

Contents

THEME: Theology in Church and World

Editorial *page 99*

Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology

TIMOTHY GEORGE

page 100

Of Mirrors and Men—Surveying a Trajectory for ‘Moving Beyond’
from Scripture to Theology

MICHAEL BOROWSKI

page 119

The Ecosapiential Theology of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job

ANDREA L. ROBINSON

page 134

Colin E. Gunton and Public Theologians: Toward a Trinitarian
Public Theology

NAOMI NOGUCHI REESE

page 150

Addressing the Scars on the Face of Christendom: World Mission
and Global Persecution in an Age of Changing Intra-Church
Relations

THOMAS K. JOHNSON

page 166

Dying to Be the Church: 1 Corinthians 15 and Paul’s Shocking
Revelation about Death and Resurrection

ROB A. FRINGER

page 174

REVIEWS *page 185*

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Roland J. Lowther

Spirit and Gospel enables the reader to see that the Holy Spirit offers not just a fresh vision of salvation, but also the wisdom to understand it, the courage to embrace it, and the power to live it.

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Mark Reasoner, Marian University

Roland J. Lowther is the pastor of Eternity Presbyterian Church, Queensland, Australia. He holds a PhD from the University of Queensland on the subject, 'Living by the Spirit'.

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Laurie Guy

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Greg Liston, Mt Albert Baptist Church, Auckland, New Zealand.

Until recently **Laurie Guy** was Vice Principal of Carey Baptist College, Auckland, New Zealand where he is presently an adjunct lecturer.

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Editorial: Theology in Church and World

WE LAUNCH THIS issue with an article by well known American theologian, Timothy George, which outlines the basis for developing an evangelical ecclesiology. From a wide background of involvement in inter-church discussions, he argues that the absence of a well-founded ecclesiology weakens evangelical identity and undermines the ability to participate in ecumenical relations.

We then go behind the scenes to the important question of moving from scripture to theology and welcome the Book Review Editor of this journal, Michael Borowski (Germany), as he outlines some recent expositions of this process. In what is essentially a prospectus for further research on this topic, we are given an insight into some important contributions from masters in the field as they propose foundations for 'mere evangelical theology'.

Branching out further, we are next treated to an interesting creative example of this 'moving beyond' as Andrea Robinson (USA) shows the connectedness of all elements within God's created order as presented in biblical wisdom literature. Robinson explains that 'ecosapiential theology' is a much needed insight which includes caring stewardship of the environment, vigilant attention to the condition of nature, and redemptive activity in all aspects of creation.

We now turn to the arena of 'public theology', for a focus on theological reflection that impacts the world of everyday life. Naomi Reese (USA) examines the work of Colin Gunton. She concludes that his trinitarianly and

eschatologically formulated views provide the resources necessary to move toward a more robust, holistic, and trinitarian public theology that takes into account the triune God in a way that other examples do not.

Our final two articles provide an outside and inside view of the church as it seeks to witness in a world of people, politics and nature. The first by Thomas K. Johnson (Czech Republic) laments that historic 'scars' on the church have limited its ability to impact the world in a positive way. However, he now happily believes that some recent developments have changed this, so there is now hope that the church may be able to demonstrate the love which defines it and so be in a position to advance its mission more effectively.

These issues call for a profound change in the inner life of the church. The Bible study article by Rob Fringer (Australia) points to the kind of dynamic to achieve this by looking at the 'shocking revelation about death and resurrection' in the famous chapter, 1 Corinthians 15. Fringer shows that this passage is ultimately about 'how believers should embody Christ's life, death and transformation in the present'. Its plain message which has often been 'downplayed and ignored', is in fact a powerful 'warning of the implication of following after a cost-less gospel'. He concludes with words that underline the entire contents of this issue, '[W]e do not want to be a divided and ineffective church!'

Thomas Schirmmacher, General Editor
David Parker, Executive Editor

Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology

Timothy George

ON 29 JULY 1928, a young evangelical pastor began his sermon on Saint Paul's discourse on the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12 with these words:

There is a word that, when a Catholic hears it, kindles all his feeling of love and bliss; that stirs all the depths of his religious sensibility, from dread and awe of the Last Judgment to the sweetness of God's presence; and that certainly awakens in him the feeling of home; the feeling that only a child has in relation to its mother, made up of gratitude, reverence, and devoted love; the feeling that overcomes one when, after a long absence, one returns to one's home, the home of one's childhood.

And there is a word that to Protestants has the sound of something infinitely commonplace, more or less indifferent and superfluous, that does not make their heart beat faster; something with which a sense of boredom is so often associated, or which at any rate does not lend wings to our religious feelings—and yet our fate is sealed, if we are unable again to attach a new, or perhaps a very old, meaning to it. Woe

to us if that word does not become important to us soon again, does not become important in our lives.

Yes, the word to which I am referring is 'Church', the meaning of which we propose to look at today.¹

These words were spoken by Dietrich Bonhoeffer to a small German-speaking congregation in Barcelona, Spain. They present both a diagnosis and a challenge for evangelicals today who are called upon to set forth a clear, compelling ecclesiology in the light of new conversations and developing relations with their Roman Catholic brothers and sisters.

As an international, trans-denominational fellowship of some one-half billion believers around the world, evangelicalism is in its very existence an amazing ecumenical fact. As a theological movement, however, evangelicalism has been slow to develop a distinctive ecclesiology, and that for

¹ Cited in Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 42. Cf. Bonhoeffer's doctoral dissertation, first published in 1930, on the doctrine of the church: *The Communion of Saints* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960).

Timothy George (ThD, Harvard) is founding dean of Beeson Divinity School of Samford University and teaches church history and doctrine. He is active in Evangelical–Roman Catholic Church dialogue and has chaired the Doctrine and Christian Unity Commission of the Baptist World Alliance. George is the general editor of the Reformation Commentary on Scripture, and has written more than 20 books and many articles. An earlier version of this article was published as 'Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology' in *Catholics and Evangelicals: Do They Share a Common Future?* Thomas P. Rausch, ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 2000) 122-48.

several reasons. First, evangelical scholars have been preoccupied with other theological themes, such as biblical revelation, religious epistemology, and apologetics. Second, as an activist movement committed to evangelism, missions, and church planting, evangelicalism has not made reflective ecclesiology a high priority. As some might choose to put it, 'We are too busy winning people to Christ to engage in something which seems too much like navel-gazing'.² This objection should not be gainsaid, especially when coupled with the warning by missiologist J. C. Hoekendijk, who once observed that 'in history a keen ecclesiological interest has, almost without exception, been a sign of spiritual decadence'.³

Third, evangelicalism is a fissiparous movement of bewildering diversity made up of congregations, denominations, and parachurch movements whose shared identity is not tied to a particular view of church polity or ministerial orders. Amidst such variety, is it even possible to describe one single, or even central, evangelical ecclesiology?

These objections sharpen the discussion, but they must not forestall our pressing forward with the kind of sustained ecclesial reflection called for not only by the present ecumenical moment but, more importantly, by biblical Christianity and Reformation theology, which are at the wellsprings

of the evangelical tradition. Our failure to do so in the past has resulted in both a loss of evangelical identity and a lingering perception of the church as trite, boring, and superfluous.

The evangelical witness emerged not only, and not primarily, as a protest against abuses in the church but rather as a protest for (*pro-testantes*) the truth of the gospel. How evangelicalism maintains the centrality of gospel truth within ostensibly weak structures of ecclesial authority is perhaps its greatest challenge today. However, within the evangelical tradition itself, in its confessions and hymns no less than its formal theological reflections, there is a rich reservoir for articulating a strong ecclesiology in the service of the Word of God.

If it seems to Roman Catholics and other observers that evangelicals are more concerned with individualistic therapeutic spirituality than with churchly Christianity, we must admit that there is warrant for such a view. A popular book on the church, though not written by a self-professed evangelical, reflects the kind of ecclesiology found in abundance on the shelves of many Christian bookstores. Some chapter titles are: 'The Church as a Helpful Service Organization', 'The Church as an Insurance Policy', 'The Church Serves My Special Interests', and 'The Church Rescues Me in Times of Crisis'.⁴ More damning still is the wording posted on a sign beside an evangelical congregation: 'The church that asks nothing of you!'

It would be a great mistake, howev-

² Donald A. Carson, 'Evangelicals, Ecumenism, and the Church', in *Evangelical Affirmations*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Carl F.H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1900), 355.

³ J. C. Hoekendijk, 'The Church in Missionary Thinking,' *The International Review of Missions* 41 (1952), 325.

⁴ Barbara Brown Zikmund, *Discovering the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983).

er, to gauge the rich tradition of evangelical ecclesiology by such trendy religious perversions. What are the lineaments of a consensual evangelical ecclesiology? We shall consider this theme under three general rubrics: the universality of the church, the priority of the gospel, and, finally, the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic.⁵

I The Universality of the Church

Two classic texts from the evangelical tradition highlight the reality of the church universal. The first is question fifty-four in the Heidelberg Catechism (1563):

What doest thou believe concerning the holy Catholic church? Answer: That out of the whole human race, from the beginning to the end of the world, the Son of God, by his Spirit and Word, gathers, defends, and preserves for himself unto everlasting life, a chosen communion in the unity of the true faith; and that I am, and forever shall remain, a living member of the same.⁶

5 D. A. Carson has taken a complementary approach in defining evangelical ecclesiology in terms of seven basic theses: (1) The church is the community of the new covenant. (2) The church is the community empowered by the Holy Spirit. (3) The church is an eschatological community. (4) The church is the 'gathered' people of God. (5) The church is a worshipping community. (6) The church is the product of God's gracious self-disclosure in revelation and redemption. (7) The church is characterized by mission. See his 'Evangelicals, Ecumenism, and the Church', 358-71.

6 Philip Schaff, ed., *Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), 3:324-25.

The second definition is from the Second London Confession (1677/1689), a Particular Baptist statement of faith, which echoes the language of the Westminster Confession:

The Catholic or universal Church, which with respect to the internal work of the Spirit, and truth of grace, may be called invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ, the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him, that filleth all in all.⁷

Georges Florovsky (1893-1979), one of the most important Orthodox theologians of recent times, once said that the church is characterized by an ecumenicity in time as well as by an ecumenicity in space. This motif is deeply rooted in the patristic tradition, East and West, and was given classic expression by Saint Augustine, whom Luther referred to as 'that poor, insignificant pastor of Hippo'.⁸

This idea is well represented also in the first two chapters of *Lumen gentium* on 'The Mystery of the Church' and 'The People of God'. God the Father, says Vatican II,

determined to call together in a holy Church those who should believe in Christ. Already present in figure at

7 In 1742, this same confession was published in America, with slight alterations, as the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. Cf. Timothy and Denise George, eds., *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 84-85.

8 Georges Florovsky, 'The Quest for Christian Unity and the Orthodox Church', *Theology and Life* 4 (1961), 201. WA 50, 615 (WML 5,252).

the beginning of the world,...it will be brought to glorious completion at the end of time. At that moment, all the just from the time of Adam, 'from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect' will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church (*LG*, 2).⁹

The church, then, is the body of Christ extended throughout time as well as space, consisting of all persons everywhere who have been, as the Puritans would have put it, 'savingsly converted', that is, placed in vital union with Jesus Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus!* Outside of this church, which is *the* church in the most comprehensive, all-encompassing sense, there is no salvation.

This ecclesial motif is crucial for Catholic-evangelical fellowship in that it enables members of both traditions to recognize in one another, 'when and where God so permits it' (*ubi et quando visum est Deo*), the evident reality of God's grace among those who have trusted Jesus himself as Lord, master, and divine Saviour.¹⁰ To be sure, this kind of fellowship is still a long way from 'full visible unity', but it is equally distant from automatic mutual condemnation.

Pope St. John Paul II said of those Christians who are beyond the visible boundaries of the Catholic church, 'We can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit'; evangelicals too can declare the same

concerning believing Catholics.¹¹ The recognition of a shared spiritual reality leads on to activities of cooperation and joint witness, the kind of things referred to in the encyclical as 'spiritual ecumenism', including the fellowship of prayer, the translation and dissemination of Holy Scripture, theological dialogues, and a common agenda of convictional (as opposed to merely prudential) co-belligerency against abortion, euthanasia, pornography, religious persecution, and the erosion of a moral base for politics, law, and culture.

But evangelicals also understand the universality of the church in ways that are not compatible, or at least are less compatible, with Catholic teaching. As Avery Dulles has shown, the concept of the church as the mystical body of Christ was brought into the mainstream of Catholic ecclesiology by the famous encyclical of Pope Pius XII in 1943, *Mystici corporis*.¹² Although *Lumen gentium* modifies the positions taken by Pius XII in several respects, it does not retract the language of *Mystici corporis*, which refers to the church *quasi altera Christi persona*, ('as if it were another person of Christ').¹³

¹¹ *Ut unum sint*, 53.

¹² Dulles, *Models*, 52.

¹³ Quoted, Schrotenboer, *Roman Catholicism*, 21. However, the following statement in *Lumen gentium* does not equate, but only compares, the church to the incarnation: 'For this reason the church is compared, not without significance, to the mystery of the incarnate Word. As the assumed nature, inseparably united to him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a somewhat similar way, does the social structure of the church serve the spirit of Christ who vivifies it, in the building up of the body (cf. Eph. 4:15)' (*LG*, 8). *Vatican II*, 357.

⁹ Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1975), 351.

¹⁰ *Augsburg Confession*, Art. V.

While some Protestant theologians have also spoken of the church as a continuation of the incarnation, most evangelicals recoil from such a direct identification lest the church itself be made into an object of faith alongside of Christ. Although Paul Tillich's theology can hardly be considered 'orthodox' by evangelical criteria, he speaks for most, if not all, Protestants when he warns against the idolatrous temptation to put the historical church in the place of God.¹⁴ In the New Testament, the metaphor of the body of Christ describes the relationships of believers to one another (in 1 Corinthians) and to Christ (in Ephesians and Colossians, where the body is distinguished from Christ its head), but not to the surrounding world. In other words, 'the body image looks inwards and upwards but not outwards'.¹⁵

In the New Testament, the church universal is depicted as a heavenly and eschatological reality, not as an earthly institution to be governed and grasped by mere mortals. The only text in the New Testament which directly refers to the church as the mother of believers is Galatians 4:26, in which, in contrast to the earthly city in Judea, the church is called 'the Jerusalem that is above, the heavenly Jerusalem'. Another text of major importance which extends this idea is Hebrews 12:22-24:

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come

to thousands upon thousands of angels of joyful assembly, to the church (*ekklesia*) of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Thus the church as a heavenly and eschatological entity includes the elect of all the ages: the saints of the old covenant as well as those of the new, the *ecclesia triumphans* and also the *ecclesia militans*. As a reality 'beyond our ken' (Calvin), this universal church is not at our disposal, and thus we can only believe it (*credo ecclesiam*)—not believe *in* it as we believe in God the Father Almighty, Jesus Christ his only Son, and the Holy Spirit. Rather, when we confess that we 'believe the church', we are bearing witness to its reality.

We mean to say that we believe it exists; that we ourselves by God's grace have been placed within it, along with all others who 'bow their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ' (Belgic Confession); and that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it.

There is indeed a sure and direct connection between this holy company of the redeemed in heaven and the pilgrim church which struggles for its footing in the awful swellings of the Jordan here below. It is precisely in this eschatological setting that we find the most compelling New Testament proof text for regular church attendance: 'Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching' (Heb 10:25).

¹⁴ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 3:162-82.

¹⁵ P. T. O'Brien, 'The Church as a Heavenly and Eschatological Entity', Carson, ed., *The Church in the Bible*, 113-14.

In Christian worship, our hearts are lifted into the heavenly sanctuary as we share together the bread and cup of the Lord's Table in anticipation of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. 'Let us lift up our hearts... We lift them up to the Lord!' This *sursum corda* moves us forward in history even as it lifts us upward into heaven. There, Calvin says, Christ has ascended, 'not to possess it by himself, but to gather you and all godly people with him'.¹⁶

II The Priority of the Gospel

The concept of the invisible church has fallen onto hard times in recent years, not only among Catholic interpreters but also among Protestant exegetes as diverse as Karl Barth and D. A. Carson, who think it best not to apply the idea of invisibility to the church.¹⁷ It is easy to see why this expression gives so much offence. The church 'invisible' sounds too much like Casper the friendly ghost—so ethereal, so docetic, so detached from the flow and flux of the real stuff of ordinary life.

At the time of the Reformation, certain spiritualist reformers seemed to give credibility to the charge which the Catholic polemicist Thomas Murner

early on brought against Luther, namely, that he wanted 'to build a church as Plato wants to build a state, which would be nowhere'.¹⁸ Thus Sebastian Franck declared: 'I believe that the outward church of Christ, including all its gifts and sacraments, because of the breaking in and laying waste by Antichrist right after the death of the apostles, went up into heaven and lies concealed in the Spirit and in truth.'¹⁹

Other radical reformers, such as Casper Schwenckfeld, declared a moratorium (*Stillstand*) on the Lord's Supper, emphasizing instead the inward feeding upon the 'celestial flesh' of Christ, a non-material Eucharist transacted in the heart by faith (*alone!*).

Over against these spiritualizing trends, however, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Bucer, Cranmer, and indeed most of the evangelical Anabaptists too stressed the importance of the local visible congregation where, in the famous words of the Augsburg Confession, 'the Word is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly administered'.²⁰ At the Leipzig Debate with John Eck in 1519, Luther firmly

¹⁶ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 4.17.29.

¹⁷ Richard John Neuhaus wrote about the importance of ecclesiology in evangelical-Catholic dialogue: 'It is a question of *the* Church as such. Not an invisible church or a church of true believers that is conceptually removed from the ambiguities and tragedies of history, but the Church that is this identifiable people through time, a people as vulnerable to the real world of historical change as was, and is, their crucified Lord.' *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, 1-92.

¹⁸ WA 7, 683, 11. Cited in Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 261.

¹⁹ George H. Williams, ed., *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 149.

²⁰ 'The church is the assembly of saints in which the Gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly.' *The Book of Concord*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 32. On the Anabaptist view of the church, see Franklin H. Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), and Arnold Snyder, *The Life and Thought of Michael Sattler* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984).

embraced the Augustinian concept of the church, reiterated in the late middle ages by John Wyclif and John Hus, as 'the whole body of the elect (*praedestinatorum universitas*)'.²¹ But this concept did not prevent him from also exclaiming, 'Thank God, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd'.²²

For Luther, the gospel, which he defined as the good news of salvation by grace alone through faith alone because of Jesus Christ alone, was constitutive for the church, not the church for the gospel. As he wrote in the sixty-second of the Ninety-five Theses, 'The true treasure of the church is the holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God.' As a doctor of Holy Scripture and as a pastor of souls, Luther revolted against the church for the sake of the church, that is, against a corrupt church for the sake of the 'true, ancient church, one body and one communion of saints with the holy, universal, Christian church'.²³

The idea that Luther embodied 'the introspective conscience of the West' and that his lonely quest for truth propelled him into the abyss of subjectivism owes more to the romanticism of the nineteenth century and the individualism of the twentieth than to the reformer's own self-consciousness.²⁴

Luther's commitment to the gospel

led him to describe justification by faith alone as 'the summary of all Christian doctrine'. In 1537, he wrote, 'Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised, even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed.'²⁵ This message, far from being the result of privatized religious experience or rebellious individualism, delivered the soul precisely from such preoccupations by pointing to the finished work of Christ on the cross.

