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

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Editorial: Spiritual Leadership

WE WELCOME ANDREY Puzynin to this issue with his fascinating article on evangelicalism in 19th century Russia, where he focuses on the hermeneutics and the cultural context of Lord Radstock, an English missionary to that country. Hermeneutics is a topic of considerable importance to us, and this treatment is all the more interesting because of its geographical and historical setting.

Our second article is just as interesting but the location is now Africa and its focus is another missionary, the famous Scottish doctor, David Livingstone who was born just one hundred years ago. The story of this iconic explorer is well known but here Sas Conradie looks at his vision for 'Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation' and the benefits he saw in these for Africa. Livingstone's highly influential (although often disparaged) approach to a 'Kingdom model' is re-examined in a global context as a model for today.

From these two case studies, we can easily see that vision and leadership are always key issues. So we turn to Lebanon and Perry Shaw's study which looks at the way the early church had a fluid approach to governance and structure in response to the challenges that confronted the fulfillment of its missional vision. Through all the changes and in the face of many challenges, Shaw concludes that 'the missional-ecclesial vision of the early church shaped its governance', a lesson which is needed today as never before.

Now we can appreciate Hank Voss's challenge that we should be careful to read the Bible not merely as a literary

work deriving from another historical period (however sensitively treated) but theologically, that is, as a word from God himself. This is a practical approach, focusing on helping theological educators to equip potential church leaders to 'hear the divine voice in Scripture'.

A related theme is the subject of an article from Billy Kirstanto of Indonesia who, with the benefit of his studies in Germany, alerts us to some of the issues facing our understanding of the Bible in a postmodern world. In a technical discussion, he asserts that the Bible speaks relevantly in every age since it is the eternal Word of God, even if there are problems in contemporary culture of definition, context and relevancy.

Finally, we turn to Nigeria and hear a reminder from Benson Ohihon Igboin that the personal element is vital, even though society, organisation and tradition are also important factors. He shows that a born again person is a changed individual and that spiritual transformation is no mere psychological adjustment. Important for his own context as for the world is his observation that conversion or spiritual transformation will result in 'positive and enviable qualities in social, economic, political interaction'.

So our international team of authors reinforces the need for a comprehensive and detailed awareness of history and culture in leadership, but most of all point to the dynamic of the Word to produce lasting fruit.

Thomas Schirmacher, General Editor
David Parker, Executive Editor

Lord Radstock and the St. Petersburg Revival

Andrey P. Puzynin

This article is a section of the book, *The Tradition of the Gospel Christians: A Study of Their Identity and Theology during the Russian, Soviet, and Post-Soviet Periods* by Andrey P. Puzynin (Eugene OR: Wipf and Stock Pickwick Publications, 2011), pages 18-39, and is used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers, <http://www.wipfandstock.com>, and in association with the author. This book was reviewed in our issue of October 2012 (36:4, 372-3) by Dr Raymond J. Laird of Brisbane, Australia, who has kindly made the selection and provided this introduction which helps to set this excerpt in its context and highlights its significance for our readers.

KEYWORDS: *Revivalism, perfectionism, pietism, Biblicism, Evangelical Alliance, mysticism, prayer, adventism*

I Introduction

Biblical interpretation, theological frameworks and cultural tradition are the burdens of Dr Andrey Puzynin in his book on the study of the Gospel Christians, an evangelical group of churches birthed in a revival in Imperial Russia towards the end of nineteenth century. The agent of that movement of the Spirit of God was the Englishman, Lord Radstock, who with his background in the Open Brethren, the Keswick movement, and the Evangelical Alliance, brought a particular

nest of theological-biblical-practical emphases in his ministry among the St Petersburg elite which burst into flame in their hearts, and then spread throughout the land among all classes.

Puzynin locates those emphases in three frameworks which he describes as Puritan-Pietistic, Primitivism, and Perfectionism. As many evangelicals of our time have traversed at least part of those frameworks in smaller or greater degrees, this reviewer was of the opinion that the analysis of this representative of Anglo-American revivalism as it had developed in the eighteenth century and then took root in Russia would be of interest to the readers of (ERT) this journal.

The author's explanation of the

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historical origins and development of the numerous elements of those frameworks is instructive. In some instances these developments may be enlightening, not only of the past but of the present, both for the individual and the corporate bodies with whom we fellowship and minister.

The analysis raises some questions for readers who are heirs of that traditional bundle of elements in one way or another. It is of profit at times to ask, by what have we been shaped? What have we kept? What have we lost? How have we integrated those that remain?

II Lord Radstock's Theology

An understanding of Radstock's theological positions is important, not only because he initiated the evangelical tradition in St. Petersburg, but also because his views continued to influence the evangelical Christians of Russia for many years after his departure from Russia. Madame Chertkova, a member of the St. Petersburg evangelical group, writes: 'I am so sorry that all of us are so incapable of putting into words our devotion and gratitude to Lord Radstock, and of witnessing to the beautiful work the Lord honored him with for Russia!... Our intercourse with him lasted over thirty years and never varied in love and wise council.'¹

1. Theological Tendencies of the Time

Mark Noll provides another helpful description of the transformations that

characterized the Protestant Paradigm to which Lord Radstock belonged.² During the three centuries after the Reformation there were transformations (1) from Christian faith defined as correct doctrine towards Christian faith defined as correct living; (2) from godly order as the heart of the church's concern towards godly fellowship as a principal goal; (3) from authoritative interpretation of scripture originating with ecclesiastical elites towards lay and more democratic appropriation of the Bible; (4) from obedience towards expression; (5) from music as performed by well-trained specialists towards music as a shared expression of ordinary people; and (6) from preaching as learned discourses about God towards preaching as impassioned appeals for 'closing with Christ'.³ The tradition that was brought to Russia in 1873–74 was a result of these transformative processes that had been boiling for about three centuries in post-Reformation Europe.

Lord Radstock was neither a theologian nor an intellectual, nor did he want to be involved in any systematic or even written mode of theologizing of the sort that was typical of the evangelicals of the Reformation. Radstock breathed the air of Puritan-Pietist Christianity. His 'religion of the heart' can be properly understood against the background of the Pietistic tradition and Romanticism, whose rationality came as a reaction against the dry ra-

¹ Edward Trotter, *Lord Radstock: An Interpretation and a Record* (London-New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914), 63.

² I am referring to the Post-Reformation Paradigm of Hans Küng, *Christianity, Essence, History and Future* (London: SCM, 1984), 614–34.

³ Mark Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2003), 52.

tionalism of the Enlightenment and the scholastic dogmatism of the Reformed theologies.⁴

2. Radstock and His Theological Peers

John Kent locates Radstock in the Anglo-American revivalist tradition, alongside such people as Richard Weaver, Reginald Radcliffe, and Richard Morgan. 'All these men were committed to an aggressive evangelical way of life before the Ulster Revival in 1859. American influence mattered more than Irish, for the publication of Finney's *Lectures* in England, and James Caughey's long visit in the 1840s, helped to stimulate the group's development.'⁵

Reginald Radcliffe visited Russia in 1884 with the purpose of establishing a Russian branch of the Evangelical Alliance. Pashkov's correspondence contains several handwritten notes on Radcliffe's addresses.⁶ Radstock also shared much in common with his American revivalist peer D.L. Moody.⁷ Many similarities can be found in the

respective theological stances of these two revivalist preachers. Radstock participated in at least one revivalist meeting conducted by Moody in Britain. His answers to Moody's questions, asked for the benefit of the audience, are published in one of Moody's books.⁸ Radstock brought to Russia not only Protestant theology and forms of worship but also the evangelical sentimental hymns and music of I.D. Sankey, Moody's revivalist companion.⁹

With regard to theological convictions, Radstock also shared many commonalities with George Müller, the leader of the Open Brethren, who enjoyed international fame in the evangelical circles of the time. It is said that during his first visit to England D.L. Moody wanted to meet two people: Charles Spurgeon and George Müller.¹⁰ Müller in turn was visiting the places where Moody had preached, serving as an Apollos to the new converts of the revival.¹¹ Spurgeon invited Müller to preach in the Tabernacle Hall the same year. The arrival of Müller in

4 Ted A. Campbell, *The Religion of the Heart: A Study of European Religious Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991).

5 John Kent, *Holding the Fort: Studies in Victorian Revivalism* (London: Epworth, 1978), 101.

6 Vasilij A. Pashkov, *Col. V. A. Pashkov Papers, 1874-1909*, University of Birmingham Information Services, Special Collections Department, 2/2/13. Hereinafter to be cited as PP. See also Sharyl Corrado, *Filosofia Shuzhenia Polkownika Pashkova* (St. Petersburg: Bibliia dlia vsekh, 2005), 111.

7 James E. Findlay, *Dwight L. Moody: American Evangelist, 1837-1899* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1969), 227-61.

8 Dwight L. Moody, Dialogue III, 'Mr. Moody and Mr. Radstock: What it is to be converted', in *Sovereign Grace: Its Source, Its Nature, and its Effects* (Chicago: Bible Institute Colportage Association, 1891).

9 Mark M. McCarthy, 'Religious Conflict and Social Order in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Orthodoxy and the Protestant Challenge, 1812-1905', PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2004, 71; Nikolai Leskov, *Schism in High Society: Lord Radstock and His Followers*, trans. James Y. Muckle (Nottingham: Bramcote, 1995), 109.

10 William R. Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody, by his son* (New York: Revell, 1900), 119.

11 Arthur T. Pierson, *George Müller of Bristol* (London: James Nisbet, 1899), 248-249.

St. Petersburg in 1883 was in line with his strategy of visiting places where revival had recently taken place.

These four revivalists—Lord Radstock and Charles Spurgeon (British evangelicals), George Müller (a German Pietist and member of the British Brethren), and D.L. Moody (an American revivalist)—were the pillars on which the tradition of the Gospel Christians was established through the ministry of Radstock.¹²

3. Sources for Analyzing Radstock's Theology

There are a number of printed resources containing Radstock's addresses, making possible a reconstruction of his theological views and interpretational practices.¹³ Mark McCarthy has

recently provided a good description of Radstock's theology. However, because McCarthy's study has a historical focus, he describes Radstock's theological views without locating him on the theological map of evangelical developments in the nineteenth century or investigating his specific interpretive approaches.¹⁴ As was said earlier, McCarthy was significantly influenced by Heier's assumption of the non-denominational nature of Radstock's theology. Hans Küng's paradigmatic approach is more suitable for understanding the theological trajectory of the evangelical movement in Russia, as it provides an explanation for the clash of the paradigms.¹⁵

III The Three Frameworks of Radstock's Theology

Radstock's theological views can be located within three frameworks that appeared chronologically.¹⁶ The oldest

¹² All of these four influential evangelical figures of the nineteenth century can be located under the rubric of evangelicalism. Besides holding to the same evangelical convictions, all four of them were involved in the Keswick movement. Lord Radstock and Spurgeon were preaching from the same pulpit during evangelistic meetings (PP II/1/b/8) and attended the same Keswick meetings (McCarthy, 'Religious Conflict and Social Order', 271). Spurgeon's sermons were translated into Russian, and the early Radstockists were accused by the Orthodox of having been converted to 'the faith of Spurgeon' (PP 2/2/405). George Müller personally visited St. Petersburg in 1882 and theologically influenced the St. Petersburg Christians. See Modest M. Korff, *Am Zarenhof* (Giessen, Germany: Brunnen-Verlag, 1956), 37-38.

¹³ Granville Radstock, *Notes of Addresses* (London: J.F. Shaw 1870); Granville Radstock and Dwight L. Moody, *A Gospel Dialogue between Mr. D.L. Moody and Lord Radstock* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1884); Lord Radstock, 'The Christian, Who and What is He'

in *Blackheath Conference* (London: J. F. Shaw, 1883); Granville Radstock, *Separated unto God and a Living Sacrifice: Two Addresses by Lord Radstock* (Glasgow: Publishing House, 1884); Leskov included two sermons of Radstock delivered in Russia in 1874. See Leskov, *Schism*, 75-88.

¹⁴ McCarthy, 'Religious Conflict', 62-76.

¹⁵ Küng does not mention in his thorough study the evangelical revival in Russia but focuses primarily on Russian Orthodoxy.

¹⁶ Noll, *Rise of Evangelicalism*, 50-65. The frameworks are derived rather arbitrarily from Noll's discussion of the antecedents of evangelicalism which he identifies as: Puritan, Continental Pietist, and High-Church Spirituality. Noll points out that the crucial spiritual emphasis of the High-Church was its stress on 'primitive Christianity' (p. 66). However, it seems more logical to consider 'Primitivism'

and broadest framework can be described as 'Puritan-Pietistic', because the main theological themes of his addresses grew out of these two Protestant movements that influenced each other. The label 'Puritan-Pietistic' is used here to denote the following features that grew out of the Continental and British Protestant paradigm of the preceding centuries: Biblicism, Christocentrism, salvation by grace through faith alone, an accent on personal religious experience and sincere moral conduct, active faith, and simple church services.¹⁷

The next framework that appeared and grew out of the Pietistic-Puritan tradition in Britain in the nineteenth century can be called Primitivism, which was characterized by its charismatic nature, its revivalism in light of the impending return of Christ, its evangelical ecumenism, and its sacramentalism.¹⁸ And finally, the most

recent framework that played a prominent role in Radstock's interpretation of Biblical texts was that of Perfectionism, which grew out of the Wesleyan movement and the Anglo-American revivalist tradition.¹⁹

1. The Puritan-Pietistic Framework²⁰

Heier argues that from the point of view of religious practice, Lord Radstock's religious activity could be linked with Wesley and his successors in early Methodism: 'What he offered was a spiritual faith in opposition to the worldliness of the Established Church. His greatest desire was the reading and interpretation of the Gospel through which an intensification of faith was to be achieved and, as a consequence, salvation.'²¹

Radstock's connection with Methodism should be limited to its broad pietistic component and to Wesleyan teaching on assurance of salvation.

as a separate framework characteristic of the Victorian era, as suggested by Horton Davies (f.n. 88 below). Noll also states that the second legacy of the High-Church was establishing religious societies promoting personal piety and doing good among the people as a whole (p. 67). This legacy was part of Radstock's ministry in Russia, because within one year after his first visit to Russia in 1873 his followers started the Society for the Encouragement of Spiritual and Moral Reading (SESMR) that was patterned after the British SPCK. The first book published by SESMR was John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan was an influential Puritan writer of the seventeenth century.

¹⁷ Enger, Trond, 'Pietism', in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, eds A. Hastings, A. Mason, and H. Pyper (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 539–41.

¹⁸ Horton Davies, *Worship and Theology in England: From Newman to Martineau, 1850-*

1900 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962), 139–43. Davies includes the following movements under the label of Primitivism: the Primitive Methodists (1812), the Plymouth Brethren (1827–1830), the Catholic Apostolic Church (1835), the Disciples of Christ (founded in 1833 and established in Britain in 1843), and the Salvation Army (1865–1879).

¹⁹ See Benjamin B. Warfield, *Perfectionism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980).

²⁰ This framework can be viewed as a meso-paradigm within the Protestant paradigm (Paradigm 4 of Küng). Küng, *Christianity*, 614–44.

²¹ Edmund Heier, *Religious Schism in the Russian Aristocracy, 1860-1900: Radstockism and Pashkovism* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), 32–33.

James Muckle is correct in saying that Radstock lacked the sophisticated theology of Wesley, which accommodated reason and tradition alongside experience and scripture as sources for Christian theologizing.²² Radstock was more similar to Primitivist Methodists than to Wesley.²³

Self-taught denominational Russian historian V.A. Popov suggests that the backdrop for the evangelical revival was German Pietism through the medium of the Evangelical Alliance.²⁴ Even though the impact of German Pietism on British evangelicalism through the medium of the Evangelical Alliance is not substantiated by evidence in his study, Popov's intuition is correct in principle.²⁵ Mark Noll has recently pointed out the mutual influence that existed between English Puritanism and German Pietism.²⁶

The compatibility of the two traditions can be observed in the biography of George Müller of Bristol, one of the most influential theological teachers of the Open Brethren, who visited St. Petersburg in 1882–83 after Radstock's departure. Müller had been a student in Halle, the centre of German Pietism, and his original impetus to start an orphanage in Bristol came from the ex-

ample of the father of German Pietism, August Franke.²⁷ It seems to have been no problem for young Müller to integrate his Pietistic Lutheran heritage with the newly developing Brethren movement, inspired by Müller's brother-in-law Anthony Groves from within the Anglican Church, years before the Evangelical Alliance came into existence.²⁸ Radstock can safely be located within this broad Puritan-Pietistic frame of theological reference.

a) Biblicism

Radstock believed in the verbal inspiration of scripture, as did all evangelicals of his time. 'Faith in the Bible was to the early evangelicals as fundamental as faith in God, and they made little distinction between the two.'²⁹ Radstock states:

While many are doubting the Inspiration of Holy Scripture, multitudes in many lands have, for eighteen hundred years, found by experience that in proportion as they are obedient to the Divine Revelation, not one jot or tittle has failed of the promises of God to those who believe His Word.... His teachings present the most perfect ideals known to the human race, and His Spirit is the one power by which corrupt humanity can be regenerated and changed

22 James Y. Muckle, 'Afterword', in Nikolai Leskov, *Schism*, 113.

23 Kent, *Holding the Fort*, 38–70.

24 V.A. Popov, 'Evangel'skie Khristiane-Pashkovtsy', Online: http://odessasem.com/publishing/bogomyslie_07_04.html; accessed 4 April, 2006.

25 The first meeting of the Evangelical Alliance was held in London in 1846. See Harold W. Fuller, *People of the Mandate* (London: Paternoster, 1996), 1–40.

26 Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism*, 53.

27 Pierson, *George Müller of Bristol*, 15–62.

28 George Müller, *Autobiography of George Müller* (London: J. Nisbet, 1906), 20–33. See also Robert B. Dann, *Father of Faith Missions: The Life and Times of Anthony Norris Groves* (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2004).

29 Willis B. Glover, *Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism* (London: Independent, 1954), 16.

into the Divine Image from glory to glory.³⁰

Radstock was a person of the Book. Leskov writes that following his conversion, Radstock severed all connections with 'worldly' culture: 'He renounced music on the grounds that "he heard better sounds from heaven," and he ceased to read all the worldly books since "a man's life was insufficient even for the study of the Bible."' ³¹

b) Christocentrism

The resurrected Christ and a personal, affective relationship with him is the major theme of all of Radstock's addresses. The following testimonies of Radstock's contemporaries can best be understood within this frame of reference. Baron von Hügel points out that 'it was the Synoptic Jesus, His teachings, especially the Sermon on the Mount, which had saturated all the fibres of his mind and character'.³² It will be demonstrated below that Radstock interpreted all of reality from a Christocentric perspective.

c) Salvation by Grace through Faith

With regard to soteriology Radstock believed salvation to be free, present, eternal, and unconditional. This was his main message during the revivalist meetings.³³ Interpreting the Epistle to the Romans in the spirit of Luther with regard to free and unconditional salvation in Christ by grace and assur-

ance of salvation in the present and the future, Radstock never developed or crystallized the doctrine. He called his audience to take their position in Christ by faith and start a life of personal relationship with God in Christ.

As was true of D.L. Moody, Radstock leaned towards the Arminian pole as far as the issue of predestination was concerned.³⁴ His theological position in this regard can be seen in the interplay of questions asked by Moody during one of his evangelistic meetings.

Mr. Moody. – Is salvation within the reach of every man here tonight?

Mr. Radstock. – Jesus said, 'God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'

Mr. M. – What would you say to anyone who thinks he has no power to believe?

Mr. R. – He *has* the power to believe. Probably he is trying to believe something about himself, to feel something about himself instead of giving credit to God. He is not asked to realize this or that about himself, but to believe the faithful God.³⁵

The Calvinist John Nelson Darby is said to have been 'puzzled over how Moody could on the one hand accept the prophetic truths concerning God's sovereignty in history, and yet inconsistently allow room for a non-Calvinist

³⁰ Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, 149.

³¹ Leskov, *Schism*, 18.

³² Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, 56.

³³ Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, 232–33. McCarthy, 'Religious Conflict', 55.

³⁴ Findlay, *Moody*, 242.

³⁵ Moody, *Sovereign Grace*, 125.

³⁶ George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 46.

view of human ability when it came to personal salvation'.³⁶

Radstock's evangelical view concerning salvation can be summarized as follows: the transcendent God loves his fallen creation. The themes of God's love and the fallen condition of individuals are dominant in Radstock's addresses.³⁷ Every human being can be saved by God's grace. In order to be saved a person needs to exercise his or her faith by believing the testimony of the scriptures about salvation in Jesus Christ. Everyone who believes this testimony is given the new nature (the new birth) by the gift of the Spirit, which makes possible both fellowship with God and a proper understanding of scripture. Without personal faith and regeneration a person cannot understand scripture, nor can they have fellowship with God.

This regeneration constitutes a change in the existential orientation through which a person comes in contact with the ultimate personal reality of God manifested in Jesus and mediated by the Spirit. A mere intellectual assent to biblical truths must not be equated with regeneration.³⁸ True regeneration should have personal and experiential dimensions, accompanied by the receiving of God's power to overcome sin. Answered prayers and godly living are preferred over systematized theologizing. Regenerated people *know* that they are saved by taking God at his word.

Unregenerated people are not sure about their salvation. God will not allow a saved person to be lost. If people

sin after their conversion, they can be forgiven by Christ, who leads believers to Christian maturity and deliverance from the power of sin.³⁹ Regenerated people can be absolutely sure about their eternal security in Christ. 'Before we are asked to go into service we are put on the platform of eternal salvation; and then we are told to press forward, and stretch forth a hand to those who are perishing in the waters, battling with the waves, but ineffectually, because they have not got their feet upon the Rock Jesus Christ.'⁴⁰

This middle way between Arminianism and Calvinism was never systematically thought through by Radstock, which was typical of the evangelicals of his time. Chadwick describes the evangelicals of that period in general as follows: 'They were men of the Reformation, who preached the cross, the depravity of man, and justification by faith alone. Some of them were Calvinists and more of them were not. Most of them had little use or time for doctrines of predestination and reprobation.'⁴¹ The most important thing was the emotional plea to accept the New Testament's testimony about God's love in Christ and to live in the light of it.

d) Personal Religious Experience

The religious experience of regeneration was a central motif of Radstock's preaching. Sinners must appropriate by faith the unmerited salvation avail-

37 Leskov, *Schism*, 18, 24.

38 Radstock, *Notes of Addresses*, 27.

39 Moody, *Sovereign Grace*, 122–27.

40 Radstock, *Notes of Addresses*, 47.

41 Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1966), 440–41.

able in Christ. Human faith is the channel through which the Spirit of God gives new birth. 'Are you forgiven? Are you born again?'⁴² 'You are in Christ, or you are not. You have received the Holy Ghost, or you have not.'⁴³ 'To be a Christian is not merely to think about Christ; it means to be in union with Christ.'⁴⁴

Writing about the theology of the German Pietist, Philip Jacob Spener, Enger Trond states: 'At the centre of Spener's theology was the experience of rebirth, the creation of the new person. This was the passion that united all Pietists. This was the experience that could empower faith. In the concept of rebirth we find the Pietists' main concern: it expresses humanity's absolute passivity in salvation, just as in natural birth; it expresses the total change, the new status as God's child; it focuses on the necessity of development and growth. With this re-born person a new reality has entered the world.'⁴⁵

Sharing the Pietistic assumptions that were amplified in the context of Romanticism, Radstock's Christianity had an experiential nature. He was not so much concerned about intellectual evidence, but would often say that answered prayers were his evidence.⁴⁶ The sentimental nature of Radstock's spirituality was well described by Leskov: 'His ideas are shaky, but his spirit is splendid and by his success he excellently typifies the words of Taine,

that 'people understand not ideas, but feelings.' 'In studying the feeling of Radstock, I myself sense that the man is in love with Christ', one person who knows him well said to me, and this must be true. Radstock is in love, and this feeling is almost irresistible.'⁴⁷

In the same vein Trotter states: 'He did not see the extension of divine claims to the whole of being and to a great extent refused the intellect its part in the redemption of man. In the intellect he still clung to the old traditions of Puritanism.'⁴⁸

e) Active Faith

In accordance with the Pietistic impetus of evangelicalism, Radstock was concerned with the practical application of his Christianity. McCarthy writes: 'After Radstock's father's death in 1856, the rest of the family gradually turned from high society to the evangelical movement, donating the money to the religious outreach to the poor. Independently, Radstock's mother was very active in the slums of London where she entered brothels to rescue prostitutes and return them to "a life of honorable work". In London the Radstocks sponsored a home for recent immigrants that could accommodate almost seven hundred people. In Paris they supported a home for girls.'⁴⁹

In this religious activity the works of charity were not separated from evangelism. In fact, evangelism was the first and foremost activity in which every Christian was expected to be involved. Leskov wrote that Radstock

⁴² Radstock, *Notes of Addresses*, 17.

⁴³ Radstock, *Notes of Addresses*, 121.

⁴⁴ Radstock, *Notes of Addresses*, 45.

⁴⁵ Enger, 'Pietism', 540.

⁴⁶ Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, 103.

⁴⁷ Leskov, *Schism*, 23.

⁴⁸ Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, 100.

⁴⁹ McCarthy, 'Religious Conflict', 51–52.

would often fill his pockets with copies of the New Testament and give them to passers-by, even though he could not speak a word of Russian.⁵⁰

f) Simplicity

In his description of a Radstockist meeting, Leskov does not mention the use of musical instruments. Biblical messages were the centre of these religious meetings. The songs of I.D. Sankey were sung in English. As with the theology and preaching of Radstock, the songs were also emotion-oriented and sentimental.⁵¹ His prayers were extemporaneous, which was very unusual for people of an Orthodox background. The space of the hall was 'sacramentalized' by signs with biblical texts such as John 3:16, Luke 12:32, and Colossians 3:23 that were hung on the walls and which mistakenly were taken by some in the audience as 'no smoking' signs!

2. The Primitivist Framework

In a sense the Primitivist framework grew out of Puritanism, with its call to return to the simplicity of the apostolic era, its conversionism, and its promotion of meditation on the work of the Holy Spirit.

a) The Charismatic Dimension

The ministry of Radstock was typically charismatic. From the outset of his meetings, Radstock assumed the role of a pneumatic preacher who was being led by the Spirit to reveal the true meaning of the scriptures. The stir of

interest among the St. Petersburg aristocracy can partly be attributed to this charismatic stance.

b) Mysticism

Trotter defines the word mysticism in terms of '... the inner meaning of the words of Scripture, the facts of history, the world of Nature. The mystic learns to discern between the world of sense, the shadow world, and the Reality that lies beyond, among the things "which are not seen" where God is all and in all.... Hence to him the distinction of time, country, race and organization are subordinate to or absorbed in the all-embracing truth of the divine unity of the Spirit....'⁵²

This definition of mysticism in Platonic terminology is revealing, both for Radstock and for Trotter, his major biographer. Radstock was indeed interested in seeing and experiencing the transcendent reality of the resurrected Christ. However, his subjective mystical vision of certain aspects of this reality was ultimately reductionist, because from the outset his framework for viewing the mystical reality of the resurrected Christ was limited by a Protestant theology that excluded and suppressed other forms of Christian spirituality. His preoccupation with the pneumatic Christ of faith and with mystical union with him, as well as his radical disinterest in the Christ of history and the ecclesial tradition, resembled in this regard more the spirituality of Docetism that had grown out of Platonic rationality than it did Chalcedonian Christology.⁵³

⁵⁰ Leskov, *Schism*, 38.

⁵¹ McCarthy, 'Religious Conflict', 71.

⁵² Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, 83–85.

⁵³ Cf. Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986), 21.

