolic Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 186.

<sup>34</sup> Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of the Ways*, 86–87.

### III. The Incident at Antioch (Galatians 2:11–14)

Galatians 2:11–14 describes Paul's confrontation of Peter and indicates that Peter was at fault for withdrawing from table fellowship with Gentiles. This is a soteriological discussion; there is no indication that Paul has a specific local church setting in mind.

The event recalled in Galatians is connected with the Council of Jerusalem described in Acts 15. After some debate, the council decreed that the Gentiles did not need circumcision to be saved through Jesus Christ (Acts 15:10–11). Peter's visit to Antioch likely took place after Paul and Barnabas returned from their first missionary journey.

In writing this epistle, Paul aimed to address the teaching that circumcision was a prerequisite for following Christ. His predominantly Gentile readers were abandoning the gospel of Christ for a 'non-gospel' of Torah observance. Paul wrote to defend the truth of the gospel.

As the starting point for much of his missionary efforts, Antioch became Paul's base of operations, in both a geographical and a theological sense.<sup>35</sup> Paul was designated along with Barnabas to go the Gentiles while the 'pil-

<sup>35</sup> Clayton N. Jefford, 'Tradition and Witness in Antioch: Acts 15 and Didache 6', *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 19, no. 4 (1992): 418. Merrill P. Miller maintains that Paul's designation as the one to go to the Gentiles accompanied the Antioch association. See Miller, 'Antioch, Paul, and Jerusalem: Diaspora Myths of Origins in the Homeland', in *Redescribing Christian Origins*, ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 233.

lars'—James, Peter and John—went to the circumcised (Gal 2:9).<sup>36</sup> Paul's presence in Antioch in Galatians 2:11 is directly connected to his mission to the Gentiles.

The text indicates that Peter had come to Antioch and was eating with Gentiles (2:12). The imperfect tense suggests that the table fellowship indicated by *synēsthien* occurred more than once.<sup>37</sup> This would be consistent with Peter's conviction that God had cleansed the unclean, as he learned in Caesarea during his visit with Cornelius (Acts 10:24–11:18).

Table fellowship could only have occurred under special circumstances. In general, Jews were reluctant to associate with Gentiles. More reluctant to mix than other people of the empire,<sup>38</sup> Jews would fear that any fellowship with Gentiles would involve violating the Torah's dietary regulations. Jews and Gentiles likely ate together only when (1) Gentile God-fearers observed Jewish dietary laws, (2) individuals brought their own different meals, or (3) the meals took place in Jewish homes.<sup>39</sup>

However, when the delegation from Jerusalem arrived, Peter withdrew from eating with the Gentiles because he feared the so-called 'party of the circumcision'. The rest of the Jews joined

Peter in this action, even leading Barnabas to join them. The account states that Jews withdrew together, perhaps indicating that they were a distinguishable group.

Paul confronted Peter directly in the presence of all (2:14). The group described as 'all' is likely the Jewish believers mentioned in 2:13. Paul described their behaviour as inconsistent with the truth of the gospel. The issue raised is the crux of Paul's message in Galatians: Gentiles do not have to become Jews, undergoing circumcision and submitting to the Torah, to be justified (2:15–16).

Peter's actions were thus an affront to the message. If Gentile believers could not associate with Jewish believers, their Christianity was defective, implying that they needed something beyond faith in Christ and baptism into his name. Paul recalled this incident in Antioch to illustrate this point to the Gentile believers, who were facing similar pressure to convert to Judaism in order to be saved.

Since the terms *ekklēsia* and *synagōgē* are absent from this passage, it is not evident that a meeting of one community is in view here. The compound word *synesthiō* does not indicate a shared Eucharist or any other gathering of a single community. Occurring three times in the Lukan corpus (Luke 15:2;<sup>40</sup> Acts 10:41; 11:3) and

<sup>36</sup> The absence of a verb in Galatians 2:9 has led translations to supply the term *go* to refer to the two parties.

<sup>37</sup> Ben Witherington, *Grace in Galatia* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 152.