As Luther put it in his lectures on Galatians in 1535: 'This is the reason why our theology is certain: it snatches us away from ourselves, so that we do not depend on our own strength, conscience, experience, person, or works, but depend on that which is outside ourselves, that is, on the promise and truth of God, which cannot deceive.'²⁶

Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone was not a novel teaching but one which he found scattered throughout the writings of the early church, especially in the prayers of the saints, and, above all, in the letters of Saint Paul. (Melancthon traced the expression *sola fide* to Saint Ambrose.)²⁷ But clearly this teaching had become obscured in the intervening centuries. Luther's 'discovery of the Gospel' made justification by faith alone the centerpiece of Reformation ecclesiology.

21 WA 2, 287, 35.

22 *Book of Concord*, 315.

23 LW 41, 119.

24 See Timothy George, 'Modernizing Luther, Domesticating Paul: Another Perspective' in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: Volume II The Paradoxes of Paul*, eds. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 437-463.

25 WA 25, 357; 50, 119. See Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1988), 62-79.

26 LW 26, 387.

27 *Book of Concord*, 31-32. Hans Küng notes many other citations of *fides sola* in pre-Reformation writings. See his *Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1964), 249-63.

In recent years, justification by faith has been the subject of extensive dialogue between Lutheran and Catholic scholars.²⁸ In Europe some years ago, Karl Lehmann, Catholic bishop of Mainz, and Lutheran theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg led discussions on the condemnations of the Reformation era with respect to justification. Out of these discussions came a question which could not have been asked even a generation earlier: Do the condemnations set forth in the *Decrees of the Council of Trent* and in the *Book of Concord* still apply today?²⁹ It is not surprising that proposals to reexamine the historic differences over justification have met with stern resistance from various quarters within both the Catholic and Protestant worlds.³⁰

An evangelical commitment to the priority of the gospel means that justification by faith alone should remain the kerygmatic centre of our proclamation and common witness, even though we also affirm with Calvin that ‘while we are justified by faith alone, the faith that justifies is not alone’ (*fides ergo sola est quae justificat; fides tamen quae justificat, non est sola*).³¹ While good works are never the *condition*, they are indeed the *consequence* of our being de-

clared righteous before our heavenly Father. Albert Outler once summarized the theology of John Wesley in a way that might capture the heart of the evangelical tradition at its best: faith alone, working by love, leading to holiness.³²

While the biblical doctrine of justification remains the evangelical centre of the visible church, we must guard against making shibboleths out of the precise formulations of Luther, Calvin, or any other human teacher. To turn justification by faith alone into justification by doctrinal precision alone is to lapse into a subtle but insidious form of justification by works. In this regard we do well to heed the words of Jonathan Edwards in his treatise on justification:

How far a wonderful and mysterious agency of God’s Spirit may so influence some men’s hearts, that their practice in this regard may be contrary to their own principles, so that they shall not trust in their own righteousness, though they profess that men are justified by their own righteousness—or how far they may believe the doctrine of justification by men’s own righteousness in general, and yet not believe it in a particular application of it to themselves—or how far that error which they may have been led into by education, or cunning sophistry of others, may yet be indeed contrary to the prevailing disposition of their hearts, and contrary to their prac-

²⁸ See H. George Anderson, et al., eds., *Justification By Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985).

²⁹ Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, eds., *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

³⁰ See Lutheran World Federation and Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

³¹ CO 8:488.

³² Cf. Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 28: ‘The faith that justifies bears its fruits in the faith that works by love.’

tice—or how far some may seem to maintain a doctrine contrary to this gospel-doctrine of justification, that really do not, but only express themselves differently from others; or seem to oppose it through their misunderstanding of our expressions, or we of theirs, when indeed our real sentiments are the same in the main—or may seem to differ more than they do, by using terms that are without a precisely fixed and determinant meaning—or to be wide in their sentiments from this doctrine, for want of a distinct understanding of it; whose hearts, at the same time, entirely agree with it, and if once it was clearly explained to their understandings, would immediately close with it and embrace it:—how far these things may be, I will not determine; but am fully persuaded that great allowances are to be made on these and such like accounts, in innumerable instances.³³

III One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic

The invisible or universal church emerges into visibility in the form of local congregations gathered around the faithful preaching of the Word of God: a community (*Gemeine* was Luther's word) or called-out assembly of the people of God, the fellowship of believers, or, as the Apostles' Creed has it, the communion of saints. Thus, evangelicals can agree wholeheartedly with the statement of *Lumen gentium* that in local churches

the faithful are gathered together through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, and the mystery of the Lord's Supper is celebrated.... In these communities, though they may often be small and poor, or existing in the diaspora, Christ is present, through whose power and influence the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church is constituted (*LG*, 26).³⁴

The church universal and the church local are related not as two species of the same genus but rather as two predicates of the same subject. Gregory the Great declared that: 'The holy church has two lives: one in time and the other in eternity.'³⁵ The connection between the one church in its two successive states is the Holy Spirit.

1. The Church is one

The New Testament speaks of 'churches' in the plural, particular congregations of baptized believers united in a common confession, sharing a mutual love for one another across the barriers of race and class, nation and 'denomination' ('I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, etc.'). In his letter to the Ephesians, the Magna Carta of New Testament ecclesiology, Paul makes this urgent plea: 'Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father

³⁴ *Vatican II*, 381.

³⁵ Gregory the Great, *In Ezech.* 2, 10 (PL 76, 1060). Cited in Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1956), 78.

³³ *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974) 1:654.

of all, who is over all and through all and in all' (Eph 4:3-5).

Thus the unity of the church is based on the fact that we worship one God. As Edmund Clowney has observed, 'If we served many gods—Isis, Apollo, Dionysos, Demeter—then we might form different cults, for there were "gods many and lords many." But we serve the one true God, who is also the heavenly Father of his one family' (Eph 3:14).³⁶

Heiko A. Oberman has claimed that schism was not the result of the Reformation but instead its genesis and point of departure.³⁷ It is clear that neither Luther nor Calvin had any idea of starting new churches; they aimed instead to reform the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. As Calvin put it, 'To leave the church is nothing less than a denial of God and Christ' (*Dei et Christi abnegatio*).³⁸

Continental Anabaptists, English Separatists, and biblical restorationists pursued a different ideal of reform, seeking not so much to purify the church as to restore it to its original, New Testament condition. Thus, by gathering new congregations of 'visible saints', organized according to the blueprint of church order in the New Testament, these radical reformers believed that they could restore, as one of them put it, 'the old glorious face of primitive Christianity'.³⁹ The end result

of this process was the proliferation of numerous denominations and competing sects, 'separated brethren' who were often more separated than brotherly in their relations with one another!

Evangelicals today are heirs of both reformational and restitutionist models of ecclesiology, and their approach to controverted questions of church order, ministry, and ecumenism often depends on which of these two paradigms is more prevalent. The fact that most evangelicals are less than enthusiastic about the modern ecumenical movement in its liberal Protestant modality does not mean that they have no concern for the unity of the church. It does mean, however, that the question of the church's unity cannot be divorced from that of its integrity.

The call to be one in Christ rings hollow when it comes from church leaders who either themselves deny, or wink at others who do, the most basic Christological affirmations of the Christian faith, including the virgin birth, bodily resurrection, and actual return of Christ himself. Thomas Oden speaks for many evangelicals when he declares:

Too many pretentious pseudoecumenical efforts have been themselves divisive, intolerant, ultra-political, misconceived, utopian, abusive, nationalistic, and culturally imperialistic....Hence modern ecumenical movements are themselves called to repentance on behalf of the unity of the Church. Without true repentance, it is doubtful that the varied houses of Protestantism can

36 Clowney, *The Church*, 79.

37 Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 249.

38 *Institutes*, 4.3.2.

39 See Timothy George, 'The Spirituality of the Radical Reformation,' *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages in Reformation*, ed. Jill

Raitt (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 334-71.

speaking confidently of the one body of Christ.⁴⁰

But evangelicals too are called to repentance. We too have sinned against the body of Christ by confusing loyalty to the truth with party spirit and kingdom advance with petty self-aggrandizement. We need the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to know when, like the Confessing Church in Nazi Germany, it is necessary to stand against schemes of false church unity and compromised theology to declare, 'Jesus Christ, as he is testified to us in the Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God, whom we are to hear, whom we are to trust and obey in life and in death.'⁴¹

2. The Church is holy

Of the four classic attributes of the church, holiness is the one best attested to in the most primitive versions of the baptismal creed: 'I believe in the *hagian ekklesian*', or, according to a variant tradition, 'I believe *through* the holy church (*per sanctam ecclesiam*).'⁴² The church is a 'called-out assembly'; it is *sancta*, 'holy', in so far as it exists over against the enviroing culture which surrounds it.

The apostle Peter addressed his first epistle to 'God's elect, strangers in the world...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through the sanctifying work of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ'. To these gentile churches

scattered throughout the Roman Empire, he said, 'Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy because I am holy"' (1 Pet 1:1-2, 14-16).

The church on earth is holy not by virtue of its being set apart from every other institution and community in its external organization, as though it were some kind of *cordon sanitaire* in the midst of the contagion all around it, but only because it is animated by the Holy Spirit and joined in vital union with its heavenly head, Jesus Christ himself. Thus Zacharias Ursinus in his *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* said the church

is called holy because it is sanctified of God by the blood and Spirit of Christ, that it may be conformable to him, not in perfection, but by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, or obedience; and by having the principle of holiness; because the Holy Spirit renews and delivers the church from the dregs of sins by degrees, in order that all who belong to it may commence and practice all the parts of obedience.⁴³

Evangelicals insist, however, that the holiness of God be clearly distinguished from the holiness of the church. The holiness of the church on earth is entirely derived, emergent, and incomplete; that of God is eternal, substantial, and unbroken by the vicissitudes of imperfection and finitude.

⁴⁰ Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1992), 309.

⁴¹ 'The Barmen Declaration', in *Creeds of the Churches*, ed. John H. Leith (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 520.

⁴² Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, 316.

⁴³ Zacharias Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1992), 289.

Thus we take exception to the statement of Yves Congar that 'there is no more sin in the church than in Christ, of whom she is the body; and she is his mystical personality.'⁴⁴

In an early draft of the section of *Lumen gentium* describing the church as the people of God, there was an acknowledgment of the sin to which the church is susceptible in its earthly pilgrimage. In the official text, however, the putative sinfulness of the church was qualified by adding the words 'in its members'. However, as Hans Küng has said, 'There is no such thing as a church without members...it is human beings, not God, not the Lord, not the Spirit, who make up the church.'⁴⁵ The justified believer is always *simul iustus et peccator*, 'at the same time righteous and sinful', and, consequently, the visible church must be at the same time a *communio peccatorum* as well as a *communio sanctorum*.

Did Luther's univocal insistence upon justification by faith alone as the centre of evangelical proclamation leave no room for sanctification, good works, or growth in grace and holiness? The Catholic prince Duke George of Saxony thought so: 'Luther's doctrine is good for the dying, but it is no good for the living.' Erasmus was less kind: 'Lutherans seek only two things—wealth and wives...to them the Gospel means the right to live as they please.'⁴⁶

While it is true that for Luther the sole, uninterrupted, and infallible mark of the church was and remained the gospel—*ubi evangelium, ibi ecclesia*—he has also much to say about good works and growth in holiness as the fruit of having been declared righteous by God through faith alone. Later reformers placed more emphasis on the 'marks of the true church' (word and sacrament for Luther and Calvin, discipline as well for later Reformed confessions, English Separatists, and Anabaptists). Calvin in particular is clear about the function of the marks: 'For, in order that the title "church" may not deceive us, every congregation that claims the name "church" must be tested by this standard as by a touchstone.'⁴⁷

The evangelical marks—proclamation, worship, and discipline—are thus distinguished from the traditional Nicene attributes precisely because they are not merely descriptive but dynamic. They call into question the unity, catholicity, apostolicity, and holiness of every congregation which claims to be a church. In this way, as Calvin says, 'the face of the church' emerges into visibility before our eyes.⁴⁸

By elevating discipline to the status of a distinguishing mark of the church, Puritans, Pietists, and the early Methodists defined the true visible church as a covenanted company of gathered saints, *separated from* the world in its organization and autonomy and *separating back to* the world through congregational discipline those members whose lives betrayed their profession.

Such procedures were meant to be

⁴⁴ Yves Congar, *Sainte Eglise* (1963), 144ff. Cited in G. C. Berkouwer, *The Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 341.

⁴⁵ Küng, *The Church*, 415-16; Clowney, *The Church*, 86.

⁴⁶ P. S. Allen and H. M. Allen, eds., *Opus Epistolarum Des Erasmi Roterodami* (Oxford:

Oxford University Press, 1928), 7, 366.

⁴⁷ *Institutes* 4.1.11.

⁴⁸ *Institutes* 4.1.9.

remedial rather than punitive; they were intended to underscore the imperatives of life and growth within the church, understood as an intentional community of mutual service and mutual obligation by which 'the whole body, bonded and knit together by every constituent joint...grows through the due activity of each part, and builds itself up' (Eph 4:16).

3. The Church is catholic

Most evangelicals are happy to confess that the church is one, holy, and apostolic. These are, after all, not only biblical concepts but also New Testament terms. But in what sense can evangelicals affirm *credimus catholicam ecclesiam*?

Many contemporary evangelical churches have long abandoned the word 'Catholic', and would even consider it an insult to be called such, and have gone so far as to alter the traditional wording of the Apostles' Creed to avoid the duty of pronouncing it. But none of this changes the fact that evangelicals are indeed catholics in so far as they believe that in its essence the Christian community is one and the same in all places and in all ages—the one, holy, universal church which embraces true believers in all sectors of human society and in all epochs of human history.⁴⁹ The reformers of the sixteenth century and the Puritans of the seventeenth, not excluding Baptists, were happy for their churches to be called catholic (cf. Richard Baxter,

The True Catholick, 1660).

Indeed, it is not too much to say that these evangelical forebears opposed the Church of Rome not because it was too Catholic but because it was not Catholic enough. They spoke of the evidence for catholicity in three respects: its geographical extent, the church as spread over the whole world, not restricted to any particular place, kingdom, or nation; its inclusive membership, gathered from all classes and ranks of human society; and its indefectibility, based on the promise of the risen Christ: 'I will be with you always even to the end of the world' (Mt 28:20).⁵⁰

Evangelical expositors, however, were careful not to define true catholicity in terms of quantifiable, empirical evidence alone. Ecclesiastical longevity can be deceptive, for, as the Scots Confession of 1560 points out, Cain with respect to age and title was preferred to both Abel and Seth.⁵¹ So too, historical continuity, numerical quantity, and cultural variety do not themselves constitute true catholicity.

The true church might be quite small: 'Where two or three of you are gathered together in my name', Jesus said, 'there I am in your midst.' This 'I' is the only basis of true catholicity. As Barth puts it, 'The Real Church is the assembly which is called, united, held together and governed by the Word of her Lord, or she is not the Real Church.'⁵²

In contemporary evangelical life,

⁴⁹ This point is elaborated most effectively in Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, 337-49. See also Küng, *The Church*, 383-411; Clowney, *The Church*, 90-98.

⁵⁰ Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, 289-90.

⁵¹ Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom* 3:461.

⁵² Karl Barth, 'The Real Church', *Scottish Journal of Theology* (1950), 337-51.

perhaps the most notable aspect of catholicity is the worldwide missionary vision which is the heart and soul of the evangelical movement. Indeed, what ecumenism is to post-Vatican II Catholicism, missions and world evangelization are for evangelicalism: not an appendix added to church activity but an organic part of its life and work. The importance of declaring the gospel to those who have never heard was at the heart of William Carey's mission to India in 1793, an event which launched what Kenneth Scott Latourette called 'the great century' of Protestant missionary advance.⁵³

This witness continues today through the many mission efforts of evangelical denominations and a vast network of international parachurch ministries, such as the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Campus Crusade for Christ, WorldVision, and Prison Fellowship. The evangelical understanding of catholicity is nowhere better seen than in this world-Christian movement through which redeemed saints 'from every tribe and language and people and nation' are being gathered by God's grace into that heavenly chorus to sing with the angels, martyrs, and all the saints: 'The Lamb is worthy—the Lamb who was slain. He is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing' (Rev 5:9, 12).

4. The Church is apostolic

Because the church is one, holy and catholic, it is also apostolic, a word added to the Nicene description of the church in 381 but clearly expressed already in Paul's metaphor of the church as 'God's house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, and the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself' (Eph 2:20). That church is apostolic which stands under the direction and normative authority of the apostles, whom Jesus chose and sent forth in his name. Evangelicals, no less than Roman Catholics, claim to be apostolic in this sense, but the two traditions differ sharply in the way in which they understand the transmission of the apostolic witness from the first century until now.

Catholics believe that the church continues to be 'taught, sanctified, and guided by the apostles...through their successors in pastoral office: the college of bishops, assisted by priests, in union with the successor of Peter, the church's supreme pastor'. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it, 'The bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them despises Christ and Him who sent Christ.'⁵⁴

As heirs of the Reformation, evangelicals do not define the apostolicity of the church in terms of a literal, linear succession of duly ordained bishops. They point instead to the primordial

⁵³ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1953). See also Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Birmingham: New Hope Press, 1991).

⁵⁴ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1994), 227-9.

character of the gospel, the inscripturated witness of the apostles, and the succession of apostolic proclamation.

While the church is indeed built on the foundation of the holy apostles and their predecessors, the prophets, there is something more basic and more important than even these worthy servants, namely, the message they proclaimed: Jesus Christ and him crucified. This is a constant note throughout the ministry of Paul, who wrote to the Corinthians, 'For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake' (2 Cor 4:5).

Again, in writing to the Galatians when his own apostolic authority was under severe attack, Paul appeals to an authority beyond himself—the gospel. 'But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preach to you, let him be eternally condemned!' (Gal 1:8). Paul brought himself under his own curse: 'But even if we....' Paul did not ask the Galatians to be loyal to him but rather to the unchanging message of Christ, Christ alone, that he had preached to them.