Radstock is depicted as a typical evangelical mystic who waited on the guidance of the Holy Spirit in daily circumstances. Trotter provides many examples of this.⁵⁴ In one anecdote, Trotter tells how once in St. Petersburg, when Radstock was finishing a meeting with a certain person, he found himself constrained to stay on, even though his conversation was at an end. After about eleven minutes he felt he needed to leave at once.⁵⁵

Having gone out into the street, Radstock met a gentleman whom he would have missed had he gone out ten seconds earlier or later. Radstock's meeting with that gentleman had important ramifications for this new convert. Kent describes Radstock in the following terms: 'He was a great renouncer: he associated the conversion of his sisters with giving up shooting, for instance. He solved the problem of his right to preach without ordination by asking God to give him three instances of the value of his doing so within twenty-four hours; he received them in the form of unsolicited letters, and went on preaching.'⁵⁶

c) The Role of the Spirit in Understanding Texts

The mystical experience of the transcendent Christ in the present was much more important for Radstock than were historical questions about Christ. Radstock believed that biblical texts could be understood properly only when a person received illumination from the Holy Spirit. Thus, talk-

ing to a person who had reservations about biblical trustworthiness, Radstock stated:

I am not going to explain them [difficulties in the Bible]; for you cannot understand them; they can only be understood by a supernatural power; till you get that supernatural power, you will not understand.... Suppose you were an ignorant man, and had never seen a telescope; I say to you, Do you see that star? That star is a cluster of stars. No, you say, I have looked all my life, and my sight is clear, and it is one star, and you tell me wrong for my eyesight is right. I will not look through the telescope.⁵⁷

Access to supernatural power (the telescope of the metaphor) comes by means of individual and personal prayer to God through Jesus.⁵⁸ Only after the Spirit is received can a person understand the meaning of the Bible. Without the Spirit the Bible is a dark text. Taking the Spirit as the starting point for understanding biblical texts, Radstock prefigured the Pentecostal way of theologizing.⁵⁹

Apologetics of this sort is consciously affective, personal, and fideistic. The text of the Bible is not understood by natural human reason or historical research. In order to overcome rationalist barriers to faith erected within the meta-narrative of modernist rational-

⁵⁴ Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, 202–7.

⁵⁵ Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, 206.

⁵⁶ Kent, *Holding the Fort*, 126.

⁵⁷ Radstock, *Notes of Addresses*, 113.

⁵⁸ Radstock, *Notes of Addresses*, 114.

⁵⁹ See Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), and Steven J. Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

ist philosophies, one has to go beyond the boundaries of an impersonal and instrumental worldview by taking for granted the Christian meta-narrative, in which reality is perceived in personal terms, and establish a personal relationship with God by taking a leap of faith.

d) The Ministry of Healing by Prayer

Lord Radstock's revivalist meetings were accompanied by many cases of physical healing.⁶⁰ He had taken up faith healing on the basis of the Epistle of James as early as 1873.⁶¹ He believed in the operative healing power of the Spirit and the command to pray for the sick. He saw that sickness is connected in Scripture with spiritual rather than physical causes.⁶² Trotter writes: 'Through a long life Lord Radstock remained steadfast to that Voice of God which he had heard, and when in 1905 a new witness from the Antipodes, in the person of Mr. J. M. Hickson, came to confirm the reality of Christ's healing power, and to declare that the gifts had never been withdrawn from the Church, he heard with gladness this new testimony and watched its development with great sympathy.'⁶³

One year before his first visit to Russia in 1873 Radstock witnessed a remarkable demonstration of the heal-

ing power of the Lord. His seven-year-old daughter was healed of curvature of the spine, which had produced great nervous irritation. The Radstocks asked a visiting American pastor to pray for their daughter. After a short prayer the girl jumped up and said, 'Jesus has done it!'⁶⁴ Trotter, following the nature of the genre, tends to downplay the darker side of Radstock's faith healing. His daughter Mary, who was born in 1871, gives insight into it: 'My father, being a faith-healer, no medicines were ever given to us on any occasion.'⁶⁵ Writing of her experiences while in Russia in 1878, she continues: 'Besides my illness... two at least of my sisters and brothers had diphtheric throats, while my mother had a bad miscarriage. No nurse and no doctor were called in....'⁶⁶

e) Revivalism

Revivalism was a characteristic phenomenon of the nineteenth century. The history and geography of revivalism suggest a phenomenon closely linked to industrialization and modernization. Richard Carwardine notes the following characteristics of revivalism:

Charismatic evangelists, mass audiences, Bible-based preaching, a gospel of repentance, the elevation of heart and experience over head and theology and the proliferation of dramatic, often physical, experiences of conversion, stress on born-

60 Cf. C. Peter Williams, 'Healing and Evangelism: The Place of Medicine in Later Victorian Protestant Missionary Thinking', in *The Church and Healing*, ed. W.J. Sheils (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), 271–85.

61 Kent, *Holding the Fort*, 148.

62 Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, 23.

63 Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, 24.

64 Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, 167.

65 Daisy Bevan, 'Odd Memories of an Ordinary Person', in Bevan Collection (London: School of Slavonic and East European Studies), 4.

66 Bevan, 'Odd Memories', 4.

again relationship with Jesus; the obligation to evangelize, faith in an inerrant Bible, strict personal discipline; social conservatism, and, very commonly, adventist, millennialist, and dispensationalist expectations founded on a conviction of God's personal intervention. On one reading revivalism has been a way of resisting modernity. Early Methodists sought in enthusiastic religion a warmth and social network, and an escape from uprootedness, market upheaval, and an emerging factory system.⁶⁷

All the characteristics of revivalism as described by Carwardine can be found in the ministry of Lord Radstock. Even though Radstock was not a professional revivalist like Finney or Moody, 'he was perfectly willing to associate with professional revivalists; he was present, naturally, at Smith's English Holiness meetings'.⁶⁸ Kent notices that Radstock's connections with the Plymouth Brethren were typical for revivalists of that time:

Like many of the lay revivalists of his time he had links with the Plymouth Brethren, whose hard core was mostly ex-Anglican, but whose ethos had developed in reaction against Anglican Tradition: the Brethren dispensed with the priesthood and cared nothing for the visible Church in the present dispensation. Anglicans, for whom the 'Church' had a personal rather than

an institutional existence, found the ruthlessly negative attitude of the Brethren horrifying. In most ecclesiastical circles Brethren were feared as a solvent of loyalties as well as a source of strange doctrine; in the 1870s, however, the influence of the Brethren waned as their original creative leadership aged and was not replaced.⁶⁹

Radstock was a revivalist in his own right. In the evangelical seaside and watering-place tradition, he had conducted personal missions in Brighton, for example, in 1867, and in Scarborough in 1869.⁷⁰ Dr. Frederick Baedeker, who later had a long ministry in Russia, was converted during Radstock's revivalist meetings in Weston-Super-Mare in 1866.⁷¹

Radstock used the technique of multiple repetitions of main ideas which was common among revivalist preachers of the time. Leskov reports that during one of his short talks Radstock managed to ask nine times if a person 'was with Christ or not'.⁷²

f) Adventism⁷³

The dramatic events of the French Revolution in the 1790s had a special effect on the evangelical interpretation of scripture. Reading the Bible in the light of their immediate experience, the

⁶⁷ Richard Carwardine, 'Revivalism', in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, ed. Adrian Hastings et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 622.

⁶⁸ Kent, *Holding the Fort*, 126.

⁶⁹ Kent, *Holding the Fort*, 126–27.

⁷⁰ Kent, *Holding the Fort*, 148.

⁷¹ Robert S. Latimer, *Dr. Baedeker and his Apostolic Work in Russia* (London: Morgan & Scott 1907), 26.

⁷² Leskov, *Schism*, 77.

⁷³ Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 47.

persecuted Protestants had developed an interpretive tradition that identified the Antichrist with the Papacy. However, the downfall of the Roman Catholic Church in France at the end of the eighteenth century opened up new horizons that reshaped the Protestant theological map of the nineteenth century.

A seventeenth-century Cambridge Scholar, Joseph Mede, had suggested that 'one day' in the book of Daniel (7:25) should be taken as meaning one year. According to Mede's interpretation, the fourth beast of Daniel 7, was taken to signify the Papacy, which should reign for 1260 years (time, times, and half a time = three and a half years = 1260 prophetic days = 1260 calendar years). The beginning of the Papacy was counted from the time when Belisarius entered Rome in 538, subjecting it to the Emperor Justinian's jurisdiction. In 1798, that is 1260 years later, Napoleonic armies entered Rome and banished Pope Pius IV.⁷⁴

Thus the French revolution opened a new vista in the interpretation of biblical prophecy in the light of contemporary historical events. The *parousia* was expected in the imminent future. The premillennial expectation shared by Radstock was based on the belief that Jesus would dramatically step into history and establish his millennial

kingdom (Revelation 20). This premillennial expectation reflected a pessimistic and world-denying attitude. Adventist notes were often appropriated in Radstock's addresses: 'Have you noticed that the Gospel is "preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations?"'⁷⁵

There is no trace, however, of a developed system of Darbyite dispensationalism in his preaching.⁷⁶ According to the adventist teaching of John Nelson Darby, God had established several distinct historical time-frameworks, or dispensations, within which he reveals his particular purposes for a particular dispensation. With regard to the millennium, Darby believed that Christ would come the first time to take the church to heaven, meeting her in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:13–17). The rapture of the church was believed to be followed by a period of tribulation (Matthew 24:21), which would be ended by the visible return of Christ to the earth with the church, to establish the millennial Davidic Kingdom promised in the Old Testament. Radstock does not indicate that he believed in two comings of the Lord—the invisible (the rapture of the church) and the visible (establishing the millennial Kingdom)—as Darby taught.

The eschatological views of Radstock played a threefold role. First, as was the case with D.L. Moody, who quite possibly never became a thoroughgoing dispensationalist, the eschatological millenarian perspective in Radstock's preaching and teaching served the real purpose of his address-

74 Timothy C.F. Stunt, *From Awakening to Secession: Radical Evangelicals in Switzerland 1815-35* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000), 22; Grayson Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals: Protestant Secessions from the Via Media, c. 1800-1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 152–248; Binfield, 'Jews in Evangelical Dissent', 225–70; Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists*, 35–36.

75 Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, 248.

76 Carter, *Anglican Evangelicals*, 220–27.

es, which was to bring his audience into contact with the transcendent and personal reality of the resurrected Christ. 'It was a way of urging sinners to turn from their too exclusive concerns to contemplate more important matters of the spirit.'⁷⁷ Second, taking into account the fine distinction made by James Patrick Callahan between 'primitivist piety' and 'restorationism', it can be argued that Radstock shared the primitivist pietistic position.⁷⁸ He consciously avoided the restoration of primitive ecclesiological structures (and rituals such as baptism) which, according to the early Brethren view, had failed in other western denominations.

Thus, taking the position of 'a mourner' with respect to historical Christianity, Radstock was not attempting to revive first-century Christianity, but was eagerly waiting for the glorious return of the Lord. This primitivist position of the Brethren may account for Radstock's unwillingness to establish any evangelical ecclesial structure in St. Petersburg, as well

as his resistance to the discussion of any 'denominational theologies'. And finally, his premillennialist views may have played an important role in his handling of material possessions. Daisy Bevan is worth quoting again:

Soon after this our house at Sheen of many happy memories was given up, also 'the stripping' of our London House was nearly completed. My father's people, for two or three generations, had been collectors of furniture and pictures.... I believe some of it was really wonderful and all was good. But fiat went forth, and all was sold.... Books, of which there was also an excellent collection, had already gone away in 'four wheeler' loads, in fact anything of value, including jewels, that my father had not forgotten the existence of, were turned ruthlessly into missionary donations.⁷⁹

Two days before he died he wrote in a letter, 'In common with many others, I believe the Lord's return is close at hand.'⁸⁰

g) Evangelical Ecumenism

Radstock was an active member of the World Evangelical Alliance, which had been established in London in 1846.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Findlay, *Moody*, 253.

⁷⁸ James P. Callahan, *Primitivist Piety: The Ecclesiology of the Early Plymouth Brethren* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1996). According to Callahan's thesis, the Brethren movement, in its origins, did not intend to restore the primitive Christian church with regard to spirituality or ecclesiology. Rather, having observed the pathetic condition of contemporary Christianity in Britain during the first half of the nineteenth century, the early Brethren started a non-denominational or better post-denominational movement that consisted of small gatherings of believers of different denominations who met for Bible reading and Christian fellowship. These gatherings were viewed as meetings of true believers practising biblical piety and awaiting the soon return of the Lord.

⁷⁹ Bevan, 'Odd Memories', 20.

⁸⁰ McCarthy, 'Religious Conflict', 76. Emphasis in original.

⁸¹ See John Wolffe, 'The Evangelical Alliance in the 1840s: An Attempt to Institutionalize Christian Unity', in *Voluntary Religion*, eds W.J. Sheils and D. Wood (London: Ecclesiastical History Society, 1986), 333–46; J.B.A. Kessler, *A Study of the Evangelical Alliance in Great Britain* (Goes, Netherlands: Oosterbaan & Le Cointre, 1968), 10–17; Fuller, *People of the*

The unity represented by this alliance was born in the vortex of great social and religious uncertainties, the consequences of the French Revolution, the increasing influence of the humanistic philosophy of the Enlightenment, and the development of Marxist ideology. The first four decades of the nineteenth century had also given rise to ecclesiastical movements that fragmented the religious map of the British Isles.⁸² Out of the chaos of fragmentation, there grew a sense of the need to cooperate interdenominationally. The Alliance was formed as a confederation, with the purpose of promoting the Christian unity that already existed among 'all who, loving the Lord Jesus Christ, are bound to love one another'.⁸³

Even though evangelical unity was the proactive motif, the anti-Catholic and anti-Tractarian drives also played an important *reactive* role in the formation of this Protestant body. A preliminary meeting in Liverpool in 1845, which was intended to prepare the ground for a subsequent international meeting, was called 'to associate and concentrate the strength of an enlightened Protestantism against the encroachments of Popery and Puseyism, and to promote the interests of scriptural Christianity'.⁸⁴ The people who met in London agreed upon a doctrinal

statement that defined basic evangelical views. Lord Radstock was a typical representative of this Protestant body.

One of Radstock's Russian followers gave the following testimony about him:

All churches are equal to Radstock *in so far as they all similarly believe in salvation by faith* [italics mine—A.P.]. By invitation, and sometimes on his own initiative, he speaks to gatherings of all these denominations; but most of all he is in sympathy with the Plymouth Brethren, who have no ministers. He is not sympathetic to the Quakers, though sometimes he speaks in their meetings. In his view, the Quakers have 'little spiritual life.' He also has little sympathy for the Irvingites although he shares their view of the second coming of Christ, which he expects at any moment. He interprets the Apocalypse, as far as I can judge, by taking something from La Mother Guyon and something from Jung-Stilling, and adding something the source of which it is impossible to trace; doubtless it is home-grown.⁸⁵ If anyone tries to make him state his opinion on some teaching of whatever church, either he remains completely silent or, if the questioner is insistent, he will say briefly: 'I cannot speak of that, it is not my affair, I can only explain the Word of God, using the text I find therein.'⁸⁶

However, this 'non-denominational' attitude is limited only to the realm of the Protestant Paradigm, as we have mentioned earlier.

Mandate, 14–20; Ruth Rouse and Stephen C. Neill (eds), *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948* (London: SPCK, 1954), 103, 338.

⁸² Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, vol. 2, *The Expansion of Evangelical Nonconformity* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 37.

⁸³ Ewing, *Goodly Fellowship*. Quoted in Fuller, *People of the Mandate*, 18.

⁸⁴ Wolfe, 'The Evangelical Alliance', 338.

⁸⁵ Leskov, *Schism*, 51–52.

⁸⁶ Leskov, *Schism*, 31.

h) (The Lack of) Sacramentalism

Lord Radstock considered that outward confession of Christ corresponded to the baptism by water of the early Christians, by which they were separated forever from the world around them.⁸⁷ Radstock believed in two kinds of baptism: baptism in water and baptism in the Spirit. He defined them as baptism of the body and baptism of the soul respectively.⁸⁸ Baptism in water 'is an acknowledgment of sinfulness and [of] a need of forgiveness'. However, due to the fact that the ritual of water baptism had been practised in all traditional Christian churches, Radstock appealed to apostolic times and interpreted the meaning of baptism in the following way:

Real baptism was when a soul acknowledged itself lost and ruined, and once for all gave itself right over to God, before the world, and was known by the world as belonging to Christ. You may have been baptized in whatever water ceremony you please; but what you need is that heart baptism into Christ, which will be followed by the sealing of the Holy Ghost. *Then* you know what conversion is.⁸⁹ This baptism is the baptism of the soul, which will be evidenced by an outward confession towards the world; it is the signing of the deed of partnership; the definite acceptance of the soul, from which time the whole inheritance of Christ becomes the portion of the poor sinner.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, 20; PP 2/1/b/8 a letter to Tikhonov dated 1884.

⁸⁸ Radstock, *Notes of Addresses*, 58–60, 115.

⁸⁹ Radstock, *Notes of Addresses*, 59.

⁹⁰ Radstock, *Notes of Addresses*, 61.

The Slavic Baptist denominational writers attribute Radstock's lack of emphasis on the importance of water baptism to his association with the Plymouth Brethren. However, infant baptism was practised in the Darbyite communities. The Müllerites (Open Brethren) were considered and called 'Baptists' by the Closed Brethren, because Müller believed that the Bible taught that baptism should take place following the conversion experience, even though he did not impose his view on those who disagreed with him. Radstock's perspective cannot be attributed to either Open or Closed Brethren views on the issue.

His ambivalent attitude on the issue of baptism and other outward identity markers prolonged the process of separation of evangelical converts from the Orthodox Church. Leskov compares Radstock's view on baptism with that of some Russian sectarians such as the Molokans and Stundists, who also understood the ritual metaphorically.⁹¹

3. The Framework of Perfectionism

Being among those who initiated the Keswick meetings in the mid-1870s, prior to his longest visit to Russia in 1878, Radstock shared the perfectionist position of the early Keswick movement.⁹² According to the teaching

⁹¹ Leskov, *Schism*, 59–60.

⁹² Kent, *Holding the Fort*, 148; J.C. Pollock, *The Keswick Story* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1964), 34–35. It should be mentioned here that all the evangelicals who visited Russia between 1870 and 1880 were part of the perfectionist movement, which was spilling over from America to Britain and to

of Pearsall Smith, who brought this movement to Britain on the wave of D.L. Moody's revival and whose works had appeared in print in England seven years earlier, a believer can reach a state of perfection already in this life by an act of faith. Radstock seems to have shared this vision.⁹³

According to this perfectionist view, there is a difference between knowing Christ as Saviour and knowing him as Lord.⁹⁴ Radstock held the view that it is not enough to receive salvation by grace. That is only the first stage; the person who goes no further than this stage will be saved only as a log is from fire.⁹⁵ Christ needs to be experienced not only as Saviour but also as Lord. The life of Christ mediated by the Spirit should take hold of believers to such a degree that they stop sinning and live lives of service in total dedication to the Lord.⁹⁶

Continental Europe. Besides Radstock and George Müller, Otto Stockmeyer and Dr. Baedeker were active propagandists of perfectionism. Baedeker served as the interpreter for the initiator of the perfectionist movement during his trip to Germany.

93 See D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 151–80.

94 Radstock, *Notes of Addresses*, 8.

95 Radstock, *Notes of Addresses*, 110.

96 Radstock, *Notes of Addresses*, 9, 43.

Thus, according to Radstock, there are three categories of Christians. First, there are nominal Christians—those who bear the name of Christ and give intellectual assent to Christian doctrines but do not possess saving faith. Such people are not to be considered real Christians. The second group of Christians consists of those people who have trusted the Lord for salvation but have not dedicated themselves completely to his service. Then, finally, the third group of Christians is comprised of those people who have come to know the Lord not only as their Saviour, but also as the Lord of their lives, having thus broken the bonds and attractions of this world.⁹⁷

The path from the second to the third stage goes through identifying with Christ by being united to him: 'He wants simply that you be united to Him; then you will not merely get the putting away of the sins you have committed; but the living God will put forth his power to keep, to save, to deliver. Not merely today; but to the end he will keep you, and will present you one day, as a proof of His grace and His love, faultless before the throne of God.'⁹⁸

97 Radstock, *Notes of Addresses*, 43, 88, 107.

98 Radstock, *Notes of Addresses*, 63.

David Livingstone's Vision Revisited – Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation in the 21st Century

Sas Conradie

KEYWORDS: *Freedom, abolition, slavery, economic development, injustice, imperialism, enterprise development, community transformation, environment*

I David Livingstone – icon and villain

David Livingstone has been both missionary icon and missionary villain in the past. For many he was the epitome of mission pioneering and for others an imperialistic missionary paternalist whose work bore little if any fruit. However, it was exactly this controversial figure from whom we in the twenty first century can learn when we discuss socio-economic and spiritual transformation in communities.

This article does not try to discuss the life and work of David Livingstone in depth. People like Rob Mackenzie,¹

Andrew Ross² and John Waters³ have all made detailed studies of Livingstone. Neither is the article an attempt to analyse all the issues presented to us by his dreams and visions or to discuss transformation in depth. It is more an effort to grapple with an understanding of David Livingstone's vision for Christianity, Commerce and Civilisation in Africa and how we must understand the relationship of these '3 Cs' in today's global context.

II Livingstone's Vision

David Livingstone had a compassion and commitment to end the slave trade through Christianising and 'civilising' Africa while facilitating an economic 'take-off' that would provide the economic incentives to stop the trade from

¹ Rob Mackenzie, *David Livingstone: The Truth behind the Legend* (Chinhoyi: Zimbabwe Fig Tree Publications, 1993).

² Andrew C Ross, *David Livingstone: Mission and Empire* (London: Hambledon and London, 2002).

³ John Waters, *David Livingstone – Trail Blazer* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996).

continuing. His passion was to open south central Africa to Christianity and commerce as a way to combat the social ills of the continent. In essence David Livingstone realised the following:

a) Spiritual Freedom

People had to be set free from sins and practices (such as superstition) that prevented them from living lives that honour God. The spread of the Good News of spiritual freedom in Christ, or Christianity, was therefore of utmost importance to Livingstone. He believed intensely that Jesus has died for all and salvation is available to all, if people will only accept it.⁴

Part of his theological understanding was also that the Holy Spirit empowers people to live holy lives and move away from sin. That would enable social change when more and more people followed that example. Livingstone clearly believed in the essential relationship of saving souls and social transformation towards becoming more like Christ and living out the principles of the Bible.

b) Cultural Freedom

People had to be set free from cultural practices that prevent social and intellectual development, including slavery. Therefore there was a need to encourage a cultural value system that would facilitate education, health and law and order. This whole package Livingstone understood to be civilisation. The chiefs abused their powers by enslaving their own people or capturing people of neighbouring groups. To end

the slave trade a change in culture was needed from within Africa as well.

c) Economic Freedom

People had to be set free from poverty that encouraged them to sell others into slavery. Economic development in Africa had to be enabled through commercial activities. Commerce therefore became to Livingstone one of the key building blocks of transforming communities so that slavery could be ended.

Livingstone's strong belief in these three Cs—Christianity, Civilisation and Commerce, as a way to end slavery and encourage social transformation had much deeper roots than his own passion. Peter Heslam indicates that

Most historians associate the slogan 'commerce and Christianity' with David Livingstone. Yet its origins go back to the birth of the abolitionist movement, which significantly coincided with the start of the British missionary movement. Legitimate commerce, coupled with the gospel, would cut off the slave trade at its source in Africa.⁵

Wilberforce and the abolitionist movement indeed had an important role in David Livingstone's thinking. Wilberforce's own vision for a better world 'lay in the transformative potential of faith and business. ... It was in pursuit of this vision that he initiated radical social transformation on a global scale.'⁶ Because both Christianity and legitimate commerce had human

⁴ Ross, *David Livingstone*, 17.

⁵ Peter Heslam, 'William Wilberforce: how transforming business can turn the tide of history', *Faith in Business* 10:4, April 2007:3-4.

⁶ Heslam, 'William Wilberforce', 4.

liberty at their core, they were destined to work together for social reform.

Rob Mackenzie emphasises the importance of the abolitionist movement's thinking on Livingstone when he attended a meeting in Exeter Hall in the Strand by the Society for the Extinction of the Slave-Trade and for the Civilisation of Africa.

There it was proposed that Africans would only be saved from the slave-trade if they were woken up to the possibilities of selling their own produce; otherwise chiefs would continue to barbarically sell their own kind to pay for the beads, cloth, guns and trinkets they coveted. Commerce and Christianity could achieve this miracle, not Christianity alone. These ideas posed by Thomas Fowell Buxton, Wilberforce's successor, had a major impact on David Livingstone.⁷

Ross expands this view by saying that

If legitimate European commerce could only penetrate Africa and promote the cultivation of products Europe wanted to buy, then these could be exchanged for European goods, uplifting African standards of living and ending the slave trade. At the same time the work of Christian missions in preaching the Gospel and in developing schools would aid the process and in turn be aided by it. This was a vision of what Livingstone was to urge on the British public later.⁸

The discussion of the relationship

between Christianity and civilization was therefore not a new idea. It had already been hotly debated in missionary circles in the 1790s and it can be argued that it was the response to the social and economic transformation the UK experienced during (some would say as a result of) the revival movements that swept the UK in the second half of the 18th Century. Dr. John Philip of the London Missionary Society emphasized that 'Civilization need not bring Christianity, but Christianity always brings civilization'.⁹ For Dr. Philip civilization encompassed education, but also commerce with emphasis on the creative impact of free trade.

The abolitionist ideals of social transformation through commerce and Christianity became so inspirational that Henry Venn (Church Missionary Society General Secretary from 1841-1873) made abolitionism through commercial enterprise a central aspect of his mission strategy. Cultivating contacts with industry, Henry Venn enlisted the support of a Christian manufacturer who agreed to import cotton at the minimum profit margin. This enabled Venn to set up the Nigerian cotton industry. African chiefs therefore had a viable economic alternative to the slave trade.¹⁰

The belief in the heart of Livingstone therefore grew that the arrival of honest traders and missionaries would provide the opportunity to exchange

⁷ Mackenzie, *David Livingstone*, 47.

⁸ Ross, *David Livingstone*, 25.

⁹ Fidelis Nkomazana, 'Livingstone's ideas of Christianity, commerce and civilization', <http://archive.lib.msu.edu/DMC/African%20Journals/pdfs/PULA/pula012001/pula012001004.pdf>, accessed 30 November 2012.

¹⁰ Waters, *David Livingstone*, 228.

the natural resources of Africa for European trade goods. This would undercut and end the slave trade, leaving the possibility of the growth of Christianity and the development of a more prosperous African society. One of the aims throughout David Livingstone's travels was therefore to find suitable bases 'from which Christianity, civilization and commerce could play their role in transforming Africa without the violence, injustice and slavery which he believed had characterized the meeting of European and African heretofore'.¹¹

Britain could play an important role in the transformation of Africa by providing missionaries and traders to create the input of Christianity and commerce that would end the slave trade. During his visits to the UK Livingstone tried to convince business people of the potential for trade and investment in Africa.

III Livingstone's vision distorted

Perhaps this passion to get the British nation more involved in spreading Christianity, commerce and civilisation in Africa and the fusion of the three in the development of Africa, became for some a pretext for imperial exploitation.

In the decade of the scramble for Africa, 1885-1895, when Africa was parcelled up by the powers of Europe, leading imperialist statesmen and political commentators were agreed in describing the movement as Europe's response to Livingstone's famous appeal to the out-

side world to intervene to end the east African slave trade. The whole effort was one intended to fulfil Livingstone's dream of a peaceful and prosperous development of Africa.¹²

Livingstone became the patron saint of liberal imperialism and for many he emerged as a paternalist and colonialist. His vision of the fusion of Christianity and commerce was used to morally justify and glorify the British Empire.¹³

Through this process of building and enriching the Empire, the three Cs that Livingstone was so passionate about became distorted in a way that he himself did not intend:

Christianity was used by imperial powers to open up areas for expansion and to pacify communities. The result was that people were burdened by Christianity as a perceived western religion and tried to get away from that, for example, in the Mai-Mai uprising in Kenya. Christianity came to be seen in many cases as the religion of the white-man and of the oppressor

Civilisation was used to impose the will of the imperial powers and to conform communities to the pattern of 'Civilised Europe' in order to produce goods for the 'Mother country'. The result was that people were burdened by the perceived western way of life. Civilisation therefore became synonymous with colonialism and oppression.

¹² Ross, *David Livingstone*, 241.

¹³ Cultural changes within Britain, such as an increasingly negative view of dark-skinned people as inferior to Europeans, might also have played a role in distorting Livingstone's views on transforming and improving Africa for the sake of the Africans.