<sup>38</sup> Sanders, 'Jewish Associations with Gentiles', 180.

<sup>39</sup> Stephen Cummins, *Paul and the Crucified Christ in Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 165.

<sup>40</sup> The Pharisees' complaint against Jesus eating with sinners in Luke 15:2 reflected the understanding that sharing a table meant sharing a bond of common identity together. See Stephen C. Barton, 'Parables on God's Love and Forgiveness', in *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 202.

in one other place in Paul's letters (1 Cor 5:11), the term emphasizes shared eating between two distinguishable parties, not the setting of an assembly or gathering. Paul does not clearly describe a local assembly but recalls this incident as part of his polemic against the idea that Gentiles must submit to works of the law to be saved.

The omission of any addressing of mixed (Jewish and Gentile) assemblies in the Jerusalem agreement, as recalled in Galatians 2:1–10, further indicates that Paul does not aim to address the issue of groupings and assemblies in his discussion. The Jerusalem council's decree in Acts 15 affirms the legitimacy of efforts to reach Gentiles, but it does not discuss congregational dynamics.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, the distinct responsibilities described in Galatians 2:9 indicate separate missionary efforts to the two groups at this stage.<sup>42</sup> Peter, James and John were to minister to the circumcised, with Paul and Barnabas going to the Gentiles.

Although some Jews and some Gentiles interacted with each other as Christians, the Galatians account in no way indicates that they gathered together as one congregation under one leadership. Believers from these two identifiable groups were willing to eat

together, which made the table fellowship so remarkable.<sup>43</sup> However, there is no sign that this was occurring regularly.

Furthermore, we have no indication that these Jews described in Galatians 2:13 were local to Antioch. The phrase 'the remaining Jews' suggests that Peter was considered part of this group. Thus, the designation of 'Jews' does not necessarily refer to Antiochene Jewish believers.

Even if these Jews in Galatians 2:13 were from Antioch, it does not follow that they belonged to the same local assembly as the Gentiles with whom they were eating. In view of the lack of specification, it is just as reasonable to conclude that this table fellowship consisted of at least two communities of believers rather than one mixed group who came together regularly.

We know that much later, Ignatius sought to unite these gatherings under his leadership.<sup>44</sup> This fact does not minimize the revolutionary nature of the table fellowship indicated in Galatians, as any association with non-Jews indicates a significant development of the Christian movement as a whole. However, the text is silent about whether this table fellowship occurred within the context of a single assembly.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Bockmuehl (*Jewish Law in Gentile Churches*, 81) writes, 'What they did not do was address the resultant problems of polity and fellowship.'

<sup>42</sup> Miller views this agreement in Galatians 2:9 as an indication of separation. See Miller, 'Antioch, Paul, and Jerusalem', 221. For a full discussion of the possible reasons for this omission, see Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, 478–80.

<sup>43</sup> The combination of Hellenistic Jews with Gentiles who were previously God-fearers made a natural bridge for this table fellowship to occur.

<sup>44</sup> Paul J. Donahue, 'Jewish Christianity in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch', *Vigiliae Christianae* 32, no. 2 (1978): 89–90.

<sup>45</sup> Some make an unsubstantiated claim that this occurred within one assembly. For example, see Stegemann and Stegemann, *Jesus Movement*, 269; Philip F. Esler, *The First Christians in Their Social Worlds: Social-Scientific Ap-*

The peace that existed between some Jewish and Gentile believers would prove to be short-lived. In the third year of Caligula's reign (40 CE), crowds of Gentile residents rose up violently against Jews, killing many individuals and burning synagogues, possibly in connection with Caligula's attempt to erect a statue of himself in the temple.<sup>46</sup> Later, the Jewish apostate Antiochus incited anti-Semitic violence when he accused the Jews of plotting to burn the city during the seventh decade of the first century.<sup>47</sup> The height of anti-Semitic sentiment in the area resulted in a deep division between Jews and Gentiles, and it may have led Gentile Christians to withdraw from Jews altogether for the sake of their own personal safety.