In a different form, this same issue would surface again during the Donatist controversy. The question was whether religious rites such as baptism, the Lord's Supper, and ordination could be valid and effective when performed by a minister who was morally impure. Augustine argued that the sacraments were effective by virtue of the power invested in them by Christ himself and the promise of his Word.

At the time of the Reformation, this issue came under review again, and the essential point of the Augustinian position was recognized as valid: The

true touchstone of doctrinal and spiritual authenticity is God himself, what he has irrevocably done in Christ and vouchsafed to us in Holy Scripture, not the qualifications, charisma, or even theology of any human leader.⁵⁵ As the authorized representatives of Jesus Christ, the apostles have faithfully and accurately transmitted their authoritative witness to their Lord in the divinely inspired writings of Holy Scripture.

The teaching authority of the apostles thus resides in the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the self-authenticating Word of God, the truth of which is confirmed in the believer by the illuminating witness of the Holy Spirit.

For evangelicals, the principle of *sola Scriptura* means that all the teachings, interpretations, and traditions of the church must be subjected to the divine touchstone of Holy Scripture itself. But *sola Scriptura* is not *nuda Scriptura*. Evangelicals cannot accept the idea of tradition as a coequal or supplementary source of revelation, but neither can we ignore the rich exegetical tradition of the early Christian writers whose wisdom and insight is vastly superior to the latest word from today's 'gilded' scholars.

The consensus of thoughtful Christian interpretation of the Word down through the ages—and on most matters of importance there is such a thing—is not likely to be wrong, and

⁵⁵ On the significance of the Donatist controversy in the history of Christian thought, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 307-18. See also Timothy George, *Galatians* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 96-8.

evangelicals, no less than other Christians, have much to learn from the church fathers, schoolmen, and theologians of ages past.⁵⁶

Even before their inspired message was committed to writing, the apostles were effectively proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ throughout the Roman Empire. Thus, Paul said to the Ephesians, 'Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears' (Acts 20:31). To the Thessalonians he recalled how 'our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction' (1 Thess 1:5).

For evangelicals, public preaching of the Word of God is a sure sign of apostolicity, for through the words of the preacher the living voice of the gospel (*viva vox evangelii*) is heard. The church, Luther said, is not a 'pen house' but a 'mouth house'. The Second Helvetic Confession (1566) goes so far as to say that 'the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God'.

The almost sacramental quality of preaching in the evangelical tradition has sometimes obscured the importance of the 'visible words' of God in baptism and the Lord's Supper. 'The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy' from Vatican II recognizes, according to *Inter oecumenici*, that 'it is especially necessary that there be close links between liturgy, catechesis, religious in-

struction and preaching' (IO, 7).⁵⁷

Evangelicals, no less than Catholics, should strive for a proper balance among these constituent acts of worship. In doing so, however, evangelicals must not compromise the priority of proclamation, for today, as in the time of the apostles, 'God is pleased through the foolishness of what is preached to save those who believe' (1 Cor 1:21).⁵⁸

IV Ecclesia In Via Crucis

'I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church', Archbishop William Temple once remarked, 'but regret that it doesn't exist.'⁵⁹ To which the evangelical responds: If by 'exist' we mean perfect, complete, unbroken, infallibly secure, verifiably visible in its external structures and temporal resources, then it is clear that such a church does not exist in this world. Furthermore, if,

⁵⁷ *Vatican II*, 46.

⁵⁸ In what is quite a remarkable statement from an evangelical theologian, Wayne Grudem concedes that on the basis of pure preaching of the Word of God and an acceptable sacramental practice, true churches may be found within the established structures of Roman Catholicism. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 866. On the possibility of true churches in Roman obedience, Grudem, it seems, has Calvin on his side. 'Therefore', wrote the Genevan reformer, 'while we are unwilling simply to concede the name of Church to the papists, we do not deny that there are churches among them' (*Institutes* 4.2.12). See Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 266-86.

⁵⁹ Cited in George Carey, *A Tale of Two Churches* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 147.

⁵⁶ In writing against the Anabaptists in 1528, Luther said: 'We do not reject everything that is under the dominion of the Pope. For in that event we should also reject the Christian church. Much Christian good is found in the papacy and from there it descended to us.' LW 40, 231.

after a thorough investigation, a panel of ecumenical experts, well trained in the latest techniques of sociological research, were to announce at a press conference that they had at long last found such a church, then nothing in heaven and earth would be more certain than that *that* church could not be the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church founded by Jesus Christ.

In this life the true church is always *ecclesia in via* (*Kirche im Werden*), the church in a state of becoming, buffeted by struggles, beset by the eschatological 'groanings' which mark those 'upon whom the ends of the world have come' (Rom 8:18-25; 1 Cor 10:11).

In 1525 Luther wrote a lyrical hymn praising the church:

To me she's dear, the worthy maid,
and I cannot forget her;
Praise, honor, virtue of her are said;
then all I love her better.
On earth, all mad with murder, the
mother now alone is she,
But God will watchful guard her,
and the right Father be.⁶⁰

To the eyes of faith the church is a 'worthy maid', the bride of Christ, but by the standards of the world she is a poor Cinderella surrounded by numerous dangerous foes:

If, then, a person desires to draw the church as he sees her, he will picture her as a deformed and poor girl sitting in an unsafe forest in the midst of hungry lions, bears, wolves, and boars, nay, deadly serpents; in

the midst of infuriated men who set sword, fire, and water in motion in order to kill her and wipe her from the face of the earth.⁶¹

In God's sight the church is pure, holy, unspotted, the dove of God; but in the eyes of the world, it bears the form of a servant. It is like its bridegroom, Christ: 'hacked to pieces, marked with scratches, despised, crucified, mocked' (Is 53:2-3).⁶²

It is only from a posture of ecclesial vulnerability that evangelicals and Catholics will be able to reach out to one another across the great divide which still separates us. Only in this way can we, believing Catholics and confessional evangelicals, reach out to one another in openness and love, the kind of love which is not puffed up, seeketh not its own; the kind of love which rejoices not in iniquity but rejoices in the truth and, for this very reason, is able then to bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things.

Only in this way will we be able really to hear one another and thus to avoid what Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy has aptly called 'the dialogue of the deaf'. For evangelicals to imagine that nothing has changed in Catholicism since the Council of Trent, and for Catholics to see evangelicals as rebellious sects who must return, like prodigal sons, to the haven of Rome, is to engage in a dialogue of the deaf. We will not break down the walls of division and distrust in this way.

As evangelicals and Catholics pursue theological dialogue, moved by our

60 LW 53, 293. This hymn is based on the text in Revelation 12:1-2 which describes a woman suffering in childbirth, which Luther interpreted as the church under assault by Satan.

61 WA 40/3, 315.

62 LW 54, 262.

love for the truth and our love for one another, we must not let our discussions degenerate into a kind of arm-chair ecumenism, heady, aloof, and divorced from an awareness of 'the pestilence that walks in darkness, and the destruction that wastes at noonday' (Ps 91:6). We have been brought together by what I have called elsewhere 'an ecumenism of the trenches'.⁶³

We are comrades in a struggle, not a struggle against one another, and not a struggle against men and women outside the Christian faith who reject the light of divine grace because they have fallen in love with the darkness which surrounds them; no, our conflict is against the prince of evil himself, against the cosmic powers and potentates of this dark world. For the church, much more is at stake than who comes out on top in the current 'culture wars'.

All of our programs and plans will ring hollow unless we stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ, evangelicals and Catholics alike, who live under the shadow of the cross and whose faithful witness is even now leading many of them to the shedding of their blood. Throughout *Ut unum sint*, Pope St. John Paul II calls us to remember 'the courageous witness of so many martyrs of our century, including members of churches and ecclesial communities not in full communion with the Catholic church'.⁶⁴

More than a decade before the convening of Vatican II, a Southern Baptist medical missionary, Dr. Bill Wal-

lace, along with two Roman Catholic missionaries, Bishop Donaghy and Sister Rosalia of the Maryknolls, were arrested by Communist thugs and brutally mistreated because of their Christian faith. Dr. Wallace was eventually killed by his captors. Following his death, Thomas Brack, leader of the Maryknoll Mission, sent the following letter to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board):

The Maryknoll fathers of the Wuchow Diocese mourn the loss of Dr. Wallace whose friendship they esteem. He healed our malaria, our skin ulcers, and the other illnesses that missionaries manage to pick up. He will be mourned by thousands of Chinese, at whose bedside he sat and in whose eyes his name will always bring a light of gratitude, though governments may come and go.⁶⁵

On another continent, in a different war, the cost of discipleship was no less dear. Several years ago on a visit to Germany, I was taken to what remains of the concentration camp at Buchenwald near Weimar. Here, more than sixty-five thousand people were put to death by a totalitarian regime which saw in the Christian faith, in both its Catholic and Protestant expressions, a threat to the ideology of death.

At Buchenwald, there was one block of cells reserved for prisoners deemed especially dangerous or notable. In cell 27 they placed Paul Schneider, a Lutheran pastor, who was

⁶³ See Timothy George, 'Catholics and Evangelicals in the Trenches', *Christianity Today* 38/6 (May 1994) 16.

⁶⁴ *Ut unum sint*, 49.

⁶⁵ Jesse C. Fletcher, *Bill Wallace of China* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 241.

called ‘the Preacher of Buchenwald’ because, even from the small window in his cell, he loudly proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ in defiance of the orders of the Gestapo guards. In cell 23, they placed Otto Neururer, a Catholic priest, whose work on behalf of the Jews and other so-called ‘undesirables’ had made him a threat to the Nazi warlords. He too ministered in Jesus’ name to his fellow inmates in the concentration camp.

In Buchenwald, a son of Rome and a son of the Reformation, separated no longer by four centuries but only

by four cells, walked the *via crucis* and bore witness together to their common Lord, Jesus Christ, the sole and sufficient redeemer. As evangelicals and Catholics together, we remember them and give thanks to God for them and for countless others like them, who share a *koinonia* in the sufferings of Jesus, for today, as in ages past, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church—the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.

Ipsi Gloria In Ecclesia.

Amen.

PATERNOSTER THEOLOGICAL MONOGRAPHS

The Omnipresence of Jesus Christ A Neglected Aspect of Evangelical Christology

Theodore Zachariades

This important book reassesses the classic Chalcedonian view of Jesus, ‘one person, two natures’. It carefully rejects all forms of kenotic Christology and affirms that Jesus possessed and used all the divine attributes, in particular, that of omnipresence, arguing that evangelical scholars have abandoned this important truth. This has ramifications for our view of the Holy Spirit and of Christ’s presence with his people. It challenges us to read the Scriptures again and to live in the presence of Jesus.

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Gerald L. Bray, Research Professor of Divinity, History and Doctrine, Beeson Divinity School, USA

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Of Mirrors and Men—Surveying a Trajectory for ‘Moving Beyond’ from Scripture to Theology

Michael Borowski

IS THERE SUCH A THING as a particular evangelical theology? And if there is, what does it look like? Over a longer period, one would have argued, evangelicalism can be found in many denominations, probably even all. Since the last decade of the 20th century, David Bebbington’s quadrilateral fostered significant progress by submitting that evangelicalism can be identified by the now famous four components of biblicism, crucicentrism, conversionism and activism.

While it was helpful to identify these components, they are rather descriptive in nature, and do not provide answers for other questions that arise. How should evangelicals do theology? How should they move from hundreds of pages of texts to doctrine that guides the faith? How should one ‘move beyond’ scripture to theology?

In this article, I summarize three stages of what can respectively be described as a trajectory towards what Vanhoozer and Treier call ‘Mere Evangelical Theology’—a framework within

which evangelicals can do theology that is faithful to scripture in the 21st century.

I Mere Evangelical Theology

1. The Marshall Plan

In 2002, the Institute for Biblical Research heard the annual lecture given by the late I. Howard Marshall, who was professor of New Testament Exegesis at the University of Aberdeen over several decades. The lecture, as well as some of the responses to it led to the publication of a book titled *Beyond the Bible—Moving from Scripture to Theology* (Baker Academic, 2004). In this book, Marshall presents an argument that may be summarized like this: The task of hermeneutics in the evangelical realm is one that cannot be ignored. Even though evangelicals do not read ‘just some book’ when they read the bible, but a book that ‘possesses authority over its readers’, the hermeneutical task remains. In fact,

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the hermeneutical task may be even more crucial, just *because* both nature and function of this particular text are of utmost importance and authority.¹

1. Marshall's proposal

For the purposes of his case, Marshall distinguishes three levels: general hermeneutics, exegesis, and exposition (or application). In reference to these three levels, Marshall comments on the current status within the evangelical world, claiming that possibly the most important and controversial issue might be the third one.² He describes a 'typical' approach of appropriating ancient text for a modern world by referring to J. I. Packer,³ arguing that, although there are strengths in such a typical approach, there would also be significant problems.

For one, different conclusions would often be drawn, even if the interpreters worked under the same kind of setting.⁴ For another, particular diversity would be visible where Christians dealt with issues for which there are no close analogies within scripture. Thirdly, modern Christians would actually criticize developments of our time, although scripture would have known some of such developments, but did *not* criticize those with even a single passage (take, for instance, the issue of slavery).⁵

Marshall, who also sees methodological problems,⁶ points out that both the routes of 'liberalism' (namely, leaving behind claims of scripture which are interpreted as 'incompatible' with the modern reader) and 'fundamentalism' (namely an approach in which often just one form of interpretation would be pursued as 'biblical', while all others would be rejected) should not be the route evangelicalism follows.⁷

a) Ethics, worship and doctrine

How should we move on, then? In his third level, exposition, Marshall discusses three areas: ethics, worship, and doctrine. In each case, Marshall lays out two approaches. Regarding ethics, Marshall argues that some tend to take scripture at face value, while others may assume that 'there may be cases where, for example, some scriptural teaching is relativized by other teachings, or where we are called to do things that may go beyond scriptural reasoning'.⁸

With regard to worship, he distinguishes a *normative* approach, in which various practices are permitted as long as they are not excluded by scripture, and on the other hand, a *regulative* approach, in which worship has to be 'prescribed' or at least implicitly permitted by scripture.⁹ With regards to doctrine, Marshall claims that there is in fact a certain development. He cites the example of the Formula of Chalcedon or the forms of the doctrine of atonement

1 I. Howard Marshall, *Beyond the Bible—Moving from Scripture to Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 13.

2 Marshall, *Beyond*, 26.

3 Marshall, *Beyond*, 26-7.

4 Marshall, *Beyond*, 28.

5 Examples are submission to political frameworks, the issue of slavery.

6 Marshall, *Beyond*, 30.

7 Marshall, *Beyond*, 31-2.

8 Marshall, *Beyond*, 35.

9 Marshall, *Beyond*, 40-1.

through history.¹⁰ However, again there would be two approaches to dealing with the situation. Marshall addresses these approaches as 'conservative' and 'progressive', one preventing (or ignoring) any development, one accepting (and advocating) it.¹¹

There would be, then, such development for various reasons: the questions of readers change, for instance with increasing knowledge about the world as it is. Furthermore, statements of scripture may be required in a *form* that is in itself not found in scripture. Challenges arise also if a text of scripture stands in tension with other texts; certain solutions to those tensions would often differ from others. Finally, readers with a mind nurtured by the gospel will change their interpretation over time, and so there will be not only development within the interpreter, but also variation between different interpreters.

In all of this, Marshall's challenge is to 'provide some kind of reasoned, principled approach to the question of the development of doctrine from Scripture'.¹² Marshall follows developments of doctrine from the OT on towards the teachings of Christ and up to some developments within the apostolic teachings, claiming that developments took place at each stage.¹³

This conclusion leads him to his ultimate concern: Is there development in doctrine today? He argues that in some sense there is not, since the canon is closed. However, *interpretation*

of the canon is not closed, Marshall claims: 'The closing of the canon is not incompatible with the nonclosing of the interpretation of that canon.'¹⁴

b) Going beyond

From here, Marshall moves on to search for principles to 'go beyond' the bible 'biblically'. He starts out by asking what took place when writers of the New Testament made use of the Old Testament.

i) Old Testament

Marshall does so by focusing on the New Testament usage of Leviticus. Working through eight references from the New Testament to the Old, he draws four conclusions: a) offerings are obsolete since the death of Jesus; b) Jesus' teaching goes beyond the teaching of the Old Testament and (probably) applies today; c) the law has to be fulfilled by the followers of Jesus until today, and consummated in the command to love one's neighbour, and (d) the statement that people will live (that is, will be *justified*) by acting out the law is set aside explicitly by Paul (while the law still prescribes how to live).¹⁵

Marshall concludes that while the authority of the Pentateuch continues, 'it is read in a manner different from what it used to be', and eventually 'it may be best to say that it is reading the Old Testament in light of Christ as the inaugurator of the new covenant that is the guiding principle in the present instance'.¹⁶ This inauguration through Christ includes, for example, a *spir-*

¹⁰ Marshall, *Beyond*, 42.

¹¹ Marshall, *Beyond*, 44.

¹² Marshall, *Beyond*, 45.

¹³ Marshall, *Beyond*, 48-53.

¹⁴ Marshall, *Beyond*, 54.

¹⁵ Marshall, *Beyond*, 58.

¹⁶ Marshall, *Beyond*, 58.

itualization of the covenant—a difficult term, Marshall agrees, but a necessary one, for instance when it comes to such issues as a physical land for Christians.¹⁷

ii) Gospels

A second step of Marshall is to look at how the early church read the gospels of Jesus Christ. Marshall offers four parameters by which the teaching of Jesus would have been constrained: (1) It was given before his death and resurrection, (2) it is elementary instruction for beginners, (3) it is given in and for a Jewish context, (4) it uses the imagery and thought forms current at the time.¹⁸

Marshall expands those parameters by interpreting them as *liminal*. Now, by referring to a liminal period Marshall submits that we witness a ‘stage during which something is coming to birth and therefore is neither completely out of the womb nor completely into independent existence’, a ‘time of transition’.¹⁹

As a result of reinterpreting his parameters, Marshall concludes that ‘the Gospels sometimes have to be understood on *two levels*: the level of the original hearers of Jesus and the level of Matthew’s audience (including ourselves).’²⁰ His point is that Jesus’ teaching continues into the liminal period—it is not ‘set aside’, but it has to be understood in the ‘light of the continuing revelation in the post-Easter period’.²¹

iii) Apostles

A final step for Marshall then is the teaching of the early church. Within the Apostolic Tradition, Marshall refers to the ‘keryma’, or the ‘apostolic deposit’—a basic core for defining the centre of Christian theology and also as an interpretative key for it.²² However, it would be easy to direct a given interpretation towards an understanding the interpreter himself prefers.