¹¹ Ross, *David Livingstone*, 77.

Commerce was used to advance the economic interest and self-enrichment of the imperial powers and individuals such as Cecil John Rhodes, while using the natural resources and cheap labour of local communities. The result was that people were burdened with the psychological and social impact of labour abuse. Commerce became synonymous with multi-national capitalism that enriches a few and impoverishes the masses.

Livingstone's dream of Christianity and commerce, combining to produce what W.W. Rostow has called 'take-off' in terms of Africa's development, therefore did not work out in the way he envisaged. The demand of industrialised countries for ivory, combined with the East African slave trade, was a barrier enough to the achievement of that hope being realised, even before the powerful worldwide imperialist expansion of the industrialised countries in the last decades of the nineteenth century finally killed it. Other factors discouraged investment, such as Africa's geography that makes transportation of goods difficult and health conditions that prevent trading from really taking off.

IV Livingstone's Vision Redeemed

The mistakes of the past are generally acknowledged today. Even though I would argue that the link between empire, mission and commercial exploitation was forged and often enforced by imperial and commercial motivation it has to be admitted that people became uneasy about the link between Christianity, Civilisation and Commerce. I propose that by dealing with the nega-

tive image related to the three themes, we can redeem what David Livingstone and other mission leaders in the 19th Century were so passionate about.

People still have spiritual needs, but with the problems related to the term Christianity, we might need to return to the roots of Christianity, the Bible, and start talking about *Biblical Faith instead of Christianity*. That will be acceptable even to Muslims. Ron Sider in his popular book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*,¹⁴ argues that some religious worldviews tend to create a fatalistic attitude towards poverty. For example, Hinduism teaches that those in the lower castes are there because of sinful choices in prior incarnations. Only by patiently enduring their present situation can they hope for a better life in future incarnations. Eastern religions de-emphasise the importance of history and material reality, considering them illusions to escape. A South African bishop once told me that people in the rural areas in South Africa are so fearful of evil spirits that they do not take any initiative to improve their lives.

Biblical faith affirms the goodness of the created world and teaches that the creator and Lord of history cares for the poor. People can be set free from the fear of evil spirits and experience forgiveness and total renewal by experiencing the life-giving ministry of Jesus Christ. However, people in their totality need to change and not only 'book a place in heaven'. Missionaries

¹⁴ Ronald Sider, *Rich Christians in an age of Hunger* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1997).

therefore must teach the whole gospel and not only salvation of souls. If God cares for the poor, then missionaries should preach that same message. To teach 'all that I've commanded you' includes caring for the poor and needy.

People still have social and emotional needs and need to be freed from values and cultural practices that prevent social-economic and emotional growth. Society needs to be transformed according to the principles of the Bible as the foundation of today's civilisation; not according to the imposed will of imperial powers, but from within the community. It is therefore better to talk about *Social Transformation instead of Civilisation*, a term that is a buzz word in global society.

Encouraging steps have been taken in this direction. During the past decade there has been an effort to say that social problems do concern the church, that they are also the church's problems and the church must deal with them. Hidden behind the former attitude was an incorrect ecclesiology and an incorrect dichotomy in the understanding of church-society relationship. It is very important for Christians to realize their responsibility towards their communities and what happens in their communities since they are members of society. The church must therefore direct itself towards transforming and engaging with society and not try to escape from it.

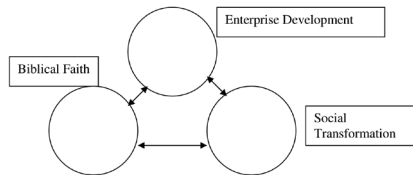
People still have physical needs and need employment to provide for these needs. What is needed is not commerce that enriches just a few, but a form of economic activity that will benefit a whole community. Such activity where people engage in business for the sake of others and not only themselves, can

be called Enterprise Development, another term that is acceptable in community development circles and used all over the world. It is therefore better to talk about *Enterprise Development than Commerce* in order to indicate this qualitative difference in business activities.

V Livingstone's Vision Modelled

Before I propose a model of how biblical faith, enterprise development and community/social transformation can be integrated, I just want to briefly mention some models of how the relationship of these themes have been viewed in the past:

1. The Escapist Model



According to this model, biblical faith has nothing to do with enterprise development or social transformation. It might touch these themes but has very little to do with them. Sometimes any link with business or social issues is seen as very negative. Quite often business or politics is seen as evil. Saving souls is the only task of the church and of Christians. The result is that people who make a commitment to Christ only want to become full-time Christian workers, perhaps caring for the sick and needy in their midst but very little more. Christian service is in

essence the only legitimate career for Christians. Quite often they leave their jobs in businesses to become full-time Christian workers.

Global commercial enterprise is a dubious affair that impoverishes the rich spiritually and the poor materially. As Paul Stevens mentions in his book, *Doing God's Business: Meaning and Motivation for the Marketplace*,¹⁵ 'The church has a long history of antipathy towards business, except for the value attributed to businesspeople who give their tithes and sit on church boards'.¹⁶

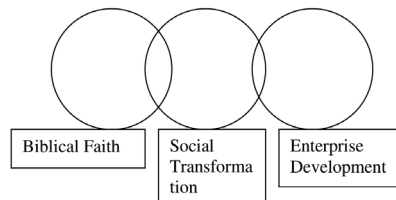
This attitude has its roots in centuries of church hostility towards making money.¹⁷ Paul, for example, says that the love of money is the root of all sorts of social evil. This attitude might also be rooted in the teaching of Jesus in which very little is mentioned about commerce. The underlying point that Jesus is making is only spiritual and relates very little to business.

The danger of this model is that it can lead to the following:

- Ecclesiological escapism where the focus is only on the spiritual needs in a community and the social and economic conditions are totally neglected. We see that in Africa today where Christianity has grown dramatically while churches are poor and somehow unable or unwilling to deal with the social problems such as corruption in their countries.

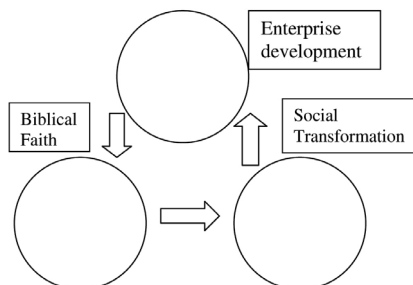
- Atheistic socialism where religion is seen as the opium of people and private enterprises are believed to oppress the community. This model proved unsustainable with the fall of communism.
- Secular commercialism where the focus is only on the commercial interests and what kind of monetary value can be extracted from communities. Very little space if any at all is provided for faith.

2. The Chain Model



In this view, biblical faith overlaps slightly with community transformation but not at all with enterprise development. Mission has nothing to do with business and very little with social action through caring for the poor in their midst. The different spheres form a chain from biblical faith towards enterprise development.

3. The Cyclic Model



¹⁵ Paul R. Stevens, *Doing God's Business: Meaning and Motivation for the Marketplace* (Grand Rapids: William B Eerdmans, 2006).

¹⁶ Stevens, *Doing God's Business*, 80.

¹⁷ Stephen Green, 'Sustainable Shareholder Value: Why Values Matter', *Faith in Business* 10:4, April 2007: 13-18.

The Cyclic Model suggests that biblical faith facilitates social transformation through the changed values of Christians who come to faith through evangelism. Social transformation facilitates enterprise development through an improved business climate as a result of improved social stability. Enterprise development facilitates biblical faith in return through more money given to the church through increased wealth of church members. That gives more financial resources for evangelism to change more people, etc – the process becomes a cycle.

VI Livingstone's Vision – Re-Modelled

Having in mind the problems related to the above models, I want to suggest the kingdom model as a more integrated approach to explain the relationship between biblical faith, social transformation and enterprise development,

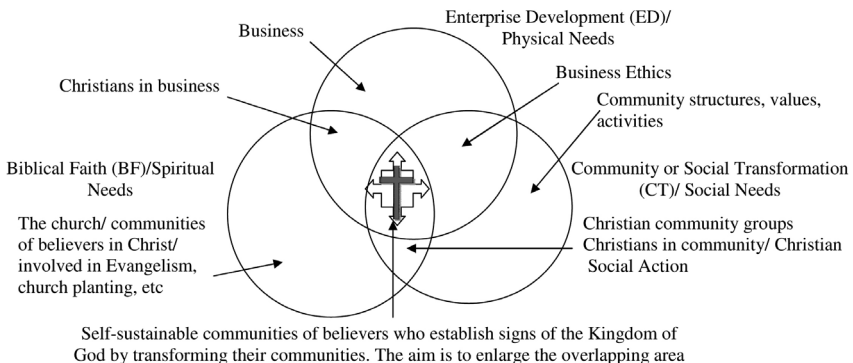
- **Biblical Faith: The Bible becomes the norm for life and conduct and**

not perceived western traditions. The Bible and not western Christianity is being taught. This brings people into a personal relationship with God to experience spiritual freedom. In this way spiritual transformation is facilitated. Evangelism is a call to transformation and changing behaviour and culture.¹⁸ Knowledge of, closeness to, healing by, and commissioning from Jesus therefore, constitute the transformation of the disciples and of ourselves.

Biblical faith empowers people to understand that God loves them, that they can love themselves and that they have to love their neighbours. This message therefore transforms their lives so that they get the courage to start businesses through which they can earn a living for themselves and their families and through that glorify God. These believers then transform

¹⁸ Anthony J. Gittins, *Bread for the Journey – The Mission of Transformation and the Transformation of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 31.

David Livingstone's Redeemed Vision – the Kingdom Model



the community around them through encouraging a life-style based on the biblical message that results in improved community care.

- **Social Transformation: The biblical principles are lived out.** Communities are helped to develop a value system that facilitates trust and responsibility; increases productivity; and enables communities to care for one another. Communities and individuals experience emotional and social freedom. Traditional God-glorifying values such as the African concept of Ubuntu are integrated into the transformation process.

Social transformation could be facilitated through discussion groups in the community and expressed through community action and voluntary service. Greater involvement from Christians in community structures facilitates improved social care and the eradication of negative values in the community. This is what has happened in the UK with the Abolitionist Movement. At the same time these Christian community leaders use their involvement as a witness to the biblical message that motivates them and in that way they can spread Biblical Faith while they are involved in the community.

Christians in this sphere can start social enterprises such as trading networks, provision of low cost housing, essential services for the poor in the community and environmental initiatives as business initiatives to generate income for the community.¹⁹

¹⁹ Ron Sider, *Rich Christians*, 236, summarises the connection between Biblical Faith and Social Transformation very well. The poor in developing countries must somehow find the courage to facilitate structural changes in

The mission we undertake in the spirit of Jesus is a mission that transforms all who are involved; in fact, the mission has as its very purpose the transformation of all things and persons, to bring them into closer conformity with Christ.²⁰

- **Enterprise Development: local communities take control of their own economic development.** Local job creation and sustainable wealth creation is encouraged. Companies and individuals from outside are encouraged to invest in sustainable commercial activities. Education provides the basis for enterprise development. Economic and physical freedom is experienced and economic transformation is facilitated.

Enterprise Development includes the provision of capital for the poor to earn their own way through, for example, micro-loan programmes,²¹ and also increases trading opportunities for local business people, access to markets, and the development of fair trade initiatives. Enterprise development then becomes a means of church planting, social service and transformation, community building and grappling with unjust practices.²²

their own countries. Such changes, however, 'can happen only if a fundamental transformation of values occurs ... Evangelism is central to social change. Nothing so transforms the self-identity, self-worth, and initiative of a poor, oppressed person as a personal, living relationship with God in Christ. Discovering that the Creator of the world lives in each of them gives new worth and energy to people psychologically crippled by centuries of oppression. As Jesus transforms lives so we as the Body of Christ can help transform others.'

²⁰ Gittins, *Bread for the Journey*, 162.

²¹ Sider, *Rich Christians*, 236.

²² Stevens, *Doing God's Business*, 91-99.

• The relationship between biblical faith, social transformation and enterprise development: The best way to understand the relationship is three overlapping circles that have the aim of developing self-sustainable communities of believers in Jesus Christ (Christians in churches)²³ that transform their society through adhering to God-given principles. With Christ at the centre, these communities of believers expand the overlapping area so that Christ will become more and more the centre of the life of the society in which these believers live.

At the heart of this understanding of the relationship between Biblical Faith, Social Transformation and Enterprise Development is the conviction that the Kingdom of God needs to become a reality in a society or community. The concept of the Kingdom of God within a mission context has been very well explained in the book, *The Good News of the Kingdom: Mission Theology for the Third Millennium*.²⁴

In an article in this book, Van Engen emphasizes that believers in Jesus are living in the dialectic of the Kingdom of God that has already come in Jesus, but yet is still in the process of coming until he comes again. The 'already' and 'not yet' character of God's rule means that the church and its mission consti-

tute an interim sign. In the power of the Spirit, the church points all humanity backward to its origins in God's creation and forward to the present and coming Kingdom in Jesus Christ.²⁵ While establishing signs of the Kingdom of God in their society, believers in Jesus:

- Care for others in such a way that God's grace brings about a radical and total transformation through faith (2 Cor. 5:17).
- Believe that together they can change the world. As the believers participate in God's mission, God's reign comes when people accept Jesus as Lord, and in obedience see God's will done on earth as it is in heaven. This involves economic justice and stewardship, structural and societal change as well as personal transformation. It involves the whole person, not only the spiritual aspects and all of life and not only the ecclesiastical.
- Live out the Kingdom's ethics and call people and structures to be reconciled with creation, with themselves, with each other and with God (2 Cor. 5:18-21). This life-style is deeply and creatively transformational for it seeks to be a sign of the present and coming Kingdom of God. Through that the believers recognize their profound commitment to radical transformation in their societies.

23 In many communities there is a very negative cultural perception of Christians and churches. It might therefore be better to talk about believers in Jesus Christ and communities of believers in Jesus Christ rather than about Christians or churches.

24 Charles Van Engen, Dean S. Gilliland and Paul Pierson (eds), *The Good News of the Kingdom: Mission Theology for the Third Millennium* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993).

VII Livingstone's Vision Implemented

Livingstone's vision to develop Africa

25 Charles Van Engen, 'Faith, Love, and Hope: A Theology of Mission On-the-Way' in Van Engen, et al, *The Good News of the Kingdom*, 253-263.

spiritually, economically and socially had a profound impact on the global mission movement. For example David Scott developed the Blantyre Mission in present day Malawi as a small missionary community intended to act with the cooperation of the African Lakes Company as a cultural and economic as well as religious catalyst within African society.²⁶ This vision also finds its expression in the concept of holistic mission where the emphasis is on the church as a vehicle for the transformation of society and catalyst for economic development.

This analysis is in line with the conclusions on the future priorities in world evangelization as suggested by Viggo Sogaard after the Global Inquiry on World Evangelization.

The emphasis here is on a holistic gospel that not only transforms an individual person, but it will have transforming consequences for societies, for trade and economics, for law, and for human rights.²⁷

Modern day examples of this vision include:²⁸

- CMS Africa is involved in exciting Business as Mission initiatives (www.bamafrica.org) while the Samaritan Strategy (www.samaritan-strategy-africa.org) encourages social transformation and enterprise development out of a better under-

standing of the biblical message.²⁹

- Various forms of Christian Community Computer Centers (www.tech-mission.org) are used to transform society and sometimes facilitate enterprise development from a Christian base that also aims to bring people to Christ.³⁰
- The Lared Business Network (www.lared.org) uses a series of principles based on the Bible that can be discussed in small groups to change the values in communities and through that encourage entrepreneurship and enterprise development.
- Various Business as Mission Initiatives amongst Unreached People Groups although in some cases the emphasis is much more on the link between Biblical Faith and Enterprise Development and less on Social Transformation.

However, there remain many challenges in the 21st Century to achieve the dreams of David Livingstone in terms of developing self-sustainable believers in Jesus Christ who can transform their communities:

1. Possibilities

- Countries such as Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia and Uganda have a real passion for community transformation,

²⁶ Ross, *David Livingstone*, 243.

²⁷ Viggo Sogaard, *Evangelizing our World: Insights from Global Inquiry*, 2004 Forum for World Evangelization, Thailand, September 2004, 59.

²⁸ This is not an extensive list but only some of the projects I have been personally involved with.

²⁹ See, Darrow L. Miller and Scott Allen, *Against All Hope: Hope for Africa* (Samaritan Strategy Africa Working Group, Nairobi, Kenya for a foundational outline of the Samaritan Strategy, 2005).

³⁰ Sas Conradie, (2007) 'Christian Community Computer Centers (C4s): Transforming Communities through Information Sharing and Technology', *Transformation*, Vol: 24 (2007) No 2:102-109.

enterprise development and biblical faith. Rwanda and Burundi are emerging as peaceful nations after years of genocide and conflict. Both these countries now have Christian presidents who ask the global Christian community to assist in spreading the gospel, changing the values in the community and to develop enterprises. There is a real possibility that Livingstone's vision could become a reality in these countries. The challenge to Christians in the international community is to accept that invitation and get involved in these countries, including investing in commercial enterprises.

- There is a growing acknowledgment that mistakes have been made in the past where the Escapist, Chain and Facilitating Models have been followed instead of the Kingdom Model. The result is endemic corruption, tribal conflict and religious syncretism. Many churches and mission initiatives are now taking steps towards a more Kingdom-orientated Model of understanding the relationship between biblical faith, social transformation and enterprise development. Theological institutions are teaching this model although much more has to be done.
- The growing integration between biblical faith, enterprise development and social transformation has the potential to decrease dependency on so-called western resources. As indigenous churches and ministries see their task not only as spir-

itual but also economical and social they will be enabled to generate much more of their own financial resources for their own ministries. That makes the Kingdom Model essential.

2. Sharing wealth in a globalised world

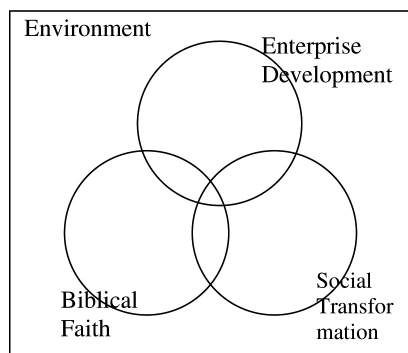
The 21st Century is a totally different world from the one in which David Livingstone worked. Technological advances in travel and communication have made the world a global village. This is part of God's design for the world since he made humanity an inter-connected and inter-dependent community with different resources in different places. This is in essence why we have globalisation. Within this inter-connected globalised community it is important for wealth to be shared to the benefit of all. This wealth or capital includes knowledge, spiritual, social and monetary wealth. The Kingdom Model of biblical faith, enterprise development and social transformation must therefore become a reality not only in one community, but ways have to be found to link 'Kingdom communities' with one another to facilitate and increase wealth exchange or to put it better, wealth interchange. The diagram below illustrates this need.³¹

³¹ I owe this diagram to Ms Shona Passfield, businesswomen and Church Mission Society Trustee.



3. The environmental context – towards the Quadruple Bottom Line Model

There is a growing acknowledgement that we live in a very fragile creation. Not only biblical faith, enterprise development and social transformation are needed, but these have to take the environmental context in which they operate into account. Christians have a biblical mandate to care for the environment while unrestrained commercial development will cause increased environmental destruction that will result in economic collapse in the future. Environmental destruction will increase social problems as communities and individuals fight with one another to obtain scarce resources such as water. The concept of the quadruple bottom line has therefore been developed to describe the environmental responsibility, social transformation, economic development and the spiritual growth in communities.³² Within the framework of the Kingdom Model as described previously, the quadruple bottom line model might be illustrated as follows:



VIII Towards the Kingdom Model

Born at the time of the Abolitionist Movement, David Livingstone's vision of Christianity, Civilisation and Commerce had a profound impact on the mission movement in the 19th Century. Unfortunately this vision has been distorted by colonialism and imperialism. Many Christians and mission initiatives became reluctant to implement this vision and shied away from commerce and social involvement. Fortunately there are a growing number of Christian initiatives today that take the vision seriously and present it in a different form.

The challenge for these initiatives is to find a way to develop a Kingdom Model of ministry that integrates the different aspects of Livingstone's vision. In a globalised world this model is needed more than ever, whether it be in well-reached communities in Africa or unreached areas of Asia and the Middle East. Perhaps it is time to even go beyond the Kingdom Model and put it within the framework of environmental care as described in the Quadruple Bottom Line Model of mission. Hopefully there will be many Christian leaders who will venture into what could become very exciting possibilities.

³² See for example Sohail Inayatullah, 'Spirituality as the Fourth Bottom Line' at www.metafuture.org/Articles/spirituality_bottom_line.htm for a non-Christian perspective on the Quadruple Bottom Line.

The Missional-Ecclesial Leadership Vision of the Early Church

Perry W. H. Shaw

KEYWORDS: *Mission, leadership, apostles, deacons, bishop, elders, prophets, organisational structure, Spirit, evangelism, congregation*

THE COMPREHENSIVE picture of God's salvific work shaped the life of the early church. While the specific language of 'already and not yet' was not used, the apostolic leaders' self-understanding that they were living 'in the last days' provided them with a missional impetus that they saw as the heart of the church's life. This was particularly the case with Paul, whose theological training and dramatic Damascus road experience profoundly shaped his missional life and teachings, and in turn the churches he founded and the individuals he mentored.

I Missional-Ecclesial Leadership in the Early Church

In reflecting on early church leadership there is a frequent tendency among

Christian writers to seek justification for contemporary church governance and administrative practice through eisegetical reading of texts that describe the developing life of the early church. In so doing the fundamental missional-ecclesial vision of the apostolic writers is often lost. A classic example is the way in which Acts 6 is used to justify various forms of church governance (all of congregational, Presbyterian, or Episcopal patterns are possible), and such practices as committees and food distribution for the poor. There are legion examples of books (and often the paragraph headings in Bible translations) that refer to this passage as 'the choosing of the seven deacons', a designation not applied until Irenaeus in the late second century.¹ The term 'deacon' does not appear once in the passage and those chosen are neither here nor elsewhere referred to as 'deacons', but as the Seven (see for exam-

¹ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1885/1987), 315-567.

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ple Acts 21:9). A more careful reading of this text in its literary context reveals the deeper issues which shaped the early church's vision of congregational leadership systems.

The book of Acts opens with a period of evangelism and growth (chs. 1-3), followed by the first external challenge to the church with the arrest of Peter and John (4:1-22). The church's response of courageous faith (4:23-30) is met with a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit (4:31), and a dynamic community life experience (4:32-37). Acts 5:1-10 describes the first internal challenge to the church, the result of which is the power of God expressed in multiple ways, and growth in reputation and numbers (5:11-16). This led to the second external challenge to the church, the arrest of the apostles and their subsequent release (5:17-40), which resulted in rejoicing and the further spread of the gospel (5:41-42).

The conflict over the distribution of food (6:1) led to the appointment of the spirit-filled Seven (6:2-6), and the spread of the word of God (6:7). One of the Seven, Stephen, began performing miracles and preaching with authority (6:8-10), leading to the third external challenge – Stephen's arrest and martyrdom (6:11–7:60). Central to this passage is Stephen's 'sermon' (7:1-53), the longest recorded in Acts, and less an actual 'sermon' than a theological defence before a religious court that paved the way for the acceptance of Gentiles into the church.²

The end result of Stephen's martyrdom is the scattering of the believers

(8:1-2), and an introduction to Saul of Tarsus (8:1, 3), who is to become the great apostle to the Gentiles. Among those scattered is another of the Seven, Philip, who uses the opportunity to preach the gospel in Samaria (8:4-13), leading to large numbers of Samaritans being accepted into the church (8:14-25). Philip is then led south where he encounters, teaches, and baptises the first Gentile convert – the Ethiopian official (8:26-39), after which we see Philip preaching in all the towns along the coast (8:40).

When taken in its context it becomes clear that Luke's concern in Acts 6:1-6 was *not* to prescribe a model for church governance and decision-making procedures. In point of fact we have no precise details of how the Seven were actually chosen – whether by election, consensus, or appointment. However, there is a detailed description of the positive qualities sought in new leaders. Nor was Luke's concern the administrative shape for distributing food to the poor. Rather, we read nothing further about food distribution in Acts, and we next see Stephen not in the ministry of social services but in the ministry of preaching and miracle-working. Shortly thereafter Philip has left his appointed ministry completely and is evangelising Samaria and beyond, and is later referred to not as a deacon but as an evangelist (21:8). If the point of the passage is to give a biblical mandate for committees and/or food distribution, at least two of the Seven failed pretty miserably in the task!

The context of this story drives us to see Luke's purpose in including it. There were several reasons, including the desire to provide an introduction to

2 Perry W.H. Shaw, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Amman: Program for Theological Education by Extension, 2000), 97-106.

the Seven as men filled with the Holy Spirit, to demonstrate how Spirit-driven and creative decision-making leads to the spread of the gospel, and finally, to emphasise that all are welcome in the people of God. The concerns embedded in the text are not administrative but rather the following: the missional-ecclesial vision of the spread of the word of God; the power of the Holy Spirit at work in the church and the need to depend on his guidance in decision-making; the comprehensive nature of the church racially and linguistically, and the love and acceptance that should characterize our churches; and the holiness and integrity of character expected in Christian leaders.

The only thing that a careful literary-contextual approach to Acts 6 says with respect to governance and church administration is that the preferred approach is one which best promotes the spread of the gospel. That this was the 'prescribed' approach of the early church is evident in the changing shape of leadership recorded in the book of Acts and the letters. Carter comments on the early church, 'At every stage persons are arranged to do ministry in the most effective way ... Changing mission means ... new positions and persons, sometimes through new roles for those already at work.'³

II Changing Leadership Patterns in Service of the Missional-Ecclesial Vision

In the opening of Acts we see authority vested in the Eleven, who in turn

oversee the casting of lots for Matthias to replace Judas and complete the Twelve. Through Acts 1-5 the Twelve apparently assumed sole responsibility for leadership, including oversight of the early church's finances (4:37; 5:2). As the church grew, the responsibilities became unwieldy and the Twelve oversaw the appointment of the Seven (6:1-6) who would take the administrative responsibility from their shoulders so that the Twelve could devote themselves to 'prayer and the ministry of the word' (6:2,4). With Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 7) and Philip's growing evangelistic ministry (Acts 8), one can only speculate as to what happened to the caring ministry to which they had been appointed, but while absolutely nothing is recorded it seems probable that the apostles continued to appoint others to these sorts of ministries.

Through Acts 8-11 the Twelve, and in particular Peter and John, continue to play a senior leadership role: the new movement in Samaria is only confirmed and established with the arrival of Peter and John (8:14-25); Barnabas saw apostolic approval as crucial to Saul's acceptance (9:27); Peter is the agency for the acceptance of Cornelius and his Gentile household into the church (10:1-11:18). Luke's record sees the Spirit's work at the heart of the church's centrifugal missional movement to Samaritans and Gentiles (8:15-19; 10:44-48; 11:15-18),⁴ crossing boundaries and becoming contextualised in new cultural settings,

³ William J. Carter, *Team Spirituality: A Guide for Staff and Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1997), 19.

⁴ cf. Bengt Sundkler, 'Jesus et les Païens', in *Contributions à l'étude de la Pensée Missionnaire dans le Nouveau Testament*, ed. Bengt Sundkler (Copenhagen: Munksgaard 1937), 1-38.

frequently in spite of the church's reluctance (11:1-3).⁵

It is with the growth of the multi-ethnic Antioch church that we first see new official roles being described. Agabus was clearly only one among many who were recognised as 'prophets' (*prophētēs*) (11:27-28), and apparently the leadership of the Antiochian church comprised a group of 'prophets and teachers' (13:1). Judas and Silas, 'leaders among the brothers' (15:22) are also designated 'prophets' (15:32). While some have questioned whether these were official designated roles in the church,⁶ the nominal grammatical structure would suggest that they were.