#### IV. Conclusion: Sound Principles of Application

The dearth of conclusive information regarding the makeup of the church in Antioch calls for prudence in deciphering the modern relevance of the aforementioned biblical passages. One cannot assume that a multi-ethnic community of worship existed among Jesus-followers in Antioch during the time of the account in Acts. Thus, one cannot cite the example of Antioch as prescribing that each local church should contain a plurality of ethnicities. We simply do not have evidence that Jews and Gentiles met and worshipped in one body. In contrast, the existence

of multiple house churches in such a large city would fit the pattern of New Testament churches, allowing room for the possibility that believers in Antioch met in more than one group.

Furthermore, nothing in Galatians 2:11–14 indicates that a single assembly is the context of the table fellowship described there. This could very well be a description of periodic inter-congregation fellowship, or simply people gathering for a meal in a setting not associated with worship. Thus, there is no basis in the biblical account of Christians in Antioch to justify an expectation that individual congregations should be multi-ethnic in makeup. The written record of the interaction between Antiochene Jewish and Gentile believers in Scriptures does not lead to the conclusion that ethnic-specific churches are unbiblical. If either Luke or Paul intended to present the Antiochene church as a paradigm for multi-ethnic local church, one would expect a much more explicit indication to this effect in the text.

However, several sound principles of application can be proposed. First, one can celebrate the *inclusion of the Gentiles* in the kingdom of God. The grand narrative of Luke-Acts shows the expansion of the gospel from Jewish to Gentile territory. The events in Antioch are pivotal in this narrative, because the first purposeful evangelization of Gentiles occurs there. The text clearly affirms this effort, as the hand of the Lord was with them and a great number turned to the Lord (Acts 11:21).

Similarly, believers today must observe the foundational principle that the gospel is for all people. Although a particular congregation may have an

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*proaches to New Testament Interpretation* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 53.

<sup>46</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.8.261. Also cf. Philo, *Embassy* 30.203; Hengel and Schwemer, *Paul between Damascus and Antioch*, 184.

<sup>47</sup> Josephus, *Jewish Wars* 7.3.47.



identified target group, such as the urban artist community or Korean immigrants, one cannot hinder other groups from coming to Christ. Purposeful efforts to reach other people groups should also be supported, as evidenced by the evangelists from Cyprus and Cyrene. This is not an insignificant emphasis, as world history demonstrates the devastating consequences when even professing believers treat one race as superior to another. The offer of inclusion in the kingdom extends to Gentiles in the same way as to the Jews.

Second, *one does not have to change ethnicity* to be included in the kingdom. As described in Galatians, Paul was adamant that the Gentiles did not need to adhere to Torah regulations and be circumcised to receive the offer of salvation. In the same way, a modern church is teaching unsound doctrine if it requires potential converts to change their ethnic identification or culture to be considered a believer.

Whether or not a local congregation has a strategic demographic to reach, as the two groups in Galatians 2:7–9 did, the incident described in Galatians 2:11–14 demonstrates that one does not have to become like the rest of the church to become part of it. A Korean American church, for example, should not indicate in any way that one has to adapt its people's ethnic and cultural practices to be saved, nor should a missionary seek to convert others to his or her cultural style in addition to the gospel.

Third, the account of the church(es) at Antioch calls modern believers to *eschew exclusivity* in the body of Christ. Although the church at large comprises many local bodies of believers,

the entire body is linked together by a common hope and faith. The account of the successful evangelization of Gentiles at Antioch indicates that Jews and Gentiles respond to the same gospel and are part of a single global church. Encountering a believer outside one's own local congregation should be a meaningful experience because of the shared connection in Christ, regardless of race.

Taking this idea a step further, the account also affirms that believers should have fellowship with other believers outside their own demographic group and congregation. Though we cannot conclusively determine the makeup of local bodies of believers in Antioch, the text clearly depicts the church at large as including both Jews and Gentiles. Local churches should not be exclusive, as observed in the table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles recalled in Galatians 2. For those believers belonging to ethnic-specific or other demographic-specific congregations, this account encourages them to connect with believers in other places as well to promote the unity of the Church.