That is unless the interpreter has a mind which is ‘nurtured on the Gospel’. Marshall refers to the concept of Christian wisdom in order to determine the truth, for instance by referring to 1 Corinthians 2:13-15.²³ From the concept of ‘kerygma’ and a mind nurtured on the gospel, Marshall deduces his twofold principle: apostolic deposit and Spirit-given insight.²⁴

2. Vanhoozer’s response

Kevin Vanhoozer, research professor of Systematic Theology at Evangelical Trinity Divinity School, was one of the responders to Marshall’s lectures. In *Beyond the Bible*, he agrees in general with Marshall’s proposal. In particular, he describes four ways of going beyond the Bible to develop doctrine biblically.

With Calvin, he addresses the way of ‘extrabiblical conceptualities’, referring to doctrine which conceptualizes biblical content; an example is the case of the concept of *homoousios*.²⁵ With Webb, adjunct professor at Tyndale Seminary Toronto, he addresses the

17 Marshall, *Beyond*, 62-3.

18 Marshall, *Beyond*, 63.

19 Marshall, *Beyond*, 63.

20 Marshall, *Beyond*, 68, emphasis his.

21 Marshall, *Beyond*, 68-9.

22 Marshall, *Beyond*, 70.

23 Marshall, *Beyond*, 70-1.

24 Marshall, *Beyond*, 71.

25 Marshall, *Beyond*, 89.

way of ‘redemptive trajectories’ (a topic we will discuss in more detail in the following section). With Wolterstorff, Professor of Philosophy at Yale and known for his advocacy of Reformed epistemology, he addresses the way of ‘divine discourse’, arguing that a passage of scripture must be understood in the light of the entire canon. His position, named ‘continuing canonical practices’, refers to the idea of doctrine that must ‘go beyond’ by being set into practice.²⁶

It should be noted that Marshall’s proposal did not go unchallenged. One example of such a critique is that of Walter Kaiser Jr. which is represented in the next section. Here I want to point out, though, that Marshall provides a highly readable presentation of his case—a case which is rather short on the other hand (less than 100 pages), and which leaves plenty of room for critical questions. So it is not surprising that Marshall’s proposal has been debated.

II ‘Moving beyond’—a Debate

In 2009, Walter Kaiser Jr., Daniel Doriani, Kevin Vanhoozer and William Webb discussed the question of how to ‘move beyond’ the Bible to theology. The discussion is published as a part of Zondervan’s ‘Counterpoints’ series, entitled *Four Views on Moving Beyond the Bible to Theology*. The editor, Gary Meadors, assured his readers on the first pages that such a ‘move beyond’ the Bible is not a liberal idea—in other words, ‘moving beyond’ would not refer to the idea of going *without*

or even *against* scripture. Rather, the expression would refer to ‘a theological construct that cannot claim a biblical context that directly teaches the point scored’.²⁷ Are such moves beyond scripture necessary for evangelicals, or more importantly, are they permitted? And if so, how should one move beyond from scripture to theology?

1. Kaiser

The first answer to these questions is given by Walter Kaiser and his method of ‘principlizing’. He sketches the method in this way: after determining subject, emphasis and context, the interpreter has to set out propositional principles provided through the given text.²⁸ Finally, Kaiser focuses on the ‘Ladder of Abstraction’, which would work ‘from the ancient specific situation’, from where ‘we move up the ladder of the institutional or personal norm’ in order to reach ‘the top of the ladder, which gives to us the general principle’.²⁹

Now, as a matter of fact, Kaiser presents his approach rather briefly—also by referring to his earlier and somewhat influential textbook, *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching* (Baker Academic, 1998), then spending significant time on examples through which he applies his model of principlizing to such issues as euthanasia, women and

²⁷ Marshall, *Beyond*, 9.

²⁸ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., ‘A Principlizing Model’, in *Four Views on Moving Beyond from the Bible to Theology*, Stanley N. Gundry & Gary T. Meadors, eds (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 23.

²⁹ Kaiser, ‘A Principlizing Model’, 25.

²⁶ Marshall, *Beyond*, 93.

the church, the bible and homosexuality, the bible and slavery, abortion, and embryonic stem cell research. In sum, Kaiser challenges the idea of going 'beyond the sacred page' in general—the principle of *sola scriptura* must not be abandoned for the sake of modern curiosity.³⁰

2. Doriani

A second answer to the questions regarding the idea of 'going beyond' is given through the representation of Doriani's 'Redemptive-Historical Model'. Doriani sketches this method in this way.

After paying close attention to a given passage (step 1), one must synthesize this passage with the 'master-texts', i.e. texts displaying God's plan of redemption throughout history (step 2).³¹ A passage, however, must not only be understood, but also applied in the same approach (step 3): imitation of Christ is the central theme, as God's plan of redemption was the theme in step 2.³² Doriani's final step is his crucial one, as he himself stresses: The Bible, being a narrative itself, would have more to offer than commands, and in regard to the advice it gives, this narrative must not be neglected, Doriani argues. Thus:

Where a series of acts by the faithful create a pattern, and God or the

narrator approves the pattern, it directs believers, even if no law spells out the lesson.³³

More concretely, interpreters may 'go beyond' through (a) casuistry and (b) asking the 'right questions'. With the former, Doriani refers to 'the art of resolving particular cases of conscience through appeal to higher general principles',³⁴ with the latter, identifying the particular questions of casuistry, namely questions of duty, character, goals and vision.³⁵

In all of this, Doriani does not question the need for moving beyond as Kaiser does. He uses a practical question, how to celebrate his daughter's wedding in accordance with scripture, to exemplify his approach for moving beyond in a case for which there is no direct teaching of scripture regarding that particular issue. Again, he does so by searching for general biblical principles (for instance, 'In biblical weddings, friends and family gather for a feast, with music and joyful celebration, before bride and groom go off to bed') and by moral reasoning (for instance, there is room for improvisation among the families within the general ethical guidelines of scripture).³⁶

It seems that Doriani combines a version of principlizing with moral reasoning—the latter is necessary, then, since he acknowledges that there are questions that cannot be deduced from

30 Kaiser, 'A Principlizing Model', 26-7.

31 Daniel M. Doriani, 'A Redemptive-Historical Model', in *Four Views on Moving Beyond from the Bible to Theology*, Stanley N. Gundry & Gary T. Meadors, eds. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 85-6.

32 Doriani, 'A Redemptive-Historical Model', 86.

33 Doriani, 'A Redemptive-Historical Model', 89.

34 Doriani, 'A Redemptive-Historical Model', 100.

35 Doriani, 'A Redemptive-Historical Model', 103.

36 Doriani, 'A Redemptive-Historical Model', 91-2.

scripture directly. In conclusion, Doriani demonstrates this approach by addressing issues such as gambling, architecture and women in ministry.

3. Vanhoozer

Vanhoozer presents a third answer by laying out his 'Drama-of-Redemption' model. For Vanhoozer, biblical interpretation is a 'joint project' of the various disciplines of theology, and ultimately an ecclesiastical one—holy scripture must lead to holy doctrine, and holy doctrine must lead to holy living.³⁷

'Going beyond' is 'participating in the great drama of redemption of which scripture is the authoritative testimony and holy script'³⁸: The church is participating by putting scripture into practice, and doctrine gives directions for doing so. *Performing* the script is Vanhoozer's term of choice, for this is another term for living the Bible:

We move beyond the script and become faithful performers of the world it implies by cultivating minds nurtured on the canon.³⁹

The 'way forward', then, may be summarized as the task of being a discerning church—finding answers that fit both the particular part of story within scripture for one and the particular context of the church for another

while in all following the rule of love and the way of wisdom.⁴⁰

Ultimately, Vanhoozer presents two case studies on 'how to make canonically correct judgments', namely the doctrine of Mary as the mother of God and the issue of transsexuality. I will cover only the earlier here.

Vanhoozer argues that Mary is rightly portrayed in using the concept of *theotokos*, as 'God-bearer', by the Council of Ephesus in 431. This concept would display not only 'good canonical judgment, but it clarifies further the identity of some of the key *dramatis personae*', since Christology is at stake, namely Christ as one person in two natures.⁴¹

Now, for evangelicals the critical issue comes into focus with Vatican I—should we state that Mary is a 'great exception' who did not sin? Beside referring to the obvious lack of scriptural evidence for such a claim, Vanhoozer locates Mary within the theodrama in order to answer the question of who Mary is: In giving birth to the Messiah, she would play a key role within the theodrama, but she would also play a key role in the transition from Israel towards the church.⁴² Vanhoozer concludes:

Mary is thus the only figure in the Bible who plays a role in Acts Two, Three, and Four alike: she represents the believing remnant of Israel; she is the mother of Jesus who

³⁷ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, 'A Drama-of-Redemption Model', in *Four Views on Moving Beyond from the Bible to Theology*, Stanley N. Gundry & Gary T. Meadors, eds (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 155.

³⁸ Vanhoozer, 'A Drama-of-Redemption Model', 156.

³⁹ Vanhoozer, 'A Drama-of-Redemption Model', 170.

⁴⁰ Vanhoozer, 'A Drama-of-Redemption Model', 175-86.

⁴¹ Vanhoozer, 'A Drama-of-Redemption Model', 188.

⁴² Vanhoozer, 'A Drama-of-Redemption Model', 189-90.

remains with him to his death; she is a follower of the risen Jesus and gathers together with other believers to pray.

However, Vanhoozer rejects any ontological superiority of Mary for the lack of canonical evidence.⁴³

4. Webb

A fourth answer is presented by William Webb and his approach of the redemptive-movement model. Webb begins by stating that there would basically be two ways to read through the Bible—one being a ‘redemptive-movement appropriation’, ie, one that ‘encourages movement beyond the original application of the text in the ancient world’, and the other, a more static or stationary appropriation of Scripture.⁴⁴ The latter would understand biblical texts in isolation from their cultural, historical and canonical context and with little emphasis on the underlying spirit (if any), which would lead to a misappropriation of the text. The earlier model—the one Webb proposes—would lead towards an ‘ultimate ethic’.

Webb uses ‘the slavery texts’ and texts on corporal punishment to illustrate his point: The earlier texts show that slavery was part of ancient cultures and had to be dealt with,⁴⁵ but

ultimate ethics lead towards an affirmation of an abolitionist ethic.⁴⁶ From Webb’s perspective, the latter texts on corporal punishment would likewise bear witness to the redemptive spirit of scripture.

Now, it appears to me that the crucial question is how one obtains an ‘ultimate ethic’. In the case of corporal punishment, Webb provides ‘three crucial areas of biblical meaning’, namely purpose meaning, abstracted meaning and redemptive-movement meaning.⁴⁷ Corporal punishment would have the *purpose* of turning children away from folly and towards wisdom. It would teach *abstract* lessons (such as ‘Discipline your children’) through concrete commands.

Yet ultimately, *movement meaning* within the biblical texts on corporal punishment would open the door to ‘a *kinder and gentler* administration of justice that underscores the dignity of the human being that is punished’⁴⁸ than might have been the case without the very biblical texts. This way, while explicitly not answering the question of whether the purpose, the abstract lessons and the movement meaning of texts on corporal punishment could not be achieved without corporal punishment (and therefore against these very texts) today, Webb indicates that this might be the exact way to go.⁴⁹

Now, it is not my aim to assess the

⁴³ Vanhoozer, ‘A Drama-of-Redemption Model’, 190-1.

⁴⁴ William J. Webb, ‘A Redemptive-Movement Model’, in *Four Views on Moving Beyond from the Bible to Theology*, Stanley N. Gundry & Gary T. Meadors, eds (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 217.

⁴⁵ Webb, ‘A Redemptive-Movement Model’, 225.

⁴⁶ Webb, ‘A Redemptive-Movement Model’, 228.

⁴⁷ Webb, ‘A Redemptive-Movement Model’, 236-40.

⁴⁸ Webb, ‘A Redemptive-Movement Model’, 240, emphasis his.

⁴⁹ Webb, ‘A Redemptive-Movement Model’, 240.

positions laid out by the contributors in full scale. In fact, even the presentation of those approaches appears to be burdened with the necessity of brevity, and at times I believe the contributors would have actually made an (even) better case if there had been more room for doing so.⁵⁰ But even a short analysis will have to address the fact that there are significant differences in moving from scripture to theology as portrayed in the four models.

While Kaiser believes that one can generate biblical principles for Christian conduct, Doriani emphasizes the act of moral reasoning regarding principles, but also character, goals and vision. While I see Doriani's approach as a differentiated example of the general approach Kaiser promotes, Vanhoozer and Webb promote significantly different views on 'moving beyond'.

Vanhoozer's approach seeks to do justice to the tentativeness of doctrine, to the requirement of putting scripture into practice, and to the diversity of real-life-situations of biblical interpreters. I feel that in some sense, his account can be understood only if one reads more of his writings. Webb, then, promotes his interpretation 'by trajectory', an approach that *per se* can hardly survive without the very idea of moving beyond.

Now, while I have tremendous respect for all four of the contributors, I have to say that all leave the reader with substantial questions.⁵¹ Fortu-

nately, Vanhoozer and Treier have published their book on 'mere evangelical theology', which I will address now.

III Towards a Mere Evangelical Theology

In 2015, Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Daniel J. Treier addressed the issue of moving from scripture to theology within a full-fledged proposal for 'mere evangelical theology'. While *Theology in the Mirror of Scripture—A Mere Evangelical Account* does not limit itself to the question of 'moving beyond', the very question regarding evangelical theology today implies this question to some degree. I will therefore survey this title, and I will do so by dividing the survey into two parts, as it is presented within the book.

1. Agenda

Vanhoozer and Treier start their account by laying out both the material and the formal principles of evangelical theology.

a) Material principle

The material principle addresses the reality that scripture then addresses: What is the essence of evangelical faith, the 'agreed-upon doctrinal core'? And right here the first problem presenting itself is identified, namely that there just is no such thing as a universally accepted doctrinal core in evangelicalism.⁵² In proposing such

50 I believe this is especially true when it comes to the presentation of case studies.

51 I have to say, though, that for me, Kaiser's approach seems to be more an example of the problem than an example of a solution, for in his case the ultimate solution lies within his

personal, individual exegesis of a given text.

52 Kevin J. Vanhoozer and David J. Treier, *Theology and the Mirror of Scripture—A Mere Evangelical Account* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015), 46-7.

a core, Vanhoozer and Treier propose an anchored set rather than a bound or centred set: the church is the vessel, the anchor is God's very being.⁵³

This being of God is then appropriated in Vanhoozer and Treier's following sections. They start with the gospel: God has acted, and God has spoken—God reveals what he himself has done,⁵⁴ and by doing so, who he is.⁵⁵ All of this is mirrored in Christ: he is the *imago dei*, communicating God's being, act and speech. In Christ, therefore, is 'a whole economy—an outworking of the divine purpose to share God's light, life and love with the entire cosmos, and the human creature in particular'.⁵⁶

It is essential to Vanhoozer and Treier to understand that the economic Trinity (that is, what the Father, Son and Spirit do in history) 'is a dramatic representation of what God's eternal life is (the immanent Trinity)' and to understand 'his eternally gracious disposition toward the world'.⁵⁷ At the centre of the economic Trinity, we find Jesus Christ as portrayed in the Gospels, a 'moving picture' of the way God is in eternity, which is why Jesus Christ is the ultimate point of reference.

Vanhoozer and Treier flesh out a bit more of what they call the first theology of a mere evangelical account, namely what is 'in Christ'. In Christ, then, would be the state of humans 'in-

sofar as the Spirit unites us to Christ'. Being part of this family, we are to celebrate Christmas forever 'with the holy family, exchanging gifts—of grace, gratitude and glorification—around the tree of life'.⁵⁸

But Vanhoozer and Treier's ontology does not stop here—both scripture and the church have a place in the economy of light as well: Scripture is 'a text authored (ultimately) by God, with God (Jesus) as its ultimate content, and with God (Holy Spirit) as its ultimate interpreter'.⁵⁹ Scripture is authored by God, bears witness of God and is read through God's redemptive work in time and space. It is read by the church—the domain in which Jesus now reigns, a 'reality of the new creation in the midst of the old'.⁶⁰

In sum, Vanhoozer and Treier sketch mere evangelical theology as a framework of the worldwide renewal movement with which they identify evangelicalism. Subsequently, mere evangelical theology is not concerned with particular confessional statements, but with this very anchoring framework.⁶¹

b) Formal principle

The formal principle of evangelical theology addresses scripture itself. Vanhoozer and Treier shift from the ontology of the gospel in chapter one to the epistemology of the gospel in chapter two. The presenting problem identified here is summarized by the claim that

53 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 48-52.

54 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 53-6.

55 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 56-7.

56 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 63.

57 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 65.

58 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 72-3.

59 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 73.

60 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 77.

61 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 79-80.

‘interpretive anarchy nullifies biblical authority’.⁶²

In other words: where evangelical theology is lacking an agreed-upon core regarding its doctrine, it finds itself challenged by countless interpretations of scripture to begin with—a mere fact, which challenges not only the quest for doctrine, but the very authority of scripture. Agreeing that moving from the ‘canonical cradle’ to the ‘development of doctrine’ is a very challenging task, Vanhoozer and Treier dare to submit a proposal which starts with what they call a critical (evangelical) biblicism.⁶³

Rather than ‘short-circuiting the economy of light’,⁶⁴ the task of evangelical theology would be to set forth the truth of the gospel in speech, seeking and promoting understanding of ‘*what is in Christ*’⁶⁵—that is by expounding, not by inventing. Such a process must start with the internal resources of the gospel, Vanhoozer and Treier claim. They start with Jesus as the teacher and the gospel’s content, a gospel that was written through and is understood by the work of the Holy Spirit.

According to Scripture, Vanhoozer and Treier claim, the gospel cannot be understood properly without Scripture,⁶⁶ and evangelical theology must therefore be done in accordance with Scripture. But how does one do theology ‘in accordance with Scripture’? Vanhoozer and Treier stress the importance of the nature of the gospel,

which would ultimately be that of testimony: historical facts, told by making sense of what happened, in various literary genres, but yet truly communicating ‘what is’ in order to edify the reader. The texts of Scripture ‘cultivate *wisdom*: knowledge that gets lived out’.⁶⁷

With this general trajectory in mind, Vanhoozer and Treier call for a biblical reasoning that does connect the ‘canonical dots’ (that is, the various authoritative texts in Scripture, namely by ‘figurally reading’), but that does not convert *sola scriptura* into *solo scriptura*. When connecting the canonical dots, we have to keep in mind the nature of doctrine, they claim: while Scripture is a verbal icon of what is in Christ, doctrine helps to answer questions about the story of salvation, including the realities presupposed and implied as well as locating one’s own place within this story.⁶⁸

It therefore *sets forth in communicative action* what is in Christ ‘on the basis of the Scriptures’.⁶⁹ The domain of the gospel, however, is the church, which reads Scripture, interprets and applies it.⁷⁰ Since evangelical theology communicates the gospel into different times and places, there is no inherent conflict with the fact of a ‘Pentecostal’ plurality—rather, different churches or denominations may be seen as different ‘voices ... to articulate all the wis-

62 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 82.