Certainly in the Revelation (11:18; 16:6; 18:24) prophets are singled out as those who have been targeted for persecution, suggesting an official leadership role in the late first century church. Likewise the *Didache* (10:7; 11:7-12; 13:1-7) speaks of prophets as individuals worthy of high respect and financial support, although by this time they may have had a predominantly itinerant influence rather than being

leaders in specific local churches.⁷

In Acts 14:14 we see the designation 'apostle' (*apostolos*) extended to Barnabas. That this became a standard designation for certain leaders beyond the Twelve is confirmed through the following: Paul's standard use of the term as a self-appellation; the reference to the apostles Andronicus and Junia (Rom. 16:7), Apollos (1 Cor. 4:6, cf. 4:9), and Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy in (1 Thess. 1:1; cf. 2:6-7); and the instructions given on apostles in the *Didache* (11:3-6). In 1 Corinthians 12:28 Paul speaks of God's appointment of first apostles, second prophets, third teachers. Irrespective of whether this is a chronological or hierarchical priority or both, or a prioritisation based on benefit to the faith community,⁸ or simply a listing device, the repeated mention in Ephesians 4:11 suggests that these are stable, permanent roles that were widespread in the early church.⁹

A discussion of the precise nature of each leadership role is subject to debate and has been discussed in some depth elsewhere.¹⁰ My point here is to indicate the fluid nature of governance

⁵ cf. Craig Van Gelder, *The Ministry of the Missionary Church: A Community Led by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 40.

⁶ Richard B. Gaffin Jr., 'A Cessationist View', in *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 23-64; John F. MacArthur Jr., *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993); Samuel E. Waldron, *To Be Continued? Are the Miraculous Gifts for Today?* (Ashland: Calvary, 2007); R. Fowler White, 'Richard Gaffin and Wayne Grudem: A Comparison of Cessationist and Noncessationist Argumentation', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* Vol. 35, no. 2, June 1992, 173-81.

⁷ Ronald Kydd, *Charismatic Gifts in the Early Church*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1984), 6-11.

⁸ Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in their Cultural Setting*, rev. ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 96.

⁹ Jerome Crowe, *From Jerusalem to Antioch: The Gospel Across Culture* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1997), 141.

¹⁰ For example Kenneth Berding, *What are Spiritual Gifts? Rethinking the Conventional View* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2006); Henry Blackaby and Mel Blackaby, *What's so Spiritual about your Gifts?* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2004); Max Turner, *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now* (Carlisle: Pater-noster, 1996).

and structure in the early church, and the continual restructuring that took place for the accomplishment of the missional mandate.

It is not until Acts 11:30 that we first hear of 'elders' (*presbuteros*), some 15 years or more after the Pentecostal founding of the church. But James has also come to prominence, and the apostles and elders look to James' leadership in the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:13). Schnabel suggests that the development of leadership by elders in Jerusalem had resulted from the departure of the Twelve from Jerusalem at the time of the Agrippan persecution of 41/42 AD mentioned in Acts 12.¹¹ It is probable that 'eldership' was first developed in the very Jewish environment of the Jerusalem Church, based on the model of the Sanhedrin.¹²

Whatever the reasons for the establishment of leadership by elders, from this point forward elders play a dominant leadership role in the church. Paul sees the appointment of elders as an essential element of his missional activity, and both appoints (Acts 14:23) and reports to (Acts 20:17; 21:18-19) elders as he travels. Even then it would seem that the term 'elder' was loose and fluid, and Acts 15:23 ('the elder brethren' – *hoi presbuteroi adelphoi* – is the best attested reading of the Greek text) suggests that in Jerusalem at least the term may have simply referred to senior believers who, like

James, had been followers of Christ since the resurrection or even earlier,¹³ a usage also found in Papias¹⁴ and Irenaeus.¹⁵

Eldership continues to be a prevailing pattern of church governance throughout the New Testament (Acts 20:17; 21:17-18; 1 Tim. 5:17-19; Tit. 1:5-6; Jas. 5:13-15; 1 Pet. 5:1-5; 2 Jn. 1; 3 Jn. 1; Rev. 4:4,10; 5:6,8,14; 11:16; 19:4), although the terminology is rather fluid between 'elder' and 'overseer' (*episkopos*; sometimes translated 'bishop'), particularly seen in the interchange of the terms in Acts 20:17,28 and Titus 1:5-9. The use of the term 'overseer' is widespread (Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:7), and may have been used to refer more specifically to those leaders in whose homes churches would meet, and who supported the faith community in various ways as 'patrons'.¹⁶

The first we see of the leadership role of 'deacon' (*diakonos*) is in Philipians 1:1 and in reference to Phoebe (Rom. 16:1). Despite the widespread translation of the term in Romans 16:1 as 'servant' or 'deaconess', neither can be justified linguistically, as the use of the masculine form (*diakonon*) in reference to a woman points strongly to a formal position held in the church.

11 Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008), 48.

12 Hans Von Campenhausen, *Ecclesiastical Authority and Spiritual Power in the Church of the First Three Centuries*, trans. by J.A. Baker (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969).

13 Roger Beckwith, *Elders in Every City: The Origin and Role of the Ordained Ministry* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), 45.

14 Papias, *Fragments of Papias*, in *The Ant-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1885/1987), 153-155.

15 Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*.

16 Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology*, trans. by M. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 573.

Deacons are also mentioned as local church leaders in 1 Timothy 3:8-10. It is noteworthy that Ignatius refers to deacons as not simply 'ministers of food and drink' but servants of 'the mysteries of Jesus Christ' (Trallians 2:3), pointing to their holistic ministry of word and deed in the service of the church's mission.¹⁷

It is probable that the early church gave multiple titles to leaders, for example elder (or deacon) and apostle, prophet, evangelist, and/or shepherd-teacher. This is suggested by Paul's tendency to introduce his letters with greetings to the elders, overseers, and/or deacons, but (with the exception of the pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus) the application of more 'charismatic' titles in the body of the text. The use of multiple titles is also indicated by a comparison between the most 'charismatic' of letters, 1 Corinthians, in which the emphasis is on the leadership of apostles and prophets, and 1 Clement 42:4 (addressed to the Corinthian church) in which Clement recaps their early leadership in the words, '[the apostles] appointed their first converts ... to be bishops [*episkopous*] and deacons.'

Despite the fact that deacons and elders clearly played a significant part in the life of the early church, we are nowhere informed as to the precise nature of their leadership roles, although clearly pastoral (Acts 20:28; Jas. 5:14; 1 Pet. 5:1-2) and teaching (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Tit. 1:9) ministries, and oversight of missional advancement (Acts 21:18-19), were key responsibilities. Of far greater concern to the New Testament

writers than leadership roles was the quality of life expected from these leaders (1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:1-4), as an essential necessity in the spread of the gospel (Acts 14:23; 20:28-32; Tit. 1:5). Paul clearly saw true righteousness in leaders as having foundational missional implications: the good reputation (*marturia*) of leaders (1 Tim. 3:7) is directly related to the witness (*marturia*) of the church.¹⁸ Fee observes,

Apart from the authority of the apostles over the churches they had founded, there seems to be very little interest in the question of 'authority' at the local level. To be sure, the people are directed to respect, and submit to, those who laboured among them and served them in the Lord (1 Cor. 16:16; Heb. 13:17). But in their roles as those who care for the others. The concern for governance and roles within church structures emerges at a *later* time.¹⁹

III Organic and Contextual Patterns of Missional-Ecclesial Leadership

Fluidity of governance and administration in service of the church's missional-ecclesial vision is also emphasized in the consistent biblical use of organic rather than organisational language in describing the church: body (Rom. 12:4-6; 1 Cor. 12:12-26; Eph. 4:4,25; 5:29-30; Col. 2:19; 3:15); family (Mt. 12:49-50; Rom. 12:10; Gal. 6:10; Heb.

¹⁸ Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 247.

¹⁹ Gordon D Fee, 'Laos and Leadership Under the New Covenant', *Crux* Vol. 25, No. 4, December 1989, 3-13.

¹⁷ Beckwith, *Elders in Every City*, 65.

13:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; 3:8); bride (2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7); wife (Eph. 5:25-28); olive tree (Rom. 11:17-24); a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation (1 Pet. 2:9). In the New Testament the word 'member' is consistently used with a biological rather than organisational meaning. Likewise, Paul saw his relationship to the churches he had established in parental (as father in 1 Cor. 4:14-15; 2 Cor. 12:14; 1 Thess. 2:11, and as mother in Gal. 4:19; 1 Thess. 2:7) rather than organisational terms.²⁰

The familial character of the early church's self-understanding is equally seen in that Luke uses some form of the Greek term *adelphos* ('brother/sister') fifty-seven times in the book of Acts when speaking of the community of faith. These images point to the church as: people more than programmes; dynamic and growing rather than static and stagnant; heterogeneous rather than homogeneous.

While certain positions (notably 'apostles', 'prophets', 'elders', 'overseers', and 'deacons') seemed to hold some level of precedence, the notion of a distinct 'clergy' class was foreign to the early church. The word *kleros*, from which the word 'clergy' derives, referred not to a separate group within the church, but to all who had received the inheritance of God's redemption (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:11-12).²¹ Within the early Christian community each believ-

er was called on to fulfil the ministry for which God had gifted him or her, so that corporately all might together grow to maturity (Eph. 4:11-12).

Spiritual gifts found their source in God himself, and consequently '... the authority to exercise a gift was the right of any person who had a call from God and could demonstrate it by the ability to use the gift properly. As a result, a large group of diverse people often shared the leadership.'²² Gaillardetz asserts that the 'charism-versus-office' debate is a product of Protestant-Catholic polemics, and that a more 'fluid continuum' existed between office and gift in the early church.²³

Comparative studies suggest that a significant cultural element came into the formation of structures within the early church. Meeks,²⁴ for example, observes clear parallels between the structure of local Christian communities in the first century and the concurrent models of the household (*oikia*), the voluntary associations that proliferated in the early Roman Empire, the synagogue,²⁵ and even the philosophical and rhetorical schools.

There can be no question but that patterns of congregational leadership

20 Robert Banks and Bernice M. Ledbetter, *Reviewing Leadership: A Christian Evaluation of Current Approaches* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2004), 37.

21 cf. W. Charles Arn, 'Lay ministry: A closer look', in *Church Growth: State of the Art*, ed. C. Peter Wagner (Wheaton: Tyndale, 1986), 108.

22 David A. Steele, *Images of Leadership and Authority for the Church: Biblical Principles and Secular Models* (Lanham: University, 1986), 9.

23 Richard R. Gaillardetz, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church: A People Called and Sent* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2008), 30-31.

24 Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale, 1983), 75-84.

25 cf. David J. Hesselgrave, *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally: A Guide for Home and Foreign Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 351, Steele, *Images of Leadership and Authority*, 27.

in the early church reflected predominant models observable in the local culture. However, the end goal differed: in contrast to a world that was shaped by Caesar the early church leaders recognised their primary calling to form an alternate community built on an identity rooted in Jesus Christ.²⁶ With this self-understanding, the focus on character rather than role in early Christian leadership should not surprise.

Even within the relatively brief period represented by the New Testament documents, change and development in church structure is observable. Lingenfelter²⁷ notes that in the early days, while the community was small and localised around Jerusalem, and group-identity was a central concern, a 'collectivist' approach to leadership was adopted by the early Christians. As the church grew, incorporated first Samaritan, then Gentile believers, and expanded far beyond the Levant region, a more complex organisation evolved. However, structures remained fluid until the close of the first century.

While the first hints of more formalised categories appear in the pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus and in the *Didache*, it is only in the writings of Ignatius (Ephesians 6; Magnesians 6; Trallians 3; Philadelphians 1; Smyrnaeans 8) in the early second century that more hierarchical and rigid ecclesial leadership structures begin to appear. If anything, a study of New

Testament terminology teaches us that congregational leadership forms must be understandable to the cultural context, and yet flexible enough to cope with changing needs both outside and inside the church, with the ultimate purpose that the community of faith will best live out its missional-ecclesial identity.

IV Summary

A careful reflection on leadership patterns in the early church suggests the following general principles:

- The missional-ecclesial vision of the early church shaped its governance. Organisational change occurred whenever the shape of governance was hindering the spread of the gospel and the formation of a community that reflected the incarnate character of God.
- The variety and flexibility of New Testament leadership terms seem to make any definitive statements on church governance or Christian leadership practice singularly unwise. Where any form of structured ministry is considered it is seen as a call to service of the faith community rather than as an opportunity to exercise power.²⁸
- It appears that general processes of institutionalisation²⁹ were at work even in the early church. However, its commitment to missional-eccle-

²⁶ Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 118.

²⁷ Sherwood G. Lingenfelter, *Transforming Culture: A Challenge for Christian Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 194-201.

²⁸ Gaillardetz, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church*, 32

²⁹ Paul G. Hiebert, Daniel R. Shaw, and Tite Tiénou, *Understanding Folk Religion: A Christian Response to Popular Beliefs and Practices* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 333-346.

sial vision with its balance between 'prophets' [apostles and prophets] and 'priests' [elders and deacons] slowed the process of institutionalisation at least until the early years of the second century.

- The Holy Spirit is the source of wisdom for both the choice of leaders and their on-going ministry. It is the Holy Spirit who provides both the gifting and authority necessary to fulfil particular leadership functions. Consequently, one of the chief responsibilities of existing leaders is to acknowledge and empower those whom the Holy Spirit has already appointed. Church governance in the early church is fundamentally a 'pneumatic' order.³⁰
- While certain individuals within

the community of faith are called to take positions of supervisory leadership, there is nonetheless a wide variety of leadership roles and these roles will be filled by many different members of the Body of Christ. Multiple leadership is based on Holy Spirit giftedness.

- Personal integrity, quality of life, being filled with the Holy Spirit, and a recognition that leaders are no more (or no less) than stewards entrusted with an authority which ultimately is not their own, are more important leadership issues than are position and task. Christian leadership finds its power base in spiritual rather than other forms of power.
- Church membership is by nature relational, emphasising mutual care and responsiveness to needs. The purpose of leadership is corporate growth in Christ, a growth that will not occur individually in an isolated setting.

³⁰ Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968).

Aspects of Reforming Theology and Practice in Sixteenth Century Europe

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From 'Grammatical-historical Exegesis' to 'Theological Exegesis': Five Essential Practices

Hank Voss

KEYWORDS: *Prayer, canon, church, context, analogy of faith, Rule of faith, hermeneutics, Christology*

If I know myself I am first and foremost a theological exegete.

*J. I. Packer*¹

The kind of questions serious young theologians put to us are: How can I learn to pray? How can I learn to read the Bible? Either we can help them to do this, or we can't help them at all. Nothing of all this can be taken for granted.

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer in a 1936 letter to Karl Barth*²

Introduction: Theological Exegesis—a Divine or a Devilish Illocution?

Theological exegesis is not a light matter; it is a dangerous thing to hear the voice of God. One seventeenth-century English writer is reported to have said, 'I had rather see coming toward me a whole regiment with drawn swords, than one lone Calvinist convinced that he is doing the will of God.'³ For the sincere exegete, the danger is twofold: obedience to the voice of God proved costly for the twelve disciples, but even graver danger lies in failing to discern whether one is hearing God's voice or another's. Perhaps the most famous example of a devilish use of 'God's voice' is attributed, not surprisingly, to the Devil himself. In Matthew 4:6 the Devil quotes Psalm 91:11-12

1 'In Quest of Canonical Interpretation', in *The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options*, ed. Robert Johnston (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 47; cf. 45.

2 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Meditating on the Word*, trans. Gracie David McI. (Cambridge, MA: Cowley, 1986), 22.

3 Cited in Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Until Justice and Peace Embrace: The Kuyper Lectures for 1981 Delivered at the Free University of Amsterdam* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 9.

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in an attempt to persuade Jesus to do something that neither the human nor the divine author of Psalm 91 intended.

In a 1984 article in *Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, F. F. Bruce claimed that grammatical-historical exegesis (GHE), by itself, is an inadequate reading strategy for the church; something more, 'theological exegesis' (TE), is needed.⁴ Since that article was written some thirty years ago, much has been written by evangelicals regarding the theological interpretation of Scripture. Many of these more recent discussions help us to build on Bruce's insight in order to more explicitly define an evangelical practice of theological exegesis. Kevin Vanhoozer is a leader in this discussion among evangelicals. He has authored a significant monograph, edited a dictionary, and written numerous essays on the topic.⁵ He understands theological exegesis to be an ecclesial reading practice which listens for the divine voice speaking in scripture by attending to the canon's Text/s, Author/s, and Reader/s.⁶

While there has been much discussion of what theological exegesis is, there has been far less discussion on *how* it works in practice. Thus this article addresses the question, '*How* do global theological educators equip

leaders in the church to practise theological exegesis?' More specifically, how do we balance an emphasis on human and divine authorship—which has tended to be an evangelical strength—while paying greater attention to a traditional evangelical weakness: readers, their contexts, and their interpretative communities? How are teachers of the church to equip the people of God to hear the divine voice in Scripture? What basic reading practices are necessary for Christian faithfulness when the church is facing massive and rapid growth, especially the type of growth described as 'church plant movements'.⁷ Toward an answer to these pressing questions, this article proposes five practices for evangelical theological exegesis:

1. Theological Exegesis Approaches Scripture with *Faith Seeking Understanding* (*fides quaerens intellectum*).
2. Theological Exegesis Is *Faithful* to the Original Contexts (*grammatical-historical exegesis*).
3. Theological Exegesis Reads Scripture with the Analogy of *Faith* (*analogia fidei*).
4. Theological Exegesis Reads Scripture with the Rule of *Faith* (*regula fidei*).
5. Theological Exegesis Reads Scripture within the Community of *Faith* (*intra ecclesiam*).

Note that the first and last of these practices are especially attuned to the *reader* of the text. Emphasis on the reader draws attention to practices, not simply method. Alasdair MacIntyre suggests that 'practices' require

4 F. F. Bruce, 'Interpretation of the Bible', in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984), 565–68.

5 See for example, Kevin J. Vanhoozer et al., eds., *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005).

6 See especially: Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text? The Bible, the Reader, and the Morality of Literary Knowledge* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

7 David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements: How God is Redeeming a Lost World* (Midlothian, VA: WIGTake Resources, 2004).

us to attend not only to methods, but also to the ends of the community in which the practice is located.⁸ Methods can be didactically helpful,⁹ but only when they are situated within these larger practices.¹⁰ The unique nature of the church's being and calling requires reading strategies distinct from the culture in which it dwells. As Yeago notes, 'Renewal of the church requires not only new ideas about the church, but renewed *practices* of being the church, and chief among these are *practices* of understanding and applying the Scriptures.'¹¹

The explosion of Christianity among the urban poor and in the global south gives rise to perhaps the most exciting stories of the twentieth century. The five practices of TE identified above are especially significant for those regional theatres. David Garrison has done the global church an invaluable (although widely ignored) service in documenting twenty-five emerging 'church planting movements'.¹² He records stories

like those of Sharif who launched 'the largest Church Planting Movement in the history of Christian missions to Muslims'.¹³ Between 1991 and 2001 Sharif's movement has seen 4000 churches planted among Muslims and 'more than 150,000 Muslims come to faith in Christ'.¹⁴ The five practices for theological exegesis proposed here aim to stimulate reflection on the types of theological education needed to serve pastors like Sharif or those currently being equipped at the institution where I serve, *The Urban Ministry Institute*.¹⁵ The thesis advanced is that an evangelical version of TE provides the best way forward for these pastors and for the theological educators whose vocation is to serve them.

I Faith Seeking Understanding (*fides quaerens intellectum*)

Anselm's (d. 1109) motto of faith seeking understanding is the starting point for the theological exegete. TE is a practice for those who have already made a volitional decision to respond to the command, 'You follow me!' (John 21:22). Their aim in reading Scripture is to know the mind of Christ.¹⁶ They

8 *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 187.

9 See for example Jack Kuhatschek, *Applying the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990); Robert Traina, *Methodological Bible Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980).

10 Richard Hays, 'Reading the Bible with Eyes of Faith: The Practice of Theological Exegesis', *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 1:1 (2007): 11–12.

11 'The Bible: The Spirit, Church, and the Scriptures: Biblical Inspiration and Interpretation Revisited', in *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church*, ed. James Joseph Buckley and David Yeago (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 93; emphasis added.

12 David Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*.

13 Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 36, 120.

14 Garrison, *Church Planting Movements*, 115.

15 The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI) has launched over 100 satellite campuses around the world since 2001. The vision of the institute is to provide formal theological education for church leaders serving among the urban poor. See further: www.tumi.org.

16 Thomas F. Torrance, 'The Reconciliation of Mind: A Theological Meditation upon the Teaching of St. Paul', in *Theology in the Service of the Church*, ed. Wallace M. Alston, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 200–201.

receive in faith Scripture's claim of divine authorship, and approach the text of scripture differently from the texts of other respected authors (Teresa of Ávila, Shakespeare, Endo) or even other texts which claim divine authorship (Koran, the Book of Mormon). For evangelical theological exegetes, the triune discourse of Scripture is unique, and they approach scripture aiming for a greater love and a deeper knowledge of the triune God.

Anselm's motto, 'I do not seek to understand in order that I may believe, but I believe in order to understand' did not represent a new interpretive practice. More than a thousand years before, others had confessed a similar 'motto'.¹⁷ A humble acknowledgement of God was deemed the starting point for knowledge (Prov. 1:7) and wisdom (Ps. 111:10). Those who wish to have understanding (Ps. 111:10) into the work (and word) of God, must begin with the fear of the Lord. The translators of the LXX were so sure of this fact that they added to the MT of Proverbs 1:7 an explanatory phrase, 'and piety toward God is the beginning of perception [*aisthêsis*]', (NETS).

For theological exegetes, 'the fear of the Lord' calls for a radical dependency upon the Holy Spirit, a dependency with at least two implications. First, the theological interpreter approaches Scripture with sin as an epistemological category. Without a favourable answer to the continual prayer of 'Lord,

Jesus, have mercy on me', he is aware of his notorious tendency to suppress unsavoury truths (Rom. 1:19–19; Ps. 119:9,11).

Secondly, dependency means that theological interpreters must be willing to turn 'common hermeneutical agendas upon their heads' by making the life of prayer 'utterly basic' to their practice of theological interpretation.¹⁸ Jeroslav Pelikan has famously pointed out that for the first 1500 years of the church, nearly all the theologians of the church (i.e. theological exegetes) were either bishops or monks. The vast majority of these would have followed some form of the Benedictine rule or a liturgy of the hours which would have them praying through the Psalter, including Psalm 119, every week.

Testimony to the influence of this practice on medieval exegetes is legion: 'whilst you were singing the psalms, did it not sometimes come about that you were illuminated by the brilliance of the spiritual sense?'; or 'when fixed in a fervor quite new, I began to love singing the Psalms for God's sake, many things in the divine Scripture began to be unlocked for me in silence as I was Psalm singing that I had been unable previously to track down by reading.'¹⁹ This prayerful approach to exegesis is at odds with much western exegetical practices, where the primacy of the life of prayer is rarely

¹⁷ For Blocher (and for Augustine, Aquinas, and Calvin), 'the fear of the LORD is the principle of exegetical and theological wisdom' (Henri Blocher, 'The Fear of the Lord as the "Principle" of Wisdom', *Tyndale Bulletin* 28 [1977]: 4, 15, 28).

¹⁸ Bartholomew and Holt, 'Prayer in/and the Drama of Redemption in Luke: Prayer and Exegetical Performance', 367.

¹⁹ Cited in Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, vol. 3: The Four Senses of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 626, n.305; 658, n. 184, cf. n.182; 724, n.182.

discussed.²⁰ Is it really surprising that earlier theological exegetes so often heard the divine voice in places where we find silence?

When the Christian exegete approaches the text with the prayer, 'Open my eyes, so that I may behold wondrous things out of your law' (Ps. 119:18),²¹ she is positioned between the discredited positivism of 'objective' historical criticism and the despair of the derridian-deconstructionist playground. In faith she approaches scripture with neither blind optimism nor despairing playfulness—rather she comes seeking the mind of Christ, an understanding of the divine voice, and a proper response of obedient love. Exegetical handbooks for the global church in the twenty-first century can no longer ignore this basic posture of the ecclesial reader.

II Faithful to the Original Contexts (*Grammatical-historical Exegesis*)

The human authors of Scripture are not excluded from the golden rule. We do our best to listen to them as we ourselves would want to be heard—not the least because we believe each to have been individually shaped, chosen, and

empowered by the Holy Spirit to write the Holy Scriptures. While the church has sometimes become distracted from the 'literal' sense of Scripture, it has almost always agreed that the literal sense was the most important. Origen himself built the spiritual sense upon the literal. Sensitivity and care (even love) for the original grammatical, historical, and literary contexts of the text remain a central practice of TE. Richard Hays has argued along similar lines:

History therefore cannot be either inimical or irrelevant to theology's affirmations of truth. The more accurately we understand the historical setting of 1st-century Palestine, the more precise and faithful will be our understanding of what the incarnate Word taught, did, and suffered.²²

Clarity on this point makes it worth repeating. Attention to the divine illocution of a text does not replace attentiveness to the human authors whom God divinely prepared and equipped to speak his own words. Tolerance for interpretive sloth and pride are not to be condoned. GHE seeks to attend carefully to the human authors' voices as individuals within a particular book, corpus, or testament.²³ It is

²⁰ For exceptions see: Patrick Reardon, *Christ in the Psalms* (Conciliar, 2000); Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Prayerbook of the Bible* (Life Together; Prayerbook of the Bible, ed. Geoffrey Kelly, trans. Daniel Bloesch and James Burtneiss (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006).

²¹ Psalm 119 (Bonhoeffer's favorite Psalm) is the prayer of the Christian Exegete (note the I-thou language throughout the Psalm). Reinhard Hütter is writing an entire commentary on the Psalm for the Brazos Theological Commentary Series.

²² 'Reading the Bible with Eyes of Faith: The Practice of Theological Exegesis', 12.

²³ Anthony Thiselton, *The Two Horizons: New Testament Hermeneutics and Philosophical Description with Special Reference to Heidegger, Bultmann, Gadamer, and Wittgenstein* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 91, 440; Vern Poythress, 'Divine Meaning of Scripture', *Westminster Theological Journal* 48:2 (1986): 277; Vanhooser, *Is There a Meaning in the Text?*, 265.

easier to hear clearly one voice, than many speaking at the same time. By carefully listening to each human author, theological interpreters are more accurately able to hear the divine voice speaking through the canon as a whole.²⁴ Thus evangelical TE does not denigrate GHE, but seeks to recover alongside of it the historic emphasis of the church on the divine voice speaking in Scripture as a whole.²⁵

III The Analogy of Faith (*analogia fidei*)

The analogy of faith (*analogia fidei*) has always played an essential role in ecclesial exegesis, but it moved to even greater prominence as a reading strategy during the Reformation due to the movement's motto of *sola scriptura*. This practice eventually came to mean that more difficult-to-understand passages in Scripture should be interpreted by the clearer ones. Henri Blocher helpfully traces four versions of the practice in the Protestant tradition.²⁶ He calls the first version the 'traditional' view and it corresponds to what I have called 'the rule of faith' in the next section (the term 'rule of faith' does not appear in the article). Blocher's fourth use, endorsed by the Second Helvetic Confession, refers to what I mean by

analogia fidei, but he calls it the *analogia totius Scripturae*, and explains that it means

[T]he comparison of all relevant passages on any topic, under the methodical duty to avoid substantial contradictions. It implies a systematic character in biblical interpretation, the totality of a coherent Scripture being the norm.²⁷

This rule is an essential component of Protestant interpretation and is also commonly referred to by the Latin phrase: *scriptura ipsius interpret* (Scripture is its own interpreter). In short, the analogy of faith requires theological exegetes to take the whole canon of Scripture into consideration when interpreting a biblical passage. Vanhoozer calls this idea of the divine voice speaking through the canon as a whole a 'canonical illocution', and he defines it as 'what God is doing by means of the human discourse in the biblical texts at the level of the canon'.²⁸

We find a compelling example of the *analogia fidei* in Jesus' reading strategy in Matthew 22:29–32. When challenged by the Sadducees about his belief in the doctrine of the resurrection (a belief that had developed more clearly during post-exilic Judaism and thus was not acceptable to the Sadducees who accepted only the Pentateuch as canonical), Jesus 'proves' the doctrine from Exodus 3:6. Grammatical-historical or historical critical study

²⁴ Examples of evangelicals who have offered helpful proposals of what this could look like on a larger scale include Paul House, Charles Scobie, and Chris Wright.