Ultimately, this study calls for prudence in application, as many have made unsubstantiated assumptions about the biblical text. Until new evidence is found and examined, presumptive assertions regarding the ethnic makeup of the communities of Jesus-followers in Antioch are untenable. However, the believers in Antioch stood at a pivotal place in history, as the church expanded to embrace Gentiles. Believers worldwide can celebrate this monumental breakthrough for the kingdom of God and call others to join in the eternal celebration.

# In Honour of the Release of *Christianity: Fundamental Teachings in Turkey*

*In February 2018, the Christian churches of Turkey held a ceremony to publicly release the English translation of a comprehensive book on the essential foundations of Christianity. The book, entitled Christianity: Fundamental Teachings in English, was compiled by an eleven-member committee over a period of more than ten years. The members of the committee represented Catholic, Armenian Apostolic, Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox and Protestant/Evangelical churches. This is the first book published in Turkey to be endorsed by all the country's Christian bodies.*

*The back cover of the book explains its contents and significance with these compelling words:*

*This book is a landmark in inter-church efforts to draw closer together. It was written by a commission delegated by leaders of all of the major churches of Turkey. This commission, which met at regular intervals, decided to publish a basic book containing the doctrines of faith held in common by all Christian churches. This joint publication will help every Christian in Turkey to understand their own faith doctrines, but it also represents a striking and seminal advance in mutual respect and affection. The faith doctrines summarized in this book can already be found in each church's books on faith and doctrine. Yet for churches that have ostracized each other for centuries, leaving a legacy of deep divisions and resentments, to sign their names to such a work is no small step toward church unity. Through this book, the churches that have maintained their presence in Istanbul express in lasting words how few points of difference they have in their beliefs and how many of the same values and teachings they share on the essentials of their faith.*

*The Turkish churches invited Thomas Schirmmacher, Associate Secretary General of the World Evangelical Alliance and President of Martin Bucer Seminary, whose Turkish branch was heavily involved in the project, to give a commemorative speech at the event. Dr Schirmmacher's message is reprinted below.*

This is a very emotional moment for me, as I followed the project from its beginning and prayed for it often. And it is immense and undeserved honour that you have invited me for the launch of your book and I thank for the trust in me, proven by this gracious act.

Each time I visit his All Holiness [the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople], as he knows, I visit the Hagia

Sophia Church first, remembering the glory of Christianity in this marvelous city. Turkey has been the site of some of the most important councils of bishops. Together with neighbour countries like Syria, Armenia and Greece, it represents the part of the world where the church grew from infancy to adulthood—from a small seed to a very large tree reaching out to all

people, to use an image that Jesus once used. With this new book, Christians in Turkey are once again taking the lead, and following its publication in Turkish two years ago, they are now making their splendid efforts available for all churches worldwide.

This is a very emotional moment for Protestants and Evangelicals in Turkey and their friends around the world. A dream has become true—and not in a comfortable situation, but in one where churches struggle on all kinds of fronts. The Armenian Patriarchate, where we are located at this moment, by its very name reminds us of a history of martyrdom and difficulties, as does the Syriac Orthodox Church even in present times. The churches in Turkey are not well-funded institutions with large academic institutions that can afford to have theologians study together for years, but they love Jesus and Holy Scripture!

Protestants and Evangelicals in Turkey are a small group and rather new in the country. They know that they owe the close collaboration revealed by this book to the friendliness and openness of historic churches, which have been present here for nearly 2,000 years. These historic churches are our spiritual grandfathers. They have borne the torch of faith through the centuries.

On behalf of the 600 million Protestants who belong to the World Evangelical Alliance, I would like to thank you, the heads and leaders of those churches, for your gratefulness and good example towards your spiritual grandchildren.

