

Theme:
The Praxis of Evangelical Ecclesiology

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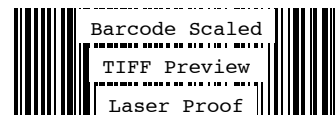
THE EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY/VOLUME 27/No. 1/JANUARY 2003

Evangelical Review of Theology

Volume 27
No. 1
January 2003

THE PRAXIS OF EVANGELICAL ECCLESIOLOGY

WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE
Theological Commission



0144-8153(200301)27:1;1-Y



Evangelical Review of Theology

EDITOR: DAVID PARKER

Volume 27 • Number 1 • January 2003

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



Published by
PATERNOSTER PERIODICALS

for
**WORLD EVANGELICAL
ALLIANCE**
Theological Commission

ISSN: 0144-8153

Volume 27 No. 1 January 2003

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The Editors welcome recommendations of original or published articles or book reviews that relate to forthcoming issues for inclusion in the Review.

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Web site: www.worldevangelical.org/tcpubs.html#ert

*Typeset by Profile, Culmdale, Rewe, Exeter, Devon EX5 4ES
and Printed in Great Britain for Paternoster Periodicals,
PO Box 300, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 0QS
by Polestar Wheatons Ltd., Exeter, Devon.*

Editorial

In this issue, we are pleased to present the final paper from the 2001 WEA Theological Commission Consultation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in which George Vandervelde of Canada writes on ecclesiology. He refers explicitly to the 'distinctive and fruitful contribution' evangelicals could make if they dealt with their traditional difficulties in this area. He offers as a starting point 'an ecclesiology shaped by the drama of the triune God's gracious desire to live among the new community of men and women created in his image' and one which is characterized by missional, communal, relational and Trinitarian concerns.

As Vandervelde indicates, our ecclesiology has often followed stereotyped lines. However, the study by Jey J. Kanagaraj of India of the profile of four women in the Johannine writings should help to offset that problem. Here women have a leadership role, being portrayed as paradigms of faith, loyalty, missionary work, *bhakti* (loving devotion) to Jesus, service to humanity, proclamation and pastoral care, which is highly significant in a patriarchal world.

Perhaps what is needed to bring in a new ecclesiological praxis is the subject of our next article – a hermeneutic that allows the text to 'transform the interpreter into the image of Christ.' Gary L. Nebeker of the United States argues that because truth can be understood in

Christocentric and transformational terms, the Spirit's role in hermeneutics must be understood similarly. If this dynamic relationship between interpretation and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit were applied generally, then disputes like the late 1980s 'Lordship controversy' might have been avoided. In a tribute to Bill Bright, Randall Gleason (Campus Crusade, Phillipines) argues that Bright's well known booklet on the Spirit filled life, presents a biblically balanced view that does not blur the distinction between faith and obedience or suggest that a commitment to Christ's saving work apart from a willingness to obey is sufficient.

An illustration of the way these themes can come together in a rather different context is provided by Young-Gwan Kim who, writing about the history of Barthian theology in South Korea since the 1930s, concludes: 'Barth's Christocentric doctrine of the Church as the Christian community still commands attention. His perspective on the nature and mission of the church is particularly significant for the contemporary ecclesiological situation in Korea.' Furthermore, Kim notes, the theological contributions of Barth's followers are marked by 'a theological passion for the primacy of God, of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit.'

David Parker, Editor

The Challenge of Evangelical Ecclesiology

George Vandervelde

Keywords: Revivalism, individualism, mission, ecumenism, parachurch, incarnation, community, divinity, trinity, divine image

I. The Need for an Evangelical Ecclesiology

In evangelical theology, ecclesiology has until recently remained an under developed topic. As Donald Bloesch observed a quarter of a century ago, 'the doctrines of the church and the sacraments are conspicuously lacking in much contemporary evangelical writing'.¹ Commenting on the same issue twenty-five years later, Stanley Grenz devotes an entire section of his recent book *Renewing the Center* to 'The "Problem" of Ecclesiology in Evangelicalism'. He

maintains that 'as a movement evangelicalism has never developed or worked from a thoroughgoing ecclesiology', and thus 'lacks a full-orbed ecclesiological base'.² Timothy George comes to a similar, though more sanguine, conclusion: 'As a theological movement, evangelicalism has been slow to develop a distinctive ecclesiology....'³

Various reasons for this evangelical deficit may be suggested. First, evangelicalism is primarily a practically oriented movement. Some speak of the pragmatic bent of evangelicalism⁴. Its main focus has been and

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¹ Donald Bloesch, *The Evangelical Renaissance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), p. 41.

² Stanley Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), p. 288. Later, under the paradoxical heading 'The Shaping of Evangelicalism's (Non)Ecclesiology', he speaks of 'evangelicalism's inattention to the church...' (p. 290; cf. p. 293).

³ Timothy George, 'Towards an Evangelical Theology,' in Thomas Rausch, *Catholics and Evangelicals: Do They Share a Common Future?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), p. 123.

⁴ Robert E. Webber maintains that evangelical pragmatism results in an 'a-theological view of the church'. *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), pp. 75-76.

continues to be mission. Donald Carson describes the prevalent evangelical attitude as follows, 'We are too busy winning people to Christ to engage in something which seems too much like navel gazing.' Church planting trumps church-thinking, 'ecclesio-logy'.

Yet, the emphasis on mission does not adequately explain the low profile of ecclesiology. After all, evangelicalism's practical penchant has not led to a lack of attention to theological reflection in general. As Timothy George points out, other themes crowd out ecclesiology. He mentions 'biblical revelation, religious epistemology and apologetics'.⁵ In addition to evangelicalism's practical bent and its privileging of other areas of theology, Timothy George mentions a third reason for the low priority given to ecclesiology, namely, the 'fissiparous' nature of evangelicalism, with its 'bewildering diversity made up of congregations, denominations, and parachurch movements' This highly variegated landscape prompts Timothy George to ask: 'Amidst such variety is it even possible to describe one single, or even central, evangelical ecclesiology?'⁶

Stanley Grenz elaborates considerably on one aspect of the variety that George mentions only in passing, namely, the parachurch phenomenon. Grenz considers this phenomenon to be not merely one among several distinctive elements but as some-

thing that characterizes evangelicalism.⁷ Coining a term for this characteristic, he speaks of the 'parachurchicity' of evangelicalism. He affirms R. Albert Mohler's statement that 'the momentum and defining characteristic of the movement came from parachurch institutions which shaped evangelical consciousness'.⁸ 'The evangelical ethos', says Grenz, 'is embodied in a variety of organizations and "ministries" that exist alongside of the ecclesiastical structures within which evangelicals hold membership.'⁹ For many, the involvement in organizations alongside the church shapes their identity, or at least directs their activity, far more than belonging to a church.

Another reason for the lack of an evangelical ecclesiology relates directly to the different places in which evangelicals find themselves. Many belong, of course, to churches that would identify themselves as evangelical. Even though the development of an ecclesiology by theologians within this tradition may not be a high priority, it is at least an option. Elaborating a distinctly evangelical theology is far more difficult for evangelical groupings within established churches, such as the large groups of evangelicals within the Anglican communion. For evangelicals to remain within these churches is to recognize, with various reservations, the validity of the ecclesiology of the established church. Conversely, the development of a distinct

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁷ *Renewing the Center*, pp. 289f.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

ecclesiology appears as a rationale for secession.¹⁰

The under-development of ecclesiology in evangelicalism is also a legacy of revivalism. Against a nominal Christianity, i.e., church membership without a clear commitment to Christ, evangelicalism stressed the need for personal rebirth, conversion, commitment. Church membership, in fact, could foster false security, obviating any need for an experientially devout and holy life. As Grenz puts it, 'The personal experience of the new birth became the sine qua non of authentic Christianity, a move that occasioned the development of a benign neglect of the church, if not a certain anti-church bias, among many evangelicals.'¹¹ He relates the case of a number of people in Norwich, Connecticut, who had been transformed in the evangelical awakening in 1745. These 'New Lights,' as they were called, proposed that to qualify for membership in the local church each person be required to testify to their experience of conversion. When the church rejected this proposal, the New Lights began to meet separately and later established their own church.¹²

The emphasis on personal experience as the criterion of authentic faith tended to propel revivalism beyond all denominational labels. In one of his sermons, George Whit-

field, looking into heaven, launches into an illuminating conversation:

Father Abraham, whom have you in heaven? Any Episcopalians? No!

Any Presbyterians? No!

Any Independents or Methodists? No, no!

Whom have you there?

We don't know those names here. All who are here are Christians.¹³

One might call this heavenly vision an eschatological prolepsis that relativizes all institutions that we call church and thus supersedes—and even preempts—all humanly devised ecclesiologies. Such transcendence also serves to highlight another reason for marginalization of ecclesiology, namely, the emphasis on the invisible church. The heart of the Christian faith was seen to transcend all institutions and to lie precisely in that invisible, yet very real, spiritual fellowship across denominational boundaries.¹⁴

Finally, one must point to individualism as a major retarding factor in developing a coherent evangelical ecclesiology. Robert Webber argues that the emphasis on individualism within evangelicalism has led to an 'a-historical view of the church'. He explains, 'It devalues the corporate life of the church. This neglect of the whole body of Christ for what has been called "freelance" Christianity is a dangerous rejection of the body in which Christ dwells.'¹⁵ In view of

¹⁰ Regarding the struggles over these opposing viewpoints, see Ian Randall and David Hilborn, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance* (Carlisle, U.K.: Paternoster Press, 2001), pp. 246-257.

¹¹ *Renewing the Center*, p. 291.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 292.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 293

¹⁴ The National Association of Evangelicals (U.S.A.), e.g., declares in its Statement of Faith: 'We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.' On the issue of unity among evangelicals, see *One Body in Christ*, esp., pp. 232-257.

¹⁵ Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith*, p. 76.

this ecclesiological deficit, the Theological Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship, at its meeting in London in 1996, made pointed proposals regarding ecclesiology. It recommends that the WEF 'undertake an intensive study ... to investigate what implications the soteriological aspects of the WEF Basis of Faith have for an evangelical understanding of the church'; 'to consider revising the WEF Basis of Faith to produce a clearer statement on the church'; and 'to describe carefully the relation between church and kingdom'. That is not all. A separate recommendation calls on the WEF to institute a commission on evangelical ecclesiology to implement these recommendations.¹⁶ While these recommendations reveal a determination to overcome the ecclesiological deficit, the failure to act on these proposals by the subsequent WEF General Assembly appears to indicate ecclesiology's continuing low priority.

II. The Development of Evangelical Ecclesiology

A. Ecclesiological Surge

If evangelical ecclesiology has suffered benign neglect in the past, it currently enjoys increasing attention. Although the Lausanne Covenant, for example, does not deal at any length with the church, it does underscore its importance. In the first article Lausanne highlights the centrality of the church. It affirms that it is

the purpose of God to call out a people for himself and to send this people into the world as his servants.¹⁷ Article six further elaborates the pivotal role of the church when it affirms that the church stands 'at the very center of God's cosmic purposes'.¹⁸

Evangelical theological conferences as well as books of essays have been devoted to ecclesiological themes. Two volumes, originating in theological consultations, were edited by Donald Carson, *Biblical Interpretation and the Church* in 1984,¹⁹ and three years later, *The Church, the Bible and the World*.²⁰ Two years later, *The Church: God's Agent for Change*, edited by Bruce Nicholls was published.²¹ Moreover, in the past few years several biblical-theological monographs have appeared. Edmund P. Clowney's *The Church*²² and Everett Ferguson's *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today*²³ deserve mention.

Works by other evangelical authors venture towards a more systematic treatment of ecclesiology. The first is Stanley Grenz's *Theology for the*

¹⁷ The Lausanne Covenant and subsequent Lausanne statements may be found in John Stott, *Making Christ Known: Historic Mission Documents from the Lausanne Movement, 1974-1989* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

¹⁹ D.A. Carson, *Biblical Interpretation and the Church: Text and Context* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984).

²⁰ D. A. Carson, *The Church in the Bible and the World: An International Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987).

²¹ Bruce J. Nicholls, *The Church: God's Agent for Change*. Exeter: Paternoster, 1986.

²² Downer's Grove: InterVarsity, 1995.

²³ Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

¹⁶ *Evangelical Review of Theology* 21 (1997), pp. 21-22.

Community of God.²⁴ Although this book is a complete systematic theology, ecclesiology obtains a rather high profile. As the title indicates, theology is conceived as arising from and directed to the church—it is ‘theology for the community of God’. Moreover, even in the section on creation, Grenz treats human beings in terms of community, as is evident in the title of chapter six: ‘Our Nature as persons destined for community’. Similarly, in dealing with the fall, he focuses on its communal dimension. The chapter is titled ‘Sin: The Destruction of Human Community’. Finally, as to ecclesiology proper, Grenz devotes no fewer than four chapters to the doctrine of the church. One other notable example of evangelical work in ecclesiology is the monograph *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*,²⁵ by Miroslav Volf, formerly a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, now at Yale Divinity School. As even this furtive glance in the theological kitchen indicates, ecclesiology has moved to the front burner of many an evangelical stove.

B. Why Now?

Before we consider some of the lineaments of an evangelical ecclesiology, a few comments are in order about the reason for the increased interest in this topic. One factor is the realization that to concentrate on mission at the expense of reflection

on the nature and purpose of the church hurts the very mission in which one is engaged. As the Lausanne statement indicates, one central aspect of mission is the creation of a new community and the call to join that new community. To treat the issue of the nature and purpose of that community as merely a by-product of mission that needs no further theological reflection is to short-change that community. Such cavalier treatment of ecclesiology leads to an uncritical importation, imposition, or perpetuation of alien structures and customs on the new community. Furthermore, just as one needs reflection on the nature of the ‘salvation’ one preaches, so too one needs critical reflection on the nature of the community that results. As Timothy George points out, loosed from any theological moorings, many evangelical churches appear to be ‘more concerned with individualistic therapeutic spirituality than with churchly Christianity’.²⁶ This reductionist soteriology leads to an equally reductionist understanding of the church. Browsing through the books found on the shelves of Christian bookstores, Barbara Brown Zinkmund comes upon chapter titles such as, ‘The Church as a Helpful Service Organization,’ ‘The Church as an Insurance Policy,’ ‘The Church Serves My Special Interests,’ ‘The Church Rescues Me in Times of Crisis’.²⁷

²⁴ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

²⁵ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

²⁶ George, ‘Toward’, p. 124.

²⁷ Barbara Brown Zinkmund, *Discovering the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983); cited by George, ‘Toward’, p. 124.

Fortunately this smorgasbord of nauseous ecclesial dishes is not at all representative of the evangelical work in ecclesiology that already exists.²⁸ Nevertheless, it does demonstrate the continued need for developing and presenting an ecclesiology more deeply rooted in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some years ago, Marty-Lloyd Jones put the matter starkly: '... the failure to be clear about the doctrine of the church is one of the greatest hindrances to evangelism at this present time.' He even calls such ecclesiological malnourishment 'the greatest hindrance to revival'.²⁹

A second reason for the increased attention to ecclesiology within the evangelical world is its increasing contact with other traditions. This ecumenical impetus may be illustrated by the international consultation between the WEF and the Roman Catholic Church. Its first consultation in 1993 dealt with the key topics that are in contention between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics: on the one hand, the authority of Scripture and the role of tradition, and on the other, the meaning and weight of justification by faith. During this consultation, two topics came to the fore, namely, the relation of divergent understandings of the church and the nature and practice of mission. This became the topic, not only of the next consultation, held in 1997, but of subsequent ses-

sions of the consultation, held in 1999 and 2001³⁰. A similar process appears to be evident in the much older Pentecostal-Roman Catholic Dialogue. This encounter began 25 years ago by concentrating on topics such as the Holy Spirit's role in Christian initiation, the Spirit and the Church, and the Spirit's role in prayer and worship. By the 1980s these discussions were devoted to the meaning of *koinonia* and its implication for mission, evangelism—and proselytism.³¹

A third reason for the increased prominence of evangelical ecclesiology must be attributed to the enormous impact of Lesslie Newbigin. During the past two decades, the writings of the great missionary pastor and theologian, spawned networks both in Britain and North America devoted to the relation of gospel and culture. Those involved in this project did not concentrate simply on the *mission* of the church, but began to examine the nature and shape of the missional *church*. The missionary ecclesiology that Newbigin fostered in the cities and towns of India and which, upon his return to

³⁰ The papers of the 1993 consultation on Justification, Scripture, and Tradition were published in *Evangelical Review of Theology* 21 (1997), pp. 101-153; the papers of the 1997 consultation on the Nature and Mission of the Church were published in *ERT* 23 (1999), pp. 6-91, as well as in *One in Christ* 35 (1999) pp. 11-92. The results of the 2001 and 2002 consultations on Evangelization, Proselytism, and Religious Freedom are in process.

³¹ See *Growth in Agreement II: Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level, 1982-1998*, eds. Jeffrey Gros, et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 713-752.

²⁸ As George points out, *ibid.*

²⁹ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Unity in Truth* (Durham: Evangelical Press, 1991), pp. 46-47.

Britain, he espoused in the West³² reverberates in the titles of the publications by authors associated with the Gospel and Our Culture Network, as it is known in North America: *The Church between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America*;³³ *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*;³⁴ *The Continuing Conversion of the Church*,³⁵ and *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit*.³⁶ In a similar vein, the recent WEF global Consultation on Evangelical Missiology, held in Brazil in 1999, further underscores the need to elaborate ecclesiology within a missionary dynamic. After alluding to the Lausanne affirmation mentioned above, the third commitment of the Iguassu Affirmation states, 'We commit ourselves to strengthen our ecclesiology in mission'³⁷

III. The Challenge of an Evangelical Ecclesiology

Building on the ecclesiological work that is beginning to develop in evangelical theology, I wish in the remain-

der of this paper to elaborate briefly a central biblical theme as a foundation for an evangelical ecclesiology and present some of its key features.

A. The Church as God's Provisional Home

The church comes to be as a result of the triune God's plan to dwell with, among, and in the community of those created as his icons. Accordingly, ecclesiology is the theological reflection on the mystery of God's desire to be intimately among us. More specifically, ecclesiology is the systematic reflection on the shape which this dwelling of God takes in the community of Christ that journeys between Pentecost and *parousia*.

From the outset of God's redeeming action described in the Pentateuch to the vision of its consummation found in the book of Revelation, the Creator of this vast universe appears to be determined to dwell on a minuscule. God seems not to be embarrassed about starting out this journey by setting up camp among a rag-tag band of ex-slaves:

I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar;

Aaron also and his sons I will consecrate, to serve me as priests.

I will dwell among the Israelites, and I will be their God.

And they shall know that I am the Lord their God,

who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them;

I am the Lord their God (Ex. 29:34-36).

And God promises not to quit until his home spans the globe.

See, the home of God is with his human creatures.

He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his people,

³² For a fine treatment of Newbigin's ecclesiology, see Michael W. Goheen, 'As the Father Has Sent ME, I Am Sending You': J.E. Leslie Newbigin's *Missionary Ecclesiology*, (Zoetermeer: Bogenkencentrum, 2001).

³³ George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder, eds., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996)

³⁴ Darrell L. Guder, ed., (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).

³⁵ Darrell L. Guder, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

³⁶ Craig Van Gelder, (Grand Rapids, 2000).

³⁷ 'Iguassu Affirmation,' *International Review of Mission* 89 (2000) pp. 242-247; *Evangelical Review of Theology* 24 (2000), pp. 200-206.

and God himself will be with them ... I will be their God and they will be my children (Rev. 20).

Somewhere between the first glimpse of God enjoying a garden walk with his special creatures in the cool of the day to the vista of God setting up permanent camp with them, the triune God's new community of women and men comes into being.

The centrality of the church in God's redemptive plan, which the Lausanne Covenant confesses, becomes clear especially when one considers the church as the privileged dwelling place of God. The central covenant promise that resounds through the older and newer Testaments is this: 'I will be your God and you shall be my people' (Ex. 6:7; Lev. 26:12; Jer. 30:22; Ez. 34:30-31; 36:28; I Peter 2:9-10. Cf. Ps. 50:7; Is. 40:1; Jer. 7:23; 11:4; Ez. 34:31; 36:28). Moreover, God is determined not simply to 'have' a people, a situation in which God could remain at some remove. Rather, the covenanting One desires to be God to a people in such a way as to dwell with, among, and in them. It is striking that this motif almost always relates to a community. Accordingly, the language of God's occupying an earthly home coincides with the story of the formation of a special people. God's setting up house among his people finds its concrete focal point in the edifice called the tabernacle. The highly detailed description of the structure and function of the tabernacle reflects its importance as the central dwelling place of God. Even though the term means simply

'dwelling place', it is used almost exclusively for God's domicile.

One is sorely tempted to relegate the notion that God dwells in a specific place to the realm of primitive, antiquated beliefs. That God would live in a tabernacle the size of a fold-up version of a small bungalow suggests the idea of 'God-in-a-box'. God seems to be brought down to the level of one of the many localized deities. It is obvious, however, that in the Old Testament the God who dwells in a confined space is none other than the Creator and Lord of the universe. In fact, precisely the identity of this God as Creator and Lord of the cosmos underscores the grace of his wondrous dwelling in a specific space. Even when the modest tabernacle is replaced by a magnificent temple, the conviction concerning the uncontainability of God is very much alive.³⁸

The characterization of the church as the dwelling of the *triune* God can refer, strictly speaking, only to the people of God A.D. The *ekklesia*, though existing among the older people of God, in its newness as body of Christ, is the creation of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, the *pneuma* which shapes ecclesiology is none other than the Spirit of Christ. When the Spirit creates the new community the community that comes into being is the body of Christ. The Spirit shapes the body in the image of Christ.

A striking correlation exists between the incarnation and the church. John's prologue points to

³⁸ See I Kings 8:23, 27.

testifies to the fact that the Word who became flesh 'lived' or 'dwelt' among us—literally pitched his tent among us.³⁹ Yet, in this lowly animal-skin covered dwelling, the glory of the Father—that is his palpable presence—is to be seen, a glory suffused with grace and truth, i.e., permeated by the character of God. Then John drives home the exclusivity of this presence in Jesus: 'No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.' Literally rendered, John affirms that the Son has 'exegeted' God. In his flesh-and-blood tenting, the Son spells out the character and intentions of God.

The negation ('no one has seen God') combined with the affirmation ('the only Son has made him known') clearly attributes to Christ an exclusive revelatory role. If you want to know God, look no further, look nowhere else. In view of this singular role of Jesus, one would think that, after this earthly domicile is broken up, the apostles would point to this privileged exegete of the Father as the sole presence of God in human form. Yet, astoundingly, what seems to be excluded in the prologue of John is thrown wide open in the first epistle of John. Again we hear the same emphatic negation, 'No one has ever seen God.' And, again, this negative statement does not serve to announce a closed, but an open heaven. John trains the spotlight on the locus where God is *disclosed*, the realm where God is to become

manifest. But, rather than pointing back to Christ as the one who has opened heaven, as the letter does so emphatically in its opening paragraph, John points equally emphatically to the fledgling community of Christ-followers as the locus of God's revealing presence. Preserving the word order of the original text makes the startling 'transfer' unmistakably clear: 'God, no one has ever seen—[but] if we love one another God dwells in us and his love is completed in us' (1 John 4:12). If we had only the statement in the prologue of the fourth Gospel extolling Christ as the exclusive God-revealer and God-embodier, we would probably resist extending this God-revealing and God-embodier role. Yet the parallel stands:

No one has ever seen God—the only begotten is the face and presence of God.

No one has ever seen God—the community that dwells in his love is the face of God.

In the path of that bold parallel between God's dwelling in Jesus and in his community the church appears.

B. Lineaments of an Evangelical Ecclesiology

1. Missional

An ecclesiology of God's dwelling with and in the Christ-community is intrinsically missional. Stretching out his wounded hands in blessing and bestowing his peace on a motley band of followers, Jesus by his Spirit turns them into bold missionary proclaimers. The dispirited become the en-Spirited. As the Father has sent me so I send you. No one has seen

³⁹ The same term for dwelling is used twice in the passage from the book of Revelation quoted above.

God—the only begotten, he has made him known. No one has seen God—but if you love one another, God stays among you and his love gets to where it needs to get. The triune God doesn't settle into a vacation cottage, let alone a retirement home. The God who moves in among his people continues to be on the move, ever outward, ever onward. The church is indeed a gathered community but it is that only as a *gathering movement*.

As in most of the New Testament, the first letter of John does not enjoin mission as a task. Rather, the missional dynamic is assumed to be intrinsic to the nature of the new community.⁴⁰ That is evident in the astounding and unexpected vistas that this brief epistle opens. Assuring the readers, for example, that Christ's sacrifice is wholly sufficient for the forgiveness of the sins of *this fledgling community* would have been quite adequate. But the author of this letter is strangely impelled to make assertions that leap far over the heads of the small assembly: 'He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world' (1 John 2:2). What propels the epistle to vault far beyond the needs of his hearers is the intrinsic dynamic of the message. This letter opens a vista equally vast and startling when speaking of salvation. The epistle most commonly describes the world in sweepingly negative terms. 'The

whole world lies in the power of the evil one' (1 John 5:19; cf. 2:15-17). Given this bleak description and the stark antithesis between the Father and the World, one would hardly expect to find the world and Christ conjoined by a possessive preposition. Yet, the epistle affirms that the Father sent the Son not only *into* the world, but as Saviour *of* the world (4:9,14). While the epistle focuses on the small congregation, its missional scope embraces the world.

The intrinsic link between church and mission and thus between ecclesiology and missiology is critical for evangelical theology. A dwelling-of-God ecclesiology would help overcome the tendency within evangelicism to play off mission against ecclesiology. It is easy to be comfortable about such polarization. After all, majoring in mission falls in lock-step with the Great Commission. Nevertheless, to accept passion for mission and concern about the church as an inescapable dilemma is to de-nature both mission and church.

Understanding mission as an integral dimension of the church—conceived as the provisional dwelling place of God—challenges us to a deepened reflection on both mission and church. The missional question cannot be reduced to strategies for winning a maximum number of converts. While conversion is the heart of mission, that heart is to be shaped by the heart of the God who wishes to dwell among his creatures. This divine desire forces us to ask the question: what kind of conversion renders the earth a place fit for God's

⁴⁰ See Lesslie Newbigin, on 'The Logic of Mission', in *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 116-127.

dwelling? What form of conversion—conversion from what to what—constitutes a welcome to God's moving into our neighbourhood? What do we know about God's habits, God's likes and dislikes, God's predilections that would govern the task of home-shaping? For an initial answer to such questions, we need not go far afield. The Bible is full of testimonies regarding God's passion. For our purposes, the poignant statement in Jeremiah 9 will suffice: 'Let those who boast boast in this, that they understand and know me, that I am the Lord; I act with steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth' (v. 24). The conversion for which mission aims, then, is immediately related to God's delight declared here. The conversion that marks mission is therefore as broad and deep as the character and desire of the God whose home-coming the church exemplifies and serves.

The church, therefore, cannot be treated as merely an organization that fosters mission—an agency for recruiting recruiters. Such treatment represents a functional reduction, so that the church is defined purely by what it does; it becomes simply a means to an end. But the church is itself an 'end', a provisional end, but an end nonetheless. The church is constituted in its communion with the living, triune God. The church is to demonstrate, not simply by its *doing*, but in its very *being*, what God is all about—God's character—and what God is *about in our world*—God's *mission*. As the continuation of God's mission of recon-

ciliation mission is exemplified, embodied, and channeled through a reconciled *people*, a *community*. For Paul, the summing up of all things in Christ is showcased in and by the very make-up of the church. The mystery of cosmic reconciliation, the reconciliation of all things in Christ finds its visible, empirical proof, in the reality of Jews and Gentiles sitting side-by-side as part of one community.⁴¹ The church comes into being by virtue of God's *mission* but, since that mission entails the homecoming of God, the church is to embody the new reality of the Father's presence in Christ by the Holy Spirit.

The showcase role of the church, therefore, fundamentally challenges any privileging of 'effectiveness' as criterion of mission, without regard to ecclesiological questions. Insisting on the integral relation of mission and church calls into question, for example, the primacy that tends to be accorded to the so called 'homogeneous unit principle'. It may well be true that churches grow most readily along lines of natural, professional, ethnic, or social affinity. No matter how effective such growth strategy may be, however, if it fosters and sanctions a relatively homogeneous congregation, it is out of touch with the breadth of God's mission of reconciliation. One needs to be open to the possibility that a numerically effective mission is anti-normative because of the inadequate ecclesiology from which it proceeds and to

⁴¹ Interestingly, in a somewhat different context, Volf too links the struggle against individualism with the missiological question (*After Our Likeness*, 11).

which it leads.