²⁵ Daniel Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 187–205.

²⁶ Henri Blocher, 'The Analogy of Faith in the Study of Scripture', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 5 (1987): 18–24.

²⁷ Blocher, 'The Analogy of Faith in the Study of Scripture,' 20.

²⁸ *Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 179, emphasis original.

might not find the doctrine of the resurrection in Exodus 3:6, but Jesus' teaching in Matt 22:29–32 reveals that the idea of resurrection is part of the divine illocution.²⁹

Jesus' final words to the Sadducees in Mark's version, '*polu planasthe*' ('You are quite wrong', ESV), continues to warn theological exegetes of the danger of failing to attend to the divine voice found in the canon as a whole. As Craig Blomberg notes: 'Contemporary objections to Jesus' logic here perhaps reveal an unnecessary rigidity in our modern historical/grammatical hermeneutics rather than any fallacy with Jesus' interpretation.'³⁰ Vern Poythress, while not discussing the *analogia fidei* in particular, makes a similar point, 'We must attend to God's meaning. And God's meaning is not boxed in. Rather, it will become evident in the subsequent events and in the subsequent words of explanation.'³¹

While the value of the analogy of faith has repeatedly proven itself throughout church history, its importance can also be illustrated from recent western evangelical theology, biblical studies, and biblical theology. In theology, Kevin Vanhoozer's proposal for a 'canonical-linguistic approach' to Christian theology presents a powerful appeal for the recovery of the analogy

of faith as a component of TE.³² Within biblical studies, the recent explosion of interest in the use of the Old Testament in the New, intertextuality, and intracanonical criticism illustrates its increasing importance.³³ A third example can be seen in evangelicals' continued commitment to a form of biblical theology which displays many of the qualifications of TE.³⁴

To these western examples must be added the testimony of pastors serving among the world's more than one billion urban poor. Many of these leaders will never be able to afford more than three or four books beyond their Bible.³⁵ The exegetical fruits of these teachers of the church, who almost always rely upon the canon for their 'commentary' on a pericope, is not to be quickly despised.³⁶

32 'A theological exegesis will therefore pay as much, if not more, attention to the canonical context as the historical in order to discern the communicative intent of the divine playwright' (Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 249).

33 See articles on 'Intertextuality' and 'Scripture, Unity of', in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, 332–34; 731–34.

34 See T. Desmond Alexander et al., eds., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity and Diversity of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000); and the *New Studies in Biblical Theology* Series edited by D. A. Carson.

35 *The Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge* (a 'precritical' Bible study aid with some 300,000 intratextual references), or some similar tool, should be one of those few books.

36 I think of conversations on 'suffering' with leaders of persecuted house churches in China, or on 'citizenship' (Acts 22:38; Eph. 2:19; Phil. 3:20) with pastors whose congregations consist of undocumented workers in the United States.

29 Although see J. Gerald Janzen, 'Resurrection and Hermeneutics: On Exodus 3:6 in Mark 12:26', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*: 23 (1985): 56.

30 Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1992), 334.

31 Vern Poythress, 'The Presence of God Qualifying Our Notions of Grammatical-Historical Interpretation: Genesis 3:15 as a Test Case', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50:1 (2007): 99.

IV The Rule of Faith (*regula fidei*)

Evangelical interpreters are becoming increasingly aware of a fourth ecclesial interpretive practice; Scripture must be read according to the Rule of Faith. This rule cannot be neglected if an interpretation is to be considered 'Christian'—at least this has been the unanimous opinion of the 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic church' (Nicene Creed) since the fourth century. Although Thomas Aquinas identified the rule of faith as *sola canonica scriptura est regulae fidei* (canonical Scripture alone is the rule of faith)—which would make it analogous to the Protestant version of the analogy of faith (*scriptura ipsius interpres*), the rule is better thought of as an authoritative summary of Scripture's message—a trustworthy map to Scripture.³⁷

The rule of faith is referred to by both Ignatius (d. c. 107) and Polycarp (d. 156), although it receives its first significant development with Irenaeus (d. c. 185) and Tertullian (d. c. 225).³⁸ Its content was perhaps most clearly articulated by Vincent of Leréns (d. c. 445), who described it as that which has been believed everywhere, always, by all.³⁹ While the exact form of this

rule is debated, its essence is threefold: Scripture narrates the story of the mission of God (His-story), Scripture leads us to Christ, and, the God who created the world is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ who together with the Holy Spirit is to be worshipped as Yahweh. The three elements of this rule are most authoritatively summarized in the Nicene Creed—the 'pledge of allegiance' for the one (holy, catholic, apostolic) nation under God (1 Pet. 2:9).⁴⁰

1. The Rule of Faith Reads Scripture as a Single Story

The first element of the rule of faith is a commitment to reading Scripture as a single story in which we as readers are participants. N. T. Wright points out that the unity of the first Christians was to be found in the story they shared:

Their strong centre, strong enough to be recognizable in works as diverse as those of Jude and Ignatius, James and Justin Martyr, was not a theory or a new ethic, not an abstract dogma nor rote-learning teaching, but a particular story told and lived.⁴¹

37 Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine*, 208; John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.9.14, ed. John Thomas McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, Library of Christian classics v. 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1165.

38 Kathryn Greene-McCreight, 'Rule of Faith', in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, 703; Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, 57–68.

39 Vincent of Leréns, *Commonitory*, 2.6–7. The Jehovah's Witnesses claim 'assemblies of

Jehovah' in some 230 countries, adding current weight to St. Vincent's concern. See also James Kombo, *The Doctrine of God in African Christian Thought*, 21–22.

40 James K. A. Smith calls the Nicene Creed the 'pledge of allegiance' for the church (*Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009], 190).

41 N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God*, vol. 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 456.

Paul Blowers, in a seminal article on the Rule of Faith, has built on Wright's observation to show that the heart of the church's rule of faith is a shared story. He writes:

My premise here is that at bottom, the Rule of Faith (which was always associated with Scripture itself) served the primitive Christian hope of articulating and authenticating a world encompassing story or metanarrative of creation, incarnation, redemption, and consummation.⁴²

An increasing number of biblical scholars and theologians recognize that Christian interpretation of Scripture must be done within the interpretive framework of the cosmic drama of salvation in which we participate.⁴³ Although the embrace of a participatory exegesis within Scripture's metanarrative is celebrated under labels such as 'Salvation History' and 'Missional Hermeneutics' these movements are simply rediscovering the ancient Rule of Faith's emphasis on the mission of God in the canonical biblical narrative.

2. The Rule of Faith Finds Christ at the Centre of Scripture's Story

If the first component of the rule of faith has to do with interpretive practice beginning and ending within the story of God, the second component of the rule makes clear the goal of all TE: to know Christ, for he is the *telos* of both

Scripture and the Christian life.⁴⁴ It listens in Scripture for the voice of the Spirit who leads us to Christ.⁴⁵ It seeks to know Christ in all of Scripture, for Christ through the Spirit reveals the Father (Matt 11:27). The exact way in which Christ is met in the canon is not specified by the rule of faith, but it does agree that he is its *res*.⁴⁶

Debates rage as to what it means to read Scripture with a Christological lens (e.g., Is such reading christocentric, christo-ecclesiological, christomonic or christotelic?). Whatever methodological lens is used, the rule of faith requires us to read all of Scripture in a manner informed and normed by an orthodox Christology.⁴⁷ However, we must keep in mind Kevin Vanhoozer's warning, 'Spiritual formation can be the aim, but not the norm, of biblical interpretation. The norm must remain the author's illocutionary intent.'⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Mt. 5:17; Lk. 24:27, 44; Jn. 5:39; Heb. 10:7; Gal. 4:19; Eph. 4:13.

⁴⁵ Typology thus becomes a vital interpretive skill in TE. See discussion in: Daniel J. Treier, 'Typology,' in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, 823–27.

⁴⁶ 'The implication is that exegesis does not confine itself to registering only the verbal sense of the text, but presses forward through the text to the subject matter (*res*) to which it points.' Brevard Childs, 'Toward Recovering Theological Exegesis', *Pro Ecclesia* 6 (1997): 19.

⁴⁷ For a well-developed example of Augustine's practice of Christological reading, see Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, 70–77.

⁴⁸ 'From Speech Acts to Scripture Acts: The Covenant of Discourse and the Discourse of the Covenant', in *After Pentecost: Language and Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Craig G. Bartholomew and et. al., vol. 2, SHS (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 42.

⁴² Paul Blowers, 'The *regula fidei* and the Narrative Character of Early Christian Faith', *Pro Ecclesia* 6 (1997): 202.

⁴³ For example, Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003).

3. The Rule of Faith is Trinitarian

The third component of the Rule of Faith exegetes Yahweh. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is to be identified with the Father, Son, and Spirit of the NT documents. C. Kavin Rowe has shown how the canonical texts exerted pressure on the early church to 'conclude that there is a necessary and essential connection between the Old Testament and, at least, economic Trinitarian doctrine'.⁴⁹ The Rule of Faith does not require the ecclesial exegete to find the Trinity in every pericope, but it does require the exegete to face the canonical 'pressure' of relating the Creator God of Genesis 1:26 with what the Spirit has revealed about God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The earliest form of the Rule of Faith is difficult to confirm, but its threefold emphasis was reliably embodied in the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed of 385.⁵⁰ The Nicene Creed thus serves as a foundational guide for the theological exegete. S. Mark Heim remarks:

The [Nicene] creed is not only one of the unifying factors of past ecclesiastical history, it is the most traditionally authoritative expression of the Christian faith. If we are interested in other forms of unity, we can bypass the creed, but a unity in faith

has no other focus or basis.⁵¹

Has Heim overstated the case? Perhaps, but if so he is correct at least to insist that the Nicene Creed cannot be bypassed by the evangelical theological exegete. The creed captures the cosmic story of redemption and the Christological and Trinitarian rules of the ancient church.⁵² It provides an essential map, reliably laying out the land in which TE is done.⁵³ It serves theological exegetes as a 'fence', helping them recognize when a certain reading of Scripture lies beyond the bounds of orthodoxy.⁵⁴ The creed is 'the touchstone and guarantee of orthodox, biblical faith'; it is the pledge of allegiance for evangelical theological exegetes.⁵⁵

V Within the Community of Faith (*catholica regula*)

We have so far laid out four essential

⁴⁹ He bases his claim on exegetical studies of: 1) Joel 2:32; Rom. 10:13; Acts 2:21; 2) Jn. 20:28; 3) 2 Cor. 3:17a; 4) Gal. 4:4–6; 5) Rom. 8:9–11 (C. Kavin Rowe, 'Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics', *Pro Ecclesia* 11:3 [2002]: 306).

⁵⁰ While the Roman Catholic and most Orthodox communions recognize all seven ecumenical councils, the Protestant churches have generally acknowledged only the first four (thus accepting the Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds).

⁵¹ S. Mark Heim, 'Introduction', in *Faith to Creed: Ecumenical Perspectives on the Affirmation of the Apostolic Faith in the Fourth Century: Papers of the Faith to Creed Consultation*, Commission on Faith and Order, ed. S. Mark Heim, Faith and Order Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 19.

⁵² My introduction to theological exegesis and the importance of Nicene orthodoxy came from Don Davis. Most recently, see his *Sacred Roots: A Primer on Retrieving the Great Tradition* (Wichita, KS: The Urban Ministry Institute, 2010).

⁵³ Philip Turner, 'Introduction', in *Nicene Christianity: The Future for a New Ecumenism*, ed. Christopher D. Seitz (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001), 11; cf. Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 204, 449–50.

⁵⁴ 'Those who are not of the truth take themselves out of the game by their refusal to play by the rules (viz. the Scriptures, the Rule of Faith)' (Vanhoozer, *Drama of Doctrine*, 426).

⁵⁵ Bray, *Creeds, Councils, and Christ*, 118.

practices of TE. Although all are inter-related, they have been presented in a dogmatic order. Faith in Christ is the door through which one approaches Scripture in order to do TE (practice one). After believing, one listens first to individual scriptural soloists (practice two), and then to the canonical choir (practice three) in order to hear what the Spirit is singing in the Word. If the song that is heard does not resonate with the rule of faith, it must be tuned into harmony (practice four). Finally, the theological exegete recognizes that what he has heard in a given text must now be sung in a local theatre (practice five).⁵⁶ But should this final stage be a solo or ensemble performance?

Rene Decartes (d. 1650) is well known for his basic premise, *cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am). One of my professors was fond of pointing out that it was the 'I' not the 'think' which was revolutionary and thus foundational for the Enlightenment. Three hundred years later, most western exegetes have deeply imbibed the principle of individualism from the Father of modern philosophy. But emphasizing 'my thought', 'my interpretation', 'my song' is a theological danger for the ecclesial exegete. According to Paul it is 'we' who 'have the mind of Christ' (2 Cor. 2:16), but who are we? Vanhoozer offers helpful insight on this point:

A canonically-centered catholic tradition that includes voices from past and present, North and South, East and West, thus corresponds to the nature of the Bible itself. To affirm a 'Pentecostal plurality' is to acknowledge that it takes many interpretive communities spanning many times, places and cultures in order fully to appreciate the rich, thick

meaning of Scripture.⁵⁷

The 'Pentecostal plurality' of which Vanhoozer speaks includes those pastors and teachers living among the world's one billion urban poor.

Theological exegetes must be humble enough to hear what the Spirit is saying to the whole body. It is not only the meritocratic elite, 'qualified by guild certification', who have been given ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches.⁵⁸ Wise ecclesial exegetes from across the ages warn us to pay careful attention to the *cognito per modum connaturalitatis* (Aquinas),⁵⁹ to 'the spiritual instinct of the children of God',⁶⁰ and to those formally untrained who have a 'theological instinct' attuned to the mind of Christ.⁶¹ Theological exegesis requires a type of 'corporate discernment of spirits',⁶² a

56 Since the individual comes to faith in a local community, there is also a circular dimension to the process.

57 Kevin Vanhoozer, 'Theological Method', in *Global Dictionary of Theology*, ed. William A. Dyrness et al. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 896. See also *The Drama of Doctrine*, 27.

58 Yeago, 'The Spirit, Church, and the Scriptures', 50.

59 Discussed in Johannes Baptist Metz and Edward Schillebeeckx, eds., 'The Teaching Authority of All—A Reflection about the Structure of the New Testament', in *The Teaching Authority of Believers* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1985), 19.

60 Helmut Thielicke, *A Little Exercise for Young Theologians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), 26.

61 Torrance, 'The Reconciliation of Mind: A Theological Meditation upon the Teaching of St. Paul', 303.

62 Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, Expanded Ed. (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 2002), 18.

process which John Powell explains is called 'connaturality':

As the life of Christ is deepened in us by the Holy Spirit, there is created in the Christian a 'sense of Christ,' a taste and instinctual judgment for the things of God, a deeper perception of God's truth, an increased understanding of God's dispositions and love toward us. This is what Christians must strive to attain individually and corporately; theologians call it Christian *connaturality*. It is like a natural instinct or intuition, but is not natural, since it results from the supernatural realities of the Divine Indwelling and the impulses of grace. No account of dialectical or analytical facility, which is purely human, can provide this connatural instinct. It is increased only by the continual nourishment of the life of God that vivifies the Christian.⁶³

Theological exegetes recognize that they are members of the body of Christ, and their interpretations of Scripture are offered with interdependence upon the perspectives of other members of the body. The body has a variety of ways of knowing: ears (hearing), eyes (sight), hands (touch), nose (smell), tongue (taste). No one member of the body (e.g. a seminary trained exegetical 'eye') understands a text of Scripture as well as the whole body who together share in the 'mind of Christ'.⁶⁴

63 John Powell, *The Mystery of the Church* (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1967), 8. Cited in Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 19.

64 Consider the insights offered by 'untrained' exegetes such as Vinoth Ramachandra, Mother Teresa, Jean Vanier, Paul Brand, Paul Tournier, Dorothy Sawyers, Frank Lau-

Secondly, if the one Spirit (Eph. 4:3–4) who speaks in Scripture is speaking to all Christians, in all places and at all times, then wisdom dictates that theological exegetes carefully consider how members of the body in other times and places have heard the Spirit's voice. Our confession of a 'catholic' or universal church is of great weight for TE, since no one contemporary culture has a complete understanding of Scripture.⁶⁵ The ecclesially attuned exegete seeks to avoid the blind spots of our age and the chronological snobbery of most historical critical exegesis by listening to the communion of saints across the ages. He also seeks to avoid the western academic captivity of the Bible by dialoguing with global exegetes whose location outside of the West allows new insights to emerge.

In Conclusion: Siblings and Neighbours

'And now the end has come. So listen to my last piece of advice: exegesis, exegesis, and yet more exegesis! Keep to the Word, to the scripture that has been given to us',⁶⁶ said Karl Barth. But

bach, Sadhu Sundar Singh, or 'uneducated' pastors like A. W. Tozer or John Bunyan. See further: Billings, *The Word of God for the People of God*, 117–18.

65 For well-developed thinking on this dimension of catholicity see: Jonathan R. Wilson, *Why Church Matters: Worship, Ministry, and Mission in Practice* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 125.

66 Karl Barth in a farewell sermon from Psalm 119 to his Bonn students in 1935 after being forced from his university post. Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 259.

what kind of exegesis is it to be? In this essay I have argued that theological exegesis (TE), rather than grammatical historical exegesis (GHE) alone, will best serve the global church. Evangelical theological exegesis requires five ecclesial practices, and GHE is only one of the practices necessary for pastors and church teachers to be adequately equipped (2 Tim. 3:17) to interpret the Word of God.⁶⁷ A 'distinctive ecclesial enterprise of scriptural interpretation' requires wisdom and a balance of these five practices; this is where future research on evangelical TE needs to focus.⁶⁸

Finally, what about our non-Christian neighbours? For Jesus and his disciples, there were only two types of reading: reading with siblings (Luke 8:21) and reading with neighbours (Lk. 10:26, 33, 36–37). Our eyes are often opened when we read Scripture with neighbours, and we learn invaluable lessons. If one thinks theological exegesis provides an excuse to ignore Adler's art, Sternberg's poetry, or an agnostic's critical commentary, one has

missed the point of the theological interpretation movement.⁶⁹ Rather, theological exegesis is a reading strategy for the community of readers who have decided to follow Jesus as Rabbi. It is not something to be forced upon those who have not made a faith commitment to Jesus, nor does it imply that evangelical theological exegetes have no need to learn from others.

Theological exegesis is analogous to that old Mennonite slogan, 'A humble proposal for world peace: Let all Christians agree to stop killing each other.' The point is not to exclude non-believers from the proposal, the point is rather to say that one must start somewhere. Theological exegesis is a reading strategy for teachers of the church, *intra ecclesiam*; it is for those who claim to follow the way of Jesus, and who are called to teach (Matt. 28:19–20) other disciples how to read the Scriptures that testify to Christ (Luke 24:27). The practices of theological exegesis provide the kind of help 'serious young theologians' and pastors need. I hope Bonhoeffer would be pleased, and that Sharif will be helped.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ In a longer version of this paper I describe the neglect of these five practices as the *Relational Fallacy*, *Exegetical Fallacy*, *Canonical Fallacy*, *Theological Fallacy*, and the *Ecclesial Fallacy*.

⁶⁸ See for example, Daniel Treier, *Virtue and the Voice of God: Toward Theology as Wisdom* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006).

⁶⁹ Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Indiana University Press, 1987); William Propp, *Exodus 19–40*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 2006).

⁷⁰ Thanks to Ryan Peterson, Timothy Larson, Dan Treier, and John Walton for feedback on previous versions of this paper; remaining errors are my own.

The Bible and our Postmodern World

Billy Kristanto

KEYWORDS: *contextualization, contemporary theology, plurality, aesthetics, Postliberal, marginal, foundationalism, metanarrative*

MAKING THE BIBLE relevant to the contemporary audience is not a new problem but it has been the lasting struggle of Christian theologians. In every age however, two alternatives can always be found with regard to this issue: the more negative responses and the more positive responses to contemporary thought. Such alternatives are unavoidable since from the Christian perspective there are the influences of both divine common grace and sin in every contemporary (secular) thought. Therefore, the right response to postmodernism should be arguably both fascination and aversion.¹ Before mov-

ing to evaluate the opportunity and reduction of postmodernism, we should sketch roughly the main arguments of postmodernism against modernism or in other words, the paradigm shift from modernity to postmodernity.

I Change of Paradigm from Modernity to Postmodernity

1. Epistemological Foundationalism

First is the shift from epistemological foundationalism. The belief that true knowledge should be based on the

1 Compare Fatio's designation of the term applied to the relationship between Lambert Daneau and medieval scholasticism in Olivier Fatio, *Méthode et théologie: Lambert Daneau et*

les débuts de la scolastique réformée (=Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, vol. 147), (Geneva: Droz, 1976), 118; quoted from Christoph Strohm, 'Methodology in Discussion of "Calvin and Calvinism"', in: H. J. Selderhuis (ed.), *Calvinus Praeceptor Ecclesiae: Papers of the International Congress on Calvin Research* (Princeton, August 20-24, 2002) (=Travaux d'Humanisme et Renaissance, vol. 388) (Geneva: Droz, 2004), 83.

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first principles from which all else is derived is typical of the modern paradigm. In the words of B. K. Putt,

One can undertake an epistemological archaeology, and 'dig' back through the layers until one can discover a bedrock of first principles (archai) upon which the edifice of learning rests. Only if such a beginning can be located can there be any hope for establishing objective and certain truth.²

In the case of Rene Descartes, epistemology is based upon the certainty of the existence of the doubting human self, thus making the idea of doubt the foundation of knowledge. Modern Christian theology for sure did not follow Descartes in claiming certainty is based upon the doubting self; rather it claimed divine revelation as the guarantee of the certainty of faith. Thus a huge difference between both cannot be ignored.

On the other hand, modern Christian theology also tried to demonstrate the reasonability of the Christian faith in such a way that is also compatible with the modern paradigm of foundationalism. The certainty and objectivity of Christian truths were demonstrated by insisting on a set of Christian 'first principles' or presuppositions such as the existence of God, the God who revealed, the God who had a saving plan for humanity, and so on. This is of course not wrong in itself. However, debate, polemics, argumentation, apolo-

getics, or even evangelization were then reductively directed to combat the basic (secular) presuppositions by showing the supremacy of Christian presuppositions. In other words, Christian witness was understood as a fine demonstration of the battle between the two totally opposing first principles. Apologetics for instance was essentially an archeological process that tried to dig deeper and deeper to discover the first principles or basic presuppositions of the faith. Other principles are superficial if not artificial since they reflect only the deepest assumption of the human heart.

Foundationalist theories have been criticized on the grounds that they are insufficient as a basis for the superstructure of belief and because they lack coherence:

... it is not obvious that we have beliefs which are indubitable, incorrigible, or in any sense intrinsically justified; and hence it is not obvious that we have any beliefs which should count as foundational. Moreover even if we admit foundational beliefs, those beliefs will be defeasible evidence for the rest of what we believe. And this ensures that the rest of what we believe is justified because of the way our evidence globally fits together. But global requirements of this sort are the hallmark of coherence theories of justification.³

2. Metanarratives

Second is the shift from the belief in

2 B. Keith Putt, 'Preunderstanding and Hermeneutical Spiral' in *Biblical Hermeneutics: A Comprehensive Introduction to Interpreting Scripture*, ed. Bruce Corley, Steve Lemke, and Grant Lovejoy (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1966), 203-4.

3 Scott Sturgeon, 'Epistemology,' in *Philosophy 1: A Guide through the Subject*, ed. A. C. Grayling (Oxford: University Press, 1999), 21.

the existence of metanarratives that can also be understood as a shift from the emphasis on unity at the expense of plurality. Unity is not uniformity and diversity does not necessarily lead to fragmentation. However, the modern mind seemed to be very cautious about the potential of disintegration and thereby had been suspicious of every kind of plurality. It reflected on various alternatives from subordinationism in the doctrine of Trinity or highly hierarchical ecclesiological structure to the wearing of a uniform in the communist ideology.

In the tradition of Christian theology, it is appropriate or even necessary to advocate the harmony of the Gospels, of the Laws, of the Prophetic Books, or even of one single book such as the Book of Genesis or a Pauline letter. If there is a place for diversity, then it should be highly subordinated. The thought of one single central (highest) focus dominated the way of doing modern systematic theology. Even in the field of Biblical Theology, advocating many focuses could not be accepted as a sound methodology, especially for the Old Testament. Geerhardus Vos, for instance, pointed out the important role of the principle of successive birth-makings (covenants) in marking the new periods in the Bible. He also believed that in the earlier stages of revelation, there are so many things in common and that greater diversity was reached only in the later periods. The individual peculiarities should 'subserve the historical plan'.⁴ Correspondingly, the evangelical message was

focused on the soteriological aspect of the Bible. The plurality of messages that do not emphasize the soteriological agenda was soon to be regarded as unevangelical.

On the other hand, our postmodern world tends to stress plurality not only as fact but also as ideology (that is, pluralism). Uniformity is considered unattractive, boring, and reductive. Postmodernity is searching for richness and diversity instead of logical coherence. It does not even matter whether one still cannot harmonize tensions between two or more opposing ideas. It is the nature of reality that it should always be perceived paradoxically. The search for truth is best described as an ongoing and unsettled dispute that does not need to be settled in a definitive way.⁵ Instead of speaking of 'the theology' of the Old Testament, one speaks of 'theologies' in the Old Testament.⁶ In the New Testament field the particular theological profile of each Gospel can be clearly distinguished.⁷ By contrast with the older tradition, one does not try to 'harmonize' the different profiles presented by various Gospels but rather celebrates the multifaceted picture of Jesus.

⁵ Compare Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, Dispute, Advocacy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 73-4.

⁶ See for instance Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Theologies in the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002) and Rolf Rendtorff, *Theologie des Alten Testaments: Ein Kanonischer Entwurf*, vol. 2: Thematische Entfaltung (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001).

⁷ Compare Udo Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2009), 399-523, 659-750.

⁴ Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1948), 25-6.

3. Pure Reason

Third is the shift from 'pure reason' with its concept of (rational-conceptual) truth to the significance of hermeneutical aesthetics. Modern thinking reasoned from the foundation upwards with its optimistic certainty of the power of reason. Even the response to art by Immanuel Kant in his aesthetic theory had been converted into abstraction and conceptual judgment, thereby reducing aesthetic judgment to a matter of merely subjective response. Modern Evangelical theology, following the demand of the age, was demonstrated as science that used modern tools borrowed from scientific method. Charles Hodge in the prolegomena of his *Systematic Theology* described theology as science in a way that 'it must include something more than a mere knowledge of facts. It must embrace an exhibition of the internal relation of those facts, one to another, and each to all. It must be able to show that if one be admitted, others cannot be denied.'⁸ In this regard, Hodge even emphasized the more important task of systematic theology compared to that of biblical theology.

Against Kantian tradition, Gadamer argues that the radical subjectivization in Kant has relied on the methodology of the natural sciences in conceptualizing human sciences. However, the search for truth cannot be limited to

conceptual knowledge, for interpretation of human sciences in that way will be inadequate. Gadamer asks, 'But is it right to reserve the concept of truth for conceptual knowledge? Must we not also acknowledge that the work of art possesses truth?'⁹ Gadamer's hermeneutic approach to art has forced him to revise aesthetical thinking by integrating aesthetics into his hermeneutics. In the last section of his *Truth and Method*, Gadamer argued for the inseparable relationship between the true and the beautiful by emphasizing the self-evident presenting nature of the beautiful. This self-evident nature of the beautiful is at the same time that which distinguishes the beautiful from the good:

Obviously what distinguishes the beautiful from the good is that the beautiful of itself presents itself, that its being is such that it makes itself immediately evident (eingleuchtend). This means that beauty has the most important ontological function: that of mediating between idea and appearance.¹⁰

It is this function of mediating that prevents human beings from succumbing to 'impure imitations and appearances of virtue', for human virtue is frequently described vaguely 'in the unclear medium of appearances' in that it has no light of its own like the beautiful.¹¹ It is the radiance of the beautiful that saves human beings from the seduction of deceptive copies of the truly good.

⁸ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 1; see also Stanley J. Grenz, 'Star Trek and the Next Generation: Postmodernity and the Future of Evangelical Theology', in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David S. Dockery (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor, 1995), 96.