When I explained the project to the Holy Father, Pope Francis, on my visit to him for his birthday in December, he was thrilled. But he was not astonished

when he heard who was involved! How much the Christian world has changed in our time was demonstrated when Pope Francis visited His All Holiness in 2014 here in this city and bowed to him when greeting him. The Christian faith is not about rivalry and power, but about service and respecting others, following the model of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This book, which looks so tiny and yet may become a model to Christianity worldwide, is so great because of the motivation behind it. No verses in Holy Scripture that came from the mouth of the Son of God better describe this motivation than John 17:18–23, taken from the prayer of Jesus Christ as the eternal high priest to His and our Father in heaven:

As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. ... My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

In its unity, the church mirrors the unity of Father and Son. Its unity preaches loud and clear to the world. But the opposite is also true: disunity and a cacophony of Christian messages to the world hinder the spread of the good news.

It is not coincidental that all great ecumenical movements in history sought unity for the sake of Christian mission. This was true of the World Evangelical Alliance when it united Protestant churches in 1846, just as it was true of the World Council of Churches in 1948 uniting Protestant, Orthodox and Oriental churches. The predecessors of His All Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarchs of the twentieth century, have called clearly upon the world's churches to come together, to present one Christ and one faith as a common witness to an unbelieving world.

Followers of non-Christian religions around us should receive the complete, essential gospel, the fundamental teachings of Christianity—but not twenty or so different versions of Christianity.

We cannot expect non-Christians to become first-class theologians, able to describe and understand the different versions of the Christian faith and then choose one of them, before they even understand the gospel. Non-Christians should come to know the one Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the one faith that brings salvation through the death of Jesus. They should hear revelation from the one God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

There is room for earnest study of the details of theology after one is already an earnest church member. There is room for the leaders of our churches to engage with each other, to learn from each other, and to express our disagreements based on a solid study of our differences. But when we are witnessing to unbelievers, that is the wrong time and place for theological struggles.

The churches in Turkey have taken the lead with their book, *Christianity: Fundamental Teachings*. All the churches together have presented a hundred pages, about our God, our Saviour, our faith, the Church and Christian morals, on which we all agree. They do not act as if we have no differences among us, but they make it amply clear that the one salvation offered by Jesus Christ is the same for all.

This work was not done by church leaders and theologians who had become liberal and no longer cared for the Word of God and for our traditions, or by people who were willing to relativize the truth and settle for just finding the smallest common denominator. Rather, it was the other way around. Earnest church leaders and theologians, steeped in their traditions and with great knowledge of church history (including the history and theology of other Christian traditions), have spelled out one hundred pages of truth that belong to all of us together, knowing that in the end, the deepest truth that exists is Jesus Christ himself who said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life' (John 14:6).

This is not to downplay theological differences. There is a need for serious theological debate. *For Christians, unity follows from the truth, not from cheap compromises*. Speaking for Protestants, meaningful unity includes studying more thoroughly the rich inheritance of the older and historic churches. I am glad that in the last decades, Protestants and Evangelicals have started to study the church fathers in depth and to publish their works, with the twenty-nine thick volumes of the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* being the most visible example. As the

World Evangelical Alliance, we are doing much in defence of our discriminated brothers and sisters of the Orthodox Church and the seven Oriental churches. Along the way, we are learning a lot from them.

In 2011 the Catholic Church (the Vatican), the World Council of Churches and the World Evangelical Alliance signed a document called 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World'. The Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Armenian Orthodox Church, the Syriac Orthodox Church and others were very heavily involved in the development of this text within the team from the World Council of Churches. This was the first-ever document signed by representatives of approximately 90

percent of Christianity globally. And it starts with these words: '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.'

The Turkish churches have shown the Christian Church worldwide that it is possible to carry out this mission in unity. Out of deep love for their fellow citizens, they have shown that unity—spelled out in one hundred pages of fundamental Christianity—is more important than anything else, so that the prayer of Jesus 'that the world might believe' may be fulfilled.