At the same time, the evangelical passion for mission, when brought into critical dialogue with traditions that give pride of place to ecclesiology,⁴² can serve as a salutary antidote to the danger of an introverted ecclesiocentrism. There is a proper, biblical relativization of ecclesiology that occurs, not at the expense of the church, but for the sake of the church. It protests a preoccupation with the church—its essential structures, the validity of its ordained ministry and of its sacraments—that leaves mission as a topic of subsequent and subordinate concern. The evangelical relativization of ecclesiology, rightly handled, can serve as a

⁴² In developing a missional ecclesiology, evangelical theologians need to take up the challenge of engaging directly with other traditions, particularly Roman Catholicism. The Second Vatican's *Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Walter M. Abbott, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II*. New York: Corpus Books, 1966, pp. 199-308) as well as Pope Paul VI apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1975) deserve evangelical engagement. The controversial document *Dominus Iesus* (*Origins* 30 [2000]: pp. 209-224) is especially relevant to the evangelical task. The link that this document lays between claims regarding Christ as the sole Redeemer and assertions about the highly privileged role of the Roman Catholic Church presents a peculiar challenge to evangelical theology. In a very different way, a recent ecumenical document deserves close attention. Issuing from the ecclesiology study of the World Council of Churches' Faith and Order Commission, the publication *The Nature and Purpose of the Church* seeks to expound the integral relation between church and mission, setting forth ecumenical agreements and disagreements on this topic (*The Nature and Purpose of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*. Geneva: WCC, 1998; the suggestion that the title be changed to 'The Nature and Mission of the Church' is under active consideration). Even if evangelical theologians were to disagree with much of the document, their response to this document could open up new perspectives on the integral relation between mission and church.

call for the continual reform of the church.⁴³

2. Communal: The Corporate Foundation of the Personal

To stress the communal dimension of ecclesiology seems tantamount to stressing the physical dimension of a rock. Yet, the evangelical emphasis on and interpretation of the experience of conversion or being born-again tends to foster a strongly individualistic approach that hampers the full appreciation of the communal dimension of the church.⁴⁴ Ecclesial community tends to be thought of as a loose 'fellowship', an aggregate of like-minded individuals. The *Lausanne Covenant* confesses the harmful effect of 'sinful individualism'.⁴⁵ Commenting on this document two decades later, John Stott, its principal author, again rues 'our evangelical tendency to individualism'.⁴⁶

⁴³ See Richard Mouw, *ibid.*, p. 133.

⁴⁴ The individualistic tendency is not simply a theological conclusion from the experience of salvation. Especially in North America, the catalyst for an individualist approach to salvation is the individualism that is rampant in society. In his study of the relation of individualism and social ethics in evangelicalism, Dennis P. Hollinger, concludes that individualism represents an accommodation to North American culture. The subtitle of his book indicates the gravity of such individualism, calling it an 'Evangelical Syncretism'. (Dennis P. Hollinger, *Individualism and Social Ethics: An Evangelical Syncretism*; Lanham, NY: University Press of America, 1983). Hollinger does suggest that the 'seeds of modern individualism' (p. 222) lie in the Reformation: '... it is clear that Reformation theology, with its potential for individualistic interpretation and application, is one contributing factor to mainstream Evangelicalism's rendezvous with individualism' (p. 223). At the same time such 'seed' or 'potential' can lead a life of its own only by virtue of evangelicalism's 'selective inattention to the corporate dimensions of the Reformation theology ...' (p. 223).

⁴⁵ *The Lausanne Covenant*, par 7.

At stake in the penchant towards individualism is not merely a sociological defect, however. Such individualism flies in the face of the biblical notion of community. While each person, as a unique creation of God, is irreplaceable and singularly esteemed by God, each is a unique person-in-community. Community is the matrix of person. It is striking, for example, that when Paul reminds Christians, 'you' are the temple of the Holy Spirit, the 'you' is always in the plural, while 'temple' is in the singular.⁴⁷ Similarly, Peter speaks of Christians as living stones that are being built into a single spiritual house.⁴⁸ Focusing on ecclesiology as reflection on God's dwelling 'place' acts as a safeguard against any attempt to lock God up in the cubicles of individual human hearts, or of any notion of the church as the concatenation of such cells—a honeycomb ecclesiology. With infinite love for each unique creature, God delights to live among us. Yet, God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is not infinitely divisible, distributed among a host of single occupancy dwellings. Considerable efforts are currently expended by evangelical theologians

to develop a better account of the communal dimension of the Christian faith. Prime among these is the work by Miroslav Volf. In the preface to his ecclesiological study, he states the purpose of his book as the attempt to overcome the individualistic malady: 'The purpose of the book is to counter the tendencies towards individualism in Protestant ecclesiology.' He seeks to demonstrate and undergird this communal dimension by appealing both to sociological and theological, and more specifically, trinitarian considerations.⁴⁹

The difficulty of disentangling evangelical ecclesiology from individualistic thought forms is evident in the work of Stanley Grenz. He clearly intends to give the corporate dimension its rightful place,⁵⁰ Yet, in developing the notion of covenant, the 'individual' believer often appears to be primary and the community derivative. The covenant, which is primarily 'vertical' is said to 'stand at the foundation of the church' as a corporate reality.⁵¹ At

⁴⁹ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness*, pp. 4-5, 159-214.

⁵⁰ See, e.g., the title of the ecclesiological chapter, 'The Church—The Eschatological Covenant Community', as well as many of the headings in this chapter: *Theology for the Community of God*, pp. 463-485.

⁵¹ While wishing to affirm a 'reciprocal relationship between the individual believer and the corporate fellowship', this reciprocity seems to break down. The 'individual' gains ascendancy, interestingly, through Grenz's notion of covenant. The church, he states, 'is formed through the coming together of those who have entered into covenant with God in Christ and thus with each other'. The other side of the reciprocal relation is described in terms of 'fostering' the faith of those who join this fellowship (*ibid.*, p. 480).

⁴⁶ John Stott, 'Twenty Years After Lausanne: Some Personal Reflections', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 19 (1995) pp. 50-55; citation p. 53. Here he couples 'individualism' with 'empire building' which he sees displayed in 'a most unseemly scramble of Western missionary organizations' into the countries formerly under communist rule.

⁴⁷ See 1 Cor. 3:16, 17; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16 ('we'). See also Eph. 2:19-22.

⁴⁸ 1 Peter 2:5; subsequently amplified by a proliferation of communal terminology for the new community: chosen race, royal priesthood, holy nation, God's own people (vv. 9-10).

the same time, Grenz describes this covenant in a way that seems to equate covenant with a social contract. After stating that 'our common allegiance to Jesus' impels us to 'join together to be the people of God', Grenz concludes, 'The covenant which inheres in the church, therefore, is *our agreement to walk together, to be a people in relationship with one another*'.⁵² This emphasis on the decision of individuals does not mean the abandonment of the more corporate understanding of the church. In the next sentence, he contends, 'We who name Jesus as Lord, therefore, are one body—a community.'⁵³ Unfortunately, Grenz does not indicate how the personal and the communal constitute an integral unity. Instead, he keeps the two in tension. Within that tension residual individualist thought forms appear to undermine the communal reality that Grenz wishes to undergird.

Contrary to the dominant western tendency to proceed from the supremacy of the individual, one can make a more compelling case, not for the supremacy, but for the priority and a certain primacy of the church, the people of God, as corporate reality. One does not become a Christian on one's own. Becoming a child of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit is normally not a private event between an individual and God. One would not know the name of Jesus without someone having spoken it, explained it, hav-

ing said something about what following him might mean. This person, in turn, has learned the meaning of words about Jesus within a specific community. Suppose, for the sake of the argument, that a person who has not heard a single word about Jesus comes to believe in him upon reading a Gideon Bible in a hotel room. Yet, even this solitary event presupposes a community and a network of relationships. In that Bible is invested the community of translators who stand in a long tradition of translation and who are part of the body of Christ. The Gideons, moreover, are in some sense present, in the Bible's fly-leaf inscription, in any referral information, and in their prayers. But even abstracting from the hidden presence of community, the new life begun there can be sustained and rightly directed only within some expression of the corporate community of faith.

The Church Father Cyprian said long ago, 'You cannot have God as your Father without having the church as your mother.' Assigning to the church the role of mother of faith sounds foreign to evangelical ears. In fact, it may seem to undermine the necessity of personal decision. Yet, Luther who, as few others have done, opened up the way to a vital, personal faith, went beyond simply juxtaposing, as Cyprian did, God and the church. He insists that 'Those who are to find Christ must first find the church'.⁵⁴

Such statements sound strange to

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 481 (emphasis added).

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Cited in *Church and Justification*, Lutheran-Roman Catholic Joint Commission (Lutheran World Federation, 1994), par. 111.

our ears because evangelicals, while often 'propositionalist' with respect to the *fides quae creditur*, the content of faith (Scripture, truth, and doctrine) tend to be 'experiential—expressivists' with respect to the *fides qua creditur*, the act of faith. The category, experiential-expressivist, developed by George Lindbeck,⁵⁵ fits the solipsistic way we tend to regard the genesis of faith: the Holy Spirit works faith in one's heart and this personal experience comes to expression in a personal testimony. What one sees and hears is the outward expression of a strictly personal, if not private, experience.

The emphasis on the personal as such is not misplaced. For support one may appeal to Paul's assurance in Romans, if you 'believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved' (10:9). But one can press this in an experiential-expressivist mould only by isolating this aspect from the immediate context and flow of Paul's writing. Paul does not draw a trajectory from the inside out, so to speak, but from the outside in. His reference to the confessing mouth of the believer is preceded and surrounded, shaped and determined by the proclaiming mouth of the preacher. Paul begins by speaking of the preached word, the 'word of faith' which he proclaims. Confession is on the lips first and thus in the heart. It reaches lip and heart because the word of faith is first of all *heard*.

Similarly, Paul elaborates in conclusion what he merely mentions at the beginning. In a domino like series, Paul works back from the believer who calls on the name of the Lord to the preacher of the good news: Every one who calls will be saved; how are they to call if they have not believed; how are they to believe if they have not heard; how are they to hear if no one proclaims? (10:13-15). And as if this concatenation were not clear enough he spells out the conclusion. So faith comes from what is heard and what is heard comes through the word of Christ (v. 17)—*ex auditu verbi*.

What we might call the 'impressivist-traditioning' dimension of Christian faith has important ecclesiological implication, as becomes clear in the opening verses of the first letter of John. All the emphasis falls on the traditioning role of the apostolic witnesses to Jesus Christ. What they have seen, touched, looked upon—that they declare. Believingly appropriating their declaration brings about *koinonia*, fellowship, communion. Now we would expect that this letter would describe communion first of all as fellowship with the one preached, with Jesus Christ. But the first thing this letter mentions is that by accepting the apostolic testimony, communion is established with *the proclaimers*. Only then does the writer mention that the believing recipients are—as if by extension—connected with Father and Son (1 John 1:1-4).

This indirect connection is the more pertinent given the fact that this Johannine letter takes aim at

⁵⁵ George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984).

people in the early church community who vaunted a straight line, vertical connection with God. Recognizing the lethal effect of such verticalism, John disfellowships its proponents. He does so for all kinds of aberrations but all of them come to painful expression in believers' isolation from the community of Christ-followers. While the emphasis to root Christian faith in the apostolic testimony may be called a hall-mark of evangelicalism, this nexus is often conceived of cerebrally, as if the link exists in the acceptance of orthodox doctrines. The ecclesiological implications of this apostolic grounding are commonly ignored.⁵⁶

The communal character of the Christian faith is intrinsic to that faith. The corporate reality of Christian faith is not a by-product of a faith that resides first of all in the hearts of individual believers. Christian community is not constituted by the common faith confession that arises out of the hearts of initially solitary, individual believers.⁵⁷ Corporate communion—body of Christ communion—is the very matrix of faith. Even

when the New Testament describes the growth of the church in terms of the addition of a number of believers, it is not the simple addition that adds up to the people of God. Rather, James encapsulates Peter's description at the Council of Jerusalem by stressing God's work in taking a people: 'God first looked favourably on the Gentiles to take from among them a people for his name' (Acts 15:14). The church indeed grows by 'addition' but the church is not constituted by addition; the 'additions' exist by incorporation. Miroslav Volf rightly speaks of the 'ecclesiality of salvation'.⁵⁸

The challenge for evangelical ecclesiology is to develop a more integral understanding and practice of the communal reality of the new reality inaugurated by Christ. At the same time, the challenge presented by evangelical ecclesiology to other traditions is the intrinsic and authentic place of the personal dimension of this reality. One may, for a time, be taken along by Christ by being borne by—even born into—a group of his followers, but the point of being borne is to be born anew, from above, as a follower of Christ.

3. Relational: 'The Divine' as God's Presence within the Human Community

A major ecclesiological challenge lies in breaking through the high-church versus low-church dilemma into which much of ecumenical theology

⁵⁶ This bracketing of the priority of the community may well be accounted for by the tendency to consign the content of the faith to an objectivist-propositional realm. In a review of John Stott's *Evangelical Truth* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), John Stackhouse Jr., comments on the polarity in evangelicalism between experientialism and objectivism. He describes the tendency to rationalism as follows: a tendency to prize soundness of conviction more than intensity of experience, to champion the objective work of justification above the subjective work of sanctification, and even to identify, at times, more quickly with the Bible than with the Lord Jesus. (Surely we should be 'Jesus people' even more than we should be 'Bible people' [Stott's description!]), *Christianity Today*, February 7, 2000, Vol. 44, No. 2, p. 89.

⁵⁷ Compare Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 162.

⁵⁸ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 172. In the introduction to his book, Volf states that the very purpose of his book is 'to counter the tendencies towards individualism in Protestant ecclesiology', p. 2.

forces ecumenical discussion. Such framing of the discussion readily translates into formulating the dilemma as choice between an adequate, or even valid, ecclesiology, on the one hand, and a deficient, or worse, absent ecclesiology, on the other. As Richard Mouw points out, the discussion is closed from the outset when one type of ecclesiology is assumed as the standard by which all others are judged.⁵⁹ By denigrating evangelical ecclesiology, even at its best, as being 'weak' the standard of the 'strong' remains unexamined and unquestioned. The standard in question is not necessarily a particular ecclesiology in all its specifics, but one that consists rather of more general ecclesiological assumptions. One basic assumption we will examine here concerns the way in which the relation between the divine and the human in the church is conceived.

The New Testament description of the church as the body of Christ appears to justify speaking of the 'divine nature' of the church. After all, in distinction from all other communities, the church is *Christ's* body. Since the church is obviously also human, the next step seems a matter of course, namely, to distinguish between the divine and human aspects, elements, or dimensions of the church. However, approaching the uniqueness of the church by differentiating between 'the human' and 'the divine' leads ecclesiology down errant paths. This approach leads to comparing the way in which

these elements relate in the church to their relation in the incarnation.⁶⁰ Within this framework, one is forced to substantialize 'the divine' within the church. The church's uniqueness is assumed to consist of a 'divine' quality of the church. The uniqueness of the church is located ontologically, i.e. by ascribing to the church a special order of 'being', namely a quality of 'divine being'.

Ascribing a 'divine quality' to the church appears to be sanctioned by the image of the 'body of Christ': the church is both human and divine; hence some aspect or element of the very being of the church must be truly divine. The problematic nature of this postulate can be demonstrated by an examination of another key image, namely, that of the 'bride of Christ'. Suppose one were to conclude by way of the incarnational analogy that the church in its being is in some sense 'divine'. The image of bride acts as a check on that conclusion. To speak of this 'bride' as 'divine' destroys the poignancy of this image. If God were interested in a divine or semi-divine partner, God need hardly look to the church. The differentiated partners of the triune being would more than suffice. The wonder of God's relationship with

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Vatican II, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*, par. 8: The hierarchically structured society and the Mystical Body of Christ 'form one interlocked reality which is comprised of a divine and a human element. For this reason, by an excellent analogy, this reality is compared to the mystery of the incarnate Word.' This comparison of the church to Christ need not entail understanding the church to be an extension of the incarnation. Usually the relation is conceived of (merely) analogically. But even when the analogical character of the relationship is stressed, the operative framework remains the doctrine of the two natures of Christ.

⁵⁹ See *Church Unity*, p. 131.

the church is diminished precisely to the degree that her otherness, her humanness, is diminished.⁶¹ The infinite measure of divine love is displayed in God's pursuit of an entirely finite, human spouse.

Rejecting an ontological understanding of the 'divine' aspect of the nature of the church need in no way derogate from the unique nature of this new community. The church is indeed divine in origin and constitution. The church is divine in origin because the New Testament church comes into being by the unique (redeeming) work of God in Jesus Christ through the outpouring of the divine Spirit. The church does not owe its existence to the will of human flesh. It is birthed by the breath of God. The church may also be said to be divinely 'constituted'. Once birthed, this community is not thrown into the world and left to its own devices, but, for its existence and unique reality, is continually dependent on the embrace of the divine spouse. In this sense the church is unthinkable without the divine. Ironically, to speak of the 'divine' as *an element* of the church is to deprecate God's role in relation to the church. For the church that is truly church, God is her 'everything'. Speaking in this way, however, takes place in a *relational* framework. The church is in no way divine but it is church only by its unique relationship to 'the divine'. This relationship is so unique, however, that to speak of a 'relationship to the divine' is far too

weak and abstract a description. The relationship consists of the triune God's provisional and proleptic dwelling with and in the new community. The church is constituted by this unique relationship.

This relational understanding of the church is crucial for the development and reception of evangelical ecclesiology. Only a relational understanding as outlined creates room for a distinctive evangelical contribution to ecclesiology. Such room is precluded if a standard critique of evangelical ecclesiological thought is allowed to go unchallenged. It is the critique that all alternatives to an 'essentialist,' 'ontological,' or 'sacramental' understanding of the divine dimension of the church betray a minimalist or reductionist or purely functional ecclesiology.

If one manages to resist the temptation to bolster a putatively weak ecclesiology by employing christological motifs, one may seek strength in yet another ontological conception. It is has the allure of being even more sophisticated and orthodox, since it involves an ontological recourse to the trinity. Whether this trinitarian recourse is more viable than the christological depends largely on the way in which the triune God is theologically invoked.

4. 'Economically' Trinitarian: The Redemptive Shape of the New Community

In advocating an ecclesiology of God's dwelling, I have not spoken explicitly or thematically of a 'trinitarian' ecclesiology. Yet, the exposition of God's dwelling among us has been elaborated within a trinitarian

⁶¹ Ascribing the divinization of the bride to grace does not mitigate the problem.

framework. The church comes into being and exists by the creative and redemptive presence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In that sense a developing evangelical ecclesiology is fully trinitarian. Nevertheless, from the viewpoint of much of contemporary ecclesiology, the ecclesiology espoused here will again be judged to be deficient, if not defective. In contemporary theology the term 'trinitarian ecclesiology' usually refers, not merely to the relation between the triune God's redemptive activity and presence with respect to the church, but more specifically to a certain correspondence between the inner nature of the triune God and the nature of the church. This approach is becoming increasingly popular and is beginning to make inroads in evangelical theology.

This ecclesiological recourse to the nature of the trinity is problematic in various ways. The difficulties can be most readily demonstrated by considering the fine ecclesiological monograph by Miroslav Volf, which we have already mentioned, namely, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*.

Within the scope of this article we cannot give this book the extensive examination it deserves, but let me in a few brush strokes sketch Volf's approach to trinitarian ecclesiology. As the title and subtitle indicate, Volf considers the understanding of the trinity to be decisive for the understanding of the nature of the church. He seeks to demonstrate this by analysing two constructions, one by Cardinal Ratzinger, the other by the

Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Zizioulas. Their conceptions become the foil for Volf's own ecclesiology. In very different ways, both proceed from hierarchically conceived inner-trinitarian relations, from which both theologians derive hierarchically conceived ecclesiologies.

In contrast to these trinitarian theologies, Volf, following Moltmann, conceives of the unity of the trinity as consisting in the 'reciprocal interiority of the divine persons.' This he describes as a 'perichoretic' model of the trinity. The three fundamentally equal persons exist in 'reciprocal relationships to one another', a relationship of 'mutual interpenetration' (217). For Volf too the nature of the church is a correlate image of the nature of the trinity. Just as in the perichoretic nature there is no hierarchy, so in the church a pyramidal ordering is avoided. The equality and mutuality of the divine persons provides a basis for the equality and mutuality of relations among members within the church and among local churches.

This all too brief a sketch of Volf's profound reflections on trinity and church suffices to indicate the method and procedure of this ecclesiology. For the purposes of this essay, I wish to challenge the very basis of this elaboration of ecclesiology, namely, the assumption that the structures of the church, and among churches, are to be inferred from the composition of the immanent trinity. This method needs to be challenged at three levels.

First, there is no biblical warrant for an appeal to the nature of the

trinity, to the 'composition' of the inner relations of what is now commonly referred to as 'the triune life' as a basis for understanding the structure and composition of the church. John 17, for example, does not provide such a basis. At most, it refers to a bi-unity, the relation of the Father and the Son. Moreover, its focus is the relation between the Father and the Son in God's redemptive mission in history. The unity of Father and Son of which John 17 speaks explicates the significance of God' dwelling among us as the Word that has not simply taken on, but has *become* flesh.⁶² One of the dominant themes of the Gospel of John is the Father-Son relation that is demonstrated in Jesus' intimate communion with and subservience to the Father in the specific life-giving mission of the Son. When, on the basis of these revealed 'economic' relation, theologians draw conclusions regarding immanent triune relations, these conclusions need to be regarded as human speculation, interesting, perhaps, but no more than the imaginative labour of the human mind.

In addition to John 17, the first chapter of the first Letter of John, explicitly links the *koinonia* of the Christ-community to God. But this passage provides no basis for trinitarian analogies. As has been noted earlier, these verses link our *koinonia* directly with that of the apostles and thus with the church through

time. This letter, therefore, affirms that in our *koinonia* with the apostolic witnesses we have *koinonia* with the Father and the Son. The letter in no way justifies a recourse to the specifics of intra-trinitarian relations to illumine the specifics of ecclesial relations. The passage affirms the oneness of Jesus the Christ with the Father, so that, as we read later, to 'have' Christ is to have the Father, and, conversely, to miss out on Christ is to miss out on the Father (1 John 2:23; cf. 4:15; 2 John 9).

Later the letter makes a similar point about the indissoluble link between our relationship to one another and our relationship with the Father through the Son. This time, however, the letter does not use the term *koinonia*. Rather, it expresses the same reality by using a familial analogy: To believe in Jesus is to have God as Father—and unavoidably a host of brothers and sisters. One cannot have one without the other. (1 John 5:1).

The bond of a believer with the Father in Christ through the Spirit turns out to entail incorporation into a community of believers. The triune God is intent on creating a community, one that is designed as a dwelling place of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. None of these biblical motifs, however, provides any ground for the attempt to derive the nature or shape of the new community from the inner relations of the triune being.

Closely related to these biblical caveats is an epistemological objection to the ecclesiological recourse to

⁶² To speak of the Word being 'en-fleshed' is in danger of being understood doctically. For the same reason, the term 'in-carnation' fails to capture the mystery of the 'becoming' of which John speaks.

the inner nature of the triune life. We know precious little about the inner being and interior relations of the triune God. After all, the very notion 'trinity' is a human, theological construct,⁶³ a feeble (though necessary) effort to do justice to the fact that God is revealed as Father, and that Jesus, his son, and the Spirit are truly divine, without there being three gods. The most sophisticated theological elaborations of the eternal, inner relations of three persons within God's triune existence are still no more than that, *our* elaborations, our limited theories about the transcendent infinite being of God.

Paul reminds us that to know the breadth and length and height and depth of God's love for us in Jesus Christ is to *comprehend* that which is *beyond comprehension*. If that holds true for the *revealed* mystery, what confidence can we possibly have that our puny minds are at all able to grasp even the 'rudiments' (even such a term here seems offensive) of the inner being of God? Moreover, it is telling that immediately after extolling the wonder of this disclosed mystery, Paul concludes by pointing precisely to what I have designated as the heart of ecclesiology. His prayer that the Ephesians may know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge ends with a 'so that': 'so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God!' (Eph-

esians 3:19). That is the 'earthy' locus for the theological reflection on the nature of the church as divine domicile.

The trinitarian revelation is the good news that God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, not only rescues us, gives us peace, *shalom*, but that the triune God does so by dwelling among us. God has pledged to fill the new community—so that it bursts at the seams, so to speak. Accordingly, it is '*through the church*' that 'the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in heavenly places' (3:10). The God who fills the new community of women and men cannot be contained in it.

Given the paucity of biblical testimony regarding the inner being of God and the limitation of our own minds, the ecclesiological recourse to the inner trinitarian relations is in danger of transmuting theology into conjury: theologians project their own theories into the trinity, then withdraw them from there, and apply them to the church. This procedure only *appears* to provide divine sanction for one's ecclesiology.⁶⁴

The final reason for resisting the inner trinitarian recourse is the concern to keep evangelical theology from straying into a metaphysical minefield. The ecclesiological recourse to the inner nature of the

⁶³ As Charles P. Price puts it, 'Scripture can be cited to support any Trinitarian heresy, and it is difficult to prove conclusively from the New Testament even the Trinitarian structure of God.' ('Some Notes on Filioque', *Anglican Theological Review*, 83 (2001), pp. 507-535; here, p. 516.

⁶⁴ See the excellent article by Mark D. Chapman in which he warns that this trinitarian methodology is in danger of turning theology into ideology. 'The Social Doctrine of the Trinity: Some Problems', *Anglican Review of Theology* 83 (2001), pp. 239-254.

trinity diverts ecclesiology into ever more sophisticated trinitarian constructions. Once one accepts this recourse as a legitimate, even normative, ecclesiological methodology, much theological acumen is invested into producing ever more refined theories of the inner trinitarian relations. To move down this path is to be drawn into a trinitarian labyrinth—a humanly constructed ontology of the divine. In the incisive review-essay of Volf's book by Ralph Del Colle, one glimpses the entrance to the maze.

Del Colle challenges both Volf's critique of Ratzinger and Zizioulas, as well as Volf's own proposal. Del Colle does so by a lengthy excursion into the niceties of the 'Latin scholastic tradition that was at pains to lay out the explanatory regime of trinitarian predication'. In the process one gets into highly complex metaphysical theories which the scholastics applied to God. Before evangelical ecclesiology ventures into the 'explanatory regime of trinitarian predication', however, the critical questions regarding the validity of the entire enterprise need to be carefully considered. Clarity on this point is urgently needed.

The sheer allure or pressure that the dominance of the ecclesiological recourse to the inner being of the triune God exerts, especially in combination with accusations of 'weak' or 'defective' evangelical ecclesiology, is all the more reason for evangelical theology not to shut down its faculties of critical discernment. Del Colle's correct estimation of the state of the question should serve as a

warning rather than an invitation: 'That the church is constituted and grounded in the trinitarian life of God now forms a major trajectory in ecclesiological understanding and has captured the imagination of the ecumenical movement.'⁶⁵

If evangelical theologians are to follow this trajectory, let it at least be with eyes wide open to the hazards that mark this path. This caution is echoed, interestingly enough, by another Catholic reviewer of Volf's work. Though highly appreciative of Volf's accomplishment, Gregory Baum concludes with a caveat, appealing, interestingly enough, to another side of the scholastic tradition:

My earliest training in theology, guided by Thomas Aquinas, created in me a preference for *apophatic* theology, the *via negativa*, the knowledge of God's unknowability. One consequence has been a reticence in regard to exploring the inner trinitarian life.... According to negative theology, concepts such as father, son, and spirit, inevitably drawn from the created order, do tell us something true about God in an analogous sense. However, such concepts do not shrink God's unknowability; they reveal, rather the ever greater measure of our ignorance.

Baum concludes with words that should strike a sympathetic chord in every evangelical heart: 'While God, the Father, Son and Spirit, is announced in Scripture and tradition and hence plays a central role in the spiritual life of Christian believers, there seems to me no good pastoral reason why one should make extended theological speculation on the inner life of the Trinity part of the proclamation of the Good News.'⁶⁶

Baum's admonition applies equal-

ly to the good news about the missionary community called church. Even if it were possible to scale the heights of heaven—be it with the help of an incarnational ladder—there is no need. It is enough to reflect on the inexhaustible riches of the Word that is near, who, together with the Father and the Spirit, dwells in the new community.

Conclusion

The need for making a distinct ecclesiological contribution is great. The challenge of elaborating an evangelical ecclesiology would serve the integrity and wholeness of the evangelical community and its witness. Developed in dialogue with existing ecclesiologies from other traditions, these evangelical endeavours would

also make a contribution to the wider discussions. The lineaments of an ecclesiology shaped by the drama of the triune God's gracious desire to live among the new community of men and women created in his image is meant as a sketch that will, it is hoped, stimulate further reflection that will probably produce very different sketches. Whatever the shape of future ecclesiologies, however, their fruitfulness is thwarted by uncritical acceptance, as well as by unthinking rejection of reigning ecclesiologies. Developing a robust and vital evangelical ecclesiology is long overdue. The resources for this development are plentiful. In critical interaction with existing ecclesiologies, evangelical theology can make a distinctive and fruitful contribution.