⁹ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., trans. J. Weinsheimer and D. G. Marshall (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 41-2.

¹⁰ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 481.

¹¹ Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 481.

Thus in our contemporary climate, transparency is more highly regarded than rational scientific talk of the truth and the good because truth and goodness can be falsified behind the surface of its mere appearance. On the other hand, the experience of the beautiful or even the ugly reflects such an immediacy that it is believed to offer a better approach in the search for truth. The seductive power of cultural pragmatism, for instance, lies in its offer of immediate experience in the work of (popular) art, creating a generation that desperately longs for continuous entertainment in their lives. The search for pleasure and enjoyment has now surpassed the search for rationality.

4. Certainty of Language

Fourth is the shift from the certainty of language and its single meaning. In modern understanding, language was believed to be referential in nature. It points to a (transcendental) reality out there. It was seen as the medium of conceptualization. There can be thus only one single correct meaning in a text. Equivocation in language was classified as logical fallacy. The modern optimistic view of the certainty of language caused the limitation of the question of truth to the rational-logical mode. The observation of true knowledge required for the most part analytical competence to find and then exclude any logical fallacy. The meaning of a text was believed to be stable and always present to the reader. In post-modern thinking, the meaning of text has to be found in the (social) context of its usage.

In contrast, Jacques Derrida's strat-

egy of deconstruction is committed to finding alternative meanings within a text. For Derrida there is without doubt ambivalence in the text, so that not even the author can impose on it any stable or unequivocal meaning. It is the task of deconstruction to uncover what has been suppressed in a text. Such a philosophical task is therefore textually based. Derrida criticizes what he called the metaphysics of presence that generally employ a hierarchical structure or subordination in treating numerous dualisms by prioritizing one side and marginalizing the other side of the opposition:

The enterprise of returning 'strategically', 'ideally', to an origin or to a priority thought to be simple, intact, normal, pure, standard, self-identical, in order then to think in terms of derivation, complication, deterioration, accident, etc. All metaphysicians, from Plato to Rousseau, Descartes to Husserl, have proceeded in this way, conceiving good to be before evil, the positive before the negative, the pure before the impure, the simple before the complex, the essential before the accidental, the imitated before the imitation, etc. And this is not just one metaphysical gesture among others, it is the metaphysical exigency, that which has been the most constant, most profound and most potent.¹²

If this dual operation is accepted, then one cannot prioritize (metaphysical) presence without regard for the contingent. All textual writing therefore

¹² Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc. (inc. 'Afterword')*, ed. Graff, trans. Weber (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), 236.

should function in the absence of any determined addressee.¹³ Thus there is never an absolute meaning to any text. A more radical reception of Derrida will move to and affirm ontological subjectivity. However, a balanced and perhaps more constructive reception will be positively reminded of the danger of the sin of pride in hermeneutics. Yet, it still does not mean that there is no objective meaning in a text. It rather suggests that the meaningfulness of a text does not depend on its single unequivocal meaning.

5. Objective Reality

Fifth is the shift from the objective and value-free view of reality with its belief in a disinterested point of view. The modern understanding of objectivity carried the idea of distant observation on the reality of an object or a fact. Declared bias should be excluded from any objective observation. For Immanuel Kant, the judgment of taste should be based upon disinterested pleasure. Thus, an object can be said to be truly beautiful if it is judged as 'the object of an entirely disinterested satisfaction or dissatisfaction'.¹⁴ The pleasure felt in discovering something beautiful should be neither a pleasure built upon the fact that the object is able to simply satisfy our senses, nor upon the fact that it can serve a practical use desired by us, nor upon the fact that it can fulfill moral requirements.

Thus, the pleasure in the beautiful should move from subjective to objective judgments. It is not built upon our interest in the object's existence but is 'merely contemplative'.¹⁵ By excluding any interest in the fulfillment of moral requirements, Kant confirmed the division of aesthetics from ethics (this is not to say however that Kant did not discuss the relationship between aesthetics and ethics at all).¹⁶ The typical modern compartmentalization of discipline was established.

By contrast, postmodernism tends to have general scepticism of objectivity in the explanation of reality. Thus, human understanding is not the mirror of reality out there; it is rather the social construction of the human mind itself. Therefore, there is no so-called universal truth valid for all kinds of people. What we have is truth only for a certain group or community. In his *Philosophical Investigations*, Ludwig Wittgenstein developed the concept of language-games and models of discourse to address language's diversity of uses and its activity-orientedness. Drawing heavily on Wittgenstein's theory, Jean-François Lyotard criticized the concept of metanarrative in his work, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Lyotard attacked the notion of transcendent and universal truth.¹⁷

In the various directions of contemporary Christian thought the Postlib-

¹³ Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Bass (Chicago: University Press, 1982), 375.

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Haffner, 1951), §1.

¹⁵ Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, §5.

¹⁶ See for instance his *Critique of Judgment*, §42, §59-60.

¹⁷ Lyotard, Jean-François Lyotard, *Introduction: The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), xxiv-xxv.

eral theologian George Lindbeck borrows from Wittgenstein's philosophy of language to give strong emphasis

on those respects in which religions resemble languages together with their correlative forms of life and are thus similar to cultures. ... The function of church doctrines that becomes most prominent in this perspective is their use ... as communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude and action.¹⁸

Mirroring Wittgenstein's thought, Lindbeck also argues for a self-referential Bible reading and interpretation that is, there is no need for extraneous references such as reading foreign psychological or philosophical meanings into the biblical text. Lindbeck gives an example of a natural reading of classic literatures such as *Oedipus Rex* and *War and Peace*,

In order to understand them in their own terms, there is no need for extraneous references to, for example, Freud's theories or historical treatments of the Napoleonic wars. Further, such works shape the imagination and perceptions of the attentive reader so that he or she forever views the world to some extent through the lens they supply.¹⁹

6. Humanity at the Centre

Sixth is the shift from placing humanity (and its autonomous reason) at the centre. Rene Descartes' famous method of doubt that established the

modern metaphysical foundation for science has put the modern human self-consciousness and reason at the centre. Philosophy was no longer the maidservant of theology (*ancilla theologiae*) but became a scientific discipline. Baruch Spinoza's rationalism excluded doctrines and miracles from the substance of Christian religion by emphasizing the essential role of love and reverence.

Similarly, the philosopher John Locke in England understood Christianity as the religion of tolerance, virtue, and morality. The representative of French Enlightenment, Voltaire, initiated mind freedom, tolerance, and human rights against the Catholic Church. In Germany, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz argued for the conformity of faith and reason. His differentiation between necessary eternal truths and actual truths finally subordinated revelation to reason and theology to philosophy. The rationalism of Christian Wolff understood Christianity as the strengthening of human moral power while rejecting the supernatural concept of revelation.

However, the postmodern critique of reason proposes a model of communicative reason against modern subject-centred reason.²⁰ Following Kant's distinction between private and public reason, Michel Foucault suggests the dimension of private reason when one 'has a role to play in society and jobs to do' and the dimension of public reason when one 'is reasoning as a reasonable

18 George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Minneapolis, 1984), 18.

19 Lindbeck, *Nature of Doctrine*, 116.

20 Compare Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

being ..., when one is reasoning as a member of reasonable humanity'.²¹

Long before Foucault's suggestion however, the Neo-Calvinism of Abraham Kuyper already suggested the idea of sphere sovereignty in which each sphere of life should have its own distinctive authority or calling. Here, the reformational theology of vocation/calling was applied to the calling of distinct spheres of life with their particular institutions. If it is applied to the different field of disciplines, it means that each discipline of learning will have its own particular calling. Kuyper's idea of sphere sovereignty, however, does not necessarily lead to pillarization since it is a product of confessionalism rather than the doctrine of sphere sovereignty. On the contrary, sphere sovereignty will free one discipline from the tyranny of other disciplines.

II Evangelical Response to Postmodernism

1. Context sensitivity

Sensitivity to the context of his audience was one of the most important characteristics of Paul's philosophy of ministry. In his letter to the Corinthians he wrote, 'I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings' (1 Cor. 9:22-23). It should be noted, however, that Paul

did not just unconditionally succumb to the demands of his audience since in the previous verses the same Paul wrote, '... I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) ... I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) ...' (1 Cor. 9:20-21). Thus, context-sensitivity means both accommodation and at the same time critical assessment. The same principle should be exercised towards our contemporary (postmodern) audience.

2. Reductionism

Against the reductionism of (modern) foundationalism, two things can be said: first, the Bible itself sometimes uses a foundationalist metaphor to describe human life.²² Second however, this is certainly not the whole picture of reality described by the Bible. Still in the same gospel, Jesus describes the kingdom of heaven by using another metaphor of leaven and flour.²³ Such depiction does not fit into the foundationalist view of reality. Insisting on foundationalism as the sole paradigm to describe reality does not do justice to the complexity of human life. A sound evangelical postmodern theology therefore should be open to other ways of presenting the reality of life. It means that theology does not deal only with the 'first principles' of knowledge; rather, it should deal also with minor or marginal principles of our contemporary society while employing the

²¹ Michel Foucault, 'What is Enlightenment?' in: *The Essential Foucault* (New York: The New Press, 2003), 43-57.

²² For example the description of one who built his house on the rock or on the sand in Mt. 7:24-27.

²³ See Mt. 13:31-33.

riches of evangelicalism in answering those contemporary questions.

As an example, the search for immanence in the New Age spirituality will not merely be judged and polemically labelled as a rejection of the qualitative difference between Creator and creation as the 'first principle' of their spirituality thus contrasting evangelical belief (in divine transcendence) with New Age (pantheistic) belief; rather, the evangelical Christian will seek for the richness in the Bible that deals with and satisfies the issue of immanence.

The 'tabernacle theology' in the Old Testament (God's special presence), for instance, can be of great relevance here since its core message is the divine immanence in the midst of his people. This tabernacle theology can also point out its fulfilment in the incarnation of Jesus and its final (eschatological) fulfilment in the life to come, thereby explaining the imperfection or the partial satisfaction of the hunger for immanence in this present world. The communal dimension of immanence can also be emphasized through the intimate fellowship between members of the body of Christ in the acts of loving and being loved.

Responding to such a case as New Age spirituality in a polemical way can be useful sometimes but it is not always so. The exclusive approach of foundationalism does not encourage the pursuit of biblical richness; it rather tends to oversimplify our complex reality by reducing it to certain basic principles that finally lead Christian people to self-satisfaction.

3. Metanarrative

Rather complex is the postmodern insistence on the rejection of any kind of metanarrative. On the one hand, the Bible does present the metanarrative of creation, fall, redemption, and consummation, but on the other hand, the question of the nature of rejection of a metanarrative should be considered carefully. What Lyotard criticized in his *Postmodern Condition* is substantially the totalizing nature of a metanarrative, which tends to dismiss the existing tensions and paradoxes of the reality of truth. Against the totalitarian domination of unity over diversity, a contemporary evangelical theology can emphasize the multifaceted picture in the Bible. It is the one and the same Jesus but through the perspectival lens of different Gospels. The plurality of the pictures of Jesus should not be suppressed but rather encouraged. It will not destroy the unity or harmony of the Bible or the four Gospels; it will rather present and witness to the biblical richness, something that our postmodern world is desperately looking for.

Similarly, the Old Testament should be presented with its many theologies, thereby preventing any kind of reductionism by focusing on one central idea. The diverse theological voices or traditions in the Old Testament should shed light on the beauty of its fulfilment in the New Testament instead of vice versa. In the field of Systematic Theology, good and constructive ecumenical dialogues should not be shunned but invited to build a structured pluralism, whereby one's particular theological tradition should not be abandoned but enriched.

In the field of Historical Theology, one should be aware of the danger of

narrow-minded confessionalism that always tries to prove the supremacy of one's own theological tradition at the same level as the supremacy of the Bible. In the field of Practical Theology, particularly in the context of ecclesiological structure and church office, the advancement of many spiritual gifts should relativize the emphasis on one single spiritual gift of the church leader. The presence of faith and love rather than fear and self-love should guarantee the accommodation of different spiritual gifts in the life of the church community.

4. Aestheticism

Against the reductive view of the Word of God as rational-logically presented truth, the aesthetic mode of the Word of God, that is, its beauty should be explored and emphasized. The psalmist witnesses the law of the Lord as 'more to be desired ... than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb'. The Bible supports the aesthetic aspect of the Word of God together with its logical aspect.

Dooyeweerd listed at least fifteen aspects in his Christian philosophy, of which the analytic or logical aspect is only one.²⁴ Dooyeweerd sees harmony at the heart of this aesthetic aspect.²⁵

²⁴ Compare Herman Dooyeweerd, *A New Critique of Theoretical Thought*, vol. 2, trans. David H. Freeman (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1969), 118-26; see also L. Kalsbeek, *Contours of a Christian Philosophy: An Introduction to Herman Dooyeweerd's Thought* (Toronto: Wedge Publishing, 1975), 40-2, 99-100.

²⁵ Dooyeweerd, *New Critique*, vol. 2, 128.

In relation to the postmodern search for plurality and a multifaceted picture, here is now the time to demonstrate the harmony of the different theologies in the Bible. Unlike the so-called hard postmodernist who is reluctant to resolve the conflicting ideas, a good evangelical theology will try to handle them as creative tensions, to present the biblical message in its multifaceted dimension.

The 'Christology-from-below' in the Gospel of Mark that describes the way of the earthly Jesus as the true Son of God in the so-called Markan secrecy theory²⁶ and the 'Christology-from-above' of the Gospel of John that starts with the idea of the preexistence and the incarnation of Jesus as the divine revelation of glory and truth²⁷ are not at odds but in harmonic beauty. Both are high Christology. Similarly, the answer of the problem of evil or suffering in the Book of Job and in the Book of Ecclesiastes, however different they might be, will contribute to the many-sided aesthetic views of the Bible.

An evangelical aesthetic theology should occupy itself with the idea of seeing the glory of God. How does the glory of God relate to ecclesiastic worship, to the process of learning, to work as vocation, to the family life, to the public society, and other spheres of life? Aesthetic theology is greatly concerned with the question of enjoyment and happiness. Though the search for truth and holiness cannot be excluded here, the emphasis should be placed more on the attainment of the highest enjoyment in human life (which is only through and in Christ).

²⁶ Compare Schnelle, *Theology*, 409-12.

²⁷ Compare Schnelle, *Theology*, 669-76.

5. Ambiguity

Against the belief in the single meaning of a word, text, or language, whether the Bible rejects any kind of ambiguity or equivocalness of meaning should be made clear. Paul's use of the word *soma* for instance can be distinguished in three different contextual meanings as a neutral, negative, and positive.²⁸ Even the key term 'lifted up' in the same verse in the Gospel of John carries the double meaning of crucifixion and exaltation.²⁹ The ambiguity of a word does not necessarily mean denigration. It rather again demonstrates the richness of meaning (and its applications).

It should be noted, however, that the variety of meanings are at the same time not unlimited. There are thus criteria of justification for the multiple meanings of a biblical text. In the case of Paul's *soma*, the justification can be found by referring to the context of its use. In the case of the Gospel of John, the criterion for John 3:14 lies in the preceding verse 13 that refers to Christ's exalted or glorious divinity while for John 12:32 the meaning can be concluded from the following verse 33 which refers to Christ's crucifixion. Both Pauline and Johannine texts require careful discernment to avoid a one-sided interpretation.

6. Contradiction

By giving room for this so-called 'language flux', the totalizing power of rea-

son and logic is at the same time regulated. Not every contradiction should be considered as logical contradiction. Apparent contradictions can occur due to the different preference for or even inconsistent use of vocabulary in the expression of one's (theological) thoughts. Without a careful discernment of the use of language in a particular theological tradition, useless polemics will often be hard to avoid. This does not mean, however, that the arbitrary use of vocabulary is encouraged since it easily tends to confuse the intended meanings.

A good evangelical postmodern theology should be able to solve the language problem. This means, first, a careful discernment of the use of vocabularies in their specific contexts; secondly, not to engage in a useless debate or polemics over the preference of vocabularies according to one's own theological tradition; thirdly, the theological contents of the text are of higher importance than the choice of certain vocabularies; and lastly, whenever possible biblical vocabularies should be given the highest preference.

7. Objectivism

Concerning the belief in an objective and value-free view of reality, several points can be made. The term 'subjective' should not always be considered as inferior to objective knowledge. The Kantian disinterested point of view can also lead to the truth being very distant, whereas subjective knowledge could also mean personal involvement or engagement with the known reality. There is indeed a positive value in bias-driven knowledge. It is even the nature of truth that in order to fully

²⁸ Compare Udo Schnelle, *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology*, trans. M. Eugene Borling (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2005), 495-96.

²⁹ Compare Jn. 3:14; 8:28; 12:32, 34.

understand it, one has to place oneself in the truth. Jesus says, 'If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.'³⁰ The access to the knowledge that Jesus' teaching is God's teaching can be granted through a bias towards obedience to do the will of God and not through a disinterested point of view.

In this regard, Stanley Hauerwas, probably the most important Postliberal ethicist, plausibly says,

Christian convictions are not isolatable 'facts', but those 'facts' are part of a story that helps locate what kind of 'facts' you have at all. ... To emphasize the story character of the gospel is an attempt to suggest that examining the truth of Christian conviction is closely akin to seeing how other kinds of stories form our lives truly or falsely.³¹

For Hauerwas, it is typical that the modern and rational story plainly 'teaches us that we have no story'.³² What is encouraged in this kind of paradigm is finally the self with its autonomous reason. The authority of the scripture's story is then based upon its practical function in the life of the ecclesiastical community:

Claims about the authority of scripture are in themselves moral claims about the function of scripture for

the common life of the church. The scripture's authority for that life consists in its being used so that it helps to nurture and reform the community's self-identity as well as the personal character of its members.³³

Does this mean that by grounding the authority of scripture in its function for the ecclesiastical communal life, Postliberalism has reduced the concept of truth to 'internal consistency'?³⁴ To highlight the setting aside of the correspondence theory of truth in Postliberalism is to miss the persuasive invitation of Hauerwas' theological thought. By emphasizing the nature of truth in its function in the Christian communal life, Hauerwas successfully excludes the possibility of knowing the truth without getting involved in the Christian life. From an evangelical perspective, such a theological statement can be viewed as a form of Christian rhetoric trying to persuade unbelievers to accept the scripture's authority by joining the community of the body of Christ, an invitation that a modern Kantian disinterested point of view has failed to offer.

8. Autonomous reason

Concerning the shift from placing humanity with its autonomous reason at the centre to a marginal position, one needs simply to refer to the inconvenient fact of the Copernican Revolu-

³⁰ John 7:17.

³¹ Stanley Hauerwas with Richard Bondi and David B. Burrell, *Truthfulness and Tragedy: Further Investigations in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University Press, 1977), 73.

³² Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame: University Press, 1981), 84.

³³ Hauerwas, *Community of Character*, 95.

³⁴ So, for instance, the criticism by the evangelical theologian Alister McGrath in his book *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Coherence of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1996), 153.

tion postulating that our world is not the centre of the universe; it is placed rather at the periphery. However, it is precisely this marginal world that God so loved and to which he gave his only Son. The hunger for self-significance, usually accompanied by the greed for being at the centre, is a modern mythos that needs to be revisited by evangelical theology. It is not our being at the centre that moved God to love human beings but precisely our marginal position.

Of particular importance here is the theological profile of the Gospel of Luke. Schnelle points out that in the Gospel of Luke, 'God stands beside those who have no rights (18:1-8), the despised and disdained (18:9-14), and those who cannot appeal to their genealogy and social class (7:1-10; 10:25-37; 17:11-19).'³⁵ It is for those marginalized people that God has shown his mercy and used them in a special way. In the same manner, theology does not have to struggle to become the queen of the sciences in order to be able to powerfully influence the world.

On the other side, theology should not accept the role of victim, one that is increasingly marginalized in our highly secular society. She should rather present its attractiveness by sounding the truth and serving society. By placing herself among the plurality of sciences, theology will encourage other

disciplines to be liberated from the exclusive ecclesiastical power though not liberated from God's truth. The struggle for recognition and acknowledgment in the plurality of sciences should not be asserted by theology since it is God who will use her to fulfil his eternal purpose in the reality of his kingdom.

Without theology there are too many unanswered questions left behind by the false triumph of scientism. There is always a secure space for theology that cannot be occupied by other sciences. Polemical writings directed against other sciences can be reduced and transformed into persuasive and constructive interdisciplinary dialogues. Through her witness, theology could indeed invite other sciences to participate in reflecting the divine glory of our Father's world.

III The Richness of the Word

To conclude, postmodernism has given us many challenges as well as opportunities to rethink and revise evangelical theology. To be sensitive to the context does not mean to give up faithfulness to the Bible. Many postmodern issues have been discussed and reflected in the Bible. Contemporary evangelical theology just needs to draw from the richness of the Word of God. Together with the apostle Paul, evangelical theologians can become all things to all people, that by all means we might save some.

35 Schnelle, *Theology*, 477.

Bias and Conversion: An Evaluation of Spiritual Transformation

Benson Ohihon Igboin

KEYWORDS: *Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, salvation, moral, intelligent, commitment, Christianity, religion*

To be formed in a religious tradition is not to merely give intellectual assent to the theological and ethical doctrines; it is to internalise these teachings and precepts, to hold them in one's heart, to fasten them on the centre of one's will. It is precisely in extraordinary circumstances, such as those generated by deadly conflict, that formation in an ethical and spiritual tradition distinguishes the behaviour of genuinely religious actors.¹

The conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus in John 3 opened an important dimension in the former's ministry. That conversation had two elements: intellectual and spiritual, and the result was predictable: change, conversion, transformation. For Nicodemus, a Judaeiser, logical or intellectual discourse was necessary for the under-

standing and meaningfulness of spiritual transformation. Thus, his question: by what power do you do the wonderful miracles, and the answer he got: you must be born again, express the theology and philosophy of spiritual transformation upon which this essay focuses.

Nicodemus was a teacher, and learned in the tradition of the Jews. As a teacher, he obviously expected some intellectual/literal explication of the concept of being 'born again' in his conversation with Christ. It was not practically or literally possible for a grown person or even newly born babies to re-enter their mothers' wombs to be re-born. Jesus' answer introduced the metaphysical/spiritual dimension to a literal probing. Thus, what appears impossible in the literal/natural conceptualisation is apodictically possible in the metaphysical realm. This certainly underscores that transformation is not a psychological, physical, natural or literal transmutation, but one which has spiritual anchorage as expressed in Christian theology.²

1 R. S. Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence and Reconciliation* (Lanham & Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 286.

2 A. Dzugba, *God and Caesar: A Study in the Sociology of Religion* (Ibadan: John Archers, 2002), 51.

The result is significant. Although there is no record that Nicodemus was converted, the actions he carried out inherently portray that he was a disciple at heart, or at least a secret disciple. He made a careful legalistic defence of Jesus against the Pharisees, and played a secondary role with Joseph of Arimathea in the burial of Jesus Christ.³

It is important to state that Nicodemus showed a 'bias', which is typical of an unconverted person. In other words, Nicodemus was speaking from a background which was fundamentally different from the answer he got. Thus, it becomes necessary for us to discuss bias as a basis for conversion. From there, the paper will discuss transformation in Christian thought, the intellectual commitment and consequences of transformation. These represent the three dimensions of transformation – theology, philosophy and result (change or transformation) – which will guide us in our discussion.

I Bias and Conversion

Bernard Lonergan (1904-1984)⁴ has articulated human bias as a basis for conversion. According to him, bias is at the centre of religious reactions: indifference, violence, intolerance, conflicts, etc. To remain in this state is to operate perpetually at the stage of religious 'unreasonableness' and 'irresponsibility'. Generally, bias is understood in the sense of prejudice. Lonergan thinks that it is cognitive, because as Cyril Orji interprets it, 'bias

is fundamentally a cognitive issue that can interfere with the actual process of human knowledge thereby undermining human progress such that attentiveness, intelligence, logic and responsibility are substituted for blindness, dullness, rationalization and inaction.' Lack of knowledge of the truth is a fundamental reason for religious ignorance. As he puts it: bias is 'the infantile beginning of psychic trouble'.⁵

As a cognitive term, bias hampers or distorts intellectual development; it is an aberration of understanding or knowledge, it is a scotosis. Scotosis in relation to bias is an unconscious process that arises, not in conscious acts, 'but in the censorship that governs the emergence of psychic contents'.⁶ In this process, unwanted insights are excluded, which has been found to lead to the emergence of contrary insights. Scotosis therefore opposes understanding, because it is the refusal to ask relevant questions whose answers are suspected to be contrary to one's desired expectation.

This leads to an attempt to ignore, belittle or reject higher values.

Bias blocks insight that concrete situations demand, and makes intelligence seem irrelevant to practical living, from which follows unintelligent policies and inept courses of action that severely distort social and cultural goals (incarnated values).⁷

3 Dzugba, *God and Caesar*, 51.

4 This section is wholly based on Bernard Lonergan's thought as used by Cyril Orji.

5 C. Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa' in *African Ecclesial Review*, 49/1&2, (March-June 2007): 50.

6 Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 50.

7 Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 50.

The consequence as Lonergan puts it is that a person begins 'to hate the truly good, and love the really evil'.⁸ This does not happen only at the level of the individual, but also at group or national level. At any rate, it divides humanity into disparate groups with opposed and irreconcilable views.

There are four main ways by which bias is normally manifested. The first is the dramatic bias that results from psychological conditioning, which is absolutely beyond the control of the person. This leads to rejection of available knowledge at one's disposal. This results in the neglect of the development of affective attitudes and behaviour. Thus, the person is most likely to pursue wrong values and ignore or deny truth.

The second is individual bias, which manifests itself in egoism. This has the tendency to distort the development of 'a person's intelligence and one's affective and experiential orientation, leading to selfish pursuit of personal desires at the expense of the common good'.⁹

The third is the group bias, which has been considered to be the 'more powerful and blinder bias'. This kind of bias divides people into social classes: ethnocentrism, race, gender, etc.

The final one is the general bias of common sense. This is the act of finding short-term immediate panacea to perennial or complex problems. Orji sums it up in this way:

Bias... is a scotosis that afflicts the

individual as well as the individual's community, affecting one's existential situation, one's worldview, and the way one's community perceives others different from them. It is a deliberate and conscious refusal to live and act attentively, intelligently, rationally and responsibly. Although it is a conscious refusal to act attentively, intelligently, rationally, and responsibly, it can also be acquired unconsciously through the socialization process.¹⁰

The above situation – bias – is one state of life which can be cured through conversion. Lonergan believes that the antidote to bias is conversion, not just of change of faith towards a religion but essentially a 'turning from' to a 'turning towards' a 'constructive life-creating and fulfilling way of life', thereby rejecting every tendency towards the destruction of life in all ramifications. Conversion therefore is not just an individual event; it is multi-dimensional because a change towards God manifests itself at the personal, social, moral and intellectual levels.

II Types of Conversion

Thus, conversion, which is a long process, helps in overcoming one's biases at the intellectual, moral, affective and religious levels, such that the unconverted are those who still live according to their biases, and are most probably ignorant of them. Conversion can then be viewed as 'a change from unauthenticity to authenticity, a total self-surrender to the demands of the

8 Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 50.

9 Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 51.

10 Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 57.

human spirit: Be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, reasonable and in love.¹¹

Lonerger considers conversion to be developmental, that is, it is an ongoing process. It is generally a movement from a wrong perspective to a correct one which conforms to acceptable moral, religious and intellectual standard. According to Louis Berkhof,

true conversion is born of godly sorrow, and issues in a life of devotion to God.... It is a change that is rooted in the work of regeneration, and that is effected in the conscious life of the sinner by the Spirit of God; a change of thoughts and opinions, of desires and volitions, which involves the conviction that the former direction of life was unwise and wrong and alters the entire course of life.¹²

Berkhof is convinced that there are two sides to conversion: the active and the passive. The former is the act of God, by which he changes the conscious course of human life, and the latter, the result of this action as seen in the observable life of the converted in their course of life and turning to God.¹³ Thus, Lonergan identified three kinds of conversion, to which scholars have added the fourth.