## Books Reviewed

Éric Rebillard

*Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200-450*

Reviewed by Steve Bryan

Duane Litfin

*Paul's Theology of Preaching: The Apostle's Challenge to the Art of Preaching in Ancient Corinth*

Reviewed by H. H. Drake Williams III

Gregg Allison and Chris Castaldo

*The Unfinished Reformation: What Unites and Divides Catholics and Protestants after 500 Years*

Reviewed by William F. Davidson

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*Christians and Their Many Identities in Late Antiquity, North Africa, 200-450*

Éric Rebillard

Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 2012  
Pb/hb, ix + 134 pp

*Reviewed by Steve Bryan, Professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, IL, USA*

Recent years have witnessed a call for the renewed study of early Christian tradition in North Africa, particularly in the various works of Thomas Oden. Although this call might be attributable in part to a resurgence in interest in patristics generally, Oden specifically addressed the next generation of African Christian scholars. Oden hoped that a re-engagement with early Christian roots in Africa might serve as a source of both ecumenical rapprochement and theological renewal on the continent.

The issues raised by Éric Rebillard, professor of classics at Cornell University, differ significantly from those of Oden but remain relevant to the contemporary practice of Christianity in Africa.

Whereas Oden's concern was for early Christian thought in Africa, Rebillard focuses on the identities of ordinary Christians in Roman North Africa in the third to fifth centuries. Whereas Oden called for the renewed study of early African Christian texts, Rebillard contends that an understanding of early African Christian identity is actually hindered by the study of these texts, because they were produced primarily by clergy.

According to Rebillard, older approaches that sought to understand early African Christianity through these texts were misleading, because such texts by their nature do not offer us a clear window into the social realities of the everyday lives of ordinary Christians. Rebillard sees a significant advance in more recent studies of early Christianity that examine the interactions between groups, such as among Jews, Christians and pagans. However, he faults such approaches for their uncritical acceptance of the idea that groups are homogeneous and fixed ('externally bounded').

This tendency to view people in fixed groups is a natural inference from Christian texts written by clergy who wrote primarily to construct rather than reflect Christian identity. However, Rebillard believes that such an approach

misunderstands the nature of group or collective identity. Drawing on identity theory, he seeks to explore the way in which individuals experience 'internal plurality', or a multiplicity of identities that may not entirely cohere but are activated in different contexts and in different ways.

Rebillard admits the challenge posed by the paucity of evidence on ordinary Christians in North Africa in late antiquity. However, he believes that the problem can be overcome by focusing on particular types of texts produced by clergy, particularly sermons and letters. Such texts enable us to see the points of view *opposed* by the authors.

After examining selected writings, primarily from Tertullian and Augustine, Rebillard concludes that 'Christianness' was simply one of many identities that mattered to the everyday lives of Christians in late antiquity, and that it did so only in an intermittent way.

In one sense, Rebillard's theoretical framework makes this conclusion predictable, even inevitable, from the outset. He regards groups as fundamentally contingent and believes that the experience of 'groupness' occurs episodically. In other words, he assumes the intermittency of group identity, and this is what he finds. But is the framework sound and does the evidence confirm the model?

One fundamental problem with Rebillard's study is that he assumes 'Christianness' to be only a social identity and not also, at least for some people (e.g. the ones whose views the African Fathers would have affirmed), a personal or core identity. By construing Christianness as a 'category membership' akin to ethnicity or occupation, Rebillard regards religious identity as simply one of a host of group identities that guide

an individual's actions. Christianness can thus be operative in certain contexts but not in others.

This, of course, may be true in situations where religious identity is only social in nature, but is it always the case? Indeed, a number of the cases considered by Rebillard deal with instances in which the point of view opposed is treated *as Christian*, or at least as compatible with Christian identity. And the authors of the texts assume that those who hold such points of view would alter their actions if persuaded that they were not compatible with Christian faith.

The exception to this general rule occurs when Christians act in a way that is obviously incompatible with Christian identity, as when the majority of Christians in Carthage offered public sacrifices under the threat of persecution as a result of Decius' edict. Rebillard argues that Christians complied because it was a requirement of participation in Roman society and that they did not see it as problematic to do so. But, as he knows well, many Christians *did* see this behavior as problematic and either found ways to side-step compliance or suffered the consequences of their non-compliance.