The Rhetoric of the Cross

*Between statement and suggestion,
Between proclamation and implication,
Between forthright pronouncement and oblique allusion,
We discover the meaning in your death.*

*Here upon the Cross,
Between Earth and Sky,
Heaven and Hell,
Life and Death,
We see your giving, your bleeding, your loving;
And we understand the reason in your sacrifice.*

Verse from *Becoming . . .* (poetry reflecting theology) by Garry Harris, Adelaide, South Australia (used with permission).

The Profiles of Women in John: House-Bound or Christ-Bound?

Jey J. Kanagaraj

Keywords: Leadership, missionary, obedience, worship, house churches, Sophia, *bhakti*, proclamation, service, faith, servant, theologian,

Despite¹ several schemes that are implemented for the empowerment of women, both at the global and national levels, an Amnesty International Report indicates that women continue to fall victims of violence and injustice. Leadership opportunities both in state and church life are still being denied to them. Many women, due to lack of confidence, are satisfied with taking back-benches in churches, even if such opportunities are occasionally provided. Most of the denominations are still not prepared to ordain women and empower them for leadership roles.

The patriarchal society in which we live thinks that women can better build up homes than the church.

Although in the past years the world has witnessed several women leaders who have played a constructive role in the church as well as in society, this is insufficient to bring a change in the traditional thinking of our generation. When the Church of England decided in 1992 to ordain women to the office of the Presbyter, the opposition was so severe that some clergy even left the Church. The evangelicals who opposed cited the Scripture (e.g. 1 Cor. 14:33b-36 and 1 Tim. 2:8-15) which, for them, teaches that women should not teach or hold the priestly office lest

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¹ This article, in its original form, was presented as a research paper to the audience of students, Faculty and the Board members of Union Biblical Seminary, Pune on 31 July 2001 and was published in the *Bangalore Theological Forum* 33 (2, 2001), pp. 60-79.

they exercise authority over men.² This indeed calls for a new biblical hermeneutic to make the Scripture relevant to the changing situations and to rediscover what the New Testament says on women's role in Christian ministry.

Previous works on the role of women in the church have mainly focused on Luke's concern for women and on Paul's injunction for women to keep silent in the churches. There has been less on women in the Fourth Gospel, although there are several works that have identified the leadership role played by the Johannine women.³ In this paper, I have collected together ideas expressed in previous works, but I give a new thrust to the household duties of John's women. This will raise the question: were the Johannine women house-bound or Christ-bound?

I make an attempt to trace some of the characteristics of women found

in the Gospel of John to answer this question hoping that it will effectively address our society which often considers women's role only to bear children, to serve men, to work in the kitchen, or to exercise hospitality. I am also including a study on the 'Elect Lady' and 'Your Elect Sister' of 2 John, a study which was hitherto excluded in the study of Johannine women. This will show how the unique roles played by the women in John's Gospel continued in the local churches of the Johannine community when the second letter of John was written.⁴ The main purpose of this article, then, is twofold: to motivate women to develop their leadership role in the church and to encourage men to treat women as equal partners in Christian ministry.

The Mother of Jesus—A Paradigm for Faith and Faithfulness

Mary, the mother of Jesus, in the Johannine narrative, appears in the beginning of Jesus' 'hour' (2:1-12) and then only at the fulfilment of the 'hour' (19:25-27), even though she is mentioned in 6:42.⁵ In Roman Catholic circles she is often interpreted as a symbol either of new Eve

² See R.T. France, *Women in the Church's Ministry: A Test-Case for Biblical Hermeneutics* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1995), pp. 9-10.

³ Notable among them are R.E. Brown, 'Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel', in *idem*, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 183-198; S.M. Schneiders, 'Women in the Fourth Gospel and the Role of Women in the Contemporary Church', in M.W.G. Stibbe (ed.), *The Gospel of John as Literature: An Anthology of Twentieth Century Perspectives* (Leiden, et al.: E.J. Brill, 1993), pp. 123-143; J.A. Grassi, 'Women's Leadership Roles in John's Gospel', *Bible Today* 35 (1997), pp. 312-317. A. Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom: A Feminist Historical-Literary Analysis of the Female Characters in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1998).

⁴ I presuppose (i) that John's Gospel and epistles show traces of common tradition, because possibly they are from the same author, but finally composed and published by the Johannine community; and (ii) that John wrote his Gospel, seeing the life-history of Jesus in the light of the life and witness of the Johannine community in which he was the elder.

⁵ Note that references to the Gospel of John in the text of this paper are given as chapter and verse only without the name 'John'.

or of Zion or of the Church.⁶ The mother of Jesus is introduced as a key figure when Jesus performed his first sign to reveal his glory. Schneiders maintains that since Mary's role in John is either unique and/or universal, the femaleness of Jesus' mother is theologically irrelevant for the question of the role of women in the church today.⁷ However, Mary's faith in Jesus as the one who is able to fulfil the needs of the people by means of a sign and her faithfulness to follow him till the cross, sharing the bitter anguish and pain, make her an ideal disciple of Jesus.

John, in his redaction, places a woman at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and gives her an active role in fulfilling the needs of the people. When Jesus' mother came to know that the wine in the wedding feast ran out, she said to Jesus, 'They have no wine' (2:3). Whether Mary expected a miracle or not, she knew who Jesus was. She believed that Jesus could provide for the need and thus prepared herself and others for his provision. Even after knowing the unavailability of Jesus to act immediately (cf. 2:4), his mother began to put her faith in action, for she told the servants (*diakonoi*), 'Do whatever

he tells you' (2:5).⁸

Her personal obedience to Jesus made her *influence* others to obey him in humble trust. One can see Mary taking the *initiative* to solve the deficiency in this life-situation. While the male disciples of Jesus were passive or even were ignorant of the need of the hour, the mother of Jesus played an *active role* in helping the servants to look at Jesus and obey him. Her faithful response led the guests eventually to have an encounter with the glory of Jesus, although only a few could see and believe in him (2:11).

Mary did not underestimate herself because of gender bias. Her action influenced Jesus to supply the need and the servants to obey Jesus, and perhaps even to fulfil his role as the messianic bridegroom who supplied better wine.⁹ Therefore the sign was effective in bringing many, including Nicodemus (3:2), to the initial stage of faith in Jesus (2:23). She saw in advance through the eyes of her faith what Jesus could do! Whereas the disciples believed in Jesus only after seeing the sign, Mary believed in him before she saw it.¹⁰ Thus she fulfils in advance what Jesus would tell

6 See R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII* (New York, et al.: Doubleday, 1966), pp. 107-109; R.E. Brown, et al. (eds.), *Mary in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press/New York: Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 188-194, 206-218, 288-289, 292-294.

7 Schneiders, 'Women in the Fourth Gospel', p. 128.

⁸ Jesus' mother's contact with the servants and her exhortation to fulfil Jesus' commands do not indicate that by reasserting her maternal role, she forces Jesus not to miss an opportunity of increasing his honour in relation to the bridegroom, as Fehribach argues (see *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, pp. 31-32). This would imply that Jesus yielded to his mother's pressure to provide wine.

⁹ See Fehribach, *Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, esp. pp. 29-43.

¹⁰ See Scott, *Sophia*, p. 179, who comments that Mary's discipleship shows a faith without signs.

Thomas after his resurrection, 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe' (20:29b) and surpasses the twelve in faith and vision.

A leader always takes the initiative to act positively at the time of crisis and also influences others to act in the right way. In this sense Mary can be called a model leader and a faithful disciple of Jesus.¹¹ E.S. Fiorenza argues that if the Johannine community had acknowledged *diakonoi* as leading ministers of the community, then Mary's injunction has symbolic overtones in the sense that the leaders of the community are admonished to do whatever Jesus tells them.¹² Note that John refers to Jesus' mother without mentioning her name 'Mary' and this may be partly because he wanted to project her as a true leader who would readily serve others without taking a name for herself. Thus John unreservedly portrays a woman as a potential leader in the very beginning of his Gospel and this would have been impossible for him unless the Johannine community had already instituted women as leaders in key areas.

The fact that Jesus, his mother and his disciples had been invited to the wedding suggests that the wedding was for a relative or close family friend. It is possible that Mary had some responsibility in catering and

hence attempted to deal with the shortage of wine (2:3).¹³ This shows that even while Mary was committed to Jesus and his redemptive purpose, she was very much involved in family affairs. Her presence at the cross along with her sister (19:25) indicates her allegiance to the family. Even her disappearance from the Johannine text has a family note, for Mary and the beloved disciple were united in filial bond as mother and son (19:26-27). However, her commitment to Christ surpassed her engagement in household duties for she followed Jesus loyally till the cross, bearing its pain. In a way, the hour of crisis in the wedding at Cana had prepared her to face even the greater crisis!

In John, the cross is the point of Jesus' exaltation/glorification. The mother of Jesus witnessed Jesus' glory at the beginning of his ministry as well as at the supreme point of his glorification on the cross, while no other male disciples, except the beloved disciple, dared to see his glory in the humiliating death. Mary thus proved her faithfulness to Jesus more than any of the other disciples and thus she became a model for persistence and complete loyalty. Only John, among the four evangelists, mentions the mother of Jesus as standing at the cross along with the beloved disciple (19:25-27). Both the figures have symbolic value, because John never gives the personal names of these two figures and

¹¹ Schneiders, 'Women in the Fourth Gospel', p. 131, rightly observes that if leadership is a function of creative initiative and decisive action, the Johannine women qualify well for the role.

¹² E.S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983), p. 327.

¹³ See D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 169.

therefore Brown thinks that their significance lies in their respective roles.¹⁴

When Jesus said to her mother, 'Woman, here is your son' (19:26) and to his disciple, 'Here is your mother' (19:27), he meant that her motherly role is no longer going to be a physical one, but one that stood in relation to the beloved disciple who represents a new community that is created at the cross. In other words, the crucified Jesus 'leaves behind him at the foot of the cross a small community of believing disciples—the kind of community, which, in other NT works, is called into being in the post-resurrectional or pentecostal period'.¹⁵ Since Jesus completed the work of creating a new community by the scene involving his mother and the beloved disciple, John comments that Jesus knew that 'all was now finished' (19:28).¹⁶ Why does John place a female figure and a male figure as those who represent the emerging new Christian community that derives its life from the cross? It is because he envisioned a community of new disciples in which men and women have equal roles to play. The concept of equality, or rather a better role for women,

in the church is also envisaged in other woman characters of John, whom we will meet as we proceed further.

2. The Woman of Samaria—an Intuitive Theologian and Missionary

The public ministry of Jesus began with the leadership role exercised by a woman, and his ministry to the Samaritans, those who were outside the fold of Judaism, began with the leadership role played by another woman, the woman of Samaria (4:3-42).

Schneiders argues that, since there is no evidence in the Synoptic Gospels that Jesus ministered in Samaria, the narrative in John 4 has its real context not in the ministry of the historical Jesus but in the history of the Johannine community, and that the conversion of Samaria is projected back into the ministry of Jesus.¹⁷ However, the absence of Jesus' ministry in Samaria in the Synoptic tradition does not nullify the historicity of his ministry there. There are many other Johannine narratives which are missing in the Synoptic Gospels. Jesus' ministry is mentioned in John as having taken place specifically in Sychar (4:5), whereas Philip's ministry took place

¹⁴ Brown, *Mary in the NT*, p. 212.

¹⁵ *ibid.* For John the cross is not only the moment of Jesus' glorification but also an event which made the gift of the Spirit possible to form a community that had received new life (cf. 7:39 and 20:22).

¹⁶ *ibid.* This proves against Fehribach's thesis that the female characters of the Fourth Gospel are marginalized after they fulfil their 'androcentric and patriarchal' function (*Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, esp. p. 169).

¹⁷ Schneiders, 'Women in the Fourth Gospel', p. 133; *idem.*, 'Because of the Woman's Testimony...': *Reexamining the Issue of Authorship in the Fourth Gospel*, NTS 44 (1998), p. 533. So also C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 2nd edn., 1978), p. 229, says that the whole story written from the standpoint of one who looks back on the Gospel story from a later time, by using the woman as a representative figure.

in 'a city of Samaria' (Act. 8:5 RSV), either in Samaria itself or in Gitta, the birthplace of Simon the sorcerer.¹⁸ The two events took place at a different time and location.

It is possible that the story of Jesus' encounter with the woman of Samaria was suppressed in the evolution of the tradition mainly because she was an ungodly woman hailing from a despised community. The accurate historical and geographical knowledge displayed in John 4 and Jesus' exceptional movement from Judea to Galilee via Samaria attest the historical credibility of the story.

A positive picture of the Samaritan woman does not emerge immediately. In contrast to Rebekah who gave water to a thirsty stranger and his camels (Gen. 24:45-46), the woman of John 4 does not give water to a thirsty man. Instead, she poses a question, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (4:9), alluding to the long-time hostility that existed between Jews and Samaritans. Like Nicodemus, she too understood Jesus and his statement in earthly terms (4:11-12). Nevertheless, the woman had a spontaneous dialogue with Jesus that gradually brought a reversal in her attitude. She began to plead with Jesus for the water which he would give so that it might become a spring within her gushing up to eternal life (4:13-15). Throughout the conversation the woman displayed an excellent knowledge of the existing culture and religious history based on the

Pentateuch. For example, she knew the tradition associated with Jacob's encampment at Shechem and the possible digging of a well there (Gen. 33:18-20)¹⁹ as well as the miraculous spring of water from Jacob's well.

In contrast to Nicodemus, who could not understand the need and mode of rebirth, the woman at Sychar honestly acknowledged her improper life (4:16-18). This led her to a further understanding of Jesus, this time as a 'prophet' (4:19), that is, an extraordinary man with a gift of revelation. At this point she became sufficiently confident to engage in theological discussion on worship (4:20-24). She boldly raised the outstanding point of theological contention between Jews and Samaritans on the place of worship and thus 'set the stranger a testing challenge'.²⁰

Unlike Nicodemus who became passive in the course of his dialogue with Jesus, the Samaritan woman was an active respondent throughout the dialogue, exhibiting uncommon theological knowledge and interests. This prompted Jesus to directly reveal himself to her as the Messiah whom the Samaritans expected in terms of the *taheb*. The messianic revelation was given to her by using the 'I AM' formula (4:25-26), a Johannine formula used to describe Jesus as the revelation of the one God to humans. This is the first time

¹⁸ F.F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, reprint, 1981), p. 177.

¹⁹ Brown, *John I-XII*, pp. 170-171, finds an allusion to the Palestinian Tg. Gen. 28:10 which speaks of the overflowing well of Haran, the place where Jacob had a vision of God.

²⁰ Carson, *John*, pp. 221-222.

in the Fourth Gospel that the formula appears in an absolute and revelatory sense and this privilege is given to a woman before it was ever revealed to the male disciples.

The disciples were astonished to see Jesus talking alone with a woman (4:27), for it was undesirable that a Rabbi should speak with women, even with his own wife, particularly in public places (*Pirke Aboth* 1.5).²¹ However, none of them had the courage to question him on this matter, but the woman was freely discussing with Jesus matters related to the human search for life. While Nicodemus disappears from the scene abruptly in the course of his dialogue with Jesus, the Samaritan is pictured as the one who was constructively engaged in the dialogue until she came to the point of seeing, though dimly, Jesus as the Messiah sent by God to reveal the truth.

John gives a positive picture of the woman, who was a Samaritan by race and corrupt in terms of religious norms, in a revolutionary way, for the Jewish society of his day regarded women as inferior to men 'in mind, in function and status'.²² His attempt to project the woman as a theologian is certainly to restore the status of women in his time when the rabbis were prohibiting knowledge of

the Law to them (M. *Sotah* 3.4).

The self-revelation of Jesus as the Messiah made such an impact on the woman that she left her jar and went to the town calling people to 'come and see' whether Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Scripture (4:28-29). The woman, who had been confined to her own house, realized a sense of freedom after her encounter with Christ to face her own people and introduce Jesus to them. Even at this stage, she had doubts about his messiahship. Her statement, *mêti houtos estin ho Christos*; ('This man is not the Christ, is he?') in 4:29 which expects an answer 'no' indicates this.²³

Such scepticism, however, was not unique only to this woman. The disciples, the crowd, and individuals like Nicodemus, Martha, and Pilate showed doubts (1:46; 3:9; 4:33; 7:41-42; 11:39; 18:33). The woman was still in the learning process until she was convinced fully along with her fellow-citizens (4:42). Had her faith been defective, it would have been impossible for the Samaritans to believe in Jesus 'because of the woman's testimony' (4:39). The fruit of her mission proves all the more that the woman truly believed in Jesus as the Messiah.

The Samaritan's act of leaving her water jar to go and call her people is reminiscent of the response which one normally gives to the call for apostleship, namely to 'leave all things', especially one's present

²¹ See Barrett, *St. John*, p. 240; Carson, *John*, p. 227; cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, pb print., 1975), p. 363.

²² See L. Swidler, *Women in Judaism: The Status of Women in Formative Judaism* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, 1976), p. 82, p. 200 n. 98.

²³ Cf. E. Danna, 'A Note on John 4:29', *Revue Biblique* 106 (1999), pp. 219-223, who argues against the usual positive claim made about the Samaritan woman.

occupation, whether symbolized by boats (e.g. Mt. 4:19-22), or tax booth (cf. Mt. 9:9), or water pot.²⁴ Her invitation to 'come and see' (*deute idete* 4:29) parallels the angel's invitation to come and see the empty tomb (Mt. 28:6) and Jesus' call to follow him (cf. Mt. 4:19; Mk. 1:17).²⁵ In this sense, John regards this woman as a mouth-piece of Jesus to call people to discipleship (cf. Jn. 1:39).

She is thus portrayed as an intuitive theologian and an apostle who brought people to Christ by her witness even before the disciples were sent out on mission. This is further confirmed by the expression *dia ton logon tês gunaikos marturousês* used for 'because of the woman's testimony' (4:39), which is similar to the *dia tou logou autôn* used in Jesus' prayer for those who would believe in Jesus by hearing the apostles' words (17:20). The woman did in advance what the apostles will do after Jesus' departure. Thus John gives the Samaritan woman apostolic status.²⁶

As an apostle who had seen Jesus as the Messiah and Saviour and who had borne witness to the people, the woman can also be understood as a missionary. John highlights her mis-

sionary role by setting her ministry in the context of Jesus' missionary challenge to his disciples (4:31-38).²⁷ The coming of the Samaritans to Jesus is metaphorically described as the 'harvest' (4:35) which, according to the Matthean tradition, is an image of mission (Mt. 9:37-38). Besides this, John 4:31-38 has several other mission terms, such as the sower and reaper, gathering of fruits, the sending of the disciples to reap others' labour, etc., implying that the woman, by sowing the seed on behalf of Jesus, has prepared for the apostolic harvest.

In the literary structure of the Fourth Gospel, her mission is connected also with the mission of Jesus whose healing in Cana of Galilee brought the whole household of the official into faith (4:46-54).²⁸ The woman's witness is identified with that of John the Baptist which is clear from the structural parallel between John 3 and 4:1-42. Just as Jesus' self-revelation (3:1-21) is placed alongside the Baptist's witness (3:22-30), in John 4 the self-revelation of Jesus (4:1-26) is placed

²⁴ See Schneiders, 'Women in the Fourth Gospel', pp. 132-133.

²⁵ The word *deute* is used in the NT 12 times, out of which it appears 6 times in the mouth of Jesus (Mt. 4:19; 11:28; 25:34; Mk. 1:17; 6:31; Jn. 21:12), twice in the sayings of the angels (Mt. 28:6; Rev. 19:17), and once in the invitation of the king who arranged a wedding feast (Mt. 22:4).

²⁶ See Brown, 'Roles of Women', p. 187; Schneiders, 'Women in the Fourth Gospel', p. 133.

²⁷ Cf. C.H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, reprint., 1965), pp. 391-405, who says that John 4:31-38 contains Synoptic words and mission concepts which John adapts to fit into his own theological point and therefore that the passage exhibits earlier tradition.

²⁸ Cf. Carson, *John*, p. 229, who finds an anticipatory link between the mission of the Samaritan (4:27-38) and the mission of the Son (5:19-47). Cf. also J.J. Kanagaraj, 'Worship, Sacrifice and Mission: Themes Interlocked in John', *Indian Journal of Theology* 40 (1998), pp. 31-32 for the link between worship and mission.

alongside the woman's witness (4:27-42).²⁹ Thus what the woman did was indeed a participation in God's mission.

The initiative taken by the Samaritan woman was the fulfilment of Jesus' own missionary agenda of accomplishing the work of the Father (4:34). Jesus considered the coming of the Samaritans to him as the gathering of fruits (4:36) and hence his food (4:32,34). It is she who gave this food to Jesus rather than the male disciples whose earthly food was not acceptable to him at that stage (4:31-34). Missionary conversion, making an impact on the society, and worshipping God in spirit and in truth—are all the hallmarks of true discipleship. The woman, who exhibits all these qualities, is indeed a model disciple of Christ and a pioneer missionary apostle! The whole narrative indicates that the Johannine community received the Samaritan converts in its fold and that the leadership included women along with men.³⁰

The fact that the Samaritan woman came with a jar to draw water shows her involvement in household work. Her life that did not follow the socially acceptable norms must have caused her to be confined inside her house. Confinement excluded her from public life, but her encounter with Christ gave a shift in life-style by freeing her from the social taboo and making her bound

to Christ. If we accept Schneiders' thesis that the beloved disciple in John is a 'textual paradigm' who, as a prism, refracts the ideal discipleship into a number of characters in the Gospel, then the woman of Samaria, as Schneiders herself indicates, can well be regarded as one such character.³¹ Definitely the Fourth Evangelist exalts a despised Samaritan woman to the rank of a theologian, apostle and missionary, while he pictures the male disciples mostly as inactive, timid and slow in understanding.

3. Martha and Mary of Bethany: Paradigms for Bhakti and Service

The story of Martha and Mary of Bethany appears only in Luke and John, but in different forms and content (Lk. 10:38-42; 12:1-8). The name Lazarus is linked with Martha and Mary as their brother in the Johannine *narrative* (11:1,5,21,23,32), whereas in Luke, Lazarus appears in a *parable* (Lk. 16:19-31). Obviously the Lucan and Johannine accounts belong to two different, but not unrelated, traditions. It is unnecessary for us to discuss the historical validity of the Lazarus episode here. In the light of the semitisms traced in John 11:1-53,³² we can agree with Dodd that the traditional material

²⁹ See R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, ET, 1971), pp. 111-112, 176.

³⁰ See Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 326-329.

³¹ Schneiders, 'Because of the Woman's Testimony ...', pp. 513-535. However, it is difficult to accept Schneiders' view that the Samaritan woman is the 'textual alter ego of the evangelist' because of the Palestinian Jewish character of the Fourth Gospel.

³² See Bultmann, *John*, p. 395 n.2.

has been remoulded by the author of John to convey his own special message.³³

Jesus loved (*égapá*) the family of Martha, Mary and Lazarus; John emphasizes this love relationship by placing the verb at the beginning of the sentence (11:5). The author does not mention anywhere in the Gospel the name of the disciple whom Jesus loved, but he mentions two women and one man as the objects of Jesus' love. This has led some scholars to identify Lazarus as the beloved disciple.³⁴ Since Lazarus himself attains his identity only through his sisters (11:1,5), why don't we consider the two women to be identified with the beloved disciple? This is certainly due to the male bias in biblical exegesis. In fact, Martha and Mary are presented as active disciples of Jesus, while Lazarus remained passive even after his resurrection!

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming to Bethany after Lazarus died, she went out to meet him out of her love and reverence for him (11:20; cf. Gen. 18:2; 19:1; 33:3-4). Her faith in Christ is revealed at the very beginning of her discourse, when she said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died' (11:21). Since Martha, like the mother of Jesus, believed that Jesus could interfere at any point of time to do good, she stated, 'But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him' (11:22). This statement anticipates what Jesus would tell his disciples about prayer in John 14:13-14 and 15:7.

Jesus' injunction to his disciples to ask in his name whatever they wish so that he might do it for God's glory, is already believed, confessed and practised by a woman disciple, and in such a critical situation as bereavement! John thus displays Martha's faith as surpassing that of the male disciples. The discourse then turned towards the doctrine of resurrection.

Martha did not understand that Jesus' promise about Lazarus rising again indicated the resurrection at the last day (11:23-24). She knew the theology of resurrection as held in Pharisaic Judaism and in Christian circles that there is a resurrection of the dead at the end-time. Martha's view of future resurrection is modified by Jesus in terms of the present resurrection experience that guarantees the future. The 'I AM' formula (used here for the second time before a woman) clarifies that Jesus is the revelation of God; by believing in him mortal human beings can rise to have eternal life now and also in the future (11:25). At a time of hopelessness Jesus gave a special call to Martha to acknowledge his life-giving power as the Son of God before he could act on her request. Immediately the woman expressed her faith by making a theologically charged confession before Jesus, 'I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world' (11:27).

Four important factors of this confession need our attention:

(i) Martha exhibited action-oriented faith in the person and mission of Christ at a time when usually it is hard for a bereaved person to do so.

³³ Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, p. 232.

³⁴ See Brown, *John I-XII*, p. XCV.

(ii) The great confession made by Peter, a male disciple, in the Synoptic tradition (Mt. 16:16; Mk. 8:29) is credited to a woman in John's Gospel. In fact, her confession is theologically more charged than that of Peter! This shows that the role of primacy in the church was shared with women in John's time.

(iii) Martha too showed evidence of her faith in Jesus before the sign of Lazarus' resurrection, just as the mother of Jesus did. That is to say, Martha's faith was not based on seeing the signs, but on the identity of Jesus and his words. What Jesus had to tell Thomas (20:29) was already demonstrated by a female disciple in Bethany.

(iv) The very purpose of the Fourth Gospel is to lead the readers into faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God and to confirm them in that faith (20:31). John records that this purpose is already fulfilled in a woman character whose creative faith placed her in the front-line in the community of believers.

The leadership role of Martha is aptly summarized by Schneiders who says,

Martha appears in this scene as the representative of the believing community responding to the word of Jesus with a full confession of Christian faith. It is a role analogous to Peter's as representative of apostolic faith in Matthew's Gospel. This representative role of Martha is difficult to understand unless women in John's community actually did function as community leaders.³⁵

No doubt, John presents Martha

as a model disciple who played a catalysing role in bringing Lazarus back to life, whereas the male disciples were merely silent listeners.

Martha attains significance in the Fourth Gospel by her role as a servant. In the dinner narrative John specifically mentions that 'Martha served (*dièkonei*)' (12:2). The imperfect mood of the verb indicates that her action was habitual with the meaning, 'Martha, as per her custom, was serving'. One of the primary marks of Jesus' disciples is servanthood and this was dramatically demonstrated by Jesus by washing the feet of 'his own' during the Passover meal (Jn. 13:1-20). By performing this act as a model for discipleship, Jesus called them to serve one another likewise (13:14-17). Martha (also Mary) had already fulfilled the role of a servant. In John it is the women followers who readily show the marks of ideal discipleship *in advance*, while the male disciples needed to be taught with a visual demonstration! The one who was distracted by many works she needed to do (Lk. 10:40) becomes the person who gladly serves in John. This shows the progress Martha had made in her 'loving devotion' (*bhakti*) to Jesus.

Schneiders argues that the meal at Bethany alludes to the Eucharist in which Jesus is the guest of honour and Martha and Mary are the ministers.³⁶ This is quite unlikely, for the meal took place 'six days before the

³⁵ Schneiders, 'Women in the Fourth Gospel', p. 136.

³⁶ Schneiders, 'Women in the Fourth Gospel', p. 137; she argues thus by observing that the term *diakonos* had become the title of the office of the deacon by the time John's Gospel was written.

Passover' (12:1), that is, on the preceding Saturday and not on the Sunday evening, as Schneiders judges.³⁷ The word *diakonos* is not used in John 12:1-8 as it is used in the wedding at Cana narrative. Moreover, the Gospel tradition displays Jesus not as the guest of honour in the Passover meal, but as the one who serves the meal. The dinner at Bethany was perhaps hosted to honour and thank Jesus for restoring the life of Lazarus. Besides thanksgiving, Mary's act of anointing at the meal also fulfils another spectrum of discipleship: devotion, service and participatory faith in Jesus' death. We will turn now to this part of the scene.

Mary's act seems to be a combination of the account of the anonymous woman's anointing of Jesus' head (Mk. 14:3-9; Mt. 26:6-13) and Luke's account of the sinful woman washing Jesus' feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair (Lk. 7:36-50). Possibly, each evangelist used independently a separate strand of tradition that came to them with cross-combinations of different details and incorporated their own theological thought into that tradition.³⁸ John gives the identity of the woman that was unknown in the primitive tradition.