The first is the cognitive or intellectual conversion. Intellectual conversion is a 'radical clarification and, consequently, the elimination of an exceedingly stubborn and misleading myth concerning reality, objectivity,

and human knowledge'.¹⁴ Intellectual conversion helps to cast off false ideas and philosophies which one had imbibed for a very long time.

The second change is the religious, which is an instance of self-transcendence. The transcendent person has the experience of God in an unrestricted manner. It is this level of experience that prompted Lonergan to regard religious conversion as the 'other-worldly falling in love' that manifests itself in 'total and permanent self-surrender without conditions, qualifications, reservations'.¹⁵ Religious conversion is intricately linked with human intellectual and emotional state. That is why religious conversion changes the totality of the person. Orji aptly puts it this way:

What this means in essence is that religious conversion is not simply a process of becoming, say a Christian or Muslim, but a total and radical re-orientation of one's life to God (not religion), that one surrenders, not only oneself, but also one's unadmitted deepest pretence to absolute personal autonomy. Religious conversion helps one embrace what is good, true, noble, and truly humanizing. It is a yes to the mystery of God that finds practical expression in love of one's neighbour, ensuring that one loves unconditionally the way God would have us love.¹⁶

The third type is the moral conver-

11 Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 53.

12 L. Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Trust, 2003), 483.

13 Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 483.

14 Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 53-54.

15 Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 54.

16 Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 54-55.

sion which is intricately related to religious conversion. More often than not, religious conversion is the basis for moral conversion. Moral conversion removes human and social inhibitions as demonstrated in individual, group and general bias because the basis of one's decisions and actions has changed. 'It consists in opting for the truly good, even for value against satisfaction when value and satisfaction conflict.'¹⁷ In other words, moral conversion engenders a radical drive towards the good as against 'apparent good' that satisfies temporally. It demands a responsible act on the basis of 'vertical freedom' and advances towards authenticity to 'opt for the truly good'.¹⁸

The fourth is the affective which is the 'intentional response to feelings and dramatic experience of being in love.' This is the idea of transformation from 'I' to 'We' consciousness. This affective consciousness works for others genuinely because self has been overcome. In religious thought, affective conversion speaks of faith and love that produce a comprehensive relationship, since 'faith is the knowledge born of religious love'.¹⁹ In fact, 'besides the factual knowledge reached by experiencing, understanding, and verifying, there is another kind of knowledge reached through discernment of value and the judgments of values of a person in love'.²⁰

Therefore, affective conversion is the concrete possibility of overcoming moral impotence, of not only being able to make a decision to commit oneself to a course of action or direction of life judged worthwhile or personally appropriate, but of being able to execute that decision over the long haul against serious obstacles.²¹

The experience of conversion at this level extends love to fellow human beings, the ecosystem and God. Aleaz argues that a saved or redeemed person automatically expresses love at the vertical, horizontal and base levels. He says, 'Salvation is a reality which can be experienced authentically here and now. A redeemed person is the one who lives in harmony not only with fellow beings, but also with the ... earth, God and spirit.'²² This whole concept of conversion has been succinctly summed up by Orji in this way:

Conversion has to be intellectual (repent of the refusal to seek truth and knowledge), religious (repent of the refusal to be unrestrained in love), moral (repent of the refusal to seek the transcendent good of the other) and affective (repent of the refusal to love as God has loved us).²³

These four kinds of conversion are intricately linked; they are not isolated one from the other. They are the

17 Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 55.

18 Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 55.

19 Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 56.

20 Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 56.

21 Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 59.

22 K. P. Aleaz, 'A Tribal Christian Theology from India' in *Asia Journal of Theology*, 19/2, (October 2005): 385.

23 Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 59.

standard by which a genuine spiritual transformation or conversion can be weighed. Thus, the Jesus-Nicodemus conversation could be said to reflect them: intellectual acceptance of Jesus' teaching on conversion that had a corresponding intellectual change of thought which brought about commitment. Even though it cannot be established with certainty that Nicodemus accepted Christianity, his bold identification with the burial of Jesus even when his disciples ran away can be interpreted as being religiously converted. The case of Paul is definitely clear in all the four kinds of conversion. As from the very moment Nicodemus encountered Jesus, even though not much is heard thereafter, he could not have remained morally hypocritical, and his affection was demonstrated during the burial of Jesus.

III Spiritual Transformation in Christian Thought

Two kinds of spiritual transformation appear to be discernible in Christian thought. The first is the conversion which has to do with the change in the here and now. The second has an eschatological dimension, which is the eternal hope of those who experience the spiritual transformation in the here and now. The second does not separate human destiny from the cosmic destiny. This is punctiliously argued by Ted Peters in the following submission.

The resurrection of a spiritual body can occur only at the advent of the eschaton. If there is no cosmic transformation, then there is no resurrection; and if there is no resurrection, then Christian faith is in

vain and of all people believers are most to be pitied (1 Cor. 15:14-19).²⁴

The apostle Paul elucidated the order of this idea of second spiritual transformation. He taught that Christ must first return (1 Thes. 4:16-17). Christ will then 'transform the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory' (Phil. 3:21; Rom. 8: 29). This aspect of spiritual transformation does not command our interest in this present enterprise.

The concept of being born again emphatically means the mark of true Christians and way to salvation. Theologian Robert Sproul articulates this view when he says that 'if a person is not born again,... then he is not a Christian.' This line of thought is pursued by the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary which defines a born again as 'a usually Christian person who has made a renewed or confirmed commitment of faith especially after an intense religious experience'.²⁵

However, such a definition does not essentially align with the biblical conception of being born again because it makes it a personal choice by human effort, excluding the supernatural work of God; biblically speaking, salvation is God's gift rather than human effort. This is substantiated by the Greek rendering of being born again to mean being born 'from above' or 'from heaven'. Thus Jesus used the water and spirit symbols to explain to Nic-

²⁴ T. Peters, *God – The World's Future: Systematic Theology for a New Era* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 23.

²⁵ This definition is retrieved from <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/born-again> accessed 25th August, 2010.

odemus that unless a person is born of water and the spirit, they cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Jesus indeed was referring to baptism and the Holy Spirit, which was demonstrated during his own baptism. It is in this sense that born again means a new beginning in the relationship between God and the baptised, both in water and in spirit.

Akpenpuun Dzurgba provides insight into the dynamics of transformation that is very broad. The concept of being born again is understood as referring to someone who has been converted or has had a religious experience, which informs their change in belief and morality. Conversion therefore is the pre-requisite of being born again. Conversion is an 'act or process of changing from one religion or one religious belief to a different religion or religious belief'.²⁶ As argued by Longergan, the issue of change of religion is secondary; conversion must first and necessarily be towards God, and then religion. This makes conversion an inward change that manifests itself in the outward.²⁷ Although, Nicodemus' conversation with Jesus did not explicitly state that he was converted instantly, we find an unmistakable example of radical or sudden conversion in Paul's spiritual experience.

Paul was a Jewaiser, a lawyer and religious activist who persecuted the early Christians until he had an encounter with Jesus on his way to Damascus. The Damascus experience implies that Paul broke with his 'former life in Judaism epoch, insofar as this epoch had to

do with conscious efforts to maintain a distance from the Gentiles for the preservation and guaranteeing of life as prescribed by the Torah'.²⁸

Paul expressed a manifest change after his conversion in intellectual, religious, moral and affective modes though those who heard of it were at first sceptical. Nevertheless, his activities thereafter showed that he indeed was converted. He changed from being a persecutor to the preacher of the faith he notoriously fought to exterminate. He fought for the abolition of religious racism between the Jews and Gentiles. For him, all he gained was counted lost in order to gain Christ. However, Paul's Judaism's zeal and radicalism were carried over to his Christian missionary enterprise, but with unwavering proclamation of Jesus as the Saviour.

Paul's example of radical conversion represents one aspect. There is also a gradual, subtle conversion. This takes a longer period of time involving devotion, Bible study and catechetical teaching. Even though it is a longer process, it also demonstrates intellectual, religious, moral and affective conversion.

Thomas, one of the disciples of Jesus appears to be a very good example. He did not fully believe in Jesus until he had seen the marks of the crucifixion of Christ as indisputable empirical/intellectual evidence of the validity of the claim of Christ's resurrection, and then his Lordship. No wonder he exclaimed: 'My Lord and my God!' Thereafter, he proclaimed Christ with great passion

²⁶ Dzurgba, *God and Caesar*, 51.

²⁷ Orji, 'Ethnic and Religious Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa', 54.

²⁸ B. O. Ukwuegbu, 'St. Paul of the Letters: Setting the Facts Straight' in *The Nigerian Journal of Theology*, vol. 23 (June 2009): 28.

and conviction. Tradition has it that he went on a missionary journey to India, established a few churches in the west coast; travelled to the east where he was martyred at Mylapore in the city of Madras.²⁹

Thus, we can distinguish two transformatory processes; one is radical while the second, which is subtle, takes place within a faith community, especially of those born into a faith family.³⁰

Conversion begins with contrition, 'a heartfelt sense of sorrow for one's sins, and is followed immediately with repentance, a turning away from one's sin and toward a commitment of living justly'.³¹ John the Baptist emphasised repentance as a condition for baptism. Since repentance is the expression of remorse for a wrong action, confession is necessary so that there will be a correlation between what goes on in the internal and the external. Repentance is from the heart and confession is a declaration of the 'working' of the heart.

The idea of repentance is intricately bound with sin. Therefore, the acts of sin,³² transgression – acting against

social behaviour or moral principles; trespass – action which is morally wrong; iniquity – being unfair and evil to other people – demand confession and repentance. It is this that transforms a person into a member of the kingdom of God. 'The coming kingdom requires the spirit of conversion.'³³ As Karl Peschke puts it:

This priority does not connote an exclusion of those who fall short of the law of the kingdom, but it demands from them conversion. The kingdom accordingly requires the transformation of this world in accordance with God's will and with the commandment of love.³⁴

Peschke's argument is born out of his understanding of the Pentecostal congregation, which brought a large population to conversion in the Acts of the Apostles. This is still the demand today in Christian preaching. Peter and other apostles had gathered in the Upper Room where they prayed. There was a sudden sound believed to come from heaven in the form of a powerful

29 P. W. Goetz, (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, 5th ed. vol. 21, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc, 1990), 1.

30 R. A. Akanmidu, 'Reflections on the Interaction between Religion, Morality and Political Leadership in Nigeria', being a paper presented at the 11th annual convocation of The Nigerian Academy of Letters, (2009): 4.

31 Peters, *God*, 252-253.

32 The concept of sin in the Hebrew connotes different aspects as follows: *Avel* means wickedness, injustice, wrong; *Rasha* means wicked, cruel, evil; *Zadon* means wickedness, evil, insolence, malice. The following root words

have to do with intent. *Avon* is translated as iniquity. *Avah* is its root word, which means to sin, understood in scriptures to be intentional sin. *Fesha* is understood as wilful sin, whose root word is *pesha*, meaning to sin or rebel, especially against God. *Khata-ah* translated as error, has its root from *Khata*, meaning to sin, transgress or miss. It is understood as unintentional sin. See W. J. Morford, *The Power New Testament: Revealing Jewish Roots*, 3rd ed, (Lexington: Shalom Ministries, Inc, 2003), 406.

33 K. H. Peschke, *Christian Ethics: Moral Theology in the Light of Vatican II*, vol. 2, (Bangalore: Theological Publications in India, 1992), 70.

34 Peschke, *Christian Ethics*, 69.

wind. This was immediately followed by flames of fire that rested on those present.

The Holy Spirit gave them the ability to speak in different languages they had previously not understood. This was testified to by those who originally spoke those languages and thought that Peter and his group were drunk. But 'Peter defended the genuineness of the religious experience convincingly'³⁵ which led to the conversion of about three thousand people from different religions to Christianity. They all thereafter demonstrated the salience of conversion.

In the case of Christian faith, the dynamic of being convicted of guilt, making confession, receiving forgiveness and absolution, experiencing cleansing, and then living a life of freedom, peace and joy is the very substance of what it means to be a Christian. It is as this experience is translated and expressed in a national context that something new is introduced to the apparently irreconcilable conflict.³⁶

The underlying principle of spiritual transformation in Christian theological thought is that such Christian experience produces a change in the mental, moral and spiritual nature of the person, engineered by the power of the Holy Spirit, in response to the establishment of a personal relationship with Christ. This presupposes that conversion entails the totality of the person. This leads us to examine

the philosophical strand of spiritual transformation.

IV Spiritual Transformation and Intellectual Commitment

We have examined spiritual transformation through the grid of the biblical/theological concept. It does appear that the transformed person is aided by the Holy Spirit in response to Christ's atoning sacrifice. This forms the justification of the 'born again' claim. And this also represents one aspect of Nicodemus' conversation with Jesus. The other aspect, the philosophical, now engages our attention. The thrust of this section is not to deny the claim of spiritual transformation. It is rather to demonstrate that it is credible and true, and that it does lead to an observable positive manifestation.

Some philosophers argue that all facts are 'theory-laden' and therefore bare facts are meaningless. Actually, the same fact can elicit different meanings when viewed by different people. This makes the claim of spiritual transformation a much more difficult task for Christians. This being so, the crucial task of Christian philosophy is to help the communication process between those who have different beliefs or worldviews.

Beliefs other than Christian are viewed by Christians as a veil, which 'can only be removed by supernatural conversion'.³⁷ This might as well extend to the change from a theistic to an atheistic worldview. Whether this

35 Dzurba, *God and Caesar*, 53.

36 K. R. Ross, 'Asia's Cry for Reconciliation: A Challenge to the Churches' in *Asia Journal of Theology*, 19/2, (2005): 417.

37 N. L. Geisler, and P. D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy: A Christian Perspective* (Michigan: Baker Books, 2007), 77-78.

transformation will be considered 'a supernatural act of God' remains a matter of argumentation, but it is outside the thought of Christian conversion. The same applies to the naturalists who see everything in the natural realm, thus denying supernaturalism. For the Christian, conversion is required (a change of heart and lifestyle) in order to understand the message of spiritual transformation. As Geisler and Feinberg admonish,

One task of Christian philosophy, then, is to work on a pre-evangelistic level to get the outsider to look around the edges or through the cracks of his glasses, or to take them off and try a set of 'theistic glasses' on for size.... Unless the intellectual ground is cleared and a straight course is cut for the word of truth, it is unlikely that the Christian is truly communicating the gospel of Christ to men of different worldviews.³⁸

The truth of spiritual transformation does appeal to evidence and argumentation. Clearly, when we see change in a person who has been changed, we do recognise it. However, what underlies the change is open to radically different speculations. The claim that encountering Christ changes people's lives requires evidence to authenticate it. However, to propose an alternative explanation on the basis of 'pre-conceived theory, is of dubious profit'.³⁹ As Dodd strongly argues,

But the events that make history do

consist of such 'bare facts.' They include the meaning the facts held for those who encountered them and their reality is known through the observable consequences. In this instance, we may be clearer about the meaning and the consequences than about the 'facts' in themselves, but this would be true of other momentous events in history.⁴⁰

The observable consequences, which Dodd emphasises, are the manifestations of a transformed life. This will constitute the thrust of the subsequent section.

The task of providing evidence is serious. For many philosophers, human persons are natural living beings with a material body. They are animals except that they possess essentially a rational property.⁴¹ The importance of the rational dimension in relation to spiritual transformation is that the mind is the citadel of human personality, and it effectively rules the person. The mind is often thought to be the last aspect of the person to capitulate to spiritual transformation.

Paul understood perfectly that radical commitment must encompass the intellectual dimension of the person who has been converted. Conversion then must first be from the mind. Thus, he urged: 'but you must from the inside continually be changed/transformed into a new form, by the renovation/renewal of your mind, to prove what is the good, pleasing and perfect will of God for you' (Rom. 12:2). The truth

38 Geisler, and Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy*, 78.

39 C. H. Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity* (London: Macmillan, 1970), 170.

40 Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity*, 170-171.

41 P. M. Gaiya, *Religion and Justice: The Nigerian Predicament* (Kaduna: Espee Printing and Advertising, 2004), 27.

is that we are more prone to think our own thoughts and ventilate our opinions when they seem to be preposterous to religious thought.⁴² This means in Christian thought that such a mind is yet to be regenerated.

John Stott argues that intellectual integrity as regards spiritual transformation requires submission rather than intellectual arrogance. According to him, the twenty-first century person queries the authenticity, trustworthiness and tenability of the Christian experience. Those who believe in the experience are believed to lack intellectual integrity. Religion is regarded as obscurantism, mental schizophrenia, intellectual suicide, etc. by the modern secular mind. Thus it is irrational to seek to attain spiritual transformation because it is out of the reach of reason, and the sole arbiter of reality in modern times is to ignore the nature of spiritual transformation because it involves a person and a relationship, not an argument, and the transformed, who is also a person, not a computer.⁴³

The quest of the secular mind for evidence backed with reason, it must be said, is not wholly objective. This is because evidence is susceptible to different interpretations.⁴⁴ However, Stott would answer that 'integrity is the quality of an integrated person'.⁴⁵ Since the integrated person is not at war with himself or herself, but at

peace, as evident in the testimonies of respected scientists or outright atheists who have had Christian experience, he concludes that submission rather than rebellion is a demonstration of genuine intellectual integrity.⁴⁶

Ted Peters acknowledges the argumentation surrounding intellectual integrity with regard to spiritual transformation. He suggests that illumination precedes conversion. This is done by the 'Spirit', which symbolised by 'the fire of revelation and the lamp of wisdom begins the transforming work by illuminating the human mind with the knowledge of salvation'.⁴⁷ Illumination is possible by presenting external and objective knowledge of the historicity of Jesus and the Christ-events. He adds:

But the facts are not enough. Illumination adds to external knowledge an internal knowledge, a conviction of the heart, a realization that regeneration makes such turning toward the light possible. Regeneration, which literally means 'rebirth' is the act of grace by which the Holy Spirit makes the living Christ present to the sinner in faith. It is the act whereby the universal saving event of Christ takes effect in a particular person's life, one's particular sins are forgiven, and the power of the new creation is appropriated.⁴⁸

Wesley Wildman and Leslie Brothers, neuropsychologists, observe that the credibility of spiritual transformation can be hampered by the reality of

42 J. Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), 90-91.

43 Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, 177.

44 D. Taylor, *The Myth of Certainty: The Reflective Christian and the Risk of Commitment* (USA: Jarrell, 1986), 71, 67.

45 Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, 177.

46 Stott, *The Contemporary Christian*, 177.

47 Peters, *God*, 252.

48 Peters, *God*, 252.

social and linguistic contexts. In other words, a complication arises from the way people describe their Christian experiences, which largely depends on social and linguistic factors. Apart from that, they hold the view that we cannot know for certain the contents of the minds of other people. This makes it difficult to ascertain whether we are describing the same experiences even when identical descriptions are involved within a single social-linguistic context.

The above might lead to relativism of descriptions but it is not an insurmountable problem. Thus, what is needed are 'sometimes mundane-seeming, sometimes spectacular experiences of conversion and character transformation'.⁴⁹ This implies that in spite of the barrier of social-linguistics to the credibility of spiritual transformation, the 'observable consequences', to use Dodd's term, can help in overcoming it. This is based on the fact that there are certain moral and social behavioural changes that are visible as a result of the experience of genuine spiritual transformation. They conclude:

It is real, and it is doubtless more wondrous and strange than our best and worst guesses. This is the hypothesis that best makes sense of the basic data, including the data of religious experience... it is a powerful idea well attested by mythical

traditions worldwide, as congenial to the natural and social sciences as it is to religion, and well matched to amazing facet of human life that we call ultimacy experiences.⁵⁰

One of the ways of ascertaining this reality is by observation of manifest changes to which we now turn.

V Observable Consequences of Spiritual Transformation

According to Dodd, 'the style is the man'.⁵¹ This he pursues by arguing that in relation to spiritual (Christian) transformation, an encounter with the historical Jesus certainly produces observable consequences. Describing the experience of the apostles, he writes:

Now they were new men in a new world, confident, courageous, enterprising, the leaders of a movement which made an immediate impact and went forward with an astonishing impetus.... It made them new men, but it was also the birth of a new community.... They themselves had passed through death to new life.⁵²

Arthur Pink corroborates this view when he states that genuine salvation brings about true, positive observable transformation. He writes:

Salvation is a supernatural thing that changes the heart, renews the will, transforms the life, so that it is evident to all around that a miracle of grace has been wrought.... A

49 W. J. Wildman and L. A. Brothers, 'A Neuropsychological-Semiotic Model of Religious Experience' in Russell, R. J., Murphy, N., Meyering, T. C. and Arbib, M. A. (eds.) *Neuroscience and the Person: Scientific Perspective on Divine Action* (California: CTNS, 1999), 351.

50 Wildman and Brothers, 'A Neuropsychological-Semiotic Model', 413.

51 Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity*, 37.

52 Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity*, 170-171.

faith that does not issue in godly living, in an obedient walk, in spiritual fruit, is not the faith of God's elect.⁵³

Again, the challenge of a true Christian is thrown forth here. And quickly, true Christians in the real sense of the word, and who authentically qualify to be so called (as in the Antioch experience where the observers were able to discern that the life of the followers of Christ was in tandem with their master and then called them Christians – little Christ), must demonstrate the characteristics and contents of spiritual transformation. The spiritual fruit which arises from repentance and conversion must be practically put into action. This is the distinguishing factor between true and false spiritual transformation.⁵⁴

Dzurgba pointedly states that 'a transparent moral character is to be noticed by the public in respect of the born-again's social life'.⁵⁵ Thus, a true spiritual transformation involves a display of a high moral standard different from the pre-conversion experience. The fruit of the spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control – must be manifestly portrayed. This must begin from their 'perception of realities, ideas, speech, taste, emotion or feeling, and action'.⁵⁶

So, apart from genuine religious piety, it is expected that spiritual transformation should bring about positive and

enviable qualities in social, economic and political interaction. Akanmidu agrees that the transformatory process, defined as 'a form of change that runs counter to the force of insistence on choices that have the potential of being vices, and not virtues', results in the deepening awareness which makes inroads 'into the character of the individual and performance'.⁵⁷

Peters gives a scintillating example of demonstrable spiritual transformation. In the West, alcoholism was regarded as a matter of will, which made alcoholics morally responsible. Later society despised the alcoholics for wasting their families' income. The most effective cure was considered to be repentance. The Christian revivalists, John and Charles Wesley, prayed for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, for conversion of heart and for strength of will to stop drinking. 'Those who repented and received the Spirit received the power to cease and desist from drinking alcohol and immediately became loving spouses and responsible parents'.⁵⁸ This remedial method impacted positively on society such that The Woman's Christian Temperance Union and Alcoholics Anonymous changed their views and acknowledged that alcoholism is a matter of personal will, and sought divine power to overcome it.⁵⁹

The foregoing analysis shows that a true spiritual transformation must have a direct tangency with life and ex-

53 A. W. Pink, 'What is Apostasy?' in *The Sword and Trumpet*, LXXVI/12 (Dec. 2008): 4.

54 W. F. Kumuyi, *The Hour of Decision* (Lagos: Life Press Ltd, 1990), 16-19.

55 Dzurgba, *God and Caesar*, 54.

56 Dzurgba, *God and Caesar*, 54.

57 Akanmidu, 'Reflections on the Interaction between Religion', 3-4.

58 T. Peters, *Sin: Radical Evil in Soul and Society* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 315.

59 Peters, *Sin*, 315.

perience. This dispels the notion that Christian experience is psychologically induced, or brought about through persuasive and emotional words. This also dispels the conditioned reflex theory that after exposure to Christian thought a person can be caught in the type of spiritual hypnosis which enables the person to react mechanically to certain issues/ways in certain conditions.⁶⁰

This does not however obliterate a psychological benefit of spiritual transformation. McKnight has amply shown that such psychologists as Eric Erickson, J. Piaget and L. Kohlberg agree that our cognitive and moral developments go through stages. This implies that conversion happens in gradual or progressive dimension just as faith grows in stages. Faith, they also agree, develops in cognitive, spiritual, moral and psychological aspects⁶¹ which is in tandem with Lonergan's concept of the intellectual, religious, moral and affective.

Josh McDowell has compiled a compendium⁶² of testimonies of people who experienced spiritual transformation. He thus presents it as an empirical and historical fact of true spiritual transformation. He gave his testimony as an atheist who was converted. The list contains different people from different walks of life whose biographies and au-

tobiographies are true testimonies of spiritual transformation. Among them we can mention Sir William Ramsay who was as staunch sceptic, Frank Morrison, C. S. Lewis, Lew Wallace, and Giovanni Papini, amongst others.

VI A Contextual Critique

Christians are people who have been converted or thoroughly evangelised⁶³ which is not necessarily a literal or sensory experience in which they must have 'received God's revelation and seen glorious things in heaven'⁶⁴ as prerequisite. Dairo's apparent literal and archetypal perception of being born again makes the case that every Christian is supposedly or likely to have the same salvation experience. The authentic baseline of this experience, it seems to us, is to 'identify with the central act of conversion in which the individual consecrates his or her life to Christ, atones for past sins and becomes "born again" or saved.'⁶⁵

This point is supported by Hans Urs von Balthasar, who underscores that the Christian experiences of Christ by Mary, the apostles who lived physically with Christ, and the apostle Paul for in-

60 J. McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Historical Evidences for the Christian Faith* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life, 1999), 337-338.

61 S. McKnight, *Turning to Jesus: The Sociology of Conversion in the Gospels* (Louisville: John Knox, 2002), 185.

62 McDowell, *Evidence that Demands*, 341-368.

63 A. Dzurgba, *An Introduction to Sociology* (Ibadan: Centre for External Studies, 2002), 20.

64 A. O. Dairo, 'Born Again Christian Sceptics and Political Democratic Progress in Nigeria: Giving Caesar His Dues' in *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, XLI/1, (June 2009): 83-93.

65 R. Marshall, 'God is not a Democrat: Pentecostalism and Democratization in Nigeria' in Gifford, P. (ed.), *The Christian Churches and Democratization in Africa* (Leiden: E. T. Brill, 1995), 244.

stance, are distinctively different. But the integrity of the experiences remain first of all 'an integrating totality and the power of the object of faith' and also 'a readiness for openness to others'.⁶⁶ The essence, therefore, is: 'It is the whole person that God desires. God does not want only man's soul but also, with tantamount importance, man's body.'⁶⁷

VII The Nigerian Experience

What does the foregoing hold for the Nigerian experience of conversion? Much has been said about Christianity in Nigeria as a widespread faith whose spirituality evokes a paradox of faith and action. The high religiosity but low morality displayed by some Nigerian Christians attests to this. The explanations of this paradox are modelled along naturalistic and numinous theories of conversion. The former can further be subdivided into the instrumental, deprivation-fulfilment, 'who-whom' and the intellectual theories.⁶⁸

The naturalists, in their evolutionary thinking, conceive of conversion as a natural phenomenon, which does not take account of the power and work of the Holy Spirit. This arises from their belief that the intervention of the

Holy Spirit is subjective or cannot pass through the 'eye' of empirical verification processes.

Subsumed under the above is the instrumental theory which explains conversion to Christianity, not on the basis of intrinsic value of the faith, but on some advantages accruable from it.⁶⁹ According to Elechi, 'It was the desire for education, coupled with the competition between the denominations, rather than ambition to embrace the new faith, that led to the rapid spread of the Christian churches in Iboland.'⁷⁰

Umejesi corroborated this view when he recently examined the activities of the Holy Ghost Mission in Igboland, and the responses of the people. Through the instrumentality of education, the missionaries had unhindered access to the people's homes and they (the people) competed in releasing their children just as the missionaries were thriving in giving incentives.⁷¹

The instrumental theory may be supported by the many instances of the prosperity gospel, which do not focus on the core of salvation message, but summon the respondents to the altar on the basis of what they stand to gain physically or materially. It is not difficult to find such messages that do not relate to Christ and his saving message. This partly accounts for the problems associated with the quality and integrity of Christians in Nigeria,

66 E. R. Babor, 'A Review of Balthasar's Theology of Faith and Experience: Leading One to be a True Christian' in *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, xl/ii, (Dec. 2008): 67-90.

67 Babor, 'A Review of Balthasar's Theology', 68.

68 M. A. B. Gaiya, "Conversion of the African: A Case Study of an Ngas Prince" in Appiah-Kubi, K. Edet, R. N., Ehusani, G. and Olagunju, J. (eds.), *African Dilemma: A Cry for Life* (N. P.: EATWOT, 1992), 138.