63 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 85.

64 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 85.

65 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 86.

66 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 94.

67 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 99, emphasis his.

68 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 105-6.

69 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 106.

70 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 110.

dom and blessings that are in Christ'.⁷¹

Mere evangelical theology, then, is the

wisdom to know the difference between courageously preserving the truths of the gospel that cannot change and charitably acknowledging the interpretive diversity of non-essential truths.⁷²

On the one hand, there is the ministerial authority of the canonical judgments—a gospel which cannot change. On the other hand, there is the ministerial authority of the scope of the Spirit's illumination—the requirement of doing theology in communion with the saints.⁷³

2. Analysis

To flesh out the consequences the application of their agenda would have on evangelical theology, Vanhoozer and Treier address four areas: a focus on the pursuit of wisdom, theological exegesis, the fellowship with the saints and scholarly excellence.

a) Wisdom

Vanhoozer and Treier finished the first part with the argument that wisdom is required in order to discern (unchanging) gospel from interpretive diversity of non-essential truths. In search of such wisdom, Vanhoozer and Treier conclude from 1 Corinthians 1-2 that there is both pagan wisdom, which is a

secular enterprise and doomed to pass away, and Christian wisdom, which is found among those believers who pursue maturity and which will endure.⁷⁴

Christian wisdom rests on Scripture, but listens and contemplates; it includes personal knowledge, and can, at its best, be termed as theology, Vanhoozer and Treier claim.⁷⁵ One of its most important potentials would be to heal the wound between head and heart.⁷⁶ While the issue of Christian wisdom would be generally absent in both evangelical prolegomena and theological education, Vanhoozer and Treier call for a 'more unified notion of theory and practice than either evangelical saints or scholars tend to possess'.⁷⁷

Such a notion would require bolder integration of both saints and scholars, of both word and spirit, of both dogmatics and ethics,⁷⁸ leaving 'room for later discernment about philosophical nuances' regarding more detailed methodological questions explicitly.⁷⁹

However, what Vanhoozer and Treier do address at some length is the general path towards wisdom. They do so by focusing on biblical hermeneutics. More concretely, they address theological interpretation of Scripture, seeking

⁷¹ Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 121-2.

⁷² Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 122.

⁷³ Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 122-7.

⁷⁴ Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 138.

⁷⁵ Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 140.

⁷⁶ Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 141.

⁷⁷ Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 148.

⁷⁸ Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 152-3.

⁷⁹ Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 156.

to answer the question ‘*in what* basic practice the wisdom of authentically ‘evangelical’ theology fundamentally consists.’⁸⁰ In doing so, Vanhoozer and Treier claim that ‘history’ and ‘mystery’ must not be pitted against each other; rather, ‘mystery gets defined redemptive-historically by Paul, while redemptive history is perceived spiritually and not just naturally.’⁸¹

b) Exegesis

One resource for an evangelical theology that mirrors biblical teaching is a theological exegesis of Scripture (TIS).⁸² TIS, then, emphasizes canon, creed and culture—canon, since TIS does not ‘shy away’ from interpreting one passage of Scripture through the entire canon; creed, since TIS interprets a passage of Scripture in the light of ‘the Trinitarian and Christological heritage of the early church that became formalized in symbols such as the Nicene Creed’;⁸³ and culture, which refers to the reflection regarding the present-day conditions for our own hermeneutics.

After presenting clarifications and a defence of TIS,⁸⁴ Vanhoozer and Treier lay out their view on the essence of TIS by first addressing Scripture’s eschatological and ethical context: the mirrors in Scripture ‘display the image of God:

the Word of the Son, by the Spirit, helping people to grow into final freedom reflecting the Father’s own life.’⁸⁵

Vanhoozer and Treier take this issue further by addressing the theological concepts in sapiential contexts. Via Rorty’s ‘Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature’ they arrive at ‘philosophy’s pragmatist turn’, which translates into (evangelical) theology as a perspective in which wisdom functions as a regulative virtue.⁸⁶

c) Church

How would church and academy fit into the given framework? Vanhoozer and Treier refer back to 1 Corinthians once more, stressing the fact that Paul acknowledges ‘factions’ within the Corinthian church: those ‘necessary divisions within an apocalyptic context ... reveal divine approval and/or disapproval of those being tested’.⁸⁷

They move on to argue that in this very letter, Paul would demonstrate teachings representing ‘first level doctrine’, namely Christ crucified in the beginning of the letter, and then the issue of resurrection at the end, presenting a core consisting of Christ’s death, burial and resurrection—an approach that would be found in the remaining letters of the New Testament as well.

For evangelical catholicity, this treatment of the gospel would entail two implications, namely identifying and preserving the gospel. However,

80 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 158, emphasis his.

81 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 161.

82 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 164.

83 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 166.

84 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 168-176.

85 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 180.

86 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 184.

87 Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 197.

1 Corinthians would hint ‘at a second level of Christian division and dogmatic rank by mentioning allegiances to various leaders such as Apollos, Cephas and Paul’.⁸⁸ They use the dispute between Paul and Barnabas concerning John Mark as an example (Acts 15:36-41)—‘Christian fellowship remains, even if ministry is pursued separately’.⁸⁹

Thirdly, there are divisions of the lowest dogmatic rank. As an example, Vanhoozer and Treier use Romans 14-15. Vanhoozer and Treier do pay attention to ‘current evangelical alternatives’, though, by addressing the debate within *Four Views on the Spectrum of Evangelicalism*, by Andrew David Naselli and Collin Hansen (Zondervan, 2011). Summarizing the positions of Kevin Bauer (fundamentalism), Albert Mohler (confessional evangelicalism), John Stackhouse (generic evangelicalism) and Roger Olson (Postconservative evangelicalism), they conclude that ‘consistently missing are overtly scriptural accounts of apostolicity and catholicity, of how evangelical fellowship might reflect and contribute to the biblical fidelity and wholeness of the church(es)’.⁹⁰

This is not to say that there is nothing constructive in those contributions—far from it. However, Vanhoozer and Treier’s concern is that the discussion focuses only on the gospel and the church in a few cases and to a certain

degree.⁹¹

d) Theology

Pursuing wisdom in theological exegesis as the church, Vanhoozer and Treier finally focus on theology as an intellectual discipline. Their assessment falls in line with their argument so far and is, therefore, a humble one:

Evangelical theology cannot grasp any certainty apart from the gospel, and divine revelation does not grant comprehensive knowledge in this era of redemptive history. Scripture can mirror only partially the fullness one might long to know, and theology can mirror only partially the teaching of Scripture itself. Only in the context of charity, with eschatologically informed humility, do we claim theological knowledge.⁹²

IV Conclusion

How should we move beyond from Scripture to theology? Not by coincidence this article has focused on some of the contributions of Kevin Vanhoozer, for the question posed appears to be one of the major ones Vanhoozer has been dealing with over decades. It appears, then, that with ‘Theology in the Mirror of Scripture’ we have the account Vanhoozer has been aiming for over a considerable period of time.

There might be rightful critique in

⁸⁸ Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 202.

⁸⁹ Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 202.

⁹⁰ Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 211.

⁹¹ Vanhoozer and Treier state that they have the greatest affinity with Stackhouse’s approach. However, they also recommend the concept of gospel doctrines in Bauder’s contribution.

⁹² Vanhoozer & Treier, *Mirror of Scripture*, 224.

a number of instances—Vanhoozer and Treier state this themselves. However, such a critique would require separate and dedicated treatment. The purpose of this article was to survey a part of the remarkable journey towards what I believe to be a proposal for doing ‘mere

evangelical theology’, which might actually function as a foundation for both the academia and the church. Hence both are ‘run’ by ordinary women and men, yet their theology needs to ‘continue scripture’ by living out the Bible and therefore mirroring Christ.

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The Ecosapiential Theology of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job

Andrea L. Robinson

IN THE 2013 FILM *Snowpiercer* a catastrophic attempt to reverse global warming triggers an ice age that wipes out nearly all life on earth.¹ The only survivors consist of a lucky few who board a train that unceasingly circumnavigates the globe. The perpetual-motion train serves as a futuristic Noah's Ark in which the remnant of humanity struggles to survive. The movie allegorically illustrates the environmental hubris that characterizes mankind. Humans abuse the environment to the breaking point, and then in greater acts of arrogance attempt to restore the world through intelligence and might. Even *Snowpiercer's* train, the pinnacle of human innovation, eventually shatters under the weight of human folly.

When people take liberties that belong to God alone, disaster is the natural outcome. The visceral human worry over having enough to survive has long been overtaken by the drive for greater affluence. While God's creation has the

capacity to sustain all life, the earth was not intended to sustain the kind of excess in which humans regularly and consistently indulge.² The human tendency to elevate the self regardless of the consequence has become more obvious due to the increasing attention to ecological damage. People have made idols of themselves, consuming the goodness of God's creation like parasites. The only antidote is a humble use and enjoyment of creation that holds the perverse self-elevation of humankind in check.

Perhaps the best resource for restoring the biblical perspective on creation is the Wisdom Literature. Proverbial sayings are a key to creaturely stability, offering invaluable insight in times of crisis. More specifically, the

¹ Joon-ho Bong, *Snowpiercer*, DVD (CJ Entertainment, 2013).

² Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 35, 74; Jonathan A. Moo and Robert S. White, *Let Creation Rejoice: Biblical Hope and Ecological Crisis* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 11-18.

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primary emphasis of biblical wisdom is the harmonious functioning of all elements of creation within God's created order. Sapiential theology teaches that true religion entails love of God, as well as love for fellow humans, fellow creatures, and all of nature.³

This paper is therefore developed upon the hypothesis that understanding ecosapiential theology can help restore the divinely ordained relationship between God, people, and the natural world.⁴ Through an analysis of biblical wisdom literature it will be shown that when people reflect the image of God by care for fellow creatures and the land, the natural resources of the world will flourish and God's plan of redemption will reach its fullest expression.

Although wisdom elements appear throughout the Bible, the current paper will focus specifically on Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job. These books offer a sustained presentation of sapiential thought and utilize frequent ecological references. The large number of verses that employ ecological terminology cannot be examined in detail. Instead, passages that give sustained attention to ecotheological issues will be examined in greater detail than the remainder of the material. The methodology employed will be a theological interpretation of the passages, by which ecosapiential themes will be evaluated and practical implications will be noted.

³ Moo and White, *Let Creation Rejoice*, 15, 24-27.

⁴ Ecosapiential theology is defined as the interconnectedness of all elements of visible creation in relationship with God and each other as presented in biblical wisdom literature.

I An Ecosapiential Apologetic

The Judeo-Christian viewpoint has often been accused of pitting humans and spirituality against nature and the physical world.⁵ Yet, Christian theology is inherently 'green'. William Brown writes, 'Central to the Christian faith is a doctrine that resists the temptation to distance the biblical world from the natural world: the incarnation.'⁶ Jesus does not merely save individuals from sin, but he becomes part of creation and restores it.⁷ A faith in Christ thus calls believers to respect the natural world and all the wonders it holds.

The drama of redemption finds greatest expression when applied to all of nature.⁸ Salvation includes the healing of all of creation, and is as broad as creation itself. Believers are called to participate in a new creation – a new and embodied reality.⁹ Such a reality is impossible to understand without wisdom theology. Wisdom literature reintegrates the doctrine of salvation with the sapiential emphasis on all of creation. Wisdom invites hearers to encounter God in a broader way than

⁵ Victorino Pérez, 'A Espiritualidade Ecológica: Uma Nuova Manera de Acercarse a Dios desde el Mundo', *Theologica Xaveriana* 60 (2010): 191-214.

⁶ William P. Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation: The Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Wonder* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 7; cf. D. C. Jones, 'Nature, Theology of', *EDT* 817-18; Pérez, 'A Espiritualidade Ecológica', 200.

⁷ Bartholomew and O'Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 14.

⁸ Jones, 'Nature', 817.

⁹ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 194-97; Snyder and Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed*, 146-50.

simply salvation from sin.¹⁰

The reversal of the environmental crisis will not come about through activism or conservation alone. An ecosapiential approach seeks to address not only the abuses of the environment, but also the underlying spiritual causes. Change will come only when humans recover a deeper sense of the relationship between human life and the biosphere as a whole.¹¹ Amy Pauw opines, 'In our own time, environmentalists are perhaps the voices closest to the sages of Proverbs.'¹² Just as Proverbs conveys a sense of communal moral urgency, modern environmentalists warn of the folly of ecological abuse. Christian environmentalism is not naive utopianism or an attempt to halt technological progress, but a multifaceted response to industrial society, its economy, its technology, and its institutions.¹³

II Proverbs

A close study of Proverbs¹⁴ reveals a general character-consequence framework. However, a strict deed-consequence-retribution theology would be

misleading as punishments and rewards are not mechanistic or automatic.¹⁵ The wisdom of Proverbs describes a long-term trajectory. Biblical and Ancient Near East (ANE) wisdom is not intended as legislation, but as practical advice whereby life decisions are based on complex factors.¹⁶ Van Leeuwen describes the primary concern of Proverbs as 'the relation of ordinary life in the cosmos to God the Creator'.¹⁷ Proverbial wisdom reveals that God engages every facet of creation and takes delight in it.

1. Proverbs 8:22-36

²² The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his way,
Before His works of old.

²³ From everlasting I was established

From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth.

(Prov 8:22-23, NASB)¹⁸

A major theological element of wisdom literature can be found in creation and primeval history.¹⁹ Sapiential texts

¹⁰ Pauw, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, 61.

¹¹ Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, 122.

¹² Pauw, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, 8.

¹³ Pérez, 'A Espiritualidade Ecológica,' 194-95.

¹⁴ References to the natural world in Proverbs: 1:17, 27; 3:19-20; 4:18-19; 5:15-19; 6:5-11; 7:22, 23; 8:22-31; 10:5; 11:25, 26, 28, 30; 12:9-12; 13:23; 14:4; 15:11, 17, 19; 16:15, 24; 17:12; 18:4, 20, 21; 20:4, 5; 21:19, 31; 22:2, 5; 23:5, 10, 34; 24:13; 25:3, 13, 14, 16, 23, 25, 26; 26:1-3, 8, 9, 11, 13, 17, 20, 21; 27:3, 4, 7, 8, 15-27; 28:1, 3, 4, 15, 19; 30:4, 14, 18, 19, 21, 24-31.

¹⁵ Russell Meek, 'Wisdom Literature and the 'Center' of the Old Testament', *Criswell Theological Review* 11 (2014): 63-77.

¹⁶ Susan Power Bratton, 'The Precautionary Principle and the Book of Proverbs: Toward an Ethic of Ecological Prudence in Ocean Management', *Worldviews* 7 (2003): 253-273; Bartholomew and O'Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 271.

¹⁷ Raymond Van Leeuwen, 'Proverbs', in *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Survey*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 171-78.

¹⁸ All scriptures are reproduced from the NASB.

¹⁹ Hans-Jürgen Hermission, 'Observations on the Creation Theology in Wisdom', in *Crea-*

portray wisdom as existing before the world and the foundation upon which it was created.²⁰ Because Wisdom was present at creation, she can therefore guide humans into successful interactions with God, fellow men, and nature.²¹ Through wisdom the Creator grants humankind the ability to master creation and perform the tasks that have been assigned from the beginning. Humans are entrusted not only with the earth, but also with the work and maintenance of it. The success of such an endeavour is the concern of wisdom literature.²²

Proverbs 8:22-36 implies that wisdom is the binding material that holds creation together. Biblical wisdom reflects God's character by 'filling the earth with creativity, generosity, con-

cern for the other and a longing for all creation to flourish before God'.²³ Creation is the habitation of wisdom, and when creation flourishes, wisdom likewise flourishes.²⁴

Along similar lines, when wisdom deteriorates, the created order also suffers. The abuse of the earth creates a trajectory toward greater abuse and evil in the world. Proverbs teaches that nature cannot indefinitely withstand abuse and evil.²⁵ According to Proverbs 8:36, 'He who sins against [wisdom] injures himself; and those who hate [wisdom] love death'.

2. Proverbs 12:9-12

⁹ Better is he who is lightly
esteemed and has a servant
Than he who honors himself and
lacks bread.

¹⁰ A righteous man has regard for
the life of his animal,
But even the compassion of the
wicked is cruel.

¹¹ He who tills his land will have
plenty of bread,
But he who pursues worthless
things lacks sense.

¹² The wicked man desires the
booty of evil men,
But the root of the righteous yields
fruit.

These four verses from Proverbs 12 address the importance of honest work and productivity. The somewhat difficult verse 9 points out that reality is more important than appearance. One

tion in the Old Testament, IRT 6, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 118-134; J. Lindblom, 'Wisdom in the Old Testament Prophets', in *Wisdom in Israel and in the Ancient Near East: Presented to Professor Harold Henry Rowley*, SVT 3, ed. M. Noth and L. Winton Thomas (Leiden: Brill, 1969), 192-204; Claus Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Atlanta: John Knox, 1982); R. Dennis Cole, 'Foundations of Wisdom Theology in Genesis One to Three' (MTh thesis, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, 1978); Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament*; Roland E. Murphy, 'Wisdom and Creation', *JBL* 104 (1985): 3-11; Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf and Stock, 1994); John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009).

²⁰ Compare Prov 3:19-20.

²¹ Bartholomew and O'Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 89.

²² Westermann, *Elements of Old Testament Theology*, 11, 100; Bartholomew and O'Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 86; Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 162-63.

²³ Bartholomew and O'Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 88.

²⁴ Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 169.

²⁵ Bratton, 'The Precautionary Principle', 268.

who lives humbly, but has sufficient resources, is better off than one who is highly esteemed, but has 'no food'.²⁶

The desire for status and acclaim is a familiar vice in modern society. Families drown themselves in debt to appear affluent and prosperous. Davis aptly writes, 'Contrary to popular wisdom, a massive cash flow does not in itself make an economy healthy. People spending no more than they can afford constitute a healthy economy.'²⁷

The disembedding of people from nature through human commerce has also distanced the human consciousness from the created order.²⁸ Verse 10 instructs humans to be attentive to the needs of their animals. Bauckham interestingly notes that the terminology here, to have regard for (*yāda'*) the life (*nepeš*) of an animal, is strikingly similar to that of Exod 23:9, in which Israelites are to know (*yāda'*) the condition (*nepeš*) of the alien in their midst.²⁹

Wisdom from Proverbs 8 can be applied also to 12:10-12. All of creation is connected such that caring for livestock and farmland benefits humans. Protecting the welfare of livestock is beneficial to their caretakers. Animals are a self-renewing resource. In the ANE they provided a range of provisions, including food, clothing, instru-

ments, and wine skins.³⁰

Before moving on it should be noted that the Bible does not portray animals preying on other animals, or even humans eating animals as immoral. Rather, the moral problem is in the mistreatment of animals through 'modern methods of factory farming and intensive rearing', in which animals are raised in 'spaces which allow no room for movement, and the chemically and genetically altered environment which farm animals increasingly inhabit, are all indicators of unnecessary suffering, and of the denial of any possibility of life quality...'³¹ Human actions toward animals should reflect God's own compassion for his creatures.