In the Johannine account the feet of Jesus attain importance. Mary fell at Jesus' feet on two occasions (11:32-33; 12:3). Her action reflects the Indian custom of paying homage to any respectable person and her

anointing of the feet alludes to the duty of Jewish slaves to wash and wipe the feet of the guests at special meals. Mary showed her *bhakti* (loving devotion) to Jesus, at first by shedding tears at his feet and then by anointing them with a costly perfume made of pure nard and wiping them with her hair. Her devotion and submission to Christ was greater than that of Martha. Both the women showed confidence in the life-giving power of Jesus, when they said, 'Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.' (11:21,32). But it was Mary who aroused the compassion of Jesus to act by her tears shed at his feet (11:33) and thus she becomes the foremost of the women, who, by their devotion and fervour, move the heart of Jesus to act in favour of suffering humanity!

Obviously John commends the role of such women in his community by projecting Mary and Martha as their representative figures. While Martha demonstrated her role as servant-leader by actively serving at the table, Mary manifested her servant role in terms of sacrifice and utter devotion to Christ. Mary's anointing was not an act of penitence as Luke implies. It was not an act of *preparation for burial* either, as Matthew and Mark record (Mt. 26:12; Mk. 14:8), but it was an act performed *on the day* of his burial (12:7). Thus Mary's anointment was an act of embalming Jesus' body in advance even before his death, exhibiting her faith in Jesus' death, for the raising of Lazarus had already triggered the decision of the Jewish leaders to kill

³⁷ See Barrett, *St. John*, p. 410, who shows that for John the Passover began on the following Friday evening.

³⁸ See Dodd, *Historical Tradition*, pp. 172-173.

Jesus (11:46-53).

Nevertheless, the question is: why was the anointing done at Jesus' feet rather than on his head? Anointing at the feet differentiates Mary's action from the woman who anointed Jesus' head in Matthew and Mark. Since the anointing is followed by the wiping of his feet with hair, her act should be associated with Jesus' act of washing his disciples' feet and wiping them with his own towel in John 13 rather than with the act of the woman in Luke 7. Jesus' act taught the disciples the nature and cost of discipleship. That is, it was the symbol of humility and service which was supremely demonstrated in his death on the cross. These two central qualities of discipleship are manifested in Mary's act as well. In fact, anointing of the feet by a woman during a meal was improper in Jewish eyes.³⁹ All the more, letting her hair loose in public, in the presence of men in particular, was treated as a disgrace for a woman (cf. 1 Cor. 11:5-16). If so, the scene in Bethany depicts Mary crossing the boundaries of the then social custom in order to express the family's love for Jesus.

Scott points out the following three important parallels between Mary's anointing of Jesus' feet and the feet-washing of Jesus in John 13:⁴⁰

(1) Both the feet-washing of Jesus and Mary's anointing of take place during the meal.

(2) Just as Jesus humiliates himself to be a slave, Mary humiliates herself by loosing her hair to do the task of a slave.

(3) Jesus' act is shown as an example to be followed by his disciples as a mark of true discipleship and leadership. So also Jesus' justification of the woman's act in 12:7-8 makes her an example to those who believe in his death.

Viewed in the light of what Jesus did to his disciples, Mary's performance is an exemplary act of humble service to humans and loving devotion to Jesus. It is striking that even before Jesus exemplified true discipleship and displayed his love for his own, Mary had already demonstrated these qualities. Her humble service prophetically foreshadows the feet-washing of Jesus at the Passover that signifies his impending death on the cross.⁴¹

The historical context in which Martha and Mary served Jesus and his followers makes us aware of the boldness these two women displayed. As J.A. Grassi observes, the dinner was hosted at a time when the Jewish leaders had given orders to make known to them Jesus' whereabouts so that they might arrest and put him to death (11:53,57).⁴² Also, one of the male disciples, Judas Iscariot, vehemently opposed Mary's act of self-renouncement out of his desire for selfish gain (12:4-6). In spite of this risky and unfavourable situation, the two women took courage to express their *bhakti* and submission to Jesus in their own home. John thus projects them as

³⁹ See R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, Vol. 2 (New York: Crossroad, 1990), p. 367 and p. 522 n. 15.

⁴⁰ Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), pp. 210-211.

⁴¹ Cf. E.E. Platt, 'The Ministry of Mary of Bethany', *Theology Today* 34 (1977), p. 37.

⁴² Grassi, 'Women's Leadership Roles', p. 315.

model leaders who need to be imitated even by the male disciples!

Mary's anointing with the costly perfume made of pure nard had a silencing effect upon all those who were in the house ('The house was filled with the fragrance of perfume'—12:3b). The sacrificial act done for Jesus left its mark upon others even without her awareness. Therefore M.L. Loane comments, 'Mary could not help but sweeten the world with the beautiful qualities of life whose influence was redolent with the Master's love.'⁴³ Here is a conceptual parallel with the mission of an apostle to spread in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing Christ (2 Cor. 2:14-16).

Just as the apostles' fragrance has a double effect, death to those who are perishing and life to those who are believing, Mary's act celebrates the new life given by Jesus by his death to those who believe (12:9, 11), but at the same time leads the Jews into their own destruction because they intensified their plot to kill Jesus as well as Lazarus (12:10, 19). Thus Mary, as an aroma of Christ, performed an apostolic act of spreading the fragrance!

In sum, both Martha and Mary are the paradigms for ideal discipleship and hence for effective leadership in the church because they exhibited the qualities of devotion, sacrifice, submission, service, faith, boldness and of apostolic witness. We should also note that as a family, the sisters were effectively involved in house-

hold duties by extending hospitality and care. At the same time they were closely bound with Christ and to his mission of accomplishing God's redemptive plan. Both of them, then, can be regarded as ideal disciples who fulfil the role of the beloved disciple in John.⁴⁴ Such a model role played by the women-duo would be unthinkable to John unless some women in his community were active members showing extraordinary devotion to Jesus.

4. Mary Magdalene: An Apostle Sent to the Apostle-Designates

Mary of Magdala, another key figure among the women profiles of John, is the next focus of our study. This woman appears only in the passion and resurrection narrative of John (19:25; 20:1-18). This means that some women in John, particularly Mary Magdalene, played supportive roles during Jesus' hour (*hōra*), the crucial moment of Jesus' ministry that made God's love and salvation a reality to the world. Just like the mother of Jesus who had a key role in the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the Samaritan woman who played the leadership role in extending the boundary of Jesus' mission to the Samaritans, and Martha and Mary who exercised an active role in Jesus' passion to the extent that their *bhakti* and service became the preamble to the whole Passion narrative of John, so also another woman, Mary

⁴³ M.L. Loane, *Mary of Bethany* (London/Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan & Scott Ltd., 2nd impr. 1955), p. 101.

⁴⁴ See Schneiders, 'Because of the Woman's Testimony ...', pp. 528, 534-535.

Magdalene, became a central figure in Jesus' resurrection and the subsequent appearances (20:11-23).⁴⁵ If Barrett's comment that in John 20:1-18 John has skilfully combined two traditions of Jesus' resurrection, resurrection appearances and the discovery of the empty tomb is correct,⁴⁶ then Mary Magdalene is the unifying figure of the two traditions.

John singles out Mary Magdalene as the only woman who *first* discovered the empty tomb (20:1-2) and who received the *first* Easter Christophany as well as the apostolic commission to announce the good news of Jesus' resurrection (20:11-18). She saw the risen Jesus first and bore witness to him (cf. Mk. 16:9-10). In Jewish tradition a woman had no right to witness because she was treated as a liar (cf. Gen. 18:15); her witness was acceptable only in exceptional cases.⁴⁷ John breaks this tradition and approves the witness of a woman. Hengel observes that Mary Magdalene in John attains the honour of being listed with the closest relatives of Jesus (19:25) and that she attains the first place in the order of revelation and in the history of the apostolic Easter message, analogous to that of Peter among the male disciples.⁴⁸ Therefore Hengel is not

wrong in calling her *die Jüngerin Jesu* (the female disciple of Jesus).⁴⁹

Mary's proclamation to the male disciples saying, 'I have seen the Lord' (20:18), has apostolic significance, for the early church regarded a vision of Jesus as the primary mark of the apostolic witness which is the foundation of Christian faith (1 Cor. 15:3-9; cf. Lk. 24:34). In this sense Mary Magdalene attains the status of an apostle, being equal in every respect to that of Peter and Paul. That is why the later Greek Fathers named her *isapostolos* ('equally an apostle').⁵⁰ In fact, Mary was given a double apostolic role: at first she carried the news about the empty tomb to Peter and the beloved disciple, inciting them to 'come and see'; and the second time she was sent to the larger group of disciples to testify that she had seen the Lord (20:17-18).⁵¹ Her love for Jesus was so deep that she was searching for him with great longing and weeping (20:11-15).

Like the Samaritan woman, Mary Magdalene was led from her misunderstanding to a clear vision and faith. She saw the risen Lord, received the commission directly from him and carried it out faithfully. She proclaimed to 'his brothers' the words of Jesus that in his exaltation the filial relationship between him and his disciples, and between them and the Father was confirmed. This message echoes the content of the apostolic preaching about Jesus' res-

⁴⁵ See Scott, *Sophia*, pp. 174-175, who shows that the women of John feature at key points in Jesus' ministry.

⁴⁶ Barrett, *St. John*, p. 560.

⁴⁷ See Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, pp. 374-375.

⁴⁸ Hengel, 'Maria Magdalena und die Frauen als Zeugen', in O. Betz, et al. (eds.), *Abraham unser Vater* (Leiden/Köln: EJ Brill, 1963), pp. 250-251, 256.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 252.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 251.

⁵¹ Cf. Scott, *Sophia*, p. 225.

urrection and its impact on human lives.

Scott argues that due to the presence of two or three layers of tradition in the resurrection narrative of John, there are some inconsistencies and duplications. For example, if the beloved disciple had already believed in the risen Jesus (20:8), what necessity was there for Mary Magdalene to go and announce it to the disciples?⁵² However, there is no inconsistency in this double account. What the beloved disciple believed was that Jesus' body was no more in the tomb. He still was ignorant of the scriptures that testify to the resurrection of Jesus (20:9)! He went back home along with Peter without real faith in Jesus' resurrection. In this situation Mary's witness must have clarified the reality of resurrection to all the disciples, including the beloved disciple. Mary's message equipped them for their future apostolic role. Hence Mary Magdalene is called *apostola apostolorum* ('the apostle to the apostles').⁵³

5. The Elect Lady: An Unnamed Pastor?

The reference to the 'Elect Lady' in 2 John needs our special attention in our endeavour to understand the leadership roles of women who feature in the Johannine writings. At the outset it should be stated that 1,2,3 John come from the same author or at least from the same community and that the epistles were written later than John's

Gospel. Therefore just like the Gospel, the epistles too generally reflect the life-situation of the Johannine community. It seems that 2 John is addressed to a community, a house-church, through an individual who was in charge of that community, just as 3 John is addressed to an individual, Gaius, with a message to the whole church.

Almost all the commentators agree that the 'elect lady' (*eklektê kyria* in 2 Jn. 1) and her 'elect sister' (*hê adelphês sou tês eklektês* in 2 Jn. 13) do not point to specific individuals. The term 'elect lady' is taken as the 'personification of the church',⁵⁴ a 'community and not an individual believer' (B.F. Westcott and S.S. Smalley), a 'local church and its members, and 'her sister' being another such local church' (C.H. Dodd), a 'personification of a local church' (John Stott), a 'metaphorical way of saying "the church and its members"' (I.H. Marshall and M.M. Thompson), and a 'church whose members are the children' (D. Jackman). The metaphorical interpretation rests on the observation that the church in the NT, similar to Jerusalem in the OT, is designated as a woman or the bride of Christ (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-32; Jn. 3:29; Rev. 18-19) and as the 'chosen woman' (1 Pet. 5:13; cf. Rom. 8:33; 1 Pet. 1:1).

Nevertheless, three issues have not adequately been dealt with by the commentators:

- (i) If the term 'elect lady' itself means the

⁵² *ibid.*, pp. 222-223.

⁵³ See Brown, 'Roles of Women', p. 190.

⁵⁴ Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT*, p. 242.

church, i.e., a community consisting of several members, then why does the author refer separately to 'your children' (2 Jn. 4), by using singular 'your' (*sou*)?

(ii) If 2 John 1 does not denote an individual, why does the author use the second person singular in three verses (vv. 4,5,13), while using plural in other verses?

(iii) Nowhere in the NT is a church addressed as *kyria* ('lady').⁵⁵

I revive, therefore, the view that was once argued by Clement of Alexandria and others, that the 'elect lady' is an individual who represents a house church (2 Jn. 10), although it is difficult to treat the terms, *Eklekta* and *Eklekta Kyria*, as personal names. The second person plural shows definitely that the letter is meant for a community of believers. But it is natural that any letter meant for a church is addressed to the leader or guardian of that church unless otherwise stated. For example, 3 John is addressed to one Gaius, while it is meant for the whole church. It is probable, as M.D. Hutaff notes, that the elect lady of 2 John was a female leader of the house-church like Prisca (1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:3), Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11), and Nympha (Col. 4:15)⁵⁶ and that her elect sister was the leader of

another local church from where the elder wrote 2 John. If this interpretation is correct, then 2 John is the only writing in the NT addressed to a woman.⁵⁷ We may also say that these women exercised a pastoral role in two different local churches over which the elder had jurisdiction.

An important characteristic of John is to use the historical figures as symbolic or representative figures (e.g.: Nicodemus in 3:1-15 where the singular and plural forms are interchangeably used, the mother of Jesus, the Samaritan woman, and even Jesus himself).⁵⁸ Likewise, the elect lady and her elect sister of 2 John are possibly historical figures whom the Johannine community set as the representatives of two separate house churches. We may also suggest that these women leaders possibly founded these churches by their labour and that is why the elder identifies the members of the churches as their children (2 Jn. 4, 13; cf. Gal. 4:19).

The female leader had three important functions in the church: to offer hospitality in her house to the travelling evangelists (cf. 2 Jn. 10, 11), to guard the church from heretical teaching that denied Christ who came in flesh (2 Jn. 7), and to preserve love, truth and the teaching (*didachē*) of Christ in the communi-

⁵⁵ Margaret Hutaff observes that the church is described as 'lady' in the *Shepherd of Hermas* (Vis. 3.1.3)—see M.D. Hutaff, 'The Johannine Epistles', in E.S. Fiorenza (ed.), *Searching the Scriptures: A Feminist Commentary*, Vol. 2 (London: SCM Press, 1994), pp. 423-424. However, in the *Shepherd of Hermas* the term is used as a polite term to address an 'elderly woman' and not as a designation of the church. The woman appears as an apocalyptic figure rather than a historical or representative figure. The same word is used to address also another woman named Rhoda in Rome (Vis. I.1.5).

⁵⁶ See Hutaff, 'Johannine Epistles', p. 423.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*; see also Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, pp. 248-249.

⁵⁸ See R.F. Collins, 'The Representative Figures of the Fourth Gospel', *Downside Review* 94 (1976), pp. 26-46, 118-132; S.M. Schneiders, 'History and Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel', in M. De Jonge (ed.), *L' évangile de Jean: Sources, rédaction, théologie* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1977), pp. 371-376.

ty (2 Jn. 5-9). It is unimaginable that such roles would have been attributed to a metaphorical or personified figure!⁵⁹ While the 'lady' was involved in the household duties such as hospitality, she was fulfilling the pastoral duties of the church because of her deep commitment to Christ.

As in the papyri manuscripts, the word *kyria* in Aramaic is equivalent to 'Martha'.⁶⁰ If so, there is a play on the word in 2 John 1. Although *kyria* is not a personal name, it perhaps points in a hidden way to Martha. In the light of John's fondness for double meaning displayed in his Gospel, such a hidden meaning is quite possible in the epistle. If so, it is only a step further to say that 'your elect sister' implies Mary of Bethany, Martha's sister. Since they showed a sincere *bhakti* and service to Jesus, it is no wonder that eventually they rose to the status as the heads of the churches on par with the male disciples. This proves that Martha and Mary were not marginalized after their role depicted in the Fourth Gospel.

Nevertheless, the question is: why are the women leaders mentioned in disguise? Dodd thinks that such mystification is to give the impression to the enemies of Christianity (cf. 1 Jn.

3:13), in case the letter would fall into their hands, that it is a harmless letter to a friend.⁶¹ However, 2 John attacks not the unbelievers, but only those who have gone out of the church (v. 7). In fact, 3 John commends the travelling evangelists who accepted nothing from the 'heathen' (*ethnikoi* – 3 Jn. 7), a derogatory label used for non-Christians. If 3 John is plainly addressed to an individual, why not 2 John? It is more probable that the women leaders are presented in a hidden way so that the letter might receive wider acceptance, including in the churches that discouraged women leadership.

Schneiders has shown that the early church was retreating from the egalitarian discipleship of the Jesus Movement, while the Gnostics were assigning apostolic functions to women in their movement.⁶² She further argues that the female identity of the Beloved Disciple was disguised by the final editor of the Fourth Gospel in order to distance the Gospel from Gnostic texts and to promote its acceptance in the 'apostolic' Christian movement, which she calls the 'Great Church'.⁶³ Therefore it is possible that the identity of the 'elect lady' and her 'elect sister' was hidden for similar reasons.

If our interpretation of the 'elect lady' as an individual who played the pastoral role in the house church is correct, then it gives one more evi-

⁵⁹ It is true that 2 Jn. 6-12 has plural verbs and pronouns, but it is also true that the exhortation is directly addressed to the lady ('But now, dear lady, I ask you' in v. 5). The plural only shows that the elder's instruction is to be circulated among the members of the church.

⁶⁰ See C.H. Dodd, *The Johannine Epistles* (London: Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 4 impr., 1961), p. 143; J.R.W. Stott, *The Letters of John: Revised Edition* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1995), p. 203; S.S. Smalley, *1,2,3 John* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1984), p. 318.

⁶¹ Dodd, *Johannine Epistles*, p. 145.

⁶² Schneiders, 'Because of the Woman's Testimony ...', p. 525.

⁶³ *ibid.*, pp. 527,531,535.

dence for the women leadership admitted in the Johannine community. Like the women in the Gospel, she too was involved in such household works as providing hospitality and service and at the same time bound herself with Christ in whose power she could function as the custodian of Christian faith.

We need to ask at this point: why does John place women in a good light? They are not pictured as those who denied or betrayed Jesus nor are they presented as those who fled away from Jesus when he was arrested and tried, as the male disciples did. Why does John portray women thus? The answer probably lies in the observation that there is an undeniable link between Sophia Christology and the role of women in the Fourth Gospel. For John, Jesus, as Sophia, is equally a female expression of God.⁶⁴ He presents Jesus Sophia as the one who pre-existed with God, was involved in creation, tabernacled among human beings, exhibited God's glory, supplied bread and wine to the needy, and revealed herself to the faithful seekers. When he projects Jesus as the female expression of God, he cannot fail to present women as reflections of Jesus Sophia in their love, devotion, faith and servanthood.

⁶⁴ By this, I am not arguing that Jesus was a female by nature and gender. I only point out how the Johannine Jesus fulfils the role of Sophia which, both in Jewish and Hellenistic thoughts, was feminine. It has been well proved by scholars that the Logos and Sophia are almost identical in status and task, and therefore one can argue that men and women bear equal status and role in Jesus.

CONCLUSIONS

Our study on the woman profiles of John shows that they had unique roles in Jesus' mission of saving the suffering world. At a time when the Jewish society treated women as house-bound, John boldly presents them as models to be followed. They took the initiative to serve in and outside their homes because of their *bhakti* to Jesus and their awareness of human needs. In their service, they were readily willing to make costly sacrifices, although men with selfish ambition regarded it a waste.

The women of John were keenly engaged in theological discussions based on the scripture and the religio-social situation of the day. This was the case even though study and teaching of the Torah were forbidden for women in the Jewish world. Therefore no wonder John gives to a woman theologian the credit of confessing Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God—a credit which was given to a male disciple, Peter, in the Synoptic Gospels.

Some of them were so loyal to Jesus that they were with him in his suffering at crucifixion and after his resurrection—the climax of the revelation of God's glory, whereas almost all the male disciples had fled away from Jesus at that point. Their witness to what they had seen made an impact in the society and led many, including the disciples, to first hand knowledge of Jesus and stronger faith in him. Therefore they are known as the apostles, missionaries, and leaders of the church.

When most of the male disciples are presented by John as passive

observers of Jesus' deeds, the women are portrayed as active respondents to him. They did virtuous deeds such as hosting dinner, serving at the table, overseeing the feast, and anointing Jesus' feet—all challenging works that no other persons took the initiative to do. They performed such deeds well in advance of Jesus' instruction to the disciples to do so. The Johannine women acted thus with the prophetic spirit and clear vision.

True, almost all of them were busily engaged in household works, but at the same time they were remarkably bound with Christ. Since Christ had liberated them from male-dominated culture and set them as model leaders, the women became more challenging figures than the men.⁶⁵ They were empowered by Jesus himself, who, as the Sophia incarnate, is the female expression of God. The unique roles played by the

women in John show that they were not 'uneducated domestic recluses'.⁶⁶ The recognition of women in John's Gospel as model figures in a male dominated Jewish society makes the Gospel a Gospel of revolution and restoration.

What do the woman profiles of John have to speak to the women of our time? Let me put them in four categories:⁶⁷

- (i) Women should bind themselves with Christ who alone can empower them to do any form of service.
- (ii) They should throw off 'I am only a woman' mentality and use the available opportunities for leadership.
- (iii) We must encourage and enable more participation of women in the church, in the liturgy, decision-making bodies, house-groups, and in ordained ministry.
- (iv) We must identify and remove all forms of oppression against women in the church and society.

⁶⁵ Cf. *Gospel of Thomas* 114 where Jesus promises to make Mary a 'male', as Peter was asking Jesus to send her away, because, for him, women are not worthy of life.

⁶⁶ Schneiders, 'Women in the Fourth Gospel', p. 130.

⁶⁷ For points (ii)—(iv) see Somen Das (ed.), *Women in India: Problems and Prospects* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1989), pp. 1-2.

Acceptance

*The audacious self-conceit of humankind
 Misconstrues the crucial question of the Age,
 Reducing reality to our subjective plane
 We focus upon vain acceptance of our belief in God;
 Failing to see the ultimate question is:
 Does God accept us?*

Verse by Garry Harris, Adelaide, South Australia
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The Holy Spirit, Hermeneutics, and Transformation: From Present to Future Glory

Gary L. Nebeker

Keywords: Christocentric, role, illumination, application, divine image, renewal, truth, teleology

Introduction

Throughout the history of the Protestant Church, the role of the Spirit in interpretation has been subsumed under discussions of the doctrine of illumination.¹ In the past quarter century, the topic of the role of the Spirit in hermeneutics has made its way into a small but significant number of books, journal articles, and scholarly essays.² As a rule, discussions in the literature have focused on two principal inquiries: Does the Holy Spirit aid in the interpretation of the text, or Does the Holy Spirit aid an interpreter in the

application of the text? This article proposes a third more nuanced alternative. Because 'truth' can be understood as that which is christocentric and transformational in character, the role of the Holy Spirit in hermeneutics must be understood in a similar way. The Spirit's role—or goal—in interpretation is to allow the interpreter to understand the text in such a way that the text transforms the interpreter into the image of Christ. While this may appear as a

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¹ For a helpful overview, see James P. Callahan, 'Claritas Scripturae: The Role of Perspicuity in Protestant Hermeneutics', *JETS* 39 (1996), pp. 353-372.

² Along these lines, several recent works bear mention, Millard J. Erickson, *Evangelical Interpretation: Perspectives on Hermeneutical Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), pp. 33-54; David J. McKinley, 'John Owen's View of Illumination: An Alternative to the Fuller-Erickson Dialogue', *BSac* 154 (1997), pp. 93-104; and Daniel B. Wallace, 'The Holy Spirit and Hermeneutics', 1-6 [cited 24 April 2002] Online: <http://www.bible.org/docs/soapbox/hermns.htm>

foregone conclusion, transformation as the Spirit's role in hermeneutics, surprisingly enough, has not been a focal feature in the literature on this topic.³ This exploratory essay, then, will attempt to explicate the relationship between textual interpretation and the transforming work of the Holy Spirit.

The Christocentric Character of Truth

In a host of instances in the NT, the word 'truth' refers to statements that are absent of falsehood, or statements that stand in contrast to lying or deception.⁴ However, to limit our understanding of 'truth' only to this, puts us into a framework of thinking of 'truth' only as 'propositionally correct' statements about God.⁵ In one important instance in the Johannine literature, 'truth' is regarded not only as statements absent of falsehood, but 'truth' is equated with a person, Jesus Christ: 'the way, *the truth*, and the life' (John 14:6). As the

revealed reality of God, Jesus Christ is truth incarnate. Thus, 'sentences and beliefs about him ... depend on the action of this person—or, more precisely, on his distinctive role in the unitary action of the Father who sends him and of the Spirit whom he gives'.⁶ While 'truth' certainly has to do with cognitive convictions or beliefs about God that are not false, 'truth' must also be understood as that which is *personal* and *relational* in character. With Jesus as the personification of 'truth,' as the 'truth' to whom we relate, 'truth,' we could also argue, is he who transforms us into his image. Hence, there is an aspect of truth that is personal, relational, and transformational in nature: 'to know the truth is to be known by the truth.'⁷

From the Pauline perspective, transformation into the image of Christ is both now and not yet. Paul regarded the future restoration of humankind's fallen moral dignity (Rom. 5:2; 8:18, 21, 30) as something that begins with union with the exalted Christ, who is the giver of eschatological life through the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45; 2 Cor. 3:17). By virtue of identification with the exalted Christ, 'glory,' is restored *already in part* and is a *present real-*

³ While transformation per se is not his specific focus, see the discussion of spirituality and exegesis in Bruce K. Waltke, 'Exegesis and the Spiritual Life: Theology as Spiritual Formation', *Crux* 30 (1994), pp. 28-35.

⁴ Anthony C. Thiselton, 'Truth', in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 3:883-894. Drawing upon the correspondence theory of truth, Nicole correctly concludes that, 'The full Bible concept of truth involves factuality, faithfulness, and completeness.' Roger Nicole, 'The Biblical Concept of Truth', in *Scripture and Truth*, eds. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), p. 296.

⁵ Alister McGrath, *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996), pp. 177-78.

⁶ So, Bruce D. Marshall, "'We Shall Bear the Image of the Man of Heaven': Theology and the Concept of Truth', *Modern Theology* 11 (1995), p. 107.

⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, *Unscientific Postscript* (London: Oxford, 1941), pp. 169-224. While we appreciate this insight, he overstated the case by insisting that truth was not so much an objective body of veracious convictions as it was the transformation of one's life that occurs as a result of personally appropriating the truth.

ity through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. This process occurs, as the believer gazes upon the glory of Christ: 'all of us ... seeing the glory [moral perfection] of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image [of christlikeness] from one degree of glory [present moral dignity] to another [future christlike moral perfection]; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit' (2 Cor. 3:18). The *not-yet* of present glory is consummated at the resurrection when the physical body is 'raised in glory' and 'raised in power' (1 Cor. 15:43; Philp. 3:21).

Beholding the moral perfection of Christ in the 'not yet' consists of a spiritually informed concentration upon the christocentric witness of Scripture. The christocentric witness of the Bible is seen in Jesus' words in John 5:39, 'it is they [the Scriptures] that testify on my behalf.' This is also implied from Jesus' self-disclosure to the disciples on the road to Emmaus: 'Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to *them the things about himself in all the scripture*' (Luke 24:27). This christocentric testimony of Scripture serves as one of the effectual means of the believer's moral transformation into the image of Christ. With Kline we concur that, 'Man's reception of the divine image from Christ, the Glory-Presence, is depicted as a transforming vision of the Glory and as an investiture with the Glory.'⁸ By 'transformation' we refer to the con-

sequent, lasting spiritual and ethical effect that the text has upon our lives, transformation that begins with the renewal of our minds (Rom. 12:2a cf. Eph. 4:23).

To illustrate further this christocentric understanding of truth, let us consider Paul's words to the Gentile Christians of Ephesus. He reminded them of the futility of their former way of living, and then makes the point, 'But you did not *learn Christ* in this way, if indeed you have heard him and have been taught in him, just as *truth* is in Jesus' (Eph. 4:21). For the Ephesian Gentiles to 'learn Christ' meant being taught the tradition regarding Jesus. Paul's Colossian parallel is worth noting in this connection: 'As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught ...' (Col. 2:6, 7). 'Learning Christ' (Eph. 4:21) also meant being spiritually transformed 'by the living Christ who was the source of a new way of life as well as of a new relationship with God'.⁹ When Paul asserted that 'truth is in Jesus', his words can be taken to mean that the truth of the gospel tradition finds its summary in Jesus, in his words, his deeds, and the validity of his witness.¹⁰

The christocentric and transforming nature of truth is also seen in Paul's perplexity over the Galatians' reversion to righteousness based on externals: 'I am again in the pain of

⁸ Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), pp. 28-29.