69 Gaiya, "Conversion of the African", 138.

70 F. K. Ekechi, *Missionary Enterprise and Rivalry in Igboland 1857-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1971), 73.

71 I. O. Umejesi, 'The Holy Ghost Mission in Igboland (1885-1967): The Shanahan Story' in *AAU: African Studies Review*, 8, (June 2009): 173-189.

and the paradox of faith and action.⁷²

The deprivation-fulfilment theory emphasises that people accept Christianity because of their frustration that has been caused by ancestral/historical curses or evil covenants. This they believe reveals itself in economic, social, political failure. Therefore, they believe they have been limited by those factors and need deliverance or exorcism. This also explains the number of deliverance ministries and activities.⁷³

The 'who-whom' theory states that conversion is dependent on the presenters of the message and the thought and feeling of the respondents about them. This is seen in the aping of the presenters by their converts. It is not infrequent to come across 'Christians' whose only evidence of spiritual birth is to talk, dress, gesticulate or do things generally like their pastors.

The intellectual theory speaks of a conversion from one form of thinking to another, especially from traditional African religion to Christianity. Sometime the message is not presented in an intellectual/logical way and when people leave a particular church for another, it will perhaps be to satisfy a curiosity. However, Moreland and Craig

argue that pastors/theologians must not shy away from a strictly intellectual/philosophical presentation of the gospel message because it will help in engaging the unbelievers in the truth and power of the scripture.⁷⁴

On the other hand, the numinous theory of conversion as demonstrated in Nigeria relates to the power/work of the Holy Spirit in salvation. Here the Holy Spirit also requires the active faith of the individual in response to the gospel. This is understood in the act of self-giving that evokes faith, love and hope or a holistic surrender to Christ who transforms one's life, because 'only this power... can explain the transformation that takes place in the believing person and his total condition which results from it'.⁷⁵

It is within the above scenario that Christians in Nigeria are often classified by such widely varying qualities as 'genuine', 'fake', 'social', 'political', 'economic', 'nominal', 'seating-warming', or 'church-going'- which in fact parallel the western concept of utilitarian, situationist or Kantian Christianity.)⁷⁶ In spite of that, in Nigerian society, we can easily look around and point to great spiritually transformed personalities including W. F. Kumuyi, E. A. Adeboye, S. K. Abiara, D. O. Oyedepo, B. A. Idahosa, Tunde Bakare, to mention a few. They are notable, not just because they preach the gospel, but because they reflect the essence

72 B. O. Igboin, 'The Gospel of Prosperity: An Appraisal of Its Syncretistic Contours' in *EPHA: Ekpoma Journal of Religious Studies*, 6/1&2, (June 2005): 160-181.

73 D. Ayegboyin, '... But Deliver us from Evil...: The Riposte of the MFM and its Implications for the Reverse in Mission' in *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, xxxvii, (June & Dec. 2005): 33-64. See also, P. N. Mwaura, 'A Spirituality of Resistance and Hope: African Instituted Churches' Response to Poverty' in *ORITA: Ibadan Journal of Religious Studies*, xxxvii/1&2, (June & Dec. 2005): 65-83.

74 J. P. Moreland and W. L. Craig, *Philosophical Foundations for a Christian Worldview* (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2003), 1-6.

75 Babor, 'A Review of Balthasar's Theology', 73.

76 S. W. Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics* (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2008), 42-43.

of spiritual transformation. There are many others also who are not well known leaders but when we observe and interact with them personally we can see that their experience is also a valid testimony to their transformation.

In review, we can remember that the only constant phenomenon in life and in history has been the constancy of change. Everything changes; and human beings too change from one belief to another. On this basis, we have examined spiritual transformation with the hindsight that a true change brings also about observable changes, especially morally, which serves as empirical and historical evidence to justify it. This change arises from an encounter with Christ. We conclude by agreeing with Kenneth Scott Latourette who says:

Through Him, movements have been

set in motion which have been made in society for what mankind believes to be its best – in the inward transformation of human lives in political order, in the production and distribution of goods to meet the physical needs of men, in healing physical ills, in the relations between races and between nations, in art, in religion and in the achievements of the human intellect. Gauged by the consequences... [and] measured by His influence, Jesus is central in the human story [*and change in human society*].⁷⁷

McDowell adds, 'This is why I believe that Jesus Christ is the greatest revolutionary who has ever lived.'⁷⁸ And we do not believe or agree less.

⁷⁷ Cited in McDowell, *Evidence that Demands*, 338; emphasis my addition.

⁷⁸ McDowell, *Evidence that Demands*, 375.

The Appeal of Exodus

Stefan Kürle

Contents

1. Introduction—Hermeneutical Reflections & Method; 2. Yhwh—'National Hero' and 'King'; 3. Moses—the Mediator, Not the Hero; 4. Israel—Between Ideal and Reality; 5. Summary and Conclusions

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Book Reviews

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**Worship and the Reality of God:
an Evangelical Theology of Real
Presence**

John Jefferson Davis

IVP Academic, Downers Grove, IL.:
InterVarsity Press, 2010
ISBN 978-0-8308-3884-4
Pbk., pp 231, biblog., index.

*Reviewed by Raymond J. Laird, Centre for
Early Christian Studies, Brisbane, Australia.*

From the moment that A. W. Tozer's
The Knowledge of the Holy was men-
tioned, I became aware that this study
by Professor John J. Davis, professor
of systematic theology and Christian

ethics at Gordon Conwell Theological
Seminary, would be something out of the
ordinary. I was not to be disappointed.
The thrust of the study is that to a large
extent American evangelicals, with few
exceptions, have lost their way in their
practice of corporate worship. He argues
that the reality of the presence of the
Triune God has been pushed aside by
two dominant worldviews, or two ontolo-
gies, that have arisen in turn over the
last few hundred years. On one hand,
scientific materialism has pushed God
out of his universe, and on the other,
the more recent digital virtualism of
post-modernity has pushed the natural
universe out of view into the background
of life. Hence, the reality of the pres-
ence of God in a God-centred universe

has been displaced. The mock reality of a humanly invented digital universe, in which the individual autonomous self exercises total control, has taken over.

Davis' plea is that evangelical churches return to a supernatural ontological framework of Trinitarian theism. The hallmark of such is loving relationships operating as the norm of life and worship. Davis bases his study on solid theology, perceptive biblical knowledge, and a year of practical field work in attendance at a wide range of churches. Thus his analysis of the state of evangelical churches in North America, his perception of the historical causes for an apparent decline, and the remedy he suggests are not without substance. He traces the decline to its commencement in Reformation iconoclasm, followed by Enlightenment naturalism, next the subversion of worship in revivalism's marginalisation of the Eucharist, and finally, the seduction of modern consumerism and entertainment-oriented cultures. There is much food for thought here, and no less for argument. Nevertheless, Davis is penetrating in his colourful treatment of the issues involved.

The first impression received was that the most important part of this study is the discussion on the Eucharist or Holy Communion, by far the longest chapter in the book. On reflection, Davis's material on the ontology of the self is probably of greater consequence. This discussion on the core identity of the Christian self lays a necessary foundation for a change of mind set. To achieve the type of ancient-future worship Davis promotes, such a change is required so that major adjustments in eucharistic theology and practice can be implemented.

At the heart of his analysis is the pointed question as to how typical evangelical

Christians understand themselves when at church. He proposes that we should think of ourselves as being trinitarian, ecclesial, and doxological. This, he asserts, brings conformity to the 'new-creation self' which is antithetical to the autonomous self of modernity and post-modernity. The claim is that the various expressions of the autonomous self arising from those hostile contexts have distorted both individual and corporate life and worship.

The chapter on the eucharist centres on an extensive argument for recognition of a 'real presence' of our Lord, the risen Christ, not on the table, but at it. The discussion is comprehensive, supported at first by an historical survey of the denuding and devitalising of Protestant worship. More positively, Davis calls up insights derived from the New Testament, the early church, ecumenical theology, recent philosophy and cyberspace to clear a path into the future. In the process, new insights are thrown on issues which have been well aired in the past. Newer issues are also illuminated with appropriate comments, with the concern throughout being to move evangelical churches from a 'real absence' to the 'real presence'. The final chapter is of a practical nature with suggestions on teaching a vital structure of worship, and on ways to implement change towards a framework of 'Ancient-Modern Blended Worship'.

There is much helpful material here for consideration by pastors, teachers, lecturers, indeed for all those in leadership in the church. There is little doubt that many are feeling the shallowness and futility of much that occurs under the banner of worship. They could profit themselves and their people by careful reflection on the things Professor Davis has raised. As expected from a professional academic, the book is enhanced

by judicious references, two excellent bibliographies, and two useful indices. There is some repetition, but the flow of argument carries the reader along buoyantly throughout. There are also a number of surprises along the way that are well worth exploring.

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**Jesus and the Demise of Death:
Resurrection, Afterlife, and the
Fate of the Christian**

Matthew Levering

Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press
ISBN 978-1-60258-447-1

Pbk., front matters xi, pp.228, end
notes, bibliog., index

*Reviewed by Raymond J. Laird, Centre for
Early Christian Studies, Brisbane, Australia.*

Dr. Levering, Professor of Theology at the University of Daytona, and Director of the Center for Scriptural Exegesis, Philosophy, and Doctrine, gives us a book that follows the disciplines expressed in the latter office. It is a theological discussion. It is based firmly on the Christian Scriptures, and it acknowledges the debt which he claims is owed to Greek philosophy. Levering has focused on personal eschatology, a much vexed question concerning death, an intermediate state, resurrection and glorification: vexed, because some of these issues have been denied, shunned, or lightly considered in twentieth century theology. The afterlife, Levering observes, has been pushed into the background in the rush for relevance to life in this present age by a focus upon horizontal relationships at the expense of giving full value to the transcendental relationship with God which is brought to its fullness only in the age which is

to come.

Levering, the theologian, conducts the reader through a Christo-centric theological study, the first three chapters being assigned to the after-crucifixion experience of Christ: his descent into Hell, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Father. He argues that Christ is a forerunner and paradigm of the believer's after death experience. For the Christian, the paradigm is modified to our differences from the Lord, the substance of the final four chapters. Included among the controversial issues raised therein is the place of merit in the human-divine relationship, the question over whether or not we have spiritual souls, the nature of our resurrection form, and the substance of the final beatific vision.

The chapters on Jesus Christ also address controversial issues such as the assertion of The Apostles' Creed that Christ descended into Hell, a tenet which has been denied by quite a number of theologians. Of particular note, is a discussion of post-mortem grace that leads to salvation for those who have died. The conversation on the meaning of 'the right hand of the Father' is another matter that Levering handles expertly.

Levering, the philosopher, sides with those who are constrained to admit that Hellenic philosophy was merged into Jewish and Christian thought. However, he adopts a both-and position in relation to issues where Jewish and Hellenic insights are regarded as opposed rather than as complementary. Again the discussion is balanced and enlightening.

As for Levering, the biblical exegete, the reader cannot help being struck by the large number of Scripture passages that form a critical part of this study. A rough count shows that there are more

than five hundred texts referenced in the main text of this work. If we take as an example the chapter on the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, which contains one hundred and fifteen references, it must be concluded that the author highly values the Bible as a vital, indeed the primary source for theological reasoning. He firmly adheres to Pope Benedict XVI's dictum which he quotes, that 'where theology is not essentially the interpretation of the Church's Scripture, such a theology no longer has a foundation'.

The methodology adopted by the author is to introduce a topic as understood by an eminent contemporary such as Tom Wright, bring other contemporary writers into the dialogue, then compare their reasoning with that of Thomas Aquinas. All of this is done with a focus on their handling of Scripture. At appropriate times he inserts a reminder of philosophical elements that are present in the text or in the theological constructs of the authors he has placed in conversation. This makes for interesting discussions indeed. Overall this is a conversation worth joining as an interested eavesdropper. It probably needs some expertise to appreciate the depth of the conversation, yet there is much that could be grasped by the educated layperson in the local congregation. As is usual, there are areas of controversy in which one may disagree with the author's position. Nevertheless, one cannot but emerge the richer and wiser for having taken part, even though it has been by proxy, so to speak.

Sixty pages of copious informative endnotes contain references, quotes, and comments, a valuable resource for further research on topics covered in the book. A bibliography of thirty pages of works cited is another commendable feature. The index is adequate, but as the

author has drawn attention to numerous biblical texts, the addition of a Scripture index would have enhanced this work for the reader wishing to look wider than the normal commentary literature for discussions of biblical passages, especially as applied in the context of theological inquiry.

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Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms:

A Study in the Development of Reformed Social Thought

David VanDrunen

Grand Rapids, USA/Cambridge, UK:

William B. Eerdmans, 2010

ISBN 978-0-8028-6443-7

Pb., pp 466, bibliog., index

Living in God's Two Kingdoms: A Biblical Vision for Christianity and Culture

David VanDrunen

ISBN 978-1-4335-1404-3

Wheaton, USA: Crossway, 2010,

Pb., pp 208, index

*Reviewed by Thomas K. Johnson, Martin
Bucer Seminary, Prague, Czech Republic*

In these two books, David VanDrunen takes up the difficult task of finding a historic Protestant and biblical framework for social ethics that avoids four common distortions: a dualistic separation from the world, a theocratic desire to dominate the world, relegating the world to moral neutrality or normlessness, and the hope that we can save secular culture by our efforts. To this end he has re-appropriated the Reformation doctrines of God's natural moral law and God's two kingdoms, which were not adequately appropriated by four

lines in modern theology: Karl Barth, Neo-Calvinism (represented by Herman Dooyeweerd and Albert Wolters), the new perspectives on Paul (represented by N. T. Wright), and the emergent church movement (represented by Brian McLaren).

These four theological lines properly attempted to overcome a reduction of Christianity to a mere saving of souls, but mistakenly talked as if all the world is in Christ or else that Christians must redemptively transform all of culture. Accidentally the gospel of the kingdom becomes a message about 'our work of transforming the world toward peace and justice' (p. 24, *Living*), with a lack of clarity about the gospel of justification by faith alone.

His solution is a renewed biblical understanding of culture, God's two kingdoms, natural moral law, and the gospel. His book *Living* is suited for entry level theological students, as well as pastors and Christian educators; *Natural Law* is a highly academic history of Protestant ethics of top quality, designed for professors and advanced scholars.

VanDrunen finds God's common, civil kingdom described in relation to Cain (Gen. 4), and this common kingdom is confirmed in characteristics of the covenant with Noah (Gen. 9). Very precisely he says, 'God does not call them [believers] to engage in cultural labours so as to earn their place in the world-to-come.... God gives us a share in the world to come as a gift of grace in Christ and then calls us to live obediently in this world as a grateful response. Our cultural activities do not in any sense usher in the new creation' (p. 28, *Living*). He claims that, 'God creates a deep and fundamental *spiritual antithesis* between believers and unbelievers' and also that 'God ordains a broad *cultural*

commonality that believers and unbelievers share' (p. 75 *Living*). 'The church exists as a community of sojourners and exiles precisely because the common kingdom, founded in the Noachic covenant, continues to exist.... Christians must strive for faithful obedience to God in both kingdoms' (p. 101, *Living*).

His historical book provides precise definitions and is the best history of Protestant social ethics I have read. The themes which he addresses are crucial for Christian proclamation and social engagement. We must teach the doctrine of justification by faith alone clearly, which requires that we also clearly distinguish law and gospel and then the two kingdoms of God. The two kingdoms doctrine, far from reducing the cultural influence of the biblical message, has been a key to why Christianity has a radically different relation to cultures from other religions, and one that has been so constructive. VanDrunen has very nicely explained God's kingdoms. But there is a huge task which his work brings to attention: we urgently need a new articulation and application of natural law ethics by evangelical scholars.

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The Intolerance of Tolerance

Don A. Carson

Nottingham, UK: Inter-Varsity Press,
2012

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Pb., pp 200, index.

Reviewed by Timothy Laurence, Lawyers' Christian Fellowship, United Kingdom

This book is a 'must' for Christian leaders—especially those who hear that line all the time! Not because of its author—though Carson is always worth reading.

It is a 'must' because of the staggering importance of its subject and because few evangelical scholars have Carson's competence to tackle it. 'Staggering' is actually one of Carson's own repeated words to describe what he is observing in western culture. It is not just that we are destroying our freedoms, but that this self-destruction is now celebrated, and it is the one thing that no one must criticise. What is it? Tolerance.

Anyone familiar with Don Carson's writing knows that he is not an alarmist and does not make foolish generalisations. Instead, he carefully traces historical patterns, makes nuanced distinctions and engages with leading social commentators in the secular world. And yet he is still staggered by what he sees: how the championing of vacuous democracy is leading to democracy's demise; how the privatisation of religion is curbing the freedom of religion, and how this loss is bringing, in turn, the loss of other civil freedoms. A mistaken moral high ground is removing morality from public life. And this hurts everyone.

Carson begins by making a distinction between what he calls the 'old' and the 'new' tolerance. From there his thesis is simple: the 'new tolerance' is intrinsically intolerant. It is therefore self-contradictory and self-destructive—and so is any public square built upon it. And yet, he argues, having rejected almost everything else, the 'new tolerance' is the only absolute 'good' the West now values.

The 'old' tolerance is seen in the conviction that everyone has the right to express differing views, especially when we disagree with them or find them offensive. This, he says, comes from a conviction that truth and goodness can be known and should be pursued by discussion and argument, and that

Jesus himself will return to put wrong to right. The 'old tolerance' is a good thing and has come in large part from the influence of Christianity within western heritage as the Reformation gradually led to a clearer distinction between the roles of church and state, expression and coercion.

The 'new tolerance', however, is the belief that one should not disagree with another view, but should accept everything (and hence nothing). Its flaw is that it cannot tolerate any view that is intolerant of it. To do so would be to tolerate intolerance; but not to do so would be intolerant! Therefore this 'new tolerance' is a self-contradiction. While claiming to be value-neutral, it inevitably becomes the tool of bullying selfish interests, and Christianity itself is targeted most frequently.

This book echoes the content of Carson's earlier work, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, but applies it to the specific area of the public square. In places the book requires careful attention. It is flooded with good quotations and contemporary international examples which makes it authoritative, notably up-to-date and a tremendous resource. It also makes the book slightly repetitive, as the topic is addressed from a number of complementary angles.

But this is why it is a 'must'. If Carson's book is full of repeated examples, our contemporary lives are filled with them all the more—and yet ordinary Christians rarely notice what they are or understand what is happening. Christian leaders are in a unique position to serve their people by engaging with Carson's book and repeating the content even more simply to equip disciples to understand and engage lovingly with the world around them.

The need is great and much is at stake.

Carson's conclusion gives ten practical applications for how to do it—including the social priority of truth and evangelism. But if Christian leaders don't engage with this book it is unlikely that other Christians will deal adequately with its staggeringly important message, which affects all our lives and how we love our neighbours and stand for the gospel.

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My China Mystery

Marion Andrew

2012

ISBN 9781921633720

Pb, pp 169 Bibliog

Reviewed by Norman T. Barker, Brisbane, Australia

With a daughter's loving touch, Australian Marion Andrews has given to us a moving story of her parents, Frank and Ella White. Rev. Frank W.F. White (1911-2001) served as missionary, army captain and Presbyterian minister. From 'long-lost treasure' – a photo album found after her father's death, with helpful notes inscribed, together with Frank's prayer letters and her mother's record of her life, she has written a coherent account of 'Her China Mystery'.

Founder of the China Inland Mission (CIM), the renowned J. Hudson Taylor, visited Australia in 1890 at the invitation of Australian CIM supporters. He appealed for 100 missionaries from Australia in the last decade of the 19th century—101 went. A steady stream followed in the 20th century. These included Frank White in 1939 and Ella Davidson in 1945. If China features in our news today, during this period China was much in the hearts of missionary-

minded people. Frank arrived in Shanghai with a party of three Australians and two New Zealanders a week after war broke out in Europe in 1939.

The group took up their work in west China, adjacent to Tibet. The slog of learning the language was lightened by the adventurous spirit of young men revelling in the nearby mountains. Marion gives a vivid picture of Frank's early missionary work as probationary, then junior missionary working with a senior colleague in NW China, with market preaching and meetings. Missionaries adopted Taylor's edict of Chinese dress to reach people who had never heard the gospel. Language study continued to better communicate this precious message.

Japan controlled east China. In the dark days after Pearl Harbour, a plea came from the British army for men who spoke Chinese to serve with the Gurkha Rifles. Frank took up a captaincy in early 1944, serving to the end of the war in Burma and West China. For his service he was made a Member of the British Empire (M.B.E.), an award finally received by Marion from Queen Elizabeth II in 2009.

These war years extracted a heavy toll on Frank's health, but after a period of recuperation in Australia, he was eager to take up his work again in China, returning in 1946, against the looming Communist threat. There was adjustment to CIM's new vision of missionary work, not as leaders but as co-workers with national Christians. By early 1946, Ella Davidson had settled into language school, followed by appointment to Lanchow in NW China. Ella witnessed the movement of God's Spirit in Lanchow, the way the local church organized itself for evangelism, and the passion to share the gospel into central Asia, a spirit that

inspired and grew the church through difficult times.

Frank and Ella met when a 'shining angel' emerged from her clinic to meet a tired, cold and hungry driver of a heavy ex-army truck with long-awaited supplies. Marion recounts Frank's engagement, within a space of a few days from their meeting, to her missionary nurse mother. Not everyone has the opportunity to propose on the famous Wall of China! They were married by CIM General Director, Bishop Frank Houghton, in Shanghai Cathedral in September 1947. By Christmas 1947 they were back at their mission station in NW China. On 31 March 1948 they moved into their first humble home since marriage.

Two months later they had to flee, as Mao's Communists advanced from NE China. The death of a Swedish missionary tried by a People's Court and stoned to death for 'sins against the people' led CIM to revise its earlier policy of holding on. They spent a year at a CIM Hospital compound where Frank worked as a hospital evangelist and where Marion was born. But Frank's continued ill-health dictated early furlough. Frank described their arduous journey out of China, to return to Brisbane, Australia, in June 1949.

CIM was reorganized as OMF to work throughout SE Asia, but could offer no place for Frank and Ella. They found themselves bereft of their dream of life-long work in China. With doors to overseas service closed, Frank was ordained to preach the gospel at home. News about the Chinese church was dark. Frank found it difficult to speak of China, creating Marion's 'China mystery'. His gift to the Presbyterian Church's college library in the 1980s of the multi-volume history of China missions by Hudson Taylor's nephew,

A.J. Broomhall, testified to his continued interest in China.

A mystery indeed, beautifully laid bare, for the family first of all, and for the wider church.

ERT (2013) 37:2, 190-191

Making a Meal of It: rethinking the theology of the Lord's Supper

Ben Witherington III

Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007

ISBN 978-1-60258-015-2

Hb, pp 140 Indices

*Reviewed by David Parker, Editor,
Evangelical Review of Theology*

Well known Asbury New Testament scholar, Ben Witherington III follows up his previous companion volume on baptism with a further compact survey of an important but often misunderstood 'basic element of Christian life and worship'. It begins with an overview of the passover in Judaism and religious meals in the ancient world before closely examining the narratives of the last supper from the synoptic Gospels.

The book then turns to the early church and the material in the Pauline letters before returning to the Fourth Gospel where a long section is devoted to the writer's contention that a correct view of the authorship of that Gospel solves the apparent discrepancies between it and the other Gospels and illuminates its own particular contribution to our understanding. Throughout these sections, careful analysis of the text and the historical background help to show clear distinctions between passover, Last Supper and the Lord's Supper (or communion). In particular, the findings of recent sociological studies are put

to good use in showing the settings of these meals.

In contrast to the space and attention devoted to the biblical material, the survey of the development of the practice and understanding of the Lord Supper throughout the history of the church is much shorter, less sympathetic and far more selective. It is mostly angled to show how great a departure there has been from the simple meal setting of the early disciples and church.

The author is well aware of the different social and religious settings that exist today and the problem of deciding what is normative now in comparison with the primitive practice. He warns against trying to re-enact the practices of the Bible as if in doing so the value and validity of the service would be assured. Instead he urges readers to see that the Lord's Supper should focus on the death of Christ and its benefits and the presence of Christ himself. He believes that there would be advantage in reinstating a home setting for worship and 'making a meal' of the service!

The book is short, written in a relaxed personal style, and provides plenty of references for further reading while at the same time focusing firmly on the text of Scripture, making it a welcome addition to the literature on this important subject.

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Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind

Mark A. Noll

Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge
U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co.,
2011

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Hb., pp180, bibliog., index.

*Reviewed by Raymond J. Laird, Centre for
Early Christian Studies, Brisbane, Australia.*

Fifteen years ago, Mark Noll voiced his experience of and revulsion to the existence among many evangelical Christians of a general distrust, extending to disdain, of higher secular learning. He mourned the fact that academic study was treated by many as nothing other than a threat to the faith. After a decade and a half of further study, teaching, public lectures, and peer consultation, he has produced a biblical-theological *raison d'être* for evangelicals to not only appreciate higher learning, but also to recognise the necessity to pursue it.

Knoll, takes the centrality of Christ, something which is both precious and critical to evangelicals, and presents a cogent argument from Bible and creed, that creation is close to the heart and purpose of the Creator and therefore worthy of study in all the variety of its elements. He argues that creation is revealed in Scripture and affirmed by the creeds, as being 'by Christ', as maintained 'in Christ', and finding its purpose as being 'for Christ'. Therefore, truth is not to be found only in revelation, but also in creation, a reason more than sufficient for evangelicals earnestly to pursue learning at the higher levels. This reviewer finds his argument convincing.

It comes as a surprise that Knoll asserts that Christology provides specific

guidelines for academic research. As he notes, such an approach to research has been thin on the ground in the past two centuries. One cannot but agree that the creation- evolution debate which arose with the advent of modern scientific methodologies has scared off Christians from considering Christological, or any biblical principles for that matter, as being relevant to such research. Thus this section of the book is of deep interest to all those involved in higher learning or contemplating it. Four guiding principles are identified: doubleness, contingency, particularity, and self-denial. These are not presented as laws for intellectual life, but simply that Christian belief may extend naturally to all areas of human endeavour. Although some problems arise for this reader, this chapter deserves serious consideration.

The crunch appears when Knoll explains how these Christological principles might be applied to various fields of study. He chooses history, science, and biblical studies for this demonstration. These chapters are probably the most controversial of the book. Indeed, Knoll has already raised some doubts at the beginning of the chapter on the Christological guidelines at page 44: 'The result is that even basic intellectual moves can pose difficulties. In my own case I have been thinking about the bearing of Christology on historical practice for more than a quarter of a century and am not at all certain that I have cracked this particular nut successfully.'

This is ironic, and really begs the question as to the validity of the adopted approach. In theory, it sounds great and promises much; in practice, apparently it is difficult to apply and the promise begins to fade. Nevertheless, Knoll's ap-

peal is to Christian professionals to test this proposition and the guidelines that flow out of it, by applying these to their research in their chosen fields. Knoll's hope is that other minds might unearth some vital things that he has missed. The discussion he presents, the suggestions he makes, and the paths he takes are all worthy of consideration.

If this challenge is taken up, perhaps new generations of evangelical Christian scholars could be produced who are more confident of the relevance of their faith, more bold in the application of the truth as it is in Jesus, and more Christ-centred in their intellectual life than many before who have struggled against such issues as historical relativism, scientific rationalism, anti-intellectual gnosticism and defective exegetical hermeneutics.

Knoll's work is completed with a reprise of the issues raised in his previous book on this topic. He lists some heartening signs which have emerged that indicate that change for the better is occurring in some quarters of evangelical thought. Among other things, he mounts a defence of Peter Enns' *Inspiration and Incarnation*, in which Knoll, while not endorsing all that Enns has expressed, finds some crucial ideas similar to the main thrust of his own work. This should help to stimulate others to step out to question some positions unwisely adopted in the past.

As a closing note, I remember writing a paper many years ago on 'My Theory of History' for an Honours' Theories of History seminar. If I had seen a book like this one at that time, that paper would have been very different. I can make no greater commendation of Noll's book.

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