Moving on from the value of creatures to the value of the land, the sagacious author of verses 11-12 lauds the value of hard work. Israelite family units learned that their plot of land could quickly come to ruin if not cared for properly. In order to leave an inheritance for posterity they had to carefully serve their small plot of land and guard its fertility. Working the land was both a familial and a spiritual obligation, 'for Israelites understood that God, too, was invested in the health of their land'.³² The Israelite perspective on the land is instructive for modern humans. If productive land is to be left

26 Tremper Longman, III, *Proverbs*, BCOTWP (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 273.

27 Ellen F. Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*, WBC (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 85.

28 Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, 78-83.

29 Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 138-39; cf. Norman Whybray, *The Book of Proverbs: A Survey of Modern Study*, HBIS 1 (Leiden: Brill: 1995), 193.

30 Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 390.

31 Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, 101.

32 Ellen F. Davis, 'Just Food: A Biblical Perspective on Culture and Agriculture', in *Creation in Crisis: Christian Perspectives on Sustainability*, ed. Robert S. White (London: SPCK, 2009), 122-136.

for posterity, it must be cared for properly.

3. Proverbs 24:30-34

³⁰ I passed by the field of the sluggard

And by the vineyard of the man lacking sense,

³¹ And behold, it was completely overgrown with thistles; Its surface was covered with nettles, And its stone wall was broken down.

³² When I saw, I reflected upon it; I looked, and received instruction.

³³ 'A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest',

³⁴ Then your poverty will come as a robber

And you want like an armed man.

The comments from the previous verses apply again here in chapter 24. Instead of extolling the benefits of hard work, however, these verses warn against the consequences of sloth. Laziness is the height of foolishness and the antithesis of wisdom.³³ Poverty is personified as a vagrant who comes to steal the sluggard's possessions. Though a man may sleep, his enemy is alert and ready. Perhaps the human failure to change course can be likened to the inactivity of the 'sluggard' of Prov. 24:30.³⁴

4. Proverbs 27:23-27

²³ Know well the condition of your flocks,

And pay attention to your herds;

²⁴ For riches are not forever, Nor does a crown endure to all generations.

²⁵ When the grass disappears, the new growth is seen, And the herbs of the mountains are gathered in,

²⁶ The lambs will be for your clothing,

And the goats will bring the price of a field,

²⁷ And there will be goats' milk enough for your food,

For the food of your household, And sustenance for your maidens.

Structural and topical similarities between 24:30-34 and 27:23-27 may indicate that the units are to be heard in tandem. The wise man who works harmoniously with nature in chapter 27 contrasts with the sluggard who neglects his fields in chapter 24.³⁵ The mention of 'riches' in 27:24 indicates that even a surplus of resources will eventually run out if one neglects one's work, just as the sluggard does in chapter 24. By refusing to act as good stewards of the environment, people are impoverishing future generations.

From an ecological perspective, these verses call for an appreciation of the earth's resources. Longman explains; 'This proverb unit seems to advocate a fundamental dependence on renewable resources, such as letting fresh grass replace dried grass and gathering vegetation from the mountains as crops for food. Lambs and goats provide food, milk, and clothes.'³⁶ Everything the human family needs is

³³ Longman, *Proverbs*, 443.

³⁴ Compare Prov 6:6.

³⁵ The verses also conclude consecutive poetic units; Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 390.

³⁶ Tremper Longman III, *Proverbs*, 483.

available through responsible dominion and stewardship of the land.

Such sage advice is especially needed in relation to modern methods of farming and animal husbandry. While slothfulness is hardly a problem, the rush to obtain greater and greater yields prompts unethical practices. The fertility of the land is being leached through the erosion of topsoil and chemical agents.³⁷ Animals are removed from their natural habitats, thus inhibiting the natural fertilization process and simultaneously contributing to pollution problems.³⁸ The teaching in Proverbs 27 provides a needed corrective to such practices. Human caretakers can 'know their flocks' by engaging in 'constant information gathering, and repeated assessment of the state of the resource'.³⁹

5. Proverbs 25:16

¹⁶ Have you found honey? Eat only what you need,
That you not have it in excess and vomit it.⁴⁰

In between the passages that laud

37 DeWitt, Calvin B., 'Unsustainable Agriculture and Land Use: Restoring Stewardship for Biospheric Sustainability', in *Creation in Crisis: Christian Perspectives on Sustainability*, ed. Robert S. White (London: SPCK, 2009), 137-56.

38 Northcott notes that, 'The methane emitted by the billions of cattle in the world is one of the largest sources of the enhancement of the greenhouse effect, and the effluent from intensive animal rearing represents a serious pollution problem.' Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics*, 101.

39 Bratton, 'The Precautionary Principle', 268.

40 Compare 25:27.

hard work, there are proverbs that warn against the human tendency to overindulge. Proverbs 25:16 counsels restraint, self-control, and moderation. Even with something as delightful and beneficial as honey, over-consumption leads to sickness. God's desire for people to enjoy life and partake of the bounties of the earth is counterbalanced by the admonition to take only what is needed.

Greed prompts the exploitation of natural resources, which in turn has detrimental effects on individuals and society.⁴¹ Greed is similar to pride in that it leads to abusive relationships with other creatures in a struggle for mastery and dominion. Indulging in avarice sets humans outside the created order rather than within it. As a result, humans unwittingly debase themselves as the harmonious interconnectedness of creation is disrupted.⁴²

6. Proverbs 30:24-28

²⁴ Four things are small on the earth,

But they are exceedingly wise:

²⁵ The ants are not a strong people,
But they prepare their food in the summer;

²⁶ The shephanim are not mighty people,
Yet they make their houses in the rocks;

²⁷ The locusts have no king,
Yet all of them go out in ranks;

²⁸ The lizard you may grasp with the hands,

41 Bratton, 'The Precautionary Principle', 260.

42 Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*, 145-46.

Yet it is in kings' palaces.⁴³

The 'four wee but wise beasties' of 30:24-28 survive and succeed through adhering to God's wisdom in the created order.⁴⁴ The creaturely wisdom stands in contrast to those who overturn the social order in the previous verses of chapter 30.

By personifying the insects as people in verse 25 the author intends the ants to serve as a model for humans. While the exceptional achievement of the ants seems out of proportion to their diminutive size, they nonetheless provide an example of industriousness, discipline, and foresight.⁴⁵ In a fascinating study of ants Bert Hölldobler and Edward O. Wilson draw the following conclusions:

If all humanity were to disappear, the remainder of life would spring back and flourish. The mass extinctions now under way would cease, the damaged ecosystems heal and expand outward. If all the ants somehow disappeared, the effect would be exactly the opposite, and catastrophic. Species extinction would increase even more over the present rate, and the land ecosystems would shrivel more rapidly as the considerable services provided by these insects were pulled away.⁴⁶

In contrast to the ant, human indus-

triousness often lacks foresight and sustainability. The wisdom of the natural world offers a better way forward, one by which the cancer of pride and greed can be remedied with the salve of compassion.

II Ecclesiastes

At first glance Qohelet's musings⁴⁷ seem to reflect an epistemology that is antithetical to that of proverbial wisdom. Proverbs articulates a loose deed-consequence theology, whereas the opening lines of Ecclesiastes lament the meaninglessness of human effort. The author of Ecclesiastes writes as if his relationship with God has led him to 'expect certain outcomes—such as justice and righteousness—and yet he observes just the opposite over and again'.⁴⁸ Further, Qohelet does not begin, as Proverbs recommends, with the fear of the Lord. His insights are based upon observation, reason, and experience alone.

Rather than opposing the message of Proverbs, however, Ecclesiastes complements proverbial wisdom by exploring the paradox between faith and pragmatism. Even after his empirical investigation Qohelet ends just where Proverbs begins, with the fear of the Lord.⁴⁹

Thus, the overarching message of Ecclesiastes is that the wise person will fear God, trust him, and enjoy what blessings are possible, even in the face

⁴³ Compare 6:1-11.

⁴⁴ Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 495.

⁴⁵ Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs*, 496-97; Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*, 55.

⁴⁶ Bert Hölldobler and Edward O. Wilson, *Journey to the Ants: A Story of Scientific Exploration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 206.

⁴⁷ References to the natural world in Ecclesiastes: 1:3-7, 14, 17; 2:4-7, 11; 3:2, 5, 16-22; 5:9; 7:6; 8:8; 9:12; 10:7-9, 11, 20; 11:1-7; 12:1, 2, 4, 5.

⁴⁸ Meek, 'Wisdom Literature', 73.

⁴⁹ Prov 1:7; Ecc 12:13.

of life's difficulties.⁵⁰ Creaturely life is most fulfilling when shaped in conformity to God's design. Qohelet discovers that a life lived in pursuit of selfish desires is ultimately self-debasing.⁵¹

1. Ecclesiastes 1:3-7

³ What advantage does man have in all his work

Which he does under the sun?

⁴ A generation goes and a generation comes,

But the earth remains forever.

⁵ Also, the sun rises and the sun sets;

And hastening to its place it rises there again.

⁶ Blowing toward the south, Then turning toward the north, The wind continues swirling along; And on its circular courses the wind returns.

⁷ All the rivers flow into the sea, Yet the sea is not full.

To the place where the rivers flow, There they flow again.

The introductory verses of Ecclesiastes link people to the ground. Just as the, sun, wind, and rivers are cyclical, humankind returns to dust and is created anew from it.⁵² A range of interpretations is possible for these opening verses, from exultation over the constancy of God's creation to frustration over life's monotony. This paper argues that a cynical interpretation best fits

the tone of the passage.

Pauw contends that the actions of the natural world here give the indication of movement without progress, effort without change. She writes, 'The wearisome repetition of the cosmos also finds an echo in the insatiability of human desire: just as the sea is never filled by water flowing from the streams, so human yearning is never fulfilled by what flows to the eye and ear (1:8b).'⁵³

Qohelet's opening meditations on the created order are still relevant today. Despite modern scientific advances, mankind is still seeking—and failing—to control and direct the mysteries of the natural world. Humans are not satisfied with incomplete knowledge and incomplete power.⁵⁴ Yet the perspective of Ecclesiastes 1:3-7, and indeed the entire book, encourages believers to be at peace with unknown elements in the world. .

Qohelet may also be warning readers to stay within boundaries set by the creator.⁵⁵ If the constancy of natural cycles falters due to human intervention, the beneficiality of nature may turn into a harsh new reality.⁵⁶ Knowledge and progress are not inherently good.

The lack of any mention of God in the verses is telling. Brown explains that,

Whereas the great creation tradi-

⁵⁰ Meek, 'Wisdom Literature', 73; Pauw, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, 61.

⁵¹ Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*, 161.

⁵² Nili Samet, 'Qohelet 1,4 and the Structure of the Book's Prologue', *ZAW* 126 (2014): 92-100.

⁵³ Pauw, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, 146; cf. Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 196.

⁵⁴ Micah D. Kiel, 'Ecclesiastes', in *The Old Testament and Apocrypha: Fortress Commentary on the Bible*, eds. Gale A. Yee, Hugh R. Page Jr., and Matthew J. M. Coomber (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 627-42.

⁵⁵ Meek, 'Wisdom Literature', 75.

⁵⁶ Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature*, 90.

tions of Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, and Job boldly claim the world as *created*, wrought by a beneficent deity, Qohelet's cosmology, for all intents and purposes, excludes cosmogony. As there is no beginning, there also seems to be no point. Qohelet's world is a creation void of creation, and *hebel* is its name (1:2; 12:8).⁵⁷

Such a nihilistic view indicates that progress without the wisdom of God is not progress at all. Peter Brunner eloquently explains, 'The striving toward nothing is therefore the opposite of a redemptive movement; it is a never-ending self-contradiction and therefore a never-ending torment.'⁵⁸

2. Ecclesiastes 3:16-22

¹⁶ Furthermore, I have seen under the sun that in the place of justice there is wickedness and in the place of righteousness there is wickedness.

¹⁷ I said to myself, 'God will judge both the righteous man and the wicked man,' for a time for every matter and for every deed is there.

¹⁸ I said to myself concerning the sons of men, 'God has surely tested them in order for them to see that they are but beasts.'

¹⁹ For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the

other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity.

²⁰ All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust.

²¹ Who knows that the breath of man ascends upward and the breath of the beast descends downward to the earth?

²² I have seen that nothing is better than that man should be happy in his activities, for that is his lot. For who will bring him to see what will occur after him?

The circular conduit of Ecclesiastes 1 is portrayed now as a pendulum swing. The constant movement emphasizes the value of life and death, both of which are ordained by God.⁵⁹ The juxtaposition of justice with creaturely mortality is an intentional statement on interrelatedness of creatures. Injustice involves one entity failing to acknowledge another entity as a creature of God. On the other hand, justice 'means respecting the needs and the dignity of each of my fellow creatures, acknowledging that we are more similar than different, for we depend for our existence entirely upon God's gracious acts of creation and preservation'.⁶⁰

The mention of work in proximity to creaturely life is also significant (3:9). 'Work' (*'āsah*) does not necessarily denote toil. Rather, the same term is used of God's creative activity in Genesis.⁶¹ Work can be defined as healthy,

⁵⁷ Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 181; cf. Pauw, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, 145.

⁵⁸ Peter Brunner, 'Gott, das Nichts und die Kreatur: eine dogmatische Erwägung zum christlichen Schöpfungsglauben,' *KD* 6 (1960): 172-93; as translated in Hendry, *Theology of Nature*, 194.

⁵⁹ Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 185.

⁶⁰ Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*, 187.

⁶¹ Genesis 1:7, 16, 25, 26; 2:2, 4.

productive activity, and based on observations from Psalms, a chief means by which humans form a beneficial connection with the rest of creation. Productive work contributes meaningfully to the world and fosters a sense of satisfaction, thankfulness, and interconnectedness. On the other hand dissatisfaction often leads to mistreatment of others and various forms of injustice.⁶²

The relationship between man and animals is of obvious interest in the passage. Qohelet's statement seems to throw into doubt mankind's superiority over animals. He regards a man as but a beast (*šəhem-bəhēmāh*) and declares that humankind has no advantage over animals (3:18-19). When taken in the broader OT context, however, the kinship of people with the earth is balanced by their distinct role as caretakers of the natural world.

Psalms 8:6-8 clearly articulates man's dominion over all animals, birds, and aquatic creatures.⁶³ Nonetheless, Qohelet encourages humanity to come to terms with the symbiotic nature of creation.⁶⁴ Meek goes so far as to propose that verbal and thematic parallels between Genesis and Ecclesiastes evoke an 'alternate vision' of a return to paradise where humans, animals,

and God enjoy perfect harmony.⁶⁵

III Job

As with Ecclesiastes, the book of Job⁶⁶ should be heard against the backdrop of Proverbs. The expansive theological perspective of Job provides a necessary counterpoint to the ordered world that is presented in Proverbs. Like Ecclesiastes, Job serves as a corrective to an overly literalistic understanding of character-consequence wisdom (Prov 3:9-10; 10:27-32). In fact, Job's friends personify such an erroneous view with their contention that Job's suffering must be due to some moral failure.⁶⁷ Waltke explains,

[God's] government transcends a simple calculus that rewards good and punishes evil. If God's actions do not conform to earthlings' understanding, that does not mean that he is dark and/or disinterested. He rules by containing darkness and wildness within a government that transcends human 'wisdom,' not by

⁶⁵ The echo of Gen 3:19 in Ecc 3:20 is clear: dust to dust, good, man/adam, eat; Meek, 'Wisdom Literature', 74.

⁶⁶ References to the natural world in Job: 1:19; 3:8-9; 4:10; 5:10, 22, 23, 25, 26; 6:3, 5, 15-18; 7:5, 9, 12; 8:11-17; 9:5-10, 17, 26; 10:8, 16; 11:8, 9, 12, 16; 12:7-10, 15; 14:2, 7-9, 11, 18, 19; 15:32-33; 18, 3-4, 16; 19:10, 25; 20:14, 16, 17, 27; 21:10, 11, 18, 26, 33; 22:8, 12, 14, 16, 24, 25; 24:2-8, 11, 18-20, 24; 25:5, 6; 26:5-14; 27:18, 20-22; 28:1-28; 29:19, 23; 30:1, 4-8, 14, 22, 29; 31:8, 20, 26, 38-40; 33:6; 34:13, 15; 35:5, 11, 12; 36:27-33; 37:2-12, 15-18, 21; 38:1-41; 39:1-30; 40:1-4, 15-24; 41:1-34; 42:1.

⁶⁷ Lindsay Wilson, 'Job', in *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament: A Book-by-Book Survey*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhooser (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 148-156.

⁶² Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*, 188.

⁶³ ⁶You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, ⁷All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field, ⁸The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas.

⁶⁴ Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*, 188; Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Stewardship* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 165.

eliminating it.⁶⁸

Even elements that appear 'evil' by human standards are not beyond God's control.⁶⁹

In Job chs. 38-42 God speaks directly to Job. God's monologue describes the origin of the universe, meteorological phenomena, and a variety of wild animals. Both wild and domesticated animals, uninhabited and cultivated land, the heavens, and the depths are all listed, 'even symbolic places such as Sheol and the 'innermost parts' of human beings'.⁷⁰

A primary theme of 38-42 therefore appears to be that no aspect of creation is beyond God's control. Further, the way that Job portrays God's ordering of creation indicates that God's concern for creation goes far beyond the human realm.

1. Job 38:1-3

¹Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind and said,

²'Who is this that darkens counsel By words without knowledge?

³'Now gird up your loins like a man,

And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!

Job is granted a rare privilege when Yahweh speaks directly to him. However, God does not respond to Job's

questions about justice and injustice. In fact, God's comments have very little to do with human beings at all. God shifts the focus from Job's suffering to the ordering of all creation. The Lord meets the needs of Job while also broadening his understanding of his place within creation.⁷¹

Chapters 38-42 present a non-anthropocentric view of the world.⁷² God describes a world without people, a world that has meaning independent of human activity.⁷³ In the light of such, the passage reminds people of their finitude and limited ability.