Even if Rebillard's analysis of early Christian identity in North Africa is not ultimately convincing, his analytical tools are still worth considering. They force readers to consider the ways in which multiple identities are negotiated in varied contexts. He does not attempt to guide contemporary Christians in Africa in thinking about the relationship between Christian identity and ethnic, national or prior religious identity (as one would find, for example, in the writings of Kwame Bediako). Nevertheless, we can gain much by considering how North African Christians in late antiquity wrestled with analogous questions.

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*Paul's Theology of Preaching: The Apostle's Challenge to the Art of Preaching in Ancient Corinth*

Duane Litfin

Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015

ISBN 978-0-8308-2471-7

Original edition 1994, revised 2015  
Pb, 392 pp, bibliog., index

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

In 1994, Cambridge University Press published Duane Litfin's doctoral dissertation, entitled *St. Paul's Theology of Proclamation: 1 Corinthians 1-4 and Graeco-Roman Rhetoric*. Together with Bruce Winter's *Paul and Philo among the Sophists* (Cambridge, 1997), Andrew Clarke's *Secular and Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical and Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6* (Brill, 2006) and Ben Witherington's *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 Corinthians 1-6* (Eerdmans, 1995), this book transformed background studies on the Corinthian letters. These works viewed Greco-Roman secularism, not Gnosticism, as the backdrop against which Paul presented his gospel message of the cross.

This 2015 volume expands and updates Litfin's work on 1 Corinthians 1-4. The new version contains added pastoral implications for those interested in how the exegesis applies to contemporary ministry concerns. The book is most welcome for those who concerned for effective preaching amidst the secularism

of the current Western world.

Litfin starts by discussing Greco-Roman rhetoric, summarizing the rhetorical tradition that emerged from the Second Sophistic movement. These nine chapters contain a number of lengthy quotations from writers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Isocrates. These block quotations are a strength of the book, as they are well explained and effectively weaved into Litfin's prose. Students looking for primary texts on ancient rhetoric will find Litfin's presentation easy to follow, and teachers will find valuable primary sources to help them present the Sophists to their students.

One question regarding Litfin's exploration of Greco-Roman backgrounds is whether the rhetorical tradition of the Sophists is the sole background for the expression 'wisdom of the world' in 1 Corinthians 1:17. Although significant contrasts can be drawn between the rhetoric of the Sophists and how Paul presents his ministry of proclamation in 1 Corinthians, another Greco-Roman background has also been proposed. For example, A. G. White in *Where Is the Wise Man: Graeco-Roman Education as a Background to the Divisions in 1 Corinthians 1-4* (T & T Clark, 2015) has advocated for Greco-Roman education more broadly, not only Sophistic rhetoric, as Paul's true opponent.

The second part of Litfin's book examines chapters 1-4 exegetically, with a primary (four chapters) focus on 1:17 to 2:5. In light of the Sophistic rhetorical background, his explanation is sound. It does lack consideration of Jewish elements such as citations, allusions, echoes and themes that influence the section, but the Jewish ideas are not central to Litfin's approach.

The third part of this book, 'Summary and Analysis', represents a significant



addition to the 1994 edition, containing ideas directly relevant to practical ministry. Litfin uses several equations to illustrate contrasts between Paul and the Sophists. He describes the classical approach to rhetorical effect as 'audience plus speaker's efforts produces results.' In contrast, he says, Paul believed that the Christian speaker should present the gospel in an intelligible manner, not seeing to manipulate his hearers like the Sophists and relying on the Spirit for the results.

Litfin helpfully employs sociological and psychological analysis to identify components within the speech and persuasion process. Drawing from McGuire's *Handbook of Social Psychology*, he describes five steps of the process: attention, comprehension, yielding, retention, and action. Litfin advocates that preachers should concentrate only on the first two, arguing that the rest of the process involves the Spirit's work rather than that of the preacher.

This part of the book will challenge the way in which many evangelicals preach. Litfin's argument that the preacher should be a herald (not a manipulator) and leave the results to the Holy Spirit is a valuable consideration for all who are involved in teaching homiletics.