⁹ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*. Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Tex.: Word, 1990), p. 280.

¹⁰ Thiselton, *NIDNTT*, 3:892; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, p. 280.

childbirth until *Christ is formed in you*' (Gal. 4:19). An important part of the Galatian Christians' transformation into christlikeness, we might surmise, was a fuller, more correct understanding of the gospel, specifically, how the Galatians would find their acceptance with a righteous God through the sufficiency of Christ's completed work (Gal. 2:5, 14; 4:16; 5:7).

Paul draws a parallel between the christocentricity of the gospel and its transforming effect in the New Covenant ministry of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 3:1–4:18). Having their spiritual blindness removed, those who hear the gospel, in a manner of speaking, behold the glory of Christ. And, 'as though reflected in a mirror, [those who behold the glory of Christ] are being transformed into the same image [of Christ] from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit' (2 Cor. 3:18). From Paul's understanding of the gloriousness of the New Covenant, we can posit that to understand the gospel aright is to understand Christ aright; to understand Christ aright is to understand 'truth' aright.

The Teleology of the Spirit in Interpretation

Having thus considered this aspect of truth as that which is christocentric, relational, and transformational in character, then our understanding of the Spirit's role in interpretation must be understood in a similar way. The Spirit's role—or goal—in interpretation is to allow us to understand the text in such a way that it trans-

forms us into the image of Christ. It is sometimes stated that the role of the Holy Spirit is connected to the *application* of a text more so than its *interpretation*. However, given the intricate interrelation between interpretation and application, we should not be forced to choose between an 'either—or' in this matter.¹¹ Moreover, since the notion of textual 'application' is rather general in nature, I am inclined to speak of a more specific role of the Holy Spirit, namely, transformation. This transformation, as we have noted, is a work in process that is both already and not yet. Finally, one may also wonder if 'doing' something the Bible commands necessarily leads to transformation into christlikeness. At times, it seems that a distinction can be made between behavioural modification and transformation into christlikeness.¹²

Christlikeness, I submit, consists of the virtues of faith, hope, and love (1 Cor. 13:13) as well as the other spiritual virtues enumerated in the NT. Drawing from the terminology of a correspondence theory of truth, followers of Christ are in a relationship of correspondence to Jesus. As Marshall puts it, 'It is a relation among persons in which one person [Christ] joins numerous others [believers] to himself by [their] faith hope, and love, and in that way makes them like himself It is thus a relation of

¹¹ John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, N. J.: P & R Publishing, 1987), pp. 81-85.

¹² For the classical explication of this distinction, see Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale, 1959).

subject [believers] to term [Christ] in which the subject can, in an unpuzzling sense, be like—correspond to—the term.¹³ All of this means that the Spirit not only aids us in a correct understanding of the text, but aids us in such a way that this understanding is consequently followed through by life change.

Perhaps we have too often assumed that the Holy Spirit helps us to come to ‘propositionally correct’ understandings of Scripture. That is to say, the Holy Spirit guides us so that our interpretations of the Bible do not contain falsehood or doctrinal error. While on the one hand we do not demur from this, on the other hand, is it not true that even non-Christian interpreters can understand the Scriptures correctly—if only in piecemeal fashion?¹⁴ Perhaps we should suggest that non-believers can at times ‘understand’ the text, but they do not regard what they understand as ‘truth’ that is personally relevant. Personal relevance, we submit, is something that can be achieved only through the ‘assessment’ or ‘appraisal’ of the Holy Spirit. This seems to be the upshot of Paul’s words in First Corinthians 2:14 when he wrote, ‘Those who are unspiritual do not receive the gifts of God’s Spirit, for they are foolishness to them, and they are unable to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.’

When Paul speaks of being transformed by the renewing of our minds

(Rom. 12:2a cf. Eph. 4:23), there is a sense in which we become whom we know.¹⁵ Thus, the role of the Holy Spirit in hermeneutics is (1) aiding our understanding of who Christ is, and (2) effecting our transformation into Christ’s image. The work of the Holy Spirit in hermeneutics involves both the former and the latter—not one to the exclusion of the other. Of course, the challenge that comes with this proposal is that it is difficult at times to measure spiritual transformation—difficult perhaps, but not impossible.¹⁶

Another matter merits consideration. If God has a desired priority, result, or goal for what occurs when his people read or hear his Word, what might that be? Admittedly, we could offer several different responses to this end (e.g., obedience, confession, repentance, thanksgiving, or worship, to name a few). However, given Paul’s understanding of God’s restoration of the fallen image of God in humankind through Christ, can we not affirm that God’s overarching desire is that his people be created to be like him in true righteousness and holiness according to the image of their creator (Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10)? Can we not also aver that God has effectively predestined our conformity to Christ (Rom. 8:29; Eph. 1:5)? In conceding these points, then, one of the means whereby God accomplishes our transformation is through the gaze

¹³ Marshall, ‘Bear the Image,’ pp. 110-111.

¹⁴ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), pp. 255-56.

¹⁵ Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Doctrine* (New York: Oxford, 1997), p. 26.

¹⁶ In this connection, a work such as Edwards’s *Religious Affections* serves as a competent guide.

that the believer brings to bear on the christocentric witness of the Word of God. This transformation, we maintain, is attainable only through the Spirit working in conjunction with our hearing and reflection upon the scriptures. This renewal spans from 'one degree of glory,' our present moral dignity, 'to another,' our future christlike moral perfection (2 Cor. 3:18c).

Does the Holy Spirit continue to transform an interpreter even if he has misunderstood a text? I am willing to answer this question with a qualified 'yes' if we can concede that transformation occurs with not only the interpretation of one biblical text, but through a collection of biblical texts. Sometimes textual misunderstanding occurs when a person incorrectly reads something from another biblical text into the biblical text that is under consideration. Lay people and even scholars may read other biblical texts and themes into a given text when the text under consideration is actually stating something else. Hence, what they are saying may be true from the fuller biblical picture, but their interpretation is not what the text under consideration is stating.¹⁷ Depending, of course, on their level of hermeneutical skills, interpreters will acquire a collection of correct textual interpretations over the course of time. Because of this, and because of a prayerful dependency upon the Holy Spirit, an interpreter may expect the continual transforming work of God

in her life. Because we have acquired a larger framework of many correct textual interpretations, transformation into christlikeness will continue even if we have misinterpreted some texts. This reinforces Paul's truism that our present knowledge of God is indirect and as a consequence, partial (1 Cor. 13:12a). Yet, he holds forth the certainty that one day ('then,' 1 Cor. 13:12b) our knowledge of God will be direct, free from the limitations of our present finitude and moral taint.

Conclusion

Looking back on my days as a college and seminary student, I always appreciated those professors who strove for a healthy balance of scholarship and spirituality in the classroom. Still, I have wondered if the transformational dimension of exegesis and theology was stressed enough in my education. In light of this, I have had to re-evaluate my role as a theologian and an educator. I recognize that theology was once regarded as the 'queen of the sciences,' and that there is a degree of scientific methodology that attends this discipline. At the same time, I have come to regard my vocation more as a narrative art that has spiritual transformation into the image of Christ as my principal didactic goal. I want to emphasize to my students that knowledge of scripture must translate into a relational knowledge of Christ. Such knowledge of Christ is not merely a 'scientific' understanding of Christ as an 'it', but a relational knowledge of Christ as a 'thou'. Such knowledge is

¹⁷ Vern S. Poythress, 'The Divine Meaning of Scripture,' *WTJ* 48 (1986), pp. 275, 278.

not knowledge for knowledge's sake, but is a knowledge that indelibly imprints our soul with the beauty and magnetism of Christ himself. Perhaps an appropriate question to ask ourselves after we have exegeted a text is: 'How will this passage lead to a greater conformity to Christ?' When asking this question, we must also remember that transformation into christlikeness will require a willingness or readiness on our part to experience anxiety or difficulty. To be sure, transformation can bring acute discomfort to our lives.

Concerning this relational-transformational knowledge of Christ, it is crucial that we take our cues from Paul's Ephesian correspondence. In that letter he states that our knowledge of Christ is something that is already possessed (Eph. 4:3-6), but is not yet fully attained (Eph. 4:13). Along with 'unity of the faith,' Paul affirms that one of the goals of Christ's gifting of the church is to bring her to 'the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ' (Eph. 4:13). If one of the eschatological aims of Christ's gifting of the church is the maturity of his people, perhaps transformation into the image of Christ should be a principal goal in the interpretive and theological enterprise. At first blush, this objective might seem overly basic or

even trite.¹⁸ Yet, humility should tell us that there is always room for growth in spiritual maturity for the people of God—even for learned scholars, pastors, and theological educators.

For those of us who are theological scholars, is seasoned, transformed insight or sapience cherished as much as is scholarly competence or notoriety? These are not mutually exclusive, but they can be. At times, skilled interpreters can correctly understand the text, but the transformational effect of the Holy Spirit may not be taking hold in our lives because of undetected or unconfessed sin. Lest we think of ourselves more highly than we ought, it ought to be remembered that exegetes and theologues are especially vulnerable to lust for recognition, arrogance, vain assertiveness, hasty defensiveness, incredulous denial, provincialism, egotistical opportunism as well as other subtleties of the flesh. In short, spiritual maturity as the teleological work of the Spirit in hermeneutics must never be regarded as methodological naïveté or a banal appeal to piety.

It is important to add that the hermeneutical aim of spiritual matu-

¹⁸ On the ethical function and goals of hermeneutics, see Roger Lundin, Anthony C. Thiselton, and Clarence Walhout, *The Responsibility of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), p. 9. Regarding theology's contribution to christlikeness through Christian wisdom, see, Charry, *Renewing of Your Minds*, pp. 3-32; and Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 'The Voice and the Actor: A Dramatic Proposal about the Ministry and Ministry of Theology', in *Evangelical Futures: A Conversation on Theological Method*, John G. Stackhouse, Jr., ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), p. 90.

rity (à la transformation into the image of Christ), is applicable not only individually, but corporately as well. Interpretive communities and the gifted interpreters therein must have not only correct understanding of the text as an intended goal, but the spiritual maturity of their interpretive community as well. Too often, we limit spiritual maturity to that which the Holy Spirit effects individualistically. Given the corporate implications of the 'new man' language in the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians,¹⁹ it is altogether appropriate to speak of spiritual maturity in a collective sense as well. This applies to the local church, to denominations, to para-church ministries, and the broader theological heritages to which we belong. Our prayer and confident expectancy must be that our churches and

institutions, as expressions of the corporate Christ, bear greater resemblance to Christ with the passing of time.

In future discussions of the role of the Holy Spirit in interpretation, it will be necessary to underscore the correlation between hearing the text, understanding it, and allowing the text to change us not only individually but corporately as well. Therefore, in keeping with Paul's urging, as we read the text, as we gaze upon Christ, 'we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ' (Eph. 4:15b). Yet, humility and commitment must accompany this hermeneutical endeavour. 'Humility is called for by the interpreter's awareness that final truth may not always be in his grasp. But commitment signifies that the interpreter never give up in his quest to find the truth.'²⁰ This quest for truth, as I have maintained, is a quest for Christ.

¹⁹ See, Darrell L. Bock, 'The "New Man" as Community in Colossians and Ephesians', in *Integrity of Heart, Skillfulness of Hands: Biblical and Leadership Studies in Honor of Donald K. Campbell*, ed. Charles H. Dyer and Roy B. Zuck (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), pp.157-67.

²⁰ Winfried Corduan, 'Humility and Commitment: An Approach to Modern Hermeneutics', *Themelios* 11 (1986), p. 83.

Living the Kingdom

*Let us hear again the kingdom stories,
Of a future-past revealed in Christ.
Impacting on our present, this was-is-will be time
confronts us,
With a history that is anticipated and created now;
In our flawed, but consecrated humanity.*

Verse by Garry Harris, Adelaide, South Australia
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The Lordship Salvation Debate

Randall Gleason

Keywords: Faith, conversion, repentance, discipleship, carnal, assurance, sanctification, works, volition, polemics, filling of the Spirit

My spiritual pilgrimage was typical of many raised in a Christian family. One of my earliest memories was of my older sister explaining to me at the age of five how to pray and invite Jesus to come into my life. Although I prayed to receive Christ at that time, it was not until my second year of High School that I began to understand the true meaning of discipleship. While attending a youth con-

ference, I asked Christ to become the Lord and master of my life. After that decision I was baptized in our local church and began to have an intense hunger to study the Bible and a strong desire to share my faith with others. The dramatic change in my life caused me to doubt whether I was truly saved when I had prayed earlier as a child. I began to ask the question, 'Does salvation require submission to Christ as Lord as well as trust in Christ as Saviour?' I soon discovered that many have asked the same question spawning one of the most hotly debated controversies within twentieth-century Evangelicalism.¹

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¹ Earlier examples include B. B. Warfield's critical review of L. S. Chafer's book entitled *He That Is Spiritual* (New York: Our Hope, 1918) in the *Princeton Theological Review* 17 (April 1919), pp. 322-27. On the significance of this early clash in setting the tone for the Lordship debate see Randall Gleason, 'B. B. Warfield and Lewis S. Chafer on Sanctification', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40 (June 1997), pp. 241-56. Other important examples include John Murray's review of Steven Barabas's book entitled *So Great Salvation: The History and Message of the Keswick Convention* (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1952) reprinted in *The Collected Writings of John Murray* vol. 4 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1982), pp. 281-86.

The brief exchange in *Eternity* magazine in 1959 between two well-known evangelicals helped to define the key points of the 'Lordship Salvation' debate. To the question, 'Must Christ be Lord to be Saviour?' Everett F. Harrison answered 'No' by demonstrating the difference between saving faith and discipleship and the danger of basing assurance of salvation upon complete surrender.² On the other hand, John R. W. Stott maintained that Jesus must be accepted as both Lord and Saviour by emphasizing the inseparable connection between saving faith and repentance, obedience, and newness of life.³ The recent defence of the 'Lordship' view by well-known Bible teacher, John MacArthur, brought new life to the controversy. The publication of his book *The Gospel According to Jesus*⁴ in 1988 drew immediate responses from Charles C. Ryrie and Zane C. Hodges, both former professors of Dallas Theological Seminary defend-

ing the non-Lordship position.⁵ Since then many have written on this controversial subject.⁶ Along the way the Campus Crusade for Christ booklet entitled *Have you made the wonderful discovery of the Spirit-filled Life?* has often been presented as an example of the non-Lord-

⁵ Charles C. Ryrie, *So Great Salvation: What it Means to Believe in Jesus Christ* (Wheaton: Victor, 1989) and Zane C. Hodges *Absolutely Free!: A Biblical Reply to Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989). Also noteworthy is the *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* published 'to promote the clear proclamation of God's free salvation through faith alone in Christ alone, which is properly correlated with and distinguished from issues related to discipleship' (see vol. 3 [Spring 1989], p. 2).

⁶ Others advocating Lordship salvation include Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr. *Lord of the Saved: Getting to the heart of the Lordship Debate* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992) and Ernest C. Reisinger, *Lord and Christ: The Implications of Lordship for Faith and Life* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1994). Also see MacArthur's important rejoinder to Ryrie and Hodges provocatively entitled *Faith Works: The Gospel According to the Apostles* (Dallas: Word, 1993) and his article 'Faith According to the Apostle James' (*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 33 [March 1990], pp. 13-34) with responses by Earl D. Radmacher (*ibid.*, pp. 35-41) and Robert L. Saucy (*ibid.*, pp. 43-47). For a detailed and generally balanced critique of the debate see the multi-authored work edited by Michael Horton, *Christ the Lord: The Reformation and Lordship Salvation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992).

² Everett F. Harrison, 'Must Christ Be Lord to be Savior? NO!', *Eternity* (September, 1959), pp. 14,16,48.

³ John R. W. Stott, 'Must Christ be Lord to be Savior? YES!', *Eternity* (September, 1959), pp. 15,17-18,36-37.

⁴ John F. MacArthur, Jr. *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988). The enthusiastic forwards in his book by J. I. Packer and James Montgomery Boice identify him as the leading spokesman for the Lordship view (see pages ix-xiii).

ship view.⁷ To commemorate Dr Bright's worldwide impact through his 'Holy Spirit' booklet, I offer this summary and critique of the Lordship debate. Rather than an endorsement of either side, Dr Bright provides a helpful biblical balance that has often been missed in the rhetoric of the debate.

'Lordship Salvation' Defined

Advocates of 'Lordship Salvation' object to the preaching of a gospel that 'encourages people to claim Jesus as Savior yet defer until later the commitment to obey Him as Lord'.⁸ They reject the assumption that faith is simply giving intellectual assent to 'some basic facts about Christ' claiming that it has produced a generation of 'professing Christians' with a false sense of assurance.⁹ They renounce such a notion as a distortion of the gospel similar to that which Paul warns against in Galatians 1:6-8:

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is really not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we

have preached to you, let him be accursed.¹⁰

They call for a return to the true demands of the gospel, which includes a willingness to submit to the Lordship of Christ in every aspect of one's life. MacArthur states, 'People who come to Christ for salvation must do so in obedience to Him, that is, with a willingness to surrender to Him as Lord.'¹¹ Thus, saving faith should not be distinguished from the true marks of discipleship including 'repentance, surrender, and the supernatural eagerness to obey'.¹² MacArthur concludes, 'No promise of salvation is ever extended to those who refuse to accede to Christ's lordship. Thus there is no salvation except "lordship" salvation.'¹³

Lordship advocates are often accused of promoting a salvation by works. Their opponents maintain that to make works of obedience the inevitable result of faith is to make works a condition of salvation. Hodges makes this allegation:

In may even be said that lordship salvation throws a veil of obscurity over the entire New Testament revelation. In the process, the marvelous truth of justification by faith, apart from works, recedes into shadows not unlike those which darkened the days before the Reformation. What replaces this doctrine is a kind of faith/works synthesis which differs only insignificantly from official Roman Catholic dogma.¹⁴

However, MacArthur emphatically

⁷ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Saved by Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 20-23; Michael Horton, 'Union with Christ', in *Christ the Lord*, pp. 112-13; Jonathan Gerstner, 'Legalism and Antinomianism: Two Deadly Paths off the Narrow Road', in *Trust and Obey: Obedience and the Christian*, ed. D. Kistler (Morgan: Soli Deo Gloria, 1996), pp. 144-45; Reisinger, *Lord and Christ*, pp. 81-84.

⁸ MacArthur, *Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 15.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 28-29 (see footnote 20).

¹⁴ Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, pp. 19-20.

denies works-salvation:

Let me say as clearly as possible right now that salvation is by God's sovereign grace and grace alone. Nothing a lost, degenerate, spiritually dead sinner can do will in any way contribute to salvation. Saving faith, repentance, commitment, and obedience are all divine works, wrought by the Holy Spirit in the heart of everyone who is saved. I have never taught that some pre-salvation works of righteousness are necessary to or part of salvation. But I do believe without apology that real salvation cannot and will not fail to produce works of righteousness in the life of a true believer.¹⁵

MacArthur claims that works of obedience are both the inevitable product and necessary evidence of genuine faith. Notice that the cause and effect relationship is only in one direction (i.e., faith producing works of obedience not works of obedience resulting in salvation). To insist that any cause and effect relationship between faith and works necessarily implies 'works-salvation' is to commit the fallacy of mistaking the effect for the cause. Bock correctly observes that, 'For a person to hold to works-salvation he must say, "Because I have done a specific act God is obligated to save me."¹⁶ This is clearly not what MacArthur and other Lordship advocates claim. Therefore, the accusation of works-salvation is unwarranted and a misrepresentation of the 'Lordship' position.

The Meaning of Saving Faith

The nature of genuine faith is acknowledged by all as one of the most fundamental issues in the 'Lordship' controversy. Those opposed to Lordship salvation emphasize saving faith as an intellectual response to the truth of the gospel. This is clearly seen in Zane Hodges' claim that saving faith is simply 'believing the facts' about Christ.¹⁷ Though Ryrie acknowledges a volitional aspect of faith, he explains it as 'an act of the will to trust in the *truth* which one has come to know'.¹⁸ Hence, his examples of faith call sinners to believe 'that Christ can forgive his sins', 'that He can remove the guilt of sin and give eternal life', and 'that His death paid for all your sin'.¹⁹ In each case his emphasis is clearly upon believing truths *about* Christ. Non-Lordship advocates also stress the simplicity of faith and reject the tendency to distinguish between authentic faith and insufficient faith (e.g., counterfeit faith, temporary faith, dead faith).²⁰ Moreover, the genuineness of a person's faith should not be questioned even if he comes 'to the place of not believing'.²¹

Lordship advocates offer a very different understanding of faith. They emphasize the enduring quality of saving faith in the person of Christ

¹⁷ Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, pp. 37-39.

¹⁸ Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, p. 121. (my emphasis)

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 119-21.

²⁰ Radmacher, pp. 37-38.

²¹ Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, p. 141. See also Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, pp. 107-111.

¹⁵ MacArthur, *Gospel According to Jesus*, p. xiii.

¹⁶ Darrell L. Bock, 'A Review of *The Gospel According to Jesus*', *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146 (Jan-Mar 1989), p. 24.

evidenced by submission and obedience to him. Kenneth Gentry explains, 'When one believes in Christ, he is bound to Him in an obedient, vital relationship. Commitment is an essential element in the act of believing. Faith is not merely intellectual assent.'²² Following Louis Berkhof's definition of faith, MacArthur reasons that genuine faith includes three components:

An intellectual element (*notitia*), which is the understanding of truth; an emotional element (*assensus*), which is the conviction and affirmation of truth; and a volitional element (*fiducia*), which is the determination of the will to obey truth.²³

The volitional element implies that 'Obedience is the inevitable manifestation of true faith'.²⁴ MacArthur is correct to conclude that any faith failing to produce obedience is 'dead' and therefore according to James insufficient for salvation (James 2:14–26).²⁵ However, his assertion that 'Obedience is ... an integral part of saving faith'²⁶ blurs the distinction between faith and obedience. His further claim that 'faith encompasses obedience'²⁷ is clearly in conflict with Paul's point that we are justified by grace through faith—not through

obedience (Romans 4:2–16). Unfortunately it is necessary here to distinguish between what MacArthur says and what he really means. His point is that the 'desire to obey' is the volitional part of faith and not obedience itself. He makes this distinction when he explains how the desire to obey can remain present in the believer even though he is disobedient:

Because we all retain vestiges of sinful flesh, no one will obey perfectly (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:10), but the desire to do the will of God will be ever present in true believers (cf. Romans 7:18).²⁸

Jonathan Edwards' concept of 'Religious Affections' offers a proper emphasis upon the volitional element of faith. For Edwards, 'true religious affections' include the inclination and will to obey God evidenced in obedience.²⁹ MacArthur echoes this when he clarifies, 'Those who believe *will* desire to obey, however imperfectly they may follow through at times. So-called "faith" in God that does not produce this yearning to submit to His will is not faith at all.'³⁰

Lordship proponents also insist on the enduring nature of true saving faith. They support this claim through the use of the present tense of the verb 'believe' (*pisteū*) indicating continuous action and the abiding quality of faith as a gift bestowed

²² Gentry, *Lord of the Saved*, p. 20.

²³ *Ibid.* See also Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939), pp. 503–505 and Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, rev. by V. D. Doerksen (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 271–3.

²⁴ MacArthur, *Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 175.

²⁵ MacArthur, 'Faith according to the Apostle James', pp. 26–28.

²⁶ MacArthur, *Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 174.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*, ed. J. M. Houston, (Portland: Multnomah, 1984), pp. 8–9.

³⁰ MacArthur, *Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 176. (his emphasis)

by God (Eph. 2:8-9).³¹ They are correct to conclude that the 'orthodox faith' of the demons (James 2:19), 'superficial faith' of the multitude (John 2:23-25), and 'temporary faith' of the rocky soil (Luke 8:13) are insufficient for salvation. However, the complex lists of ingredients Lordship advocates include in genuine faith allow little room for immature faith. For example, MacArthur offers the following definition of 'saving faith':

It clings to no cherished sins, no treasured possessions, no secret self-indulgences. It is an unconditional surrender, a willingness to do anything the Lord demands. ... It is a total abandonment of self-will, like the grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies so that it can bear much fruit (cf. John 12:24). It is an exchange of all that we are for all that Christ is. And it denotes obedience, full surrender to the lordship of Christ. Nothing less can qualify as saving faith.³²

However, Scripture is filled with examples of believers with weak faith. Even to his disciples Jesus said, 'You men of little faith' (Matt. 8:26). Faith is frequently presented in Scripture as something that grows and matures (Jam. 1:2-4). Yet Lordship proponents often fail to include this idea in their understanding of faith. MacArthur uses the example of child-like faith (Matt. 18:3) to illustrate obedient humility³³ yet how mature and full-blown can the faith of a child be? A child is often disobedient and requires the training and discipline of a loving father to bring him to maturity. MacArthur asserts,

'Faith obeys. Unbelief rebels. ... There is no middle ground.'³⁴ Yet examples abound throughout Scripture of genuine faith mixed with unbelief. The genuine faith of the Israelites departing from Egypt (Exod. 4:30-31; 14:30-31; cf. Heb. 11:29) is confirmed both by their worship (Exod. 15:1-18) and by their obedience (Exod. 12:28, 50) yet they were still guilty of rebellion (Num. 14:9; Deut. 9:23-24) and unbelief (Num. 14:11). Likewise, Moses was a man of great faith yet he committed the same sins of unbelief and rebellion (Num. 20:12, 24) thereby forfeiting his right to enter the land like the others. Unfortunately, believers often do rebel. Initial faith is always less than perfect. However, God does not leave it there. He uses the process of discipline (Heb. 12:4-13) and trials (1 Pet. 1:6-7) throughout the believer's life to bring his faith to maturity.

Repentance and Salvation

Some who oppose Lordship theology deny repentance is necessary for salvation.³⁵ Others limit the meaning of repentance to 'a change of mind' about Christ thereby making it virtu-

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 172-73.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 140.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ For example, Zane Hodges declares, 'Though genuine repentance *may* precede salvation ..., it *need not* do so. And because it is not essential to the saving transaction as such, it is in no sense a condition for that transaction' (*Absolutely Free!*, p. 146, his emphasis).

ally synonymous with faith.³⁶ Ryrie affirms both approaches when he declares, 'It is faith that saves, not repentance (unless repentance is understood as a synonym for faith or changing one's mind about Christ).'³⁷ Lordship advocates object to such a narrow definition of repentance. They define repentance as a turning to God from sin that 'involves a change of heart and purpose' inevitably resulting 'in a change of behavior'.³⁸ MacArthur explains:

Intellectually, repentance begins with a recognition of sin, understanding that we are sinners, that our sin is an affront to a holy God, and more precisely, that we are personally responsible for our own guilt. ... *Emotionally*, genuine repentance often accompanies an overwhelming sense of sorrow. ... *Volitionally*, repentance involves a change of direction, a transformation of the will.³⁹

In other words, repentance requires a willingness to forsake sin in order to obey God. Furthermore, repentance is regarded as inseparable from saving faith. MacArthur explains, 'Genuine repentance is *always* the flip side of faith; and true faith accompanies repentance.'⁴⁰

Hence, repentance is no less essential for salvation than faith and therefore must be included in the gospel message.

The Lordship understanding of repentance is essentially correct for the following reasons. First, though it is true that 'repentance' (*metanoia*) primarily means 'a change of mind',⁴¹ its use throughout the New Testament often denotes a decision to change one's behaviour (e.g., Acts 26:20; 2 Cor. 12:21; Rev. 2:21–22). Most Evangelical scholars acknowledge this understanding of repentance.⁴² However, we should be careful to remember that repentance is the decision to change our life, not the actual behaviour that results from the decision. Grudem clarifies, 'We cannot say that someone has to actually live that changed life over a period of time before repentance can be genuine, or else repentance would be turned into a kind of obedience that we could do to merit salvation for ourselves.'⁴³

Second, repentance is clearly a part of the gospel message throughout the New Testament. Jesus charged his disciples just before his ascension: 'Repentance for forgive-

³⁶ Thomas L. Constable, 'The Gospel Message', in *Walvoord: A Tribute*, ed. D. Campbell (Chicago: Moody, 1982), pp. 207–8; Livingston Blauvelt, Jr. 'Does the Bible Teach Lordship Salvation?' *Bibliotheca Sacra* 143 (Jan-Mar 1986), pp. 41–42; and Robert P. Lightner, *Sin, the Savior, and Salvation* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1991), p. 212.

³⁷ Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, p. 99.