Job 38:4-7 carries an allusion to Proverbs 8:22-31, which describes wisdom as being present at the creation of the universe. The statement suggests that if Job was present at creation then he must also have access to the wisdom of God.⁷⁴ The implication is that Job was neither present, nor does he have access to God's wisdom.⁷⁵

Further, God does not ask man to name the creatures, as he did in Genesis, or to dominate them in any way. Job is simply asked to behold the 'strength, dignity and freedom' of the wild beasts.⁷⁶ With the exception of the horse (38:19-25) all the creatures listed are beyond man's control.

2. Job 39:13-18

¹³'The ostriches' wings flap joyously

⁶⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 942.

⁶⁹ Alissa Jones Nelson, 'Job', in *The Old Testament and Apocrypha: Fortress Commentary on the Bible*, eds. Gale A. Yee, Hugh R. Page Jr., and Matthew J. M. Coomber (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 519-546.

⁷⁰ Nelson, 'Job', 538.

⁷¹ Wilson, 'Job', 152.

⁷² Rae, 'Response to Mark I. Wallace,' 75.

⁷³ McKibben, *The Comforting Whirlwind*, 36.

⁷⁴ 'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding.' (Job 38:4).

⁷⁵ Whybray, *Job*, 158-59.

⁷⁶ Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 128.

With the pinion and plumage of
 love,
¹⁴ For she abandons her eggs to the
 earth
 And warms them in the dust,
¹⁵ And she forgets that a foot may
 crush them,
 Or that a wild beast may trample
 them.
¹⁶ 'She treats her young cruelly, as
 if they were not hers;
 Though her labor be in vain, she is
 unconcerned;
¹⁷ Because God has made her forget
 wisdom,
 And has not given her a share of
 understanding.
¹⁸ 'When she lifts herself on high,
 She laughs at the horse and his
 rider.

Creation, as portrayed in Job, teaches man that the created order is both rational and irrational. Even the aspects of creation that do not make sense from a human perspective are ordered and controlled by God.⁷⁷ Some creatures, such as the clumsy ostrich are certainly more puzzling than others. God seems to find his creation beautiful and take enjoyment in it.

Wilson suggests, 'God's delight in his ordered creation is reflected in the leisurely nature of the guided tour, in his care for those bearing young (39:1), and in his evident pleasure in animals such as the warhorse (39:19-25).'⁷⁸ Additionally, no moral or didactic lessons are offered in the passage. One might surmise that God intends creation to be

appreciated in its own right.⁷⁹

The passage teaches also that God continuously maintains an ordered creation. The meteorological phenomena and the wild animals operate within the limits set by God. The natural elements are fearsome or uncontrollable only from a human perspective, not from God's.⁸⁰ The myriad of wild life forms are not an object of divine or human micromanagement, yet all are 'affirmed and sustained by God'.⁸¹ God's rulership is one of care and freedom, as creatures who operate within their prescribed boundaries flourish without intervention.⁸²

3. Job 40:15-16; 41:1, 12, 33

¹⁵ 'Behold now, Behemoth, which I
 made as well as you;

He eats grass like an ox.

¹⁶ 'Behold now, his strength in his
 loins

And his power in the muscles of his
 belly.

¹ 'Can you draw out Leviathan with
 a fishhook?

Or press down his tongue with a
 cord?

⁷⁹ Hilary Marlow, 'Justice for All the Earth: Society, Ecology, and the Biblical Prophets', in *Creation in Crisis: Christian Perspectives on Sustainability*, ed. Robert S. White (London: SPCK, 2009), 192-208; Francis I. Andersen, *Job* (Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1976), 273-78; Moo and Robert S. White, *Let Creation Rejoice*, 36.

⁸⁰ Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 940; Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 44.

⁸¹ Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 129.

⁸² Stewart W. Herman, 'Between Text and Sermon: Job 31-41', *Interpretation* 70 (2016): 75-77; Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 129.

⁷⁷ Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 941-42.

⁷⁸ Wilson, 'Job', 155.

¹² 'I will not keep silence
concerning his limbs,
Or his mighty strength, or his
orderly frame.

³³ 'Nothing on earth is like him,
One made without fear.

Chapters 40 and 41 present a poignant statement about humankind's place in the cosmos that should not be read out of context. Together, the behemoth and the leviathan, representing the strongest beasts of land and sea, reinforce the notion that God's creation is expansive, mysterious, and beyond human control.

The terminology once again evokes the creation account of Genesis 1. The 'behemoth' (*bāhēmôt*) of Job 40:15-24 is the same term as that which is used of the earthly beasts created in Genesis 1:24 (*bāhēmāt*). The behemoth is also characterized as the 'first' (or chief) of God's great acts (40:19), which raises him to a status similar to the wisdom of Proverbs 8 and the light of Genesis 1.⁸³

The portrayal of these great beasts contrasts their mythical associations of chaos. God easily controls the beasts, the forces of chaos, the earth, and everything within it.⁸⁴ All the seemingly pointless excursions into nature now make more sense. Job can no more 'exercise jurisdiction in the moral realm than he is able to control the natural'.⁸⁵ To control the universe Job would have

to be as powerful and wise as God himself. Much to Job's dismay (40:4-5), God vividly demonstrates that Job is not.

4. Job 40:3-5; 42:2, 6

³ Then Job answered the Lord and said,

⁴ 'Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You?

I lay my hand on my mouth.

⁵ 'Once I have spoken, and I will not answer;

Even twice, and I will add nothing more.'

² 'I know that You can do all things,
And that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted.

⁶ Therefore I retract,
And I repent in dust and ashes.'

The behemoth was created *with* Job, which implies a common identity, and by extension a common identity with all creatures. Job had earlier complained that he was a 'brother to jackals and a companion of ostriches' (30:29), and exiled from his family. He can now exult in being part of the community of creation. Brown quips that Job has something of a 'Copernician revolution' when he finally realizes that the world does not revolve around himself.⁸⁶ In the light of God's expansive creation Job finally grasps his own creatureliness, and finds comfort in the One who is Creator and Sustainer.⁸⁷

Humility is the antidote to anthropocentrism and the abuse of God's crea-

⁸³ Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 128-29.

⁸⁴ The behemoth and leviathan may be normal creatures described in mythical or fanciful language; Bartholomew and O'Dowd, *Old Testament Wisdom*, 146-47; Nelson, 'Job', 538; Wilson, 'Job', 155; Andersen, *Job*, 288; Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 128.

⁸⁵ Andersen, *Job*, 287.

⁸⁶ Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 130-33; cf. McKibben, *The Comforting Whirlwind*, 42.

⁸⁷ Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation*, 131; Rae, 'Response to Mark I. Wallace', 74.

tion. By viewing the cosmos from God's perspective, humans can see their limited role within creation.⁸⁸ Although science can now explain many of the mysteries presented by Job, modern scientific discoveries always lead to new avenues for further investigation.⁸⁹ Instead of an exploration that involves cruelty and exploitation, the book of Job recommends a humble approach to the mysteries within the community of creation. When human set themselves above nature, transcend God's boundaries, and attempt to overcome finitude in ways that dishonour creation, they set themselves against the Creator.

A further insight that can be gleaned from Job 38-42 is that nature can provide a sense of nearness to God in times of trial. Andersen points out:

a long-standing tradition in western Christian thought that belittles the knowledge of God gained by thinking about the world. 'Natural theology' was kept within bounds by the scholastics, and denied altogether by Neo-orthodoxy. The book of Job does not take this discouraging attitude. Just as Jesus invited us to 'consider the lilies of the field', so the Lord is like a friend who asks you to join Him in a walk around His garden. God enjoys His world, and He wants us to enjoy it with Him. But it is only when God Himself conducts the tour that the excursion is profitable.⁹⁰

The overarching theme of ecosapi-

ential theology is encapsulated in the final chapters of Job. All of creation testifies to the power, wisdom, and mystery of the Creator. A profound encounter with God and his creation is the fundamental experience of man when he occupies his God-ordained place in the natural world.

IV Conclusion

To conclude, a brief survey of insights garnered from the foregoing examination of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job will be offered.

Proverbs teaches that God orders his creation and sets boundaries to ensure its proper operation. Both the human and the natural world are endowed with a purpose and a role within the functioning whole. Rejection or transgression of the created order results in a destructive trajectory for all of the natural world. Proverbs exhorts believers to live in harmony with fellow humans, living creatures, and the land itself.

The ancient sages advocate an intimate and caring relationship with the various elements of creation. When people reflect the image of God by care for fellow creatures and the land, the natural resources of the world flourish. When people are distanced from the natural world, apathy and abuse are the result. The resultant overconsumption of natural resources impoverishes future generations.

The wise teacher of Ecclesiastes demonstrates that progress is not inherently beneficial. A respect for the value and dignity of other creatures is more important than the values of consumption and comfort. Greed leads to a constant striving for more, which leads

⁸⁸ Bratton, 'The Precautionary Principle', 260; cf. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 941; Nelson, 'Job', 539.

⁸⁹ Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology*, 46.

⁹⁰ Andersen, *Job*, 270-71.

to dissatisfaction, which leads to injustice. Seeking after God is a corrective that leads to contentment and a harmonious relationship with all of creation.

Finally, the book of Job displays an omniscient and omnipotent God who cares for every element of his creation. The intimate relationship between humans and God is counterbalanced by a non-anthropocentric view of God's relationship with his creation. Humans are not the centre of the universe, and God has purposes for his creation that sometimes have nothing to do with humans. Further, the mystery and beauty of nature teaches man about God and draws humanity closer to him. In the light of God's glory in creation man should approach nature with an attitude of humility, expecting to encounter the presence of God.

All three books also teach that people experience a deeper understanding of self through nature. Human beings do not have a monopoly on wisdom.⁹¹ Ecosapiential wisdom teaches that creation can, in fact, impart wisdom to humans. The proverbial ant offers lessons on resourcefulness and foresight while the locust teaches the value of cooperation (Prov 6:6; 30:24-33).

Additionally, learning from God's creatures may break through hearts hardened to the natural world. Humans should be humbled by the realization that most of the qualities they pride themselves on are also shared by the natural world: persistence, cooperation, stability, power, grace, beauty

and artistry.⁹²

While ecosapiential themes from all three books overlap, one common thread underlies the entire wisdom corpus. At the heart of biblical wisdom literature stands God's design for the world. Faithful stewardship announces and embodies the full reign of God in every aspect of life. The work of redemption is what God does in and for believers, but also through them.⁹³ The efforts of believers must not be limited to 'conversion evangelism'.⁹⁴ A mission that desires to reach all nations and all peoples should embody the full scope of God's salvific plan. Snyder and Scandrett exhort, 'If we are passionate about people, we will be passionate about their world.'⁹⁵

Stewardship of the natural world has too often been exerted in the form of exploitation and domination, when it should instead be care and service on behalf of God. Ethical stewardship is not an opposition to human progress and scientific advance, but rather a type of progress that respects the value and limitations of the natural world. Therefore, ecosapiential theology includes caring stewardship of the environment, vigilant attention to the condition of nature, and redemptive activity in all aspects of creation.

⁹² Davis, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs*, 147-48.

⁹³ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 200.

⁹⁴ Snyder and Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed*, 141-42.

⁹⁵ Snyder and Scandrett, *Salvation Means Creation Healed*, 152.

⁹¹ Pauw, *Proverbs and Ecclesiastes*, 130.

Colin E. Gunton and Public Theologians: Toward a Trinitarian Public Theology

Naomi Noguchi Reese

I Public Theology

In the history of public theology—a category of theology that seeks to bring theological truths to bear on public arenas—the Holy Spirit’s role in creation has been underexplored. If the Holy Spirit is the agent of transformation in creation, why have so many theologians neglected the Spirit’s activity in the context of public theology? One of the causes of such neglect derives from a long-held belief in dualism. As a result, generally speaking, theologians have neglected the eschatological aspect of the Spirit’s work over creation, and instead have devoted most of their attention to the immanent/spiritual aspect of the Spirit’s work.

Hence, a theology is needed that recaptures the eschatological aspect of the Spirit’s work over creation. Colin E. Gunton’s pneumatology which is trinitarianly formulated and eschatologically conceived brings a fresh approach to public theology. It moves us toward a full-bodied, holistic and trinitarian public theology that takes into

account the triune God. Ultimately, it enables us to see the world through the lens of the eschatological Spirit’s work and to look beyond traditional modes of Christian cultural engagement that have been counterproductive.

A pneumatology which is firmly grounded in a trinitarian theology is necessary to further develop public theology. It is only within this framework that we can understand the divine intention of redemption toward the creation and have a holistic understanding of the mission of the triune God for the created world. In so doing, we will be able to discern how we should engage with culture as a participant in the divine redemption.

In what follows, I will present a brief summary of Gunton’s pneumatology and then discuss three prominent U.S. public theologians and thinkers to discern whether pneumatology plays any significant role in their public theology. In turn, I examine how Gunton’s robust pneumatology provides the necessary resources to address the defi-

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ciency in public theology owing to the absence of an adequate theology of the eschatological Spirit. Finally, I discuss criteria for discerning the Spirit's work in relation to public theology.

II Gunton's Pneumatology

Basil of Caesarea is perhaps the most significant theological influence in relation to Gunton's pneumatology. Gunton states, 'It is Basil who makes, I think, the most important point.'¹ Basil's stance on the work of the Spirit is clearly eschatological: 'The original cause of all things that are made, the Father ... the creative cause, the Son ... the perfecting cause, the Spirit.'² Moreover, Basil's attribution of the work (*ad extra*) of the three persons is trinitarianly formulated.

Gunton's appreciation of Basil, therefore, is the basis for his eschatological Spirit who perfects the creation at the end. However, behind the eschatological Spirit, there is a trinitarian God whose being consists of three persons in communion which forms the centre of both Basil's and Gunton's theology. Gunton contends, 'To say that the Spirit is the perfecting cause of creation is to make the Spirit the eschatological person of the Trinity: the one who directs the creatures to where the creator wishes them to go, to their destiny as creatures.'³ More succinctly, 'the Spirit is God being

eschatological'.⁴

Hence, for Gunton, the eschatological Spirit is a *person*, not *substance*, whose mission is to perfect the created world in accordance with Christ. And it is not a *modalistic* God, but rather the *trinitarian* God whose being consists of three persons who 'receive and give each other what they are.'⁵ Indeed, the work of the Spirit is inseparable from that of the Father and the Son. The Son and the Spirit are, Gunton contends, the 'two hands' of the Father. They are distinct, yet inseparable. If Jesus is 'the basis of God's movement out into the creation to bring that which is not God into covenant relation with him', the Spirit is the one who brings perfection to the world based on what Christ has achieved on the cross.⁶

Gunton further elaborates, 'The Son is the *content* of God's redemptive movement into the world, [while] the Spirit is its *form*, and that form is its freedom.'⁷ The divine love is manifested in the Son and through the Spirit to show God's relentless love for the world. Yet, the manner of the manifestation is different.

Gunton continues, 'The Spirit is God's eschatological transcendence,

4 Gunton, *Father, Son & Holy Spirit*, 76.

5 Colin E Gunton, 'The Spirit as the Lord: Christianity, Modernity and Freedom', in *Different Gospels*, ed. Andrew Walker (London: Hodder and Stoughton for the C. S. Lewis Centre, 1988), 83.

6 Colin E Gunton, *Theology through the Theologians: Selected Essays 1972-1995* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 127.

7 Gunton, 'The Spirit in the Trinity', in *The Forgotten Trinity: 3. A Selection of Papers Presented to the BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today*, ed. Alastair I.C. Heron, 130; italics in original.

1 Colin E Gunton, *Father, Son & Holy Spirit: Toward a Fully Trinitarian Theology* (London, New York: T&T Clark, 2003), 81.

2 Basil of Caesarea, *On the Holy Spirit* XV 36 and 38.

3 Gunton, *Father, Son & Holy Spirit*, 81.

his futurity, as it is sometimes expressed. He is God present to the world as its liberating order, bringing it to the destiny determined by the Father, made actual, realized, in the Son.⁸ The Spirit is the eschatological Spirit whose goal is to bring the world to its intended end.

As noted, Gunton defines the work of the Spirit as ‘perfecting’. From this definition, we can identify two primary implications. The first is the dynamic nature of creation: the transformation/perfection of the world. If the Spirit is the eschatological Spirit who perfects, the creation is the object of such perfection. Indeed, the Spirit is the agent of the age to come.

Nonetheless, in the history of theology, the Spirit’s work has been construed primarily as immanent rather than transcendent.⁹ For example, it is common to stress the immanent aspects of the Spirit such as strengthening believers and guiding them to follow Christ.¹⁰ Indeed, the Spirit is often seen as a ‘substantial force’ that we possess within us rather than a person who acts as an agent of the age to come.

Consequently, cosmic and social dimensions of the Spirit’s eschatological work are overlooked.¹¹ Gunton contends, ‘The Spirit is better identified in terms of transcendence than of immanence. The Spirit may be active within

the world, but he does not become identical with any part of the world.’¹²

It is therefore the Spirit who transforms/perfects the entire creation. This transformation does not indicate a return to the protological state of the creation, but rather ‘redirection’ or movement towards the completion of the creation. Gunton refers to this as a ‘return’ ... but of a process by which that which was in the beginning is not so much restored to a former integrity as returned perfected to the Father through the Son and by the Spirit—an eschatological rather than protological return.¹³

The second implication, which relates to the first, is that if the Spirit is the eschatological Spirit who brings the transformation of the world, our reconciliation with God through the Spirit is the means of effecting such transformation. Gunton contends that reconciliation is ‘the Father’s determination to bring all things into *relation* to himself through Christ’.¹⁴

To be sure, relation is an important concept because it entails rightness with God. If our relation with God is skewed, we cannot remain right with God. Gunton thus defines sin as a ‘false relation to God’.¹⁵ It is ‘the disruption or distortion of the relation of personal beings with the personal crea-

⁸ Gunton, ‘The Spirit in the Trinity,’ 130.

⁹ Gunton provides an extensive discussion on how the Spirit’s work has been understood as immanent contrary to its true nature in history in *Theology through the Theologians*, 105-108.

¹⁰ Lk 12:12; Jn 14:26; 16:8-11; etc.

¹¹ Gen 1:2, 2:7; Ex 35:30-31; Ezek 37:9, 12; Lk 1-2; Rom 8:2; etc.

¹² Gunton, *Theology through the Theologians*, 108.

¹³ Gunton, *Theology through the Theologians*, 127.

¹⁴ Gunton, *Theology through the Theologians*, 120.

¹⁵ Colin E Gunton, *The Christian Faith: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell Publishing, 2002), 139.

tor God'.¹⁶

The Spirit opens the hearts of human beings and invites us to restore our relation with God. Restoring our relation with God, which is reconciliation, enables us to become what we are created to be. Accordingly, our relation with each other, along with the created world, is restored as well. This is the means of the transformation of God's whole creation.