The book concludes with five helpful appendices. One covers the relationship between Paul, Apollos, and Philo, which Bruce Winter also explored. A second appendix addresses Paul and the book of Acts, a significant discussion point within Pauline studies. The third concerns Paul's epistemology. The last two discuss implications for preaching and then broader implications, addressing the 'celebrity preacher culture' that has been encouraged in some evangelical circles and by the church growth movement.

Litfin's volume is of value to anyone interested in Paul, Corinth, 1 Corinthians, or Greco-Roman background studies. It is highly recommended for those exploring a more academic approach to preaching.

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*The Unfinished Reformation:  
What Unites and Divides Catholics  
and Protestants after 500 Years*

Gregg Allison and Chris Castaldo

Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016

ISBN: 978-0-310-52793-0

Pb., pp. 176

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The authors explain that their project grew out of a request for resources that defined 'commonalities and differences between Roman Catholic and evangelical Protestant theology with reference to the Reformation'. Although their text avoids explicitly evangelical signposts and the two families of interest become simply Catholic vs. Protestant, the responses to Catholic distinctives largely demonstrate an evangelical perspective.

Theologically, the authors' predictable answer to the question of a finished reformation is a resounding 'no'. It is encouraging that Catholics and evangelical Protestants can agree on such major issues as the Trinity, the nature of Christ and His sufferings, and the work of the Holy Spirit, but even here, the differences outweigh the agreements, especially in the areas of authority and salvation.

The fact that the study spends one chapter on agreements and four on differences certainly hints that the Reformation is unfinished. Allison and

Castaldo raise particular concerns regarding Catholic assumptions about the church. 'Nowhere is the divide between the two groups more clearly seen than in the Catholic Church's claim that "the sole Church of Christ ... subsists in ... the Catholic Church, which is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in communion with him"' (p. 101). In Catholic understanding, Peter's successor possesses 'full, supreme, and universal power over the whole church, a power which he can always exercise unhindered' (p. 103).

Allison and Castaldo go on to point out that, for Catholics, the pope is 'the concrete, visible representative of Christ ... holding the ultimate responsibility for divine revelation by maintaining Tradition and interpreting Scripture' (p. 103). Obviously, these convictions remain unacceptable to evangelicals. To grant such authority to the pope would deny evangelicalism the ability to maintain its own convictions or its very identity.

In their final chapter, Allison and Castaldo come back to their central question: is the Reformation finished? They give an interesting answer: 'yes', 'no', and 'no, but'. They argue first that the contemporary secular age has created an entirely different stage for interaction between evangelical Protestantism and Catholicism. Pluralism, democracy, skepticism, subjectivism, individualism, materialism and nihilism—i.e. the age of unbelief—have 'upset the former equilibrium, moving the center of gravity away from traditional allegiances that once pitted Catholics and Protestant against each other' (p. 149).

This is the reason for the partial 'yes' answer to their question. Catholics and Protestants can now collaborate in

many ways and agree to disagree with charity. 'Instead of drowning or impaling one another, we may now enjoy a cup of espresso together, pray for one another's family, and cherish each other as friends. So, yes, the reformation is over' (p. 150). One wonders if this statement fully defines a finished reformation, or if a finished reformation is necessary to bring us to this degree of agreement.

The optimism is balanced by the first of two 'no' answers, as the authors reiterate that the Reformation cannot yet be finished 'because of the many basic doctrinal differences that still exist between the Catholic and Protestant traditions' (p. 150).

The second 'no' seems to strike at the heart of the matter. Although progress has taken place in mutual understanding of the doctrinal and practical issues that divide Catholics and Protestants and in the recognition of areas where cooperation is possible, 'key differences still persist' (p. 151). Protestants believe that 'unless the Catholic Church undergoes radical reform according to Scripture, the Reformation will necessarily continue'; Catholics assume that 'unless Protestant churches "return home" to Mother Church, the Reformation will never be finished' (pp. 151–52). The 'no' votes seem to carry the day.

Well written and the product of careful research, this book and offers a valuable guide helping all Christians, Protestant and Catholic alike, to understand the similarities and differences between the two groups. It establishes the possibility of cooperation in some key areas of ministry while recognizing that a workable union that could produce a finished reformation remains out of reach.