³⁸ MacArthur, *Faith Works*, p. 88. See also Gentry, *Lord of the Saved*, pp. 46–47.

³⁹ MacArthur, *Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 164.

⁴⁰ MacArthur, *Faith Works*, pp. 90–91.

⁴¹ Frederick W. Danker, et al. eds., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), pp. 640–41.

⁴² E.g., Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987), pp. 935f; Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p. 713; Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, pp. 269–70, and Bock, 'Review', p. 28.

⁴³ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p. 713.

ness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all the nations—beginning from Jerusalem’ (Luke 24:47). Peter and Paul responded by preaching repentance to unbelievers throughout the book of Acts (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; 8:22; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20). Therefore, repentance must be preached as part of the gospel at all times to all nations.

Third, repentance is often linked with faith in the New Testament (Mark 1:15; Acts 11:17–18; 19:4; 20:21; Heb. 6:1). Though sometimes only faith is mentioned as necessary for salvation (John 3:16; 6:28–29; Acts 16:31; Rom. 10:9), other times only repentance is mentioned (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 5:31; Rom. 2:4; 2 Cor. 7:10; 2 Tim. 2:25). And often those who repent are considered believers (Acts 2:38–47; 3:19; 11:17–18). Hence, the biblical concept of repentance is no less important for salvation than faith.

Those opposed to a Lordship understanding of repentance often echo the claim of Lewis Sperry Chafer, the founder of Dallas Theological Seminary, that ‘the New Testament does not impose repentance upon the unsaved as a condition of salvation’.⁴⁴ However, most fail to understand properly Chafer’s comments in their historical context. Dallas Seminary professor, Darrel Bock explains:

What Chafer argued is that repentance alone without the positive side of faith, is

not good enough. Regret or sorrow for sin is not enough if it is not wedded to trust. When Chafer affirmed that repentance alone is inadequate for salvation, he had in mind the idea of sorrow associated with the ‘anxiety benches’ in the tent revivals of his day.⁴⁵

A true repentance tied to faith was indeed included in Chafer’s understanding, for in writing the Dallas Seminary doctrinal statement he stated, ‘We believe that the new birth of the believer comes only through faith in Christ and *that repentance is a vital part of believing*, and is in no way, in itself, a separate and independent condition of salvation.’⁴⁶

The Meaning of ‘Lord’: God or Master?

The Lordship of Christ is often tied to salvation in the New Testament. For example, ‘Every one who calls on the name of the *Lord* shall be saved’ (Acts 2:21) and ‘If you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is *Lord*”, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved’ (Romans 10:9). Lordship teachers regard such passages as indisputable evidence that salvation requires the willingness to submit to Christ as ‘sovereign master.’⁴⁷ However, opponents of Lordship salvation object, pointing to the fact that the term ‘Lord’ (*kurios*) has a variety of meanings in the New Testament

⁴⁴ Bock, ‘Review’, 29. A careful reading of Chafer confirms this (*Systematic Theology*, vol. 3, pp. 372–73).

⁴⁶ James H. Thames, ed. *Dallas Seminary 1999–2000 Catalog* (Dallas, Texas), p. 156.

⁴⁷ MacArthur, *Gospel According to Jesus*, pp. 206–10 and Gentry, *Lord of the Saved*, 59–65.

⁴⁴ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* vol. 3 (Dallas: Dallas Seminary, 1949), p. 376.

including 'God' (Acts 3:22), 'owner' (Luke 19:33), or 'sir' (John 4:11).⁴⁸ When used in passages dealing with salvation (e.g., Rom. 10:9) they claim 'Lord' functions primarily as divine title meaning 'God.' As such, 'Jesus is Lord' (1 Cor. 12:3) is a confession of Jesus Christ's deity rather a commitment to submit to his rule.
49

It is true that the divine name *Yahweh* is frequently translated 'Lord' (*kurios*) thereby providing an important proof for the deity of Christ when applied to Jesus (Acts 2:36; cf. Isaiah 40:3). This does not mean, however, that the divine meaning of 'Lord' should be distinguished from his sovereign right to rule. The deity of Christ naturally includes his authority to rule as sovereign God. Therefore, to confess 'Jesus as Lord' implicitly acknowledges his divine right to exercise dominion over one's life.

Confusion arises, however, when the question of how much submission is enough to validate the genuineness of that confession. To demand that Christ be 'Lord of all' as evidence of genuine faith diminishes the interplay between a commitment to Christ's Lordship and the life-long process of 'being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord' (2 Cor. 3:18, NIV).

⁴⁸ Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, p. 70 and idem, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), pp. 173-76.

⁴⁹ Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, p. 73 and Lightner, *Sin, the Savior, and Salvation*, p. 209.

Faith and Discipleship

Non-Lordship proponents are careful to distinguish between the gift of salvation and the cost of discipleship.⁵⁰ They insist that since discipleship requires great effort and salvation is a free gift, the two should not be confused.⁵¹ They conclude that discipleship is the responsibility of believers, not unbelievers, and therefore should not be included in the demands of the gospel.⁵² Lordship theology makes no such distinction. MacArthur asserts that 'Every Christian is a disciple' by noting that the word 'disciple' is used as a synonym for 'believer' throughout the book of Acts (6:1,2,7; 11:26; 14:20,22; 15:10). Furthermore, the goal of evangelism according to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) is to make disciples, not merely believers.⁵³ He is correct to stress that discipleship is not something to be entered into subsequent to conversion.

However, when MacArthur claims that 'The call to Christian discipleship explicitly demands ... total dedication', he fails to make the important distinction between entrance into discipleship and the process of growth within discipleship.⁵⁴ Total dedication is the goal of discipleship

⁵⁰ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Designed for Discipleship* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), pp. 11, 14.

⁵¹ Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, pp. 67-76.

⁵² Lightner, *Sin, the Savior, and Salvation*, p. 211

⁵³ MacArthur, *Gospel According to Jesus*, pp. 196f.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

and not a pre-condition for becoming a disciple. MacArthur often gives the impression that there are only committed disciples who practise total obedience to Christ.⁵⁵ Though he admits that true disciples sometimes do sin, he insists that they 'inevitably return to the Lord to receive forgiveness and cleansing'.⁵⁶

The Lordship portrait of a genuine disciple seems to ignore the biblical examples of those who did not always live lives worthy of a disciple.⁵⁷ Peter denied Christ and John Mark turned back on his first missionary journey and yet both remained true disciples. The Scriptures give other examples of poor disciples who hesitated to follow Christ (e.g., Joseph of Arimathea—John 19:38). True believers will always struggle with the demands of discipleship and therefore we should not doubt the genuineness of their faith when they do.

Assurance of Salvation

While both sides of the Lordship debate equally affirm the unconditional security of all true believers, they offer two distinct approaches to

assurance. Lordship teachers offer an assurance available to all believers based upon the promises of Scripture but conditioned upon the pursuit of holiness and the fruit of the Spirit.⁵⁸ They note that believers are commanded regularly to examine themselves (1 Cor. 11:28) to see if they are 'in the faith' (2 Cor. 13:5). 'Full assurance' (Heb. 6:11; 10:22) is, therefore, not automatic but requires diligence 'to make certain about his calling and choosing you' (2 Pet. 1:5–7). This is achieved by 'making every effort to add to your faith goodness, ... knowledge, ... self-control, ... perseverance, ... godliness, ... brotherly kindness, ... [and] love' (2 Pet. 1:10).

Some Non-Lordship proponents reject any conditions to assurance. They claim that all believers should be completely assured of their salvation beginning the moment they believe apart from any evidence of a transformed life.⁵⁹ They argue that to tie assurance to obedience is to compromise the free grace of salvation by making it partly dependent upon works. Other non-Lordship teachers emphasize that assurance is based primarily upon the promises of God's word but secondarily on the transformation of life.⁶⁰

All are correct to affirm that all true believers can immediately be assured of their salvation based upon the promises in God's word. However,

⁵⁵ In a footnote MacArthur makes mention of the 'disciple' distracted by his father's death (Matthew 8:21-22) and the 'disciples' who withdrew (John 6:66), but maintains that they were not a true Christians (Ibid., p. 196). This would indicate that in the gospels 'disciple' does not always mean a true believer. However, MacArthur is correct in asserting that Jesus' call to discipleship (e.g., 'Follow Me') was basically a call to believe in Him.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 104.

⁵⁷ Paul's repeated exhortation in his epistles 'to walk worthy of your calling' (Eph. 4:1; Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12) suggests some within those churches were not walking worthy.

⁵⁸ MacArthur, *Faith Works*, pp. 202–212.

⁵⁹ Zane Hodges, *The Gospel under Siege* (Dallas: Redecion Viva, 1981), p. 10. See also Hodges, *Absolutely Free!*, pp. 93–99.

⁶⁰ Lightner, *Sin, the Savior, and Salvation*, pp. 244–47; Rylie, *So Great Salvation*, pp. 143–44.

this might not be 'full assurance' (Heb. 6:11), namely, an assurance completely absent of any doubt. Peter clearly states that growth in obedience and the practice of the spiritual disciplines can strengthen our assurance (2 Peter 1:10-11). Believers often grow in their assurance as they experience the grace of God worked out in their lives over a period of time. Those who divorce assurance from any change of life overlook the danger of false professions. Paul warns of those who 'profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny him' (Tit. 1:16). To them the Lord will say, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you who practise lawlessness' (Matt. 7:23).

Furthermore, while 'assurance' is founded upon 'eternal security,' the two must be distinguished in meaning. On the one hand, eternal security speaks of the absolute certainty of the believer's salvation from God's perspective. Assurance, on the other hand, refers to the conscious awareness of salvation from the believer's perspective. As such 'full assurance' of salvation may not be the privilege of a believer living in deliberate disobedience to God. At the same time, to doubt the salvation of every believer who seriously struggles with disobedience in his life leaves him vulnerable to the accusing work of Satan (Rom. 8:33-32; Rev. 12:10).⁶¹

⁶¹ In counselling a doubting believer, I would use 1 John 5:13 to show him that he can know 'now' that he has eternal life based upon his profession of faith in Christ. However, I would also explain that doubts often accompany a sinful lifestyle. If he is living in sin, repentance is an effective way to remove those doubts.

The Polemic Tone of the Debate

Many points of difference in the debate have been confused by the polemic style of the leading spokesmen on both sides. Both MacArthur and Hodges are guilty of two tendencies that have overheated the discussion.⁶² The first is the creation of 'straw men' that project inaccurate caricatures of opposing views. Ryrie wisely cautions against this:

Realize that a straw man usually is not a total fabrication; it usually contains some truth, but truth that is exaggerated or distorted or incomplete. The truth element in a straw man makes it more difficult to argue against, while the distortion or incompleteness makes it easier to huff and puff and blow the man down.⁶³

Such misrepresentation limits the possibility of mutual understanding and fruitful discussion. An example of this is Hodges' gross misrepresentation of the Lordship view when he writes: 'Those who feel unable to inspire lives of obedience apart from questioning the salvation of those whom they seek to exhort, have much to learn from Paul!'⁶⁴ Such an unfair characterization overlooks the Lordship emphasis upon the confident assurance of victory rather than doubt as the primary inspiration for every Christian to obey God and overcome temptation. J. I. Packer expresses this best when he writes,

⁶² See Bock, 'Review', pp. 39-40 and Paul Schaefer, 'A Royal Battle', in *Christ the Lord: The Reformation and the Lordship*, ed. M. Horton (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), pp. 179-93.

⁶³ Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, p. 29.

⁶⁴ Hodges, *The Gospel under Siege*, p. 97.

Nobody has much heart for a fight he does not think he can win. ... But the Christian is forbidden such disastrous pessimism. God obliges him to expect success when he meets sin. For Scripture tells him that at conversion the Spirit united him to the living Christ. This was his regeneration. It made him a 'new creation' (2 Cor. 5:17), and ensured his permanent superiority in the conflict with sin.⁶⁵

A second tendency creating misunderstanding is the widespread use of rhetorical hyperbole. Both sides are guilty of frequent overstatements designed primarily for rhetorical effect. For example, MacArthur states that 'A place in the kingdom is not something to be earned'. But later on the same page when speaking of the rich young ruler he asserts, 'Christ set the price for eternal life, but he refused the terms'.⁶⁶ Such unguarded statements may grab the attention of the reader but ultimately they confuse MacArthur's position. Bock correctly summarizes MacArthur's book as 'a mixed bag of good observations and significant overstatements'.⁶⁷ The negative fallout of such rhetorical hyperbole is that in order to properly understand the different viewpoints the reader is often required to distinguish between their forceful rhetoric and what they actually mean. This not only adds needless friction to the dialogue but also blurs their true points of differences.

⁶⁵ J. I. Packer, *God's Words: Studies of Key Bible Themes* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1981), p. 185.

⁶⁶ MacArthur, *Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 146.

⁶⁷ Bock, 'Review,' p. 37.

The Carnal Christian

The term 'Carnal Christian' has become a lightning rod issue within the debate. Non-Lordship proponents explain the diversity of spiritual maturity among Christians by appealing to Paul's contrast between the 'spiritual' and 'carnal' (1 Cor. 3:1-3). For example, Ryrie declares,

There were carnal or fleshly Christians in Paul's day. ... Paul says they walk as mere men (verse 3), this is like unsaved people. That does not mean that they were in fact not believers; Paul addresses them as believers. But it *does* indicate that believers may live like unsaved people.⁶⁸

Lordship teachers strongly condemn Ryrie's notion of two categories of Christians. Anthony Hoekema warns, 'The concept of the "carnal Christian" as a separate category of believers is not only misleading but harmful'.⁶⁹ Using even stronger terms, Reisinger denounces the theory as 'one of the most perverse teachings in our generation'.⁷⁰ This conflict is rooted in two distinct models of sanctification.

*Reformed Model (Lordship View)*⁷¹

Although the believer's sanctification is perfect in Christ positionally, it is not perfect in this life experientially. After the believer accepts Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord he continues to struggle with sin and temptation. However, because of the

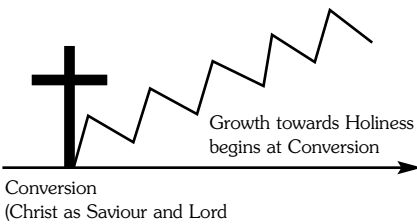
⁶⁸ Ryrie, *So Great Salvation*, p. 31.

⁶⁹ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, p. 21.

⁷⁰ Reisinger, *Lord and Christ*, p. 79.

⁷¹ Reformed theologians including B.B. Warfield, J.I. Packer, R.C. Sproul, J.R.W. Stott commonly advocate this view.

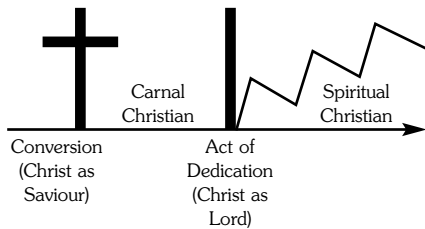
transforming effects of regeneration the believer is free from sin's dominion and will progressively grow towards greater holiness throughout his life. Through the process of sanctification the old sin nature is progressively subdued, but never entirely abolished in this life. Yet, due to his new identity in Christ and superiority over the sin nature, the believer will inevitably experience greater conformity to the image of Christ throughout his life until death.



Chaferian Model (Non-Lordship View)⁷²

The believer is positionally sanctified when he is set apart from sin to God at the moment of conversion. However, experiential sanctification often does not begin until after a subsequent act of dedication when the believer commits himself to the Lordship of Christ. This single act of dedication initiates the growth process which occurs gradually through the

counteraction of the new nature (new man) of the believer against his old nature (old man). The degree of growth is determined by the believer's yieldedness to God, confession of sin, and the practice of the spiritual disciplines empowered by the Holy Spirit. Those who do not take the step of dedication are 'carnal Christians' and fail to grow.



A comparison reveals several important differences between these two models.⁷³ First, the Reformed model expects spiritual growth immediately to spring forth following conversion while the Chaferian model allows for a delay of growth resulting in two types of Christians: spiritual and carnal. Second, the Reformed view anticipates gradual victory in the context of an ongoing struggle for all Christians while the Chaferian model stresses the need for an additional crisis of dedication necessary for 'carnal Christians' in order to break their cycle of defeat.

⁷² This label is given to the position associated with Lewis S. Chafer by Charles C. Ryrie, 'Contrasting Views on Sanctification', *Walvoord: A Tribute*, ed. D. K. Campbell (Chicago: Moody, 1982), p. 191. See also Ryrie's chart in *The Balanced Christian Life*, p. 187.

⁷³ For a comparison between the Reformed and Chaferian views see my article, 'B. B. Warfield and Lewis S. Chafer on Sanctification,' pp. 241-56.

Third, contrary to the Lordship view the Chaferian model suggests some believers may choose a life-long pattern of carnality virtually no different from the unconverted.

Lordship proponents reject the Chaferian model for the following reasons.⁷⁴ First, they claim that the idea of a carnal Christian implies 'a true believer can continue in unbroken disobedience from the moment of conversion'.⁷⁵ Such a notion is incompatible with the unfailing work of God that transforms the life of every true believer. MacArthur explains,

If ... salvation is truly a work of God, it cannot be defective. It cannot fail to impact an individual's behavior. It cannot leave his desires unchanged or his conduct unaltered. It cannot result in a fruitless life. It is the work of God and will continue steadfastly from its inception to ultimate perfection (Philippians 1:6).⁷⁶

Second, they claim that to promote a second distinct and necessary step (i.e., act of dedication) beyond conversion reveals a defective understanding of the unity of salvation. Such an emphasis drives an unhealthy wedge between justification and progressive sanctification. Third, they reject the categorization of Christians into two types as harmful because such a notion opens the way for 'depression on the part of those ... on the lower level of the Christian life, and pride on the part of those who ... have reached the

higher levels.'⁷⁷

Lordship theology is correct to reject certain aspects of the Chaferian model of 'carnal Christian'. Though Paul declared the Corinthians were 'still carnal' (1 Cor. 3:3), he did not mean that they constituted a distinct class of Christians whose lives were no different than unbelievers.⁷⁸ To divide Christians into categories of spirituality (i.e., carnal/spiritual) seems contrary to Paul's very point against making divisions in the body (1 Cor. 1:10-12; 3:4). Even the 'carnal' Corinthians were experiencing some measure of spiritual growth for Paul later includes them in his claim, 'We all ... *are being transformed* into the same image from glory to glory' (2 Cor. 3:18). To suggest that a believer can genuinely be a 'new creation' (2 Cor. 5:17) and yet remain a 'carnal Christian' with little change of character diminishes the transforming effects of regeneration.⁷⁹ Paul exhorted the Corinthian believers to grow by 'perfecting holiness in the fear of God' (2 Cor. 7:1) not to move from one level of spirituality to another.

Lordship advocates are also right to challenge the Chaferian emphasis upon a distinct act of dedication.

⁷⁷ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, p. 20.

⁷⁸ For a helpful analysis of 1 Cor. 3:1-3 see D. A. Carson, 'Reflections on Assurance', in *The Grace of God, The Bondage of the Will*, vol. 2 eds. T. R. Schreiner & B. A. Ware (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), pp. 390-93.

⁷⁹ Even Ryrie admits, 'If a believer could be characterized as carnal all his life, that does not mean that he or she is carnal in all areas of life. ... Every believer will bear some fruit' (*So Great Salvation*, pp. 31-32).

⁷⁴ MacArthur, *Gospel According to Jesus*, pp. 24-25; Gentry, *Lord of the Saved*, pp. 6-8.

⁷⁵ MacArthur, *Gospel According to Jesus*, p.

178 (footnote 22).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

According to the Chaferian model, Paul's exhortation to 'present yourselves to God as ... instruments of righteousness' (Rom. 6:13; cf. 12:1) refers to 'the initial act of recognizing the lordship of Christ and the right of the Holy Spirit to control and direct the life of a believer'.⁸⁰ John Walvoord, Charles Ryrie, and Dwight Pentecost all claim with Chafer that this dedication is 'accomplished once for all' by appealing to the aorist tense of the verb 'present'.⁸¹ However, most Greek grammarians dispute their use of the 'aorist'.⁸² Rather than a command for a once-for-all dedication of one's self to God, Paul's exhortation is better understood as a call to the continuous presentation of oneself for service in a manner similar to the repeated presentation of the free-will offerings in the Old Testa-

ment.⁸³ Many Christians experience sudden turning points that lead to dramatic changes in their lives (e.g., rediscovery of a neglected truth, greater awareness of the cost of discipleship, recovery from backsliding, unique fillings of the Holy Spirit). However, the Bible says nothing about a specific decision of commitment every believer must make subsequent to conversion to reach a new plane of Christian living categorically different from his life before.

However, the wholesale rejection of the notion of 'carnal Christians' by Lordship advocates seriously underestimates the impact of sin in the lives of believers. Paul's words to the Corinthians undeniably teach that 'carnal Christians' do exist (1 Cor. 2:14–3:3). It is true that he is not suggesting grades of spirituality; however, he does accuse the Corinthians of immature and fleshly behaviour (3:1–3). His point is that

⁸⁰ John F. Walvoord, 'The Augustinian–Dispensational Perspective', in *Five Views on Sanctification* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), p. 218.

⁸¹ John F. Walvoord, *The Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), p. 197; Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life*, pp. 79, 187; Dwight Pentecost, *Pattern for Maturity* (Chicago: Moody, 1966), pp. 129–30; and Chafer, *Systematic Theology* vol. 6, pp. 254–55.

⁸² E.g., D. A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), pp. 69–72; Buist M. Fanning, *Verbal Aspect in New Testament Greek* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), pp. 359–61; Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), p. 500.

⁸³ Rather than a 'one-for-all' dedication of oneself to God, the aorist active imperative 'present' (*parastēsate*) in Rom. 6:13 is best understood as an ingressive aorist expressing a command to commence or begin presenting ourselves alive to God. Hence, Romans 6:13 could be translated, 'Do not continue yielding your members to sin ..., but start presenting yourselves to God' (see Nigel Turner, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, vol. 3 [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963], pp. 74, 76). Its force is similar to the aorist active infinitive 'to present' (*parastēsai*) in 2 Tim. 2:15, 'Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth.' Compare this with the same form of the word (aorist active infinitive) used in Romans 12:1, 'I urge you ... to present (*parastēsai*) your bodies a living and holy sacrifice.' In each case the ingressive idea of beginning an ongoing process fits well the context (Fanning, *Verbal Aspect*, pp. 359–61).

though they had 'received ... the Spirit' (2:12) he 'could not speak to [them] as spiritual men' (3:1) because they were 'walking like mere men' (3:3). They had the Spirit but they were thinking and living like those who did not.

That their carnal condition had continued for a long while is indicated by Paul's regret that they were 'yet unable to receive' solid food (3:2) and were 'still fleshly' (3:3). How long could they stay carnal? Long enough to 'suffer loss' at the judgment seat of Christ and yet 'be saved ... as through fire' (3:15). Every believer will evidence some growth during his lifetime, yet that does not preclude the possibility that after conversion he may enter into a state of carnality that continues for an extended period, even to the end of his life. A notable example of this is Lot. In the Old Testament Lot is always portrayed as a selfish, compromising individual. Ryrie ably explains:

If we had only the Old Testament record concerning Lot we would seriously question his spiritual relation to God. But the New Testament declares that he was a righteous man in God's sight even when he was living in Sodom (2 Peter 2:7-8 where the word *righteous*, translated 'just' in v. 7, is used three times of Lot). So here is a man whose lifelong rejection of the sovereignty of God over his life did not prevent him from being righteous in God's sight.⁸⁴

Therefore, it is critical for all who hold to 'Lordship salvation' to account for extended periods of disobedience in the life of the believer.

⁸⁴ Ryrie, *Balancing the Christian Life* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), p. 173.

Another serious omission in Lordship theology relates to the issue of the 'sin unto death' (1 John 5:16). The Bible is clear that disobedience in the life of the Christian will not go unnoticed by God. Hebrews 12:5-11 teaches that the Lord will always discipline those who truly belong to him. Furthermore, divine discipline can ultimately result in the loss of physical life. According to 1 John 5:16, it is possible for a believer to commit a 'sin unto death' which due to God's judgment results in the loss of physical life.⁸⁵ In the Old Testament we have the example of the Exodus generation who rebelled at Kadesh Barnea. With the exception of Joshua and Caleb, they all died in the wilderness (Duet. 2:14) including Moses and Aaron.⁸⁶

This kind of temporal judgement which ultimately leads to physical death is also mentioned several times by the apostle Paul. He speaks of delivering certain ones within the church over to Satan 'for the destruction of [their] flesh' in order that their 'spirit may be saved' (1 Cor. 5:5; cf. 1 Tim. 1:20). Also due to their disregard for the Lord's table, we are told that in the Corinthian church 'a number sleep' (1 Cor. 11:30). Indeed, God may judge a sinning

⁸⁵ W. Robert Cook, *The Theology of John* (Chicago: Moody, 1979), pp. 138-39.

⁸⁶ Regarding the redeemed status of the Exodus generation (Exod. 4:31; 12:27, 50; 14:30-31; cf. Heb. 11:29) and the relationship between their sin/judgment and Moses and Aaron's offence (Num. 20:12) see my article, 'The Old Testament Background of Rest in Hebrews 3:7-4:11,' *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 157 (July-Sept 2000), pp. 288-94.

Christian with physical death as a result of falling into a state of disobedience. This condition is so contrary to the believer's status as a 'new creature' that the Lord removes such a one from the earth in order to prevent the continuation of such a state.

The severe warnings against Christians living in disobedience indicate that it is indeed possible for a believer to be in this condition. However, MacArthur ignores all these facts with his insistence that the mark of a true disciple is 'that when he does sin he *inevitably returns* to the Lord to receive forgiveness and cleansing'.⁸⁷ If such was truly the case, the Lord would never have made provision for 'the sin unto death'.

Lordship advocates are correct to be concerned about the serious problem of false profession within the church today. However, their solution to this problem is flawed by overstatements and an inadequate account of sin in the life of the believer. Repentance, discipleship, and a willingness to obey are each a vital part of the gospel presentation. However, none require an exhaustive understanding of all that the Lord demands in order to be genuine. Furthermore, no matter how clearly the gospel is presented, false profession can never be totally avoided, for 'Even Jesus had a Judas.'⁸⁸

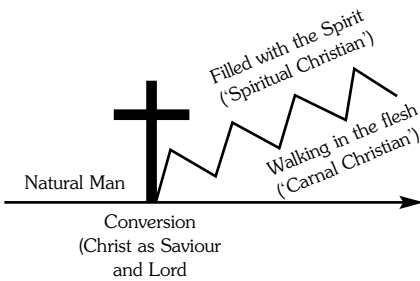
An Alternative to the Lordship Controversy

In his booklet entitled *Have you made the wonderful discovery of the Spirit-filled life?* Dr Bright offers a needed alternative between the two-stage spirituality of the non-Lordship model and the denial of Christian carnality by Lordship theology. Dr Bright's concept of the carnal Christian fits well Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. 3:1-3. Never does he state that carnality is a stage that many will pass through before achieving spiritual victory. His distinction between Christians refers to two different spiritual conditions, not sequential categories or stages. His explanation of how to be filled with the Spirit contains no reference to a once-for-all act of dedication that initiates the believer into the category of 'spiritual man.' His description of 'spiritual breathing' clearly indicates he is speaking of a life-long spiritual discipline not a once-for-all crisis experience. He calls believers not to 'breathe' just once but rather to daily practise personal confession and Spirit-filling. Furthermore, he acknowledges the danger of false profession when he warns, 'The individual who professes to be a Christian but who continues to practice sin, should realize that he may not be a Christian at all, according to 1 John 2:3; 3:6-9; Ephesians 5:5.' When Lordship proponents object to the Holy Spirit booklet they are primarily rejecting the Chaferian view of the 'carnal Christian' and not an accurate understanding of Dr Bright's teaching on the Spirit-filled

⁸⁷ MacArthur, *Gospel According to Jesus*, p. 104. (my emphasis)

⁸⁸ Bock, 'Review,' p. 38.

life.⁸⁹



In *The Four Spiritual Laws* booklet Bill Bright clearly makes Lordship a part of coming to Christ. He explains that 'it is not enough just to know [the first] three laws' (i.e., the facts of the Gospel). Law four declares, 'We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord ... as an act of the will.' In this booklet he presents only two of the three circles: the natural man with Christ outside and self on the throne and the spiritual man with Christ on the throne. Thus the invitation to sinners is clearly to become the spiritual man with Christ on the throne directing all the interests of one's life. This is repeated in the prayer of invitation, 'I ... receive You as my Saviour and Lord. ... Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.' Bright considers the request to 'take control' and 'make me the kind of person You want me to be' a necessary part of the prayer of faith. Here Bright expresses agreement with

Lordship proponents that insist a 'willingness' to obey and submit to Christ must be part of the initial act of saving faith. Nowhere in the booklet does he either blur the distinction between faith and obedience or suggest that a commitment to Christ's saving work apart for a willingness to obey is sufficient.

Regarding the genuineness of my decision to accept Christ at the age five, I have come to realize that child-like faith is truly all that God requires of us to be born again. As I look back at those earlier years there were signs of spiritual life and obedience to Christ that confirm the reality of my first decision. Recently a childhood friend shared with me a forgotten memory from the distant past. He reminded me how I had led him to Christ at the age of nine. His words confirmed to me that God was indeed graciously at work long before my dramatic teenage crisis experience. Fortunately, since that time there have been many spiritual turning points that have moved me along in my pursuit of Christ. One such milestone was my decision to work with the ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ. I thank Dr Bright for his careful and balanced statement of the biblical gospel that has left an unparalleled impact on the cause of world-evangelism for a generation. May the Lord raise up more like Dr Bright who can show us what God can do with a man wholeheartedly devoted to the Lordship of Christ.

⁸⁹ Hoekema, *Saved by Grace*, pp. 20-23; Gerstner, 'Legalism and Antinomianism', pp. 144-45; Reisinger, *Lord and Christ*, pp. 81-84.

Karl Barth's Reception in Korea: An Historical Overview

Young-Gwan Kim

Keywords: Church growth (Korea), Reformed theology, theocentric theology, Christocentric theology, Confucianism, Neo-Calvinism, Minjung theology, Sung theology, oppression, justice

During the mid-1960s and the 1970s, Korean theologians who had studied philosophy and theology under western theologians in the Reformed Protestant seminaries in Europe and North America were eager to characterize themselves as evangelical and Bible-centred, with an emphasis on the worshipping community and the maintenance of high standards of individual conduct. They emphasized both theocentric and Christocentric theology—so-called evangelical theology—by employing Karl Barth's Christocentric ecclesiology as a practical as well as a theoretical basis for Korean churches and pastors.

The reciprocal relationship between knowledge and practice, that is, the unity between theology and ethics in Barth's theological development, was helpful in promoting the rapid growth of the church in Korea. The statement, 'Knowing God is doing His will ethically and morally', became an extensively proclaimed motto by theologians and pastors in the Korean Christian community. Korean Christians accepted it without any resistance. This was because they had already been influenced by Confucianism with regard to their ethical principles of conduct as well as their religious views.

One of Barth's students in Basel, Sung-bum Yun (1916-1989), was instrumental in establishing Barth's ideas in Korea. In his work entitled *Han'gukjok Sinhak: Song ui Hae-sokhak* [The Korean Theology: The Hermeneutics of Sincerity] (1972), he has argued that a genuine Confucian-Christian dialogue and formula-

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tion of a Korean theology of Confucianism is possible by integrating the theology of Karl Barth and Neo-Confucianism. This is because Karl Barth has significantly influenced Korean Calvinist or Reformed Theology, namely Korean Presbyterianism, which was ultimately influenced by Confucianism.

Correspondingly, Heup-Young Kim (the most recent and outstanding neo-Calvinist interpreter of Karl Barth) has developed a unique relationship between Karl Barth's theology and Wang Yang-ming's confuciology of self-cultivation in his work *Wang Yang-Ming and Karl Barth: A Confucian-Christian Dialogue* (1996) for the purpose of a genuine inter-religious dialogue within a Northeast Asian context. In this work, Kim seeks to identify the affinity between Korean Christian thought and Barth's theology, and his impact on Korean Christianity, especially on the Presbyterian Church in Korea. However, Kim does not explore in any detail why and how Barth's theology was assimilated and is still influential in Korea. It is thus necessary to investigate the Korean reception of Karl Barth's theology and Confucianism in terms of its deep-rooted religious affinity with Reformed Christianity, namely Neo-Calvinism. This is because the ideas of the Reformer John Calvin have had a great influence on Korean theologians, especially those belonging to the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Tonghap), which represents over sixty percent of the Christian population. Therefore, it was natural for Karl Barth's theo-

gy, rooted in Calvin, to be well received in Korea.¹

Barth's theological impact upon Korean Christian thought has been great, but it has never been brought to the attention of the English-speaking world. For this reason, this article will sketch an historical account of the rise of Barthianism in Korea, discussing when Barth's theology was received in Korea and how Korean Christian theologians responded to it. However, this article does not argue that all Christian churches and pastors in Korea accepted Barth's theology without criticism. Rather, it explores the interpreters of Karl Barth who have taken Barth's Christ-centred principle as their theological norm and basis.

The Reception of Karl Barth's Theology in Korea in the early 20th Century

Kyung-Ok Chung, the Wesleyan scholar, was the theologian who first introduced the theology of Karl Barth to the Korean Church in the 1930s. Chung graduated from the Methodist Theological Seminary (Seoul) in 1928, where he taught as a professor of systematic theology. His Barth-related works were not published, but his small book entitled *An Exposition of the Doctrinal Statement of the Korean*

¹ See Martha Huntley, *To Start a Work: the foundations of Protestant mission in Korea, 1884-1919* (Seoul: Presbyterian Church of Korea, 1987), p. 407. For an analysis of Barth's interpretation of some aspects of Calvin's theology, see William Klempa, 'Barth as a Scholar and Interpreter of Calvin', *Calvin Studies* 7 (1994), pp. 31-50.

Methodist Church (1935) interpreted Christian doctrines according to Karl Barth's theology.² Since Chung's theological image was radical, conservative Korean theologians misunderstood Barth's theology as being too liberal and therefore unacceptable. For Chung, for instance, the Bible becomes the Word of God to us by the work of the Holy Spirit rather than being a book of God's objective revelation.

It was after 1945 that the number of disciples of Karl Barth increased on the campuses of the Methodist Theological Seminary (Seoul), the Hankuk Theological Seminary (Presbyterian Church of Korea), and the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea (Tonghap). While the Methodist interpreters of Barth's theology attempted to indigenize his Christocentric theology on the basis of Confucianism, the deep-rooted socio-cultural-religious tradition in Korea, the Presbyterian interpreters were firmly committed to Barth's Word-centred theology.³ In the 1950s, the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea began to teach the theology of Karl Barth to undergraduate theological students.

Minjung Theology and Karl Barth's Christocentrism

Barth's theology became increasingly recognized in Korea in the 1960s and 70s. Historically, the Korean Church began to see its mission through the emergence of the

students' revolutionary movement of April 19, 1960, which was directed against the corrupt Korean government. The students' revolutionary movement is called the heir to the spirit of the March First Independence Movement of 1919, and to the historical tradition of the Korean Christians' struggle for freedom and human rights. In 1962, the members of the Korean National Council of Churches (KNCC) and 204 Korean Christian leaders issued a statement urging the military government to hand over its political power to civilians as follows:

We resist all forms of dictatorship, injustice, irregularities and corruption. We reject the impure influence of foreign powers on all aspects of economic, culture, ethics and politics. We resolve to make a contribution to the historical development of our country with prayer and service led by the power of the Holy Spirit.⁴

Subsequently, 'The Korean Christian Declaration of 1973' shows clearly the awakening of the Korean Church's socio-political responsibility:

Jesus the Messiah, our Lord, lived and dwelt among the oppressed, poverty-stricken, and sick in Judea. He boldly confronted Pontius Pilate, a representative of the Roman Empire, and he was crucified while witnessing to the truth. He

² For Chung's other works, see Kyung-ok Chung, *Naneu Eirokae Salalda, Naneu Eirokae Whachul da* [I Lived and Proclaimed] (Seoul: Kohyung Suewon, 1982).

³ For details on the rise of Barthianism in Korea in the 1930s and the 1940s, see Chang-sik Lee, 'A Historical Review of Theological Thought for the Last One Century in Korea', *East Asia Journal of Theology* 3/2 (1985): pp. 321-326.

⁴ Chai-yong Choo, 'A Brief Sketch of a Korean Christian History from the Minjung Perspective', in *Minjung Theology: People as the Subjects of History*, ed. Yong-bock Kim (Singapore: The Commission on Theological Concerns, The Christian Conference of Asia, 1981), p. 75.

has risen from the dead, releasing the power to transform and set the people free. We resolve that we will follow the footsteps of our Lord, living among our oppressed and poor people, standing against political oppression, and participating in the transformation of history, for this is the only way to the Messianic Kingdom.⁵

'The Declaration of Human Rights in Korea' by the KNCC and 'The Declaration of Conscience' by Bishop Daniel Tji were made in 1974. Sixty-six leaders of various churches and seminaries signed 'The Theological Statement of Korean Christians'. Twelve church leaders also signed 'The Declaration for the Restoration of Democracy'.⁶

These statements of the 1960s, and 1970s, clearly manifest Korean Christianity's vision of the church's mission as being for, and of, the people who were oppressed by poverty, as well as those oppressed by dictatorship. The late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed a remarkable rise of Barthianism in Korea. Moreover, Minjung theology took shape in this period against the background of the politically oppressive and dictatorial Park regime in South Korea and the economic deprivation of urban workers and rural peasants there.

Minjung is a Korean word with its root in the Chinese characters for 'Min' and 'Jung'. The former means 'people' and the latter refers to the term 'the mass'. Thus 'Minjung'

means 'the mass of the people, or mass, or just the people, or the common people'.⁷ It should be noted, however, that both words can be carefully defined within the Korean political as well as economic context. That is to say that Minjung theologians do not use both terms 'people' and 'the mass' in the same way as Marxists use them. Thus, the term 'people' is not a political expression, and 'the mass' does not refer to the proletariat in the political sense. The term Minjung is therefore a rather general term which refers to 'the people of God' or 'the mass of oppressed people' in Korean society according to their Christian experiences in the political struggle for justice both in the past and present. After all, Minjung theology is 'an accumulation and articulation of theological reflections on the political experiences of Christian students, labourers, the press, professors, farmers, writers, and intellectuals as well as the theologians in Korea in the 1970s'.⁸

For Minjung theologians, the church as community is an event. This is because Jesus Christ exists as the friend or head of his people in accordance with Barth's fundamental doctrinal affirmation of Jesus Christ as the head of his community. Barth, as well as Minjung theologians, began their theological work in the midst of a host of controversial

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Further details on this theological trend in Korea can be found in Taik-poo Chun, *The History of Christian Development in Korea* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1985).

⁷ David Kwang-sun Suh, 'Minjung and Theology in Korea: A Biographical Sketch of an Asian Theological Consultation', in *Minjung Theology*, pp. 17-18.

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 18.

political and theological concerns.⁹ Barth held that the persecution of the Christian church was inevitable. He provides examples by citing political, state-religions, and anti-God movements during the times of such leaders as Nero, Diocletian, Louis XIV, and Adolf Hitler. For Barth, they are evidence of the continual political oppression that Christians have suffered.¹⁰ Minjung theologians also see the Christian community as 'the people' who are persecuted and oppressed either by political dictators, or economically by the bourgeoisie.

Minjung theology was therefore inspired by Karl Barth's socio-political concern for the poor and oppressed, and Latin American theology of liberation. Barth argued that the community's proclamation of the gospel summons the world to reflect on social injustice and its consequences and to alter the conditions and relationships in question. At this point, Minjung theologians shared Barth's viewpoints regarding social and political injustice as they addressed contemporary socio-political issues in Korea, such as human rights, social justice, and the political interpretation of the Bible. One may say that they were influenced by Barth and applied his theory and practice of theology to a particular

social circumstance in Korea in the 1970s.

Minjung theology is also one of the movements that has assimilated Barth's Christocentric ecclesiology into itself. Minjung theology's major themes are the person of Jesus Christ as the Lord of the community and the bringer of God's kingdom, his death and resurrection for the community and the world, and the Holy Spirit's coming at Pentecost. Basically, Minjung theologians have developed their major theological thought under the influence of contemporary western theologians. This includes such works as Jürgen Moltmann's *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in messianic dimensions*, Wolfhart Pannenberg's *Theology & the Kingdom of God*, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Christ the Center*. Karl Barth influenced all these theologians.

Minjung theologians, such as Byung-moo Ahn, Yong-bok Kim, Nam-dong Suh, and Young-sok Oh, were among those who propagated Barth's theology in Korea. But they were mainly concerned with theological indigenization, employing Barth's view of the church as a community along with the Korean concept of community and its structure. For example, Yong-bok Kim's *Korean Minjung and Christianity* (1981) represents Minjung theologians' understanding of *kongdongchae* (community) which was inspired by

⁹ See Yong-bok Kim, 'Karl Barth's Political Theology and Korean Minjung Theology', in *Korean Minjung and Christianity*, ed. Yong-bok Kim (Seoul: Hyungsung Sa, 1981), pp. 264-288.

¹⁰ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, IV/2, ed. G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1936-1969), pp. 664-665. Also cf. *ibid.*, IV/3, pp. 694, 767.

Barth's socio-political approach.¹¹

An Indigenous Theological Movement and Karl Barth's Christocentric Theology

An indigenous theological movement was established in Korea. Sung-bum Yun,¹² the best known interpreter of Barth's theology and the most influential theologian of the Methodist Church of Korea, published a book in 1967 entitled *Theology of Sung: Yellow Theology*. In this work, Yun set out a theological method of indigenization in accordance with Karl Barth's Christocentric theology and Korean Confucianism. Although Barth was opposed to all forms of syncretism, Yun argued that theological indigenization is an essential task for Christian theologians. It is an unavoidable syncretistic task in evangelizing non-Christian countries. That is, theological indigenization is a means of mission as well as of understanding other religious beliefs. Yun's other work, *Christianity and Korean Thought* (1964), deals explicitly with Barth's

perspectives on the Holy Spirit, mission, social service, and pastoral care. It suggests that ecumenism is the most essential task for the Christian community in Korea, making use of Karl Barth's Christocentric theology.

In 1968, Sung-bum Yun published an introductory book entitled *Karl Barth*. This book focused on Barth's Christocentrism, including his theology of the Word of God and ecclesiology. It has been reprinted and continues to be useful to students of theology in Korea. Yun's monumental work, *Hankuk juk Shinhak* [Korean Theology: An Interpretation of Sung] (1972) discusses further the theological method of indigenization on the basis of both Korean Confucianism and Karl Barth's theology.

Subsequently, some Methodist theologians published an important monograph in 1969, entitled *Karl Barth's Theology*. In this volume, June-Kwan Eun's article, 'Barth's Doctrine of the Church', presents Barth's ecclesiology by following his discussion of the four marks of oneness, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. Eun's four books¹³ argue that the ecumenical and the missionary tasks are an intra-ecclesiological mandate for Korean Christians. In these volumes, Eun states that

¹¹ For a further similar theological understanding regarding 'the people of God' or 'Christian community' between Minjung theologians and Karl Barth, see Byung-Mu Ahn, 'The Korean Church's Understanding of Jesus', *International Review of Mission* 74/293 (Jan, 1985): pp. 81-91.

¹² Sung-bum Yun (1916-1979) was formerly principal of the Methodist Theological Seminary, Seoul, Korea, and taught Systematic Theology there. He studied at Doshisha University, Japan, and also at Basel University, Switzerland, under Karl Barth. His major research area was the theological indigenization of the gospel of Jesus Christ, especially as an indigenous Korean Christian-Confucian theology on the basis of Karl Barth's Christ-centred ecclesiology.

¹³ *Church, Mission and Education* (Seoul: Chunmangsa, 1982), *Ecclesiology in light of Basileia and Ecclesia* (Seoul: Taehan Kidokkyu Seohae, 1998), *Practical Ecclesiology* (Seoul: Taehan Kidokkyu Seohae, 1999), and *The Witness of the Word of God* (Seoul: Sungkwan Munhwasa, 1980).

Barth's doctrine of the church can be the best theological paradigm for the accomplishment of such tasks.

It is worth noting that it was the theologically progressive or liberal theologians of the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea (Tonghap), Hankuk Theological Seminary, and Methodist Theological Seminary, who mostly accepted Karl Barth's theology. Professors from Yonsei University Faculty of Divinity, and Ehwa Woman's University School of Theology also adopted Barth's theology enthusiastically.

During the 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s, the socio-political situation in Korea was unsettled, so Korean Christianity was seriously challenged by a number of indigenous theological movements including Minjung and Sung theologies. Both Minjung and Sung theologies were regarded as radical challenges to the conservative Korean Church. Since both took Barth's theology as their theological source and norm, the most conservative Korean theologians accordingly rejected Karl Barth's theology without any scholarly debate or analysis. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, there was an anti-Barthian movement among conservative Presbyterian theologians. For example, Chul-won Suh, Professor of Systematic Theology at Chongshin (Hapdong Presbyterian) Theological Seminary, and Young-han Kim, Professor of Christian Theology at Soongsill University School of Theology, led this movement. Professor Suh strongly resisted Karl Barth's theology, particularly Barth's view of Scripture and

divine revelation.¹⁴

Karl Barth's Reception in Korea in the late 20th Century

Although both the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea, and the Methodist Theological Seminary have taught Karl Barth's theology from the late 1950s or the early 1960s, it was not until the late 1970s that the theology of Karl Barth was taught at other institutions including Ehwa Woman's University School of Theology, Yonsei University Faculty of Divinity, Hankook, Reformed, and Seoul Theological Seminaries. This was because from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s, graduates of European and North American seminaries returned to Korea and began to teach the views of contemporary theologians, including Karl Barth. These graduates include Chun-gwan Un, Dongnam Suh, Kyun-jin Kim, Chul-ha Han, Yong-bok Kim, Byung-moo Ahn, Chung-ku Park, and Myung-yong Kim. The first three are professors of Christian Theology at Yonsei University Faculty of Divinity, which has a Methodist background. The other four are professors at Hankuk Theological Seminary (progressive Presbyterian), the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea (Tonghap), and the Methodist Theological Seminary. Therefore, those who graduated

¹⁴ For some evidence of this, see Young-han Kim, *Barth eaisu Moltmann kagi* [From Barth to Moltmann] (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1982) and Chul-won Suh, 'Critique of Karl Barth's Theology', *Shinhak Jinam* 258 (Spring 1999), pp. 160-171.

from the above seminaries and Yonsei University have been enthusiastic in adopting Barth's theology, while Chongshin (Hapdong Presbyterian) Theological Seminary graduates have resisted Karl Barth's ideas. Although both the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea (Tonghap) and Chongshin (Hapdong Presbyterian) Theological Seminary are Presbyterian and are influenced by the reformer, John Calvin, the former accepts Barth's theology enthusiastically, while the latter objects to it. This is because Hapdong Presbyterians regard themselves as conservative, but Tonghap Presbyterians and the other seminaries are theologically liberal and radical. However, the major reason for rejecting Barth's theology is denominational schism and competition between Tonghap and Hapdong Presbyterians.¹⁵ The other reason might be that Tonghap Presbyterians were influenced by Princeton Seminary graduates, and Hapdong Presbyterians by Westminster Theological Seminary graduates.

The Influence of Karl Barth's Practical Theology in Korea

It was true that Barth's Christocentric ecclesiology, and his theology of the Word of God impressed many

seminary students. Once they graduated from the seminary and planted churches, they not only adopted Barth's practical theology as their exemplary model for church growth, but they were also eager to apply his ecclesiology in their pastoral ministry. Coincidentally, the mid-1970s, and the 1980s marked a period of rapid church growth and spiritual revival with an emphasis on both Word-centred evangelism and socio-political concerns. Many Korean pastors who were influenced by Barth's ecclesiology and his theology of the Word of God were involved in the organization of the Word-centred evangelical movement, namely, 'a neo-orthodox movement' in Korea. It arose in 1967 and influenced Reformed and Methodist theologians from the late 1970s on.¹⁶ Professors Bong-nam Park, Chungkoo Park, Myung-yong Kim, Kwang-sik Kim, Chul-ha Han,¹⁷ and Kyung-yun Chung were all active in this theological movement.

There are a number of world-renowned Presbyterian and Methodist congregations, such as Somang, Myungsung, Onnuri, and

¹⁵ For a historical background of the denominational conflict between Tonghap and Hapdong Presbyterians in Korea, see Tail-poo Chun, *The History of Christian Development in Korea* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1985) and Seung-tae Kim, *Historical Reflection of Korean Christianity* (Seoul: Word of Press, 1994).

¹⁶ See Chul-ha Han, 'Analysis of Theological Circumstance in Korea', *Church and Theology* 2 (1966), pp. 83-97.

¹⁷ After Chul-ha Han completed his doctorate at the Union Theological Seminary in New York, he was very active in introducing Karl Barth's theology to Korea. His Barth-related works are as follows: 'An Asian Critique of Western Theology', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 7/1 (April 1983): pp. 34-47; 'Is there God outside of the Church?' *Church and Theology* 6 (1973): pp. 22-32; 'Karl Barth's Interpretation of Anselm's Theology', *ibid.*, 3 (1970): pp. 100-120; and 'Korean Theology and Church', *ibid.*, 4 (1971), pp. 46-73.

Kwanglim Church, in which Barth's Christ-centred ecclesiology are evident. These congregations stress evangelism, worship, prayer, fellowship, Bible study, social service, and foreign mission. All of the above congregations have at least 20,000 or more members and support many foreign missionaries. Significantly, the senior pastors at the above churches all graduated from the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea, and the Methodist Theological Seminary in Seoul, which principally teach the theology of Karl Barth.

To take an example, the senior pastor at Somang Presbyterian Church is the Reverend Sun-hee Kwak. He graduated from the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea, and Princeton Theological Seminary. In 1976, he encouraged his congregation to emphasize the Reformed tradition of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* and the *Larger and Shorter Catechisms*. Since he had a vision of the church being devoted to evangelism and offering biblical teaching to the members, his church concentrates on the spiritual growth of believers through prayer, Bible study, retreats at Prayer Mountain, fellowship, social concerns, and foreign mission. By 1990, its membership had expanded to 22,000, and currently it supports fifty missionaries, working in centres as diverse as isolated rural areas of Korea, Africa, Southeast Asia, South America, Russia, and China. In Korea, the Reverend Sun-hee Kwak is known as an interpreter of Barth's theology, and he is famous for his successful pastoral ministry, especially his

Christ-centred preaching, which he believes contributed directly to the rapid growth of his congregation within such a short period. He has published many books and articles that deal with ecclesiology on the basis of Calvinism and Barth's theology.¹⁸

Numerous Publications on Karl Barth's Theology in Korea

The introduction of Barth's ideas can also be traced to a Korean translation by Kwang-sik Kim of Otto Weber's *Karl Barths Kirchliche Dogmatik* in 1976. Professor Myung-yong Kim was eager to introduce Barth's theology to Korea by publishing several articles.¹⁹ Accordingly, Kim translated A. D. R. Polman's book *Karl Barth's Neo-Orthodoxy* into Korean and published it in 1981. In 1986, Professor Bong-nam Park published the book entitled *Kyueui Hak Bangbup Ron* [How to Understand Karl Barth], which introduced Karl Barth's monumental work, *Church Dogmatics*, to the Korean Church, and to theo-

¹⁸ For his understanding of Barth's theology, see Sun-hee Kwak, 'The proclamation of the Word of God and the Korean Church', *Church and Theology* 5 (1972): pp. 47-55 and idem, 'The Scripture as the Word of God: Calvin's View of Scripture', *ibid.*, 4 (1971), pp. 168-187.

¹⁹ Myung-yong Kim's thesis topic for a doctorate is 'Der Gottesbegriff Karl Barths in der heutigen Diskussion' (ThD Thesis: Tübingen University, 1985). And his published articles are 'Karl Barth's Theological Reflection on Socio-political Movements', *Kidokkyu Sasang* (Aug, 1986), 90-105 and 'Karl Barth's Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans', *Theology and Church* 20 (1988), pp. 103-133.

logical students. Since the above books have been published, Barth's theological stature in Korea has increased greatly.

From the late 1980s, Presbyterian and Methodist students have written masters' theses on Barth's theology. It should also be noted that Baptist and Seoul Theological Seminary (Evangelical Holiness) students have also submitted master's theses on Barth's theology, especially his ecclesiology. There are now more than forty masters' theses which deal extensively with Barth's ecclesiology.²⁰ The particular reason for choosing Barth's ecclesiology as the favourite thesis topic was the fact that theological students were very interested in identifying Barth's Christocentrism within the rapidly growing Reformed and evangelical churches in Korea.

The Baptists tended to be scornful of Karl Barth's theology until the late 1980s. In the early 1990s, that initial distorted attitude changed as Korean Baptist theological candidates wrote masters' theses on Barth.²¹

Although Barth's reception in Korea was mainly among Tonghap Presbyterians and the Methodists, the Evangelical Holiness Church

(Wesleyan Background) was also enthusiastic in accepting Barth's theology. In the late 1980s, Professor Shin-keun Lee took a position on the faculty of Seoul Theological Seminary and began to teach the theology of Karl Barth supported by the Evangelical Holiness Church of Korea. Lee completed his doctoral thesis entitled '*Entwicklung und Gestalt der Ekklesiologie Karl Barths*' at Tübingen University in 1987. His Barth-related works are *The Kingdom of God and Ideology* (1990) and *The Ethics of the Kingdom of God* (1991). His book, *Karl Barth's Ecclesiology* (1989), is an outstanding, comprehensive work for understanding the biblical and ecumenical character of Barth's ecclesiology. His other book, entitled *Theology and Church* (1998), emphasizes the Christian community's relationship with non-Christians in the world-occurrence, and thus it has become the well-known articulation of Barth's theology of mission. He also translated U. Dannemann's book *Theologie und Politik im Denken Karl Barths* into Korean and published it in 1991.²²

²⁰ For a fuller list of Barth-related masters' and doctoral theses by Korean theological students one can access the Korea Library Computer System, which is available at most Korean theological seminaries.

²¹ These theses were written by Baptist Theological Seminary graduates: Myung-soo Kim's 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of God' (1995); and Won-bong Lee's 'Karl Barth's Ecclesiology' (1995).

²² There are six masters' theses, which were supervised by Professor Shin-keun Lee: In-sook Hong's 'Karl Barth's Theology of Mission and His Ecclesiology' (1987); June Huh's 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of Reconciliation' (1995); Bo-kyung Kim's 'Karl Barth's Understanding of Sin' (1988); Seo-taek Oh's 'Karl Barth's Ecclesiology: An Examination of Church Dogmatics IV/1, 2, and 3' (1994); Seong-seok Park's 'Karl Barth's View of the Relationship between Church and State' (1994); Byung-hoo Soen's 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of Election' (1991); and Soon-chul Yang's 'Political Ethics in Karl Barth's Doctrine of Reconciliation' (1993).

In any case, since the 1980s convincing attempts to construct an ecclesiology emphasizing the nature of community are finally receiving attention. Barth's dynamic view of the gathering, upbuilding, and sending of the Christian community has been influential. For example, the following three masters' theses, which have been written by Presbyterian Seminary graduates, have examined Barth's ecclesiology: Jae-eun Lee's 'Karl Barth's Ecclesiology in relation to His Theology of Mission' (1993); Chul-min Kim's 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church' (1993), and Dok-man Lee's 'Karl Barth's Ecclesiology' (1992). Two other masters' theses have also commanded particular attention as exemplary works: Jung-keon Chun's 'Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church' (1993); and Young-hwan Kim's 'A Biblical Doctrine of the Church on the Basis of Karl Barth's Ecclesiology' (1994).

We might also note that a doctoral thesis was written by Eae-young Kim, a graduate of Ehwa Woman's University School of Theology. It was subsequently published in 1991 with the title *Karl Barth's Socio-Political Interpretation of the Christian Community*. Her supervisor, Soon-kyung Park, is a well-known interpreter of Barth's theology in Korea. Professor Park initially introduced U. Dannemann's work, entitled *Der Zusammenhang von Theologie und Politik im Denken*

Karl Barths (1975), to Korea in 1977.²³

All of the above writings and publications of masters' and doctoral theses are the fruit of Barth scholars' theological contribution to the Korean Christian community. Certainly, Barth's Christocentrism has influenced Korean theologians and theological students to reaffirm the ecclesiological principle, rooted in the Word of God, which has promoted the growth of the Korean Christian community. In the 1980s, the number of Barth interpreters increased dramatically in Korea.

During the 1990s, the number of Barth-related monographs and articles were numerous, so a full discussion of Barth's theology, and his ecclesiology, has occurred among Korean theologians and pastors. Some important monographs from the Korean Presbyterian perspective are Sang-young Han's *Karl Barth's Ecclesiology and His Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (1990)²⁴; Heup-young Kim's *Wang Yang-Ming and Karl Barth: A Confucian-Christian Dialogue* (1996); and Jae-jin Kim's *Die Systematische Anatomie der Theologie von Karl Barth* (1998). There are also a number of Barth-related articles and works produced by the Evangelical Holiness theo-

²³ Park's other Barth-related works are 'Socio-political Issue and Task in Christian Theology', *Shinhak Sasang* 19 (1979); 'Theory and Praxis in Communism and Christianity', *Kidokkyo Sasang* (March 1983); and 'Karl Marx and Karl Barth', *Soongshil University Research Centre for Theology and Sociology* (1988).

²⁴ In this work, Han developed Barth's theology of mission systematically and asserted that Barth's theology is biblical as well as practical.

gians. Some of their works are as follows: Keun-hwan Kang's 'Korean Church's Ecclesiological Principle on the basis of Karl Barth's Doctrine of the Church' (1991); Dok-hyung Han's 'Karl Barth's Theology and Hermeneutics' (1997); Shin-keun Lee's 'Karl Barth's Understanding of the Kingdom of God' (1994); and Chang-kyun Mok's *Theological Debate in the Twentieth Century* (1995).

Another decisive factor is that both Handeul and Taehan Kidokkyo Seohae (the Christian Literature Society) publishing companies have devoted themselves to translating books by and on Karl Barth into Korean, and they continue to publish them. Some of Taehan Kidokkyu Seohae's Korean translations and publications of Barth-related works are as follows: Karl Barth, *Homiletik: wesen und vorbereitung der predigt*, tran. In-kyu Jeong (1999); *The Humanity of God*, tran. Kyung-yun Chun (1994); *Kurze erklärung des Römerbriefes*, tran. Kyung-yun Chun (1966); Georges Casalis, *Karl Barth's Life and Theological Thought*, tran. Young Choi (1993); and Karl Barth Society in Korea, *The Word of God and Theology* (1995). Also Handel's publication is: Karl Barth, *Letzte Zeugnisse*, tran. Mee-hyun Chung (1997). One of their real accomplishments was the publication of Nam-hong Choi's translation of Karl Barth's *Der Römerbrief* (Handel Publishing Company) in 1997. This remains an important text for the study of Karl Barth's theology at most Korean theological seminaries.

Establishment of the 'Karl Barth Society' in Korea

In 1993, a few zealous, young Korean theologians who had completed their advanced degrees in theology at European, and North American universities or seminaries, organized a 'Karl Barth Society'. The leading members of the 'Karl Barth Society' in Korea are Professors Shin-kun Lee, Kwang-sik Kim, Kyun-jin Kim, Jong-ho Choi, Myung-yong Kim, Mee-hyun Jeong, and Young-sok Oh. There are also many members of this society who graduated from the Presbyterian Seminary of Korea, the Methodist Theological Seminary, Hankuk Theological Seminary, and Seoul Theological Seminaries. Kyun-jin Kim, Professor of Christian Theology at Yonsei University School of Theology, is presently a leading figure in the 'Karl Barth Society' in Korea. This society has cultivated the seeds sown in the Korean neo-orthodox movement of the 1970s and 1980s in Korea. Its major activity has been to organize a 'Karl Barth Colloquium' semi-annually and to sponsor other seminars. The annual publication of Barth-related articles and monographs is also one of their activities. The Korean translation of the first volume of *Church Dogmatics* is being produced by Young-sok Oh, a Professor of Systematic Theology at Hankuk Theological Seminary. Other members of the 'Karl Barth Society' are also working on Korean translations of other volumes of Barth's *Church Dogmatics*.

The 1990s have witnessed a widespread and positive reception of Karl

Barth's theology in Korea. It is worthy of note that Professor Shin-keun Lee, one of the leading members of 'Karl Barth Society', subsequently organized another branch of the 'Karl Barth Society' in Bucheon, Kyunggi Province, Korea, called 'Hankuk Shinhak YunKu So' (The Research Centre for the Studies of Contemporary Theology). The main purpose of this research centre is to publish a large number of Barth-related monographs, pamphlets, and articles. Professor Lee, chair of this centre, published a Korean translation of Barth's *Theology and Church* in 1998 and of Ulrich Danemann's *Theologie und politik im denken Karl Barths* in 1991.

Conclusion

Since many Korean interpreters of Barth's theology have written and published so extensively, Karl Barth is known as 'a father of neo-orthodox theology' or 'a father of dialectical theology'.²⁵ Barth's theology is generally regarded as basic for the understanding of contemporary theology in Korea. His Christocentric doctrine of the Church as the Christian community still commands attention. His perspective on the

nature and mission of the church is particularly significant for the contemporary ecclesiological situation in Korea. Therefore, the theological contributions of the members of the 'Karl Barth Society' are marked by a theological passion for the primacy of God, of Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. This has exerted a noteworthy impact upon a new generation of theological students in Korea.

Having given a specific overview of the Korean reception of Karl Barth's theology, we have recognized that Barth, for the Korean Christian community, is remembered as 'a father of neo-orthodox theology' or 'a father of dialectical theology'. Significantly, his Christocentric and community-based ecclesiology continues to make an impact on the contemporary Korean church's theology and practice.

²⁵ The Karl Barth Society, preface to *The Word of God and Theology* (Seoul: The Christian Literature Society, 1995). As we have observed, Barth's theological impact upon Korean theologians is not confined to Presbyterians and Methodists, but is also found among the Baptists and the Evangelical Holiness Church. For theological trends in Korea in the 1990s and Korean theologians' understanding of Barth's theology, see Yong-kyu Park, 'The Birth of Korean Evangelicalism', *Shinhak Jinam* 65/3 (Fall 1998), pp. 270-303.

Books Reviewed

Reviewed by David Parker
Stanley J. Grenz
*Renewing the center: evangelical
theology in a post-theological era*

Reviewed by Gordon Preece
James C. Peterson
*Genetic Turning Points: The
Ethics Of Human Genetic
Intervention*

Reviewed by Robert J. Vajko
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David Spencer (eds)
*The Global God: Multicultural
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Reviewed by Max Davidson
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Contemporary Theologies*

Reviewed by Fernando A. Gros
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Book Reviews

ERT (2003) 27-1, 86-89

0144-8153

**Renewing the center:
evangelical theology in a post-
theological era**

Stanley J. Grenz
Grand Rapids: Bridgepoint/Baker
Academic, 2000
ISBN 0-8010-2239-8
Hb 366pp indexes

Reviewed by David Parker,

*Editor, Evangelical Review of
Theology*

Readers of Dr Stanley J. Grenz' earlier books, especially *Revisioning Evangelical Theology* (1993—see ERT 23/3 Jul 1999, 280-3) and *A*

Primer on Postmodernism (1996—ERT 21/3 Jul 1997, 271-4) need to read this volume which the author describes as 'a watershed' representing a 'distillation of my work in recent years'.

It contains some ideas presented in various forms elsewhere but here brought together in an integrated argument for his vision of 'evangelical theology in a post-theological era' i.e., in a post-foundationalist and post-rationalist era which needs a new understanding of the nature of evangelicalism and new formulation of its theological task in particular. The result is a rigorous, comprehensive and self-consciously evangelical essay in theological method.

The opening chapters deal histori-

cally with the emergence of 'classical evangelicalism' through the Reformation, Puritan and Pietistic eras and its development into what Grenz identifies as a gospel movement focusing on 'convertive-experimental piety'. There is further discussion of the subsequent developments, especially in North America, with the growth of the movement's interest in Scripture and theology, most notably under the influence of the Princeton Theology in the context of the rise of science, issuing in the controversies of the fundamentalist period.

This is followed by a series of valuable studies of the more recent developments focused in theologians who, reacting to the perceived deficiencies of fundamentalism, defined the 'New Evangelicalism' as a theology that sought to defend biblical orthodoxy in a more positive and socially engaging manner over against theological liberalism and popular culture. Key early figures were Carl Henry and Bernard Ramm, while those selected for study in the period of the 'expansion of neo-evangelical theology' are Millard Erickson and Clark Pinnock. Grenz brings this historical review up to date by reference to Wayne Grudem, John Sanders, David Wells and others who are working during the 'transition' of the movement when its 'demise' is threatened in a post-modern context. Key features of interest here are the move from a realist to a constructionist view of truth and the move from the grand metanarrative to local stories.

Grenz takes a positive rather than a negative approach to the challenge

of the post-modern condition, and sees evangelicalism as 'a "big tent" that encompasses a wide diversity' and not a 'monolithic entity' that requires clearly marked and defensible boundaries. So in the second half of the book, he presents his understanding of the theological task of evangelicalism in a post-foundational age. He draws insights from W. Pannenberg's coherentist approach to theology, and G. Lindberg's 'cultural-linguistic' way of 'intratextual theology'. More crucially, he refers to the Reformed epistemology (especially of Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolstertorff) in support of a (post)foundation for the theology in the believing community. This, he claims, makes the approach 'at the same time nonfoundationalist and decidedly postmodern' and 'returns theological reflection to its proper primary location within the believing community' instead of the Enlightenment ideal that put it 'in the academy'.

Thus, according to Grenz, theology is 'an intellectual enterprise by and for the Christian community' in which those 'those whom the God of the Bible has encountered in Jesus [an 'identity-producing event'] seek to understand, clarify, and delineate' their interpretative framework which is 'connected with the gospel as informed by the narrative—revealed in the Bible' of God's action. So theology is not purely '*descriptive*' but also '*prescriptive*' as 'the theologian seeks to articulate what *ought* to be the interpretative framework of the Christian community'.

From here, Grenz proceeds to out-

line the threefold 'sources' of theology (Scripture, tradition and culture) and its 'focal motifs' (Trinity, community and eschatology) which he (and co-author John R. Franke) expounded in detail in *Beyond Foundationalism* (2001 see ERT Apr 2002, 181-4)

Three further chapters deal with some key remaining issues—theology and science after the demise of realism, an evangelical theology of religions, and the important matter of evangelical ecclesiology. This then allows the author to come to the summarizing topic of 'renewing the evangelical center', or what he refers to in the terms of Hans Frei as 'generous orthodoxy' which would transcend the traditional 'liberal-evangelical dichotomy' and its modernist assumptions.

Grenz does not have in mind some kind of renewed 'Constantinian ideal' where evangelicalism dominates culture in a 'glorious uniformity' and where other voices are marginalized. Rather, he is speaking of a renewed theological centre, which 'involves restoring a particular *theological* spirit to the center of the church'. This would bring renewal to the life and worship of the church and spill over into mission, fulfilling the historic role of evangelicalism in its character of convertive piety as a renewal movement. According to Grenz, the considerations he has put forward in this book indicate that the 'pattern of church life to which evangelicals can devote their efforts' would be 'gospelized in focus', 'doctrinal in orientation', and 'catholic in vision'.

This comprehensive vision from one of evangelicalism's most productive thinkers is noteworthy for its scope and the way it draws useful insights from a wide range of sources. Another feature is its strong focus on meeting the demands of a postmodern context yet without wanting to depart from its evangelical character, although questions will be raised about the extent to which he has been successful in this, especially regarding the sense in which Scripture can still be regarded as a 'source' or 'primary voice' of theology in his scheme. While the emphasis on Scripture as the 'instrumentality of the Spirit' is true to historic evangelical principles and not dissimilar to the viewpoint of other contemporary evangelicals (such as Donald Bloesch), Grenz' use of 'speech-act theory' and similar concepts to explore a '(post)foundation for theology' will require deeper consideration.

This book carries forward and provides the theoretical underpinning for some of the author's earlier work in systematic theology, some of which at least can be developed much further (or even modified) in the light of this work. His strong views on the non-ecclesial nature of evangelicalism coupled with his communitarian emphasis raises interesting possibilities for the development of a post-modern understanding of the church.

These and many other thought provoking ideas, carefully presented as they are, suggest that perceptive readers will gain much from this book. However, it is focused mainly

on the North American scene where the fundamentalist, liberal, modernist and neo-evangelical distinctives appear in their most pronounced form. Although these movements have been widely influential globally, readers from less polarized contexts may see things differently.

The threefold vision in the final chapter of the 'shape' of a renewed evangelical centre may not seem to be all that distinctive, but the call for evangelicalism to regain its mission in a postmodern era and not be undercut by it may be the most important value of the book.

ERT (2003) 27-1, 89-91

0144-8153

Genetic Turning Points: The Ethics Of Human Genetic Intervention

James C. Peterson

Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001

ISBN-0-8028-4920-2

Paper 360pp

Reviewed by Gordon Preece,

Ridley College Centre of Applied Christian Ethics

This book reinforces a conviction I felt strongly fifteen years ago. Early in my time teaching ethics I became aware of how many of our major ethical questions are pre-empted technologically and that our theology is forever playing catch-up. Consequently I decided to do a Masters of Science and Society to address my scientific and technological ignorance. This book further helps

address that problem. It is written by someone with qualifications that bridge the gap from both ends—a researcher in genetics and now a Ph.D. and teacher in ethics, James Peterson. Peterson's aim is to address the whole wide range of interconnected ethical questions concerned with genetic issues in an accessible fashion. He focuses on professionals in the field and well-educated laypersons. No prior knowledge of genetics or ethics is assumed. It's a noble aim and a tall task. Let's see whether he succeeds.

Peterson organizes his book to address ethical questions in the order in which the technologies raising them are becoming usable. So we move from genetic research to testing to drugs and lastly surgery. This is a helpful organizing principle that enables the later chapters to build on the earlier ones and demonstrates the continuities between issues while allowing readers to pick and choose particular issues of concern. While a long book at approximately 360 pages, it is neatly divided into fifteen bite-sized chapters and has convenient summaries at the end of each.

The book introduces the topic by questioning the mythology of the Galileo-like warfare between science and theology, arguing that they have been and are largely allies. Ethical evaluation depends on an accurate grasp of scientific, particularly genetic facts. Technology and theological tradition are then examined in terms of their formative roles in human life and purpose respectively. Technologically, if you have 'a hammer in hand, everything looks like a nail'.

Such reductionism can be countered if we are particularly careful in the take-up stages of technological innovation before they develop an imperative of their own. Technology needs to be guided by the Great Commandment and a biblical theology that sees our role as imitating God's role of sustaining, restoring and improving a fallen creation, thus playing God, but within limits. Peterson's Irenaean rather than Augustinian framework helpfully allows for human junior partnership in the development of creation and opposes sloth as much as pride.

Part I, 'Genetic Research,' helpfully sets parameters for the relationship of genes and individuality and family. Because of our genetic links, informed individual choices also affect families and cannot be taken or ignored in isolation. Genetic knowledge is not neutral but has profound effects, personally and corporately. Profound issues of group consent, gene patenting of various life forms and social investment are raised and dealt with carefully. This patient building of the context is very helpful.

Part II, 'Genetic Testing,' raises the range of issues concerning genetic information for individuals and families and how we deal with it ethically. Issues of employment, insurability and privacy are profound in their social implications. The genie of genetic knowledge cannot easily be put back into the bottle.

Part III, 'Genetic Drugs...' follows a similar individual, familial, community pattern. It proposes four standards for ethical intervention: safety, genuine improvement for the recipient,

supporting an open future of real choice, and stewardly use of resources.

Part IV, 'Genetic Surgery,' examines individual major and minor/cosmetic genetic changes, all the way to human cloning, in part or whole. It then examines the vexed question of surgical changes to the family line with their heightened stakes of permanence. While generally in favour of genetic surgery for individuals in non-trivial cases and wary of family line surgery, I found Peterson's arguments for the latter a challenge. In principle, if surgery is dangerous or has unknown consequences long-term we shouldn't try it on individuals either. Standard safeguards should prevent abuse. The ethical issues are not necessarily different between individuals and families. Numbers do not change the norms. Finally, communal dangers of coercion, racism, and eugenics are tackled, as usual with thoughtfulness and fairness.

There is much that is extremely helpful in this very thorough book. It largely succeeds in its aim in an accessible and popularly illustrated way. It is however more sanguine about genetic technologies than I would be. Perhaps this is the Augustinian in me coming out. Ellul's critique of the extent to which our technologies become a totally enveloping environment or technique is not taken seriously enough I suspect, even though Ellul does not take the dominion/cultural or playing God mandate seriously enough. I was also concerned by occasional hints of dualism which sat awkwardly with Peterson's strong emphasis in

human dominion. Is such dominion just for this world as a temporary physical phase as he implies or for 'the new heavens and new earth' as well, as Scripture implies? Peterson's even-handed for-and-against approach obscured his own views somewhat. Perhaps this would make it a very good textbook. Some, however, including the evangelical body that withdrew it from its bioethics series, would not agree. Perhaps this was due to the even-handed way Peterson deals with the vexed issues of life in the womb, though I thought his conclusions were relatively conservative. Perhaps it was the generally positive view of genetic intervention Peterson expresses as one who was a practitioner. Fortunately, withdrawal from the series did not stop the publication of this excellent overview. I will certainly recommend it to my students.

ERT (2003) 27-1, 91-93

0144-8153

The Global God: Multicultural Views of God.

Edited by

Aida Besançon Spencer, and
William David Spencer
Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Books,
1998.

ISBN 0-8010-2163-4

Pb 281pp Indexes

Reviewed by Robert J. Vajko

*Adelaide College of Ministries,
South Australia.*

The editors state the purpose of this book in the introduction. The writers

of the separate chapters were asked, 'Through what attribute is God most understood in your culture and what attribute of God needs to be more fully apprehended? The point of the book is to build a global theology—a summary of how God is revealing Godself—in this transmillennial period' (p. 17).

After an introductory chapter entitled, 'The God of the Bible', the remaining nine chapters show how God is perceived in different cultures. This approach is similar to anthropologist Charles Kraft's concern for an 'ethnotheology' or a 'cross-cultural Christian theology'.

Chapters two to seven show how God is perceived from the cultural perspectives of the United States (two Anglo-American perspectives and one Hispanic perspective), the Caribbean, Africa, Nigeria, and Ghana.

The co-editor of this book, William Spencer, explains in the second chapter how power became the popular way of seeing God in the United States. And yet he wants to prove that love is 'God's central operating hermeneutical characteristic' (p. 42). It might be questioned whether love or holiness (the great triple emphasis of Isaiah's vision of God and that of Rev. 4:8) is to be the 'central operating hermeneutical' principle. The danger is to flatten all biblical data (even understood in a correct biblical theology) by proof-texting. The result is that we tend to understand God in the light of a hermeneutical principle that we have chosen on the basis of our own cultural preference. It is better to seek the balance that

comes from a fuller biblical theology following what Donald Carson calls the 'biblical plot-line'. (See the section 'The Love of God' in *The Gaging of God*, Zondervan, 1996, pp. 238-242).

In chapter three, Gretchen Hull has a more balanced approach in what she calls 'The Complementarity of God's Love and God's Righteousness'. She states, 'God's love is not a solitary attribute' (p. 66). Can we detect a certain dissonance between these two authors?

In chapter four, God is seen as 'the Stranger' from a Hispanic American perspective. Here again there is a valuable insight in our understanding God from the point of view of those who in the American culture are treated as marginal. But again the tendency to use Luke 9:58 which speaks of Jesus as understanding displaced peoples smacks of proof-texting.

In chapter five, Dieumème Noël-iste, starts his article by asking how theology and culture relate and sees three approaches. The first is what he calls an 'ideological theology' which subjugates but does not really change culture. The other extreme is a fusion between theology and culture that produces a cultural theology which does not truly respect biblical revelation. His answer is that 'the best use theology can make of culture is that of facilitator in the process of the indigenization of Christian faith' (p. 106). Noël-iste sees God as 'Transcendent but Not Remote' as over against the Caribbean tendency to see God as spatially remote and not immanent.

In chapter six, Tokunboh Adeyemo gives his view of how Africans perceive God as an 'Unapproachable God'. He states that, 'belief in a supreme deity is a prominent theme among Africans' (p. 136).

In chapter seven, Edward John Osei Bonsu speaks of God from another African (this time a Ghanaian) perspective. He points out, as other African theologians have done, that the proper appellation of religion in Africa is not animism, fetishism, or idolatry but 'African traditional religion', and the danger of syncretism between it and Christianity resulting in what African theologian Byang Kato called a Christopaganism.

In chapter eight, God is seen from a Chinese American perspective as holy and merciful. The author of this chapter pleads for a greater emphasis on the latter while not forgetting the former of these two attributes of God. In chapter nine, the author deals with how the Chinese names for God lead to conceptions and misconceptions.

The final two chapters deal with God from a Korean and a Korean North American perspective. The latter in the last chapter reveals how the American culture warps the balanced biblical view of God. This procedure shows how this book is rich in what might be called blended or hyphenated cultural perspectives. A Chinese American or a Korean American have perspectives that a mono-cultural person does not have.

Overall, this book is a gold mine of cultural insights showing how we need to see God from what anthro-

pologists call an 'etic' (outside of our culture) and an 'emic' (from within our culture) perspective. This work also shows how easily we move towards texts that relate to our cultural setting, resulting in a certain reductionism. Also there is a challenge for us to be more related to the Bible's theological story in our understanding of God whatever our cultural setting might be. This book is a stepping-stone to help us build a more cross-cultural theology. This reviewer sees the possibility of using this book as a primer in cross-cultural theology starting with theology understood as the study of God himself. It can also be a case-book for students to seek to contextualise without compromise. We are faced in each chapter with the text-context tension.

ERT (2003) 27-1, 93-95

0144-8153

**Fortress Introduction to
Contemporary Theologies**

by Ed. L. Miller and Stanley J.
Grenz

Fortress: Minneapolis, MI, 1998
ISBN 0-8006-2981-7
x + 246pp Pb. Index.

*Reviewed by Max Davidson,
Morling College, Sydney
Australia*

For many evangelicals, twentieth century theologies often constitute a maze that seems both daunting and dangerous. It seems daunting because the underlying presuppositions typically differ significantly

from those held by evangelicals, and dangerous because of the theological ideas involved.

So it is pleasing to find a small book such as this. Miller and Grenz have been able to write in an understandable style, achieve remarkably fair and succinct summaries of the theologies they have selected, and offer helpful evaluations of some key issues. The authors are both from North America. Ed Miller is Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Colorado, Boulder, USA, while Stanley Grenz teaches at Carey Theological College, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

The word 'contemporary' in the title refers to the period from the present back to the break in 1920, through Karl Barth, with the 'old' liberal theology of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The plural 'theologies' indicates the diversity of approaches theologians have taken in the last eight decades.

Each of the thirteen chapters discusses a different theology and most commonly, one of its major exponents. Various biographical cameos add interest and help the reader understand important influences in the theologians' lives. At the conclusion of each chapter there is a brief but helpful evaluative section, written from an evangelical perspective.

In dealing with the theologies associated with Karl Barth, Reinhold and H. Richard Niebuhr, Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, as well as the Death of God theologies, the authors traverse familiar territory. The book then dis-

cusses Process Theology, Moltmann's 'hope in the midst of suffering', the importance of reason in Wolfhart Pannenberg, Liberation Theology, Rosemary Radford Ruether's Feminist Theology, the pluralism championed by John Hick, and finally, Postliberalism and Narrative Theology.

Readers will find the earlier chapters of interest because of the important background they provide for understanding the more recent theological perspectives. However, the last four chapters are of particular relevance in that each concerns an aspect of theology at a cutting edge of the present-day theological scene. With Liberation Theology, the very nature of salvation and the kingdom of God are in focus in a world all too familiar with poverty and oppression. Miller and Grenz rightly identify links and similarities between Liberation Theology and Feminist Theology. The status and roles of women in society and church are critical issues in many parts of the world today. Finally, the questions of whether or not Jesus is the only Saviour, and whether people must actually respond to the Christian gospel in order to be saved, are currently matters of hot debate amongst evangelicals.

The book does suffer from the vast scope of the task it sets itself. In many respects it does admirably, but the pressure to be concise means inevitably that readers will wish for more explanation of some of the concepts important to the various theologians. To write about the work of a theologian often demands entry

into a special conceptual framework with its own technical language that the theologian takes hundreds of pages to develop. Miller and Grenz deal with each theology and theologian in a mere fifteen pages or so. While there are many helpful explanations of theological terms, there will also be gaps for many readers. For example, in relation to the atonement, 'exclusive' and 'inclusive' substitution are passed over with little clarification. The book's usefulness would be increased if a brief glossary were included at the end, so that readers who desired succinct definitions could find them as necessary.

Another problem with this type of book is the fact that it inevitably operates essentially at the second-hand level. The general approach has to be by summary and this is never an adequate substitute for first-hand acquaintance with the primary sources. However, to the credit of Miller and Grenz, their work is extensively referenced to the theologians' own writings, so those wanting to go further can do so.

One annoying defect in this edition is the presence of several typographical errors. For example, p. 20 has 'though' for 'through', while p. 115 has 'Moltmann professor declares'. The book's North American origin is obvious in the phrase 'this side of the Atlantic' (pp. 25-26) and in the mention of Babe Ruth, 'home runs' and 'struck out' (p. 47), without any mention that the reference is to American baseball.

Overall, this is an interesting and useful book for theological students

and for Christians in general who want to gain some insight into twentieth century theologies and theologians. It is both an introduction and an invitation to firsthand acquaintance with these theologians.

ERT (2003) 27-1, 95-96

0144-8153

Cities of God

Graham Ward

London: Routledge, 2001

ISBN 0-415-20256-6

314 PB

*Fernando A. Gros, King's College
London*

The city has always been a rich and important source for theological reflection. Graham Ward's *Cities of God* (a clear yet playful allusion to Augustine's *City of God*) represents a recent attempt at a contemporary theology of the city. One of the main protagonists of 'Radical Orthodoxy' (along with John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock), Ward here attempts a critique of the contemporary city considering how the church can locate and embody itself within this milieu. Simultaneously sophisticated and polemical, this touches upon many important aspects of urban theology, yet remains unconvincing in its conclusions.

The book presents itself in three parts, beginning with a treatment of the nature of the city, considering the biblical accounts, theological reflections upon the city and the secularisation of the city. The book then moves to an extended discussion of what Ward calls an 'analogical world-

view.' Finally, the book turns to consider the 'theology and practices of contemporary living.' This third section most clearly demonstrates the three critical weaknesses of *Cities of God*.

Are 'contemporary living' and urban living, the same thing? Clearly not, yet Ward conflates the two. True, contemporary life is, by and large, lived with the city in view. The city does loom large over the contemporary psyche with its central place in popular culture, providing both the setting and scene for a great deal of current film, music and television. Urban living has become a byword for being hip, chic and sophisticated (not to mention wealthy). As a recent 'Century City' exhibition at the Tate Modern gallery reminded us, most of the great art of the 20th century was inspired by the City. Moreover, the simultaneous rise of globalisation and the gentrification of western cities have given rise to a new kind of cosmopolitanism. Given all this, it seems essential to clearly articulate in a theology of the city what is unique about urban life. Harvey Cox's *The Secular City* manages this in a way that *Cities of God* fails to achieve.

Ward's reflection on living and working in Manchester is an example of this (pp. 238ff). Manchester is an interesting example of how smaller cities are becoming more international and simultaneously embodying 'decay and development'. Moreover, such cities have become tied to the global economy, having acquired a veneer of cosmopolitanism and cultural sophistication.

However, it is an error to confuse, as Ward does, cities like Manchester (which would not make any list of the top fifty key cities in the world) with global cities like New York, Tokyo, Paris or London. The latter embody mobility, cultural production and social diversity to a hyperreal extent not possible in a city like Manchester. Moreover, these cities are powerful examples not just of the effects, but also the drivers of globalisation; the simultaneous way that societies are becoming more outward and cosmopolitan and yet more local and narrow, as in the new politics of the right. This is making suburbs more complex and angst-ridden places where people desire the benefits of the city but seek to escape its anarchy and socialisation. Furthermore, the effects of these trends on those who live in the centre of these global cities is creating a new global elite, who embody a new logics of emancipation and cultural consumption. Both these trends Ward fails to adequately address.

Considering where Ward locates his reflection on the city, this limitation is not surprising. *Cities of God* locates the genesis of urban reflection around the beginning of the 20th century, with the rise of urban planning and cinematography. With regard to the latter, Ward reads a great deal of significance into Fritz

Lang's ideology of the future of the city in Metropolis. Interestingly, Ward also, early in *Cities of God*, considers the importance of Freud and although the point is not made explicitly, it also seems to connect both chronologically and conceptually. These three strands, representation, analysis and organization represent the core of Ward's approach to the city.

Such a move represents a second critical flaw, because Ward fails to take account of the much earlier developments in urban reflection by the French sociologist Charles Baudelaire and in particular the concept of the Flaneur. Baudelaire's approach was a form of urban ethnography that was sensitive to both what it meant to be embodied in the city and what such embodiment meant, by immersion in the city and attentiveness to the significance of the everyday for the flow of life.

Its third flaw is that *Cities of God* fails to connect with the rich vein of urban missiology that has arisen since *The Secular City*. This is a glaring and frustrating omission. Although *Cities of God* is not the breakthrough work its own rhetoric claims it to be, engagement with this book does raise a number of important issues for those interested in urban theology in this age of globalisation.

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, 250 S. Wacker Dr., 16th Flr., Chicago, Illinois 60606-5834 USA, E-mail: atla@atla.com, Web: www.atla.com/

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