Furthermore, this reconciliation takes place in the church—the community of the last days. Gunton observes, 'According to the New Testament, human community becomes concrete in the church, whose calling is to be the medium and realization of communion'.¹⁷ The purpose of the church is therefore to be the catalyst of reconciliation for the world, while the church herself is to be shaped into a perfect communion, having been reconciled with God, others and the created world.

III Public Theologians and Colin E. Gunton

In this section I will examine public theologians and thinkers in the United States context. I have selected three prominent public theologians and thinkers whose work has had significant influence in public theology in the United States. Following this, I will

evaluate Colin Gunton's contribution to public theology. My intention is to use these three theologians and thinkers as foils in evaluating whether pneumatology plays any significant role in their public theology.

1. H. Richard Niebuhr

In *Christ and Culture*, Niebuhr constructs his famous five typologies in order to answer the question: What is the relationship that reflects our faithfulness and loyalty to Christ in dealing with the world if Christ directs Christians to the world?

The Christ against culture paradigm perceives culture as sinful and non-redemptive. This is an extreme type since adherents completely reject culture and seek to build a new society that is not corrupted by culture. The opposite pole of this extreme is the Christ of culture type. Contrary to Christ against culture, this type accepts culture. Although adherents are loyal to Christ, they 'seem equally at home in the community of culture'.¹⁸

Niebuhr argues that despite their differences, these two types are in fact similar to each other. For example, they are unitarian instead of trinitarian in their theology: 'Jesus Christ being essentially God for the former [Christ against] and the Almighty Father the single God of the latter [Christ of]'.¹⁹

Further, these two types are one worldly instead of two worldly. For Christ against culture, this world is thought to be corrupted beyond re-

¹⁶ Gunton, *The Christian Faith*, 59. For Gunton, the divine justice is by nature transformational and relational, rather than penal and individualistic (Gunton, *Christian Faith*, 76).

¹⁷ Colin E Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Many: God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 217.

¹⁸ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper and Row, 2001), 83.

¹⁹ Niebuhr, 'Introduction', in *Christ and Culture*, 49.

demption. Therefore, its focus is on the world to come. Similarly, with Christ of culture, it is melioristic and does not 'abandon the idea of another world but makes it an extension of the best parts of this aeon'.²⁰

In between these two extremities, Niebuhr identifies the remaining three types: Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox, and Christ as the transformer of culture. For these, the main issue is not whether to reject or accept culture. Rather, it is how to embrace this world and the next at the same time—how to live a responsible life in the world while remaining faithful to Christ.

A further contrast is that these types are not unitarian. Niebuhr states that they are 'if not trinitarian, at least bi-nitarian'.²¹ Unlike the extreme types, they distinguish three persons of the Trinity and their respective missions. Further, they understand reality to be two-worldly, rather than one-worldly, and they acknowledge the usefulness of culture. The divine values and imperatives can be appreciated both in Christ (Bible, church) and nature (reason, culture). Nonetheless, sin infects culture. Despite God's creating, governing and redeeming work, nothing escapes the effects of sin.

Christ above culture incorporates elements of Christ of culture, while maintaining the lordship of Christ over the created world. The world was created through Christ and is upheld by him. Hence, Christ and the world cannot be opposed to each other. Indeed,

'both faith and knowledge proceed from the same divine source'.²² Nonetheless, adherents do not perceive Christ as the Christ of culture. A discontinuity exists between the imperatives of nature and those of the gospel. The distinction must be maintained although culture is ultimately under the sovereignty of God.

Christ and culture in paradox is characterized by tension between God's righteousness and human righteousness. Like Christ against culture, this type sees culture as corrupted. But unlike Christ against culture, it accepts the reality that humanity is surrounded by culture and believes that it is impossible to avoid it.

Christ the transformer of culture argues for the transformation of humanity as well as the created world. Like Christ and culture in paradox, advocates believe that sin has corrupted the entire created world and that we are in need of God's forgiveness and mercy. Yet, this corrupted world is still under God's sovereign rule. Therefore, Christians must participate in God's creating and redeeming work.

Niebuhr offers several points of theological support for this typology. The first is creation. Christians must participate in the Son's creating and redeeming work. Niebuhr states, 'The Word that became flesh and dwelt among us, the Son who does the work of the Father in the world of creation, has entered into a human culture that has never been without his ordering action.'²³

²⁰ Niebuhr, 'Introduction', in *Christ and Culture*, 47.

²¹ Niebuhr, 'Introduction', in *Christ and Culture*, 49.

²² Douglas F. Ottati, 'Christ and Culture', *American Presbyterian* 66 (1988): 323.

²³ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 193.

The second is the 'nature of man's fall from his created goodness'.²⁴ The fall has corrupted God's creation, but it did not corrupt the creation to the extent of requiring a replacement. 'Man's good nature has become corrupted; it is not bad, as something that ought not to exist, but warped, twisted and misdirected'.²⁵ Likewise, culture is 'corrupted order rather than order for corruption'.²⁶ Hence, culture needs to be transformed in order to restore its goodness even if this means a rebirth through transformation.

The third theological support is a view of history. In light of the two points described above, Niebuhr argues that it becomes clear that history is not merely a series of human events. It is rather a 'dynamic interaction between God and man'.²⁷ Niebuhr observes that on this view the triune God works together to create, forgive and redeem the world in order to bring transformation.

It is noted that humankind is to participate in this divine work. In such a dynamic interaction between God and man, 'the eschatological future has become for him an eschatological present'.²⁸ Hence, Christ is the transformer of culture.

2. D. A. Carson

In *Christ & Culture Revisited*, D. A. Carson presents a treatment of Niebuhr's five typologies seen through the eyes of a biblical theologian. In this volume,

Carson reshapes the typologies and offers several suggestions.

For one, Carson criticizes Niebuhr's handling of scripture. Carson determines that Niebuhr's problem originates in how he perceives the biblical canon. He states, 'Niebuhr's view, a view that is still quite common in some academic circles, is that the Bible in general, and the New Testament in particular, provides us with a number of discrete paradigms'.²⁹ Naturally, this view discourages us from reading the Bible in a holistic manner.

Niebuhr's reading violates the 'canon's "rule" [which] lies in the totality of the canon's instruction'.³⁰ Hence, Niebuhr's handling of scripture comes across as piecemeal. Carson argues that we need to listen to all the voices of the canon and integrate them systematically. To do so involves the following 'non-negotiables'.

In addition to close exegesis of a wide range of biblical texts, we need to think through how they fit into the great turning points of redemptive history, into the massive movement from creation to the new heaven and the new earth, with critical stops along the way for the fall, the call of Abraham, the rise and fall and rise again of Israel, the resurrection, the gift of the Spirit and the birth of the church.

Furthermore, we cannot ignore great theological structures, including the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead, all that the cross achieves, and the unavoidable implications of New Testament eschatology with its underlying

²⁴ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 193.

²⁵ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 194.

²⁶ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 194.

²⁷ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 194.

²⁸ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 195.

²⁹ D. A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2008), 40-41.

³⁰ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 41.

combination of inaugurated and future eschatology.³¹

Carson contends that it is not enough to examine a wide range of biblical texts and see what each one says. We also need to listen to the voices in relation to the grand biblical and theological scheme of creation, fall, redemption and consummation. In short, it is imperative to understand the relation between Christ and culture within the *flow* of the divine drama.³² Carson is also concerned that whatever models we conceive should be grounded in Scripture.

If for any reason we continue to think of different models of the relation between Christ and culture, we must insist that they are not *alternative* models that we may choose to accept or reject. Rather, we shall ask in what sense they are grounded in the Scriptures and ponder their interrelations *within* the Scriptures, and how and when they should be emphasized under different circumstances exemplified *in* the Scriptures.³³

Thinking about the relation between Christ and culture is thus not a matter of preference of one paradigm over another, but of discerning a holistically biblical pattern. Moreover, 'As empirically useful as certain grids may be, thoughtful Christians need to adopt an extra degree of hesitation about canon-

izing any of them.'³⁴ Further, Niebuhr's discrete paradigms do not accurately reflect the rich and complex nature of Scripture.

Eschatologically speaking, we are living in a time of tension. Jesus inaugurated the kingdom of God. Yet, this kingdom will not be consummated until his second coming. Hence, it is not either 'Christ against culture' or 'Christ transforming culture', but should be both. Carson therefore argues that Christians must live as a 'people in tension'.³⁵

He writes, 'On the one hand, we belong to the broader culture in which we find ourselves; on the other, we belong to the culture of the consummated kingdom of God, which has dawned among us.'³⁶ This tension exists in the Christian life, and we are not free to ignore or reject it. Rather, Christians must embrace the tension and seek the welfare of the city while we wait for the final consummation of the creation.

3. James Davison Hunter

In *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World*, James Davison Hunter seeks to find a new way for Christians to engage with the twenty-first century world. Hunter supports his claims using sociological and historical evidence and contends that the traditional ways of Christian engagement are based on flawed social theory and therefore ineffective in achieving their goals. Hunter makes two significant arguments based on sociological

³¹ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 226.

³² The non-negotiables of biblical theology that Carson suggests should act as the framework for all approaches to Christ and culture. Indeed, some differences in approach may result from how one understands the big picture of the divine drama.

³³ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 62; italics original.

³⁴ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 224.

³⁵ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 64.

³⁶ Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 64.

evidence.

First, he contends that the traditional means of engagement encourage Christians to evangelize in order to bring change to society. This basic principle derives from a belief that the more Christians there are in society, the stronger the Christian influence will be because

cultures are shaped from the cumulative values and beliefs that reside in the hearts and minds of ordinary people. The means and ends of world-changing ... are to change the hearts and minds of enough people that the social order will finally come to reflect the values and beliefs that they hold.³⁷

Yet, Hunter contends that this is a misconception since none of the evidence of history and sociology supports such a theory. On the contrary, changes in society often take place when people in positions of power work together for a common purpose through networks of the elite.

Second, our traditional methods of cultural engagement are no longer adequate for the cultural changes that our modern society has experienced. Two such changes resulting from modern pluralism are 'difference' and 'dissolution'. Hunter argues that the prevalence of 'difference' does not foster religious belief that is strong and coherent because of the lack of surrounding cultural structures to reinforce such beliefs. 'Dissolution', on the

other hand, creates scepticism about basic features of reality. Furthermore, 'They [difference and dissolution] present conditions advantageous for the development of nihilism—genial and otherwise.'³⁸

Hunter therefore argues for a new approach. He proposes a 'theology of faithful presence' that Christians should embrace in order to be the light and salt of the world. He states,

A theology of faithful presence begins with an acknowledgement of God's faithful presence to us and that his call upon us is that we be faithfully present to him in return. This is the foundation, the logic, the paradigm.³⁹

Faithful presence calls us to be present to others whether they are inside or outside the community; this requires sacrificial love. Further, faithful presence requires us to be faithful to our vocational tasks, in which we are to strive for excellenc. Through these tasks, Christians honour God.

But this new approach should not be taken as a means to manifest or utilize one's power to influence. God invites humanity who is made in his image to participate in world-making since 'world-making is an expression of our divine nature'.⁴⁰ Yet, Hunter qualifies that

it is also important to underscore that while the activity of culture-

³⁷ James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 274.

³⁸ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 211. Hunter defines nihilism as 'autonomous desire and unfettered will legitimated by the ideology and practice of choice'. Hunter, *To Change the World*, 211.

³⁹ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 243.

⁴⁰ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 232.

making has validity before God, this work is not, strictly speaking, redemptive or salvific in character. Where Christians participate in the work of world-building they are not, in any precise sense of the phrase, 'building the kingdom of God'.⁴¹

Hunter argues that the concept of 'building the kingdom of God' is indeed a dangerous idea. It invokes the idea of 'taking over' or 'conquering' which leads to a type of Constantinian engagement. He contends, 'The ideal is to shift to a *post*-Constantinian engagement, which means a way of engaging the world that neither seeks domination nor defines identity and witness over against domination.'⁴² Christians are not here to dominate or take over the culture. But, our engagement with the culture should proclaim the coming of the kingdom and be the foretaste of what is to come. Hunter states,

If there are benevolent consequences of our engagement with the world ... it is precisely because it is not rooted in a desire to change the world for the better but rather because it is an expression of desire to honor the creator of all goodness, beauty, and truth, a manifestation of our loving obedience to God, and a fulfillment of God's command to love our neighbor.⁴³

The primary goal of Christian cultural engagement, contrary to what Christians have traditionally believed, is not to bring change to the world. Rather, Hunter argues that the world

cannot be changed:

Will engaging the world in the way discussed here change the world? This I believe is the wrong question. The question is wrong in part because it is based on the dubious assumption that the world, and thus history, can be controlled and managed.⁴⁴

Instead, the purpose of participating in world-making is ultimately to honour God, the Creator, for his goodness and to fulfil our duty to love our neighbours as God commands us.

IV The Promise of Gunton's Pneumatology

Despite the richness of the public theologies offered by the theologians and thinkers examined above, none of them pays much, if any, attention to pneumatology. As a result, their understanding of the work of the Spirit in public theology lacks depth. For the most part, the Spirit seems to be viewed merely as an extension of Christ. When Christ is mentioned, the Spirit appears to be implicitly included.

Consequently, the Spirit's relation to the Father and the Son is not taken into account in relation to the transformation of the creation. Indeed, it is not only pneumatology that is noticeably missing from the theories discussed above, but also God's trinitarian nature.

This presents a lacuna in contemporary approaches to public theology and reveals the need for a robust pneumatology in this theological endeavour. When pneumatology is overlooked,

⁴¹ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 233.

⁴² Hunter, *To Change the World*, 280.

⁴³ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 234; italics and emphasis original.

⁴⁴ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 285.

there is a tendency to perceive God in a unitarian or binitarian manner, creating a serious deficiency in one's theology. Colin Gunton rightly argues, 'Because God is triune, we must respond to him in a particular way, or rather set of ways, corresponding to the richness of his being.'⁴⁵ To fail to perceive God trinitarianly means that we begin on the wrong foot.

Gunton continues, 'In turn, that means that everything looks—and, indeed, is—different in the light of the Trinity.'⁴⁶ Thus, we must approach God trinitarianly. Gunton's pneumatology provides a firmer foundation for public theological inquiry and helps settle several important questions whose answers must guide our hermeneutics: Who is God, what is he doing with the world, and how is he guiding the world to its ultimate end?

1. Trinitarian thinking

Trinitarian thinking is indispensable to 'undo the old bifurcation between the cultural mandate and the great commission'.⁴⁷ These issues have been approached apart from considering the Trinity so that the two commandments are not perceived within the divine intention of creation and redemption. As a result, the complementary nature of the two commandments is overlooked. We are not forced to choose one or the other, but the two go hand-in-hand in

order to achieve the ultimate plan of God for the world.

One perceives the tendency to bifurcate these commandments, for example, in the case of D. A. Carson. His understanding of the creation story seems thin because he does not view it through the lens of God's triune nature and work. Indeed, Carson rather quickly dismisses the cultural mandate as 'peculiar responsibilities toward the rest of the created order' that we have as God's image bearers, without any elaboration.⁴⁸ Yet, he emphasizes the importance of a trinitarian theology of the Godhead in public theology, even including it as one of the non-negotiables of biblical theology.

This is where Gunton's robust pneumatology can be helpful. Gunton argues that a weak pneumatology has plagued western theology since the time of Augustine. There is a tendency in western theology to perceive the Spirit as the 'bond of love' that unites the Father and the Son. Hence, the 'bond of love' is hardly perceived as a person, contrary to the nature of the triune God.

Yet, as Gunton argues, the Scripture attests that the Spirit is the *eschatological* Spirit. If one overlooks the work and person of the Spirit, one's theology is deprived of the third aspect of the creation story: the Spirit's perfecting work. Indeed, when one surveys Carson's non-negotiables of biblical theology, it seems clear that the Spirit's relation to the Father and the Son is not taken into account.⁴⁹ Hence, a holistic

⁴⁵ Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 2nd ed. (London: T&T Clark, 2003), 4.

⁴⁶ Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology*, 4-5.

⁴⁷ James K. A. Smith, 'Thinking Biblically about Culture', *Perspectives* 24 (2009): 23.

⁴⁸ Carson, *Christ & Culture Revisited*, 46. Also, see Smith, 'Thinking Biblically', 22.

⁴⁹ This point appears more prominently in Carson's criticism of Vincent Bacote's cosmic

trinitarian thinking is missing. But seen through a trinitarian lens, the distinct work of each person of the Trinity becomes clear.

The Father, who is the fountainhead of the three persons, reaches out to the world through his two hands, the Son and the Spirit, as Gunton frequently observes. On the one hand, the Son, who is the mediator of creation and redemption, works incarnationally by identifying himself with the world through becoming human and instituting a new beginning for fallen humanity. On the other, the Spirit works both transcendentally and immanently in perfecting and transforming the creation (humanity and the created world) to bring all things into relation to the Father through the Son. Yet, their respective work should be understood as unified although each person's is distinct. They are united in one goal, namely, to transform the whole creation.

Hence, the old bifurcation of the cultural mandate and the great commission can be eliminated by viewing both in light of the unified work of the three persons of the Trinity. In my view, it is not enough to read the Bible canonically, we must also read it trinitarianly. When we read the Bible trinitarianly, it helps us to see who the triune God is and how he is working in order to bring ultimate redemption to the world. Gunton's trinitarian theology, especially his robust pneumatology, enables us to shift our eyes to the triune Creator.

pneumatology. He questions how 'these complementary roles of the Spirit are properly related to each other (the Spirit's role in creation and the Spirit's role in redemption).' Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited*, 215.

2. The nature of transformation by the Spirit

Gunton's pneumatology leads us to conclude that the nature of culture is redemptive.⁵⁰ It is not only humanity that will be redeemed, but also the created world because the creation will be 'brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God' (Rom 8:21). Since culture is a significant aspect of the created world, the Spirit uses it in his work of perfection and transformation; thus, culture is redemptive.

As noted above, Hunter contends that culture-making is not salvific or redemptive in character. Culture cannot be changed by mere human effort. Instead, we should honour God by being faithful witnesses rather than attempting to change the world. Perhaps the main difference between Gunton and Hunter is not primarily whether culture is redemptive, although they diverge on this point, but how to understand transformation. Hunter argues,

Within the dialectic between affirmation and antithesis, faithful presence means a constructive resistance that seeks new patterns of social organization that challenge, undermine, and otherwise diminish oppression, injustice, enmity and corruption.⁵¹

This statement hints that, after all, Hunter expects some type of transformation to occur as a result of faithful presence. As one might discern from the preceding discussion, Hunter promotes the more peaceful and non-

⁵⁰ In stating that culture is redemptive, I do not mean in the sense of effecting salvation, but in the sense of being indispensable for human flourishing.

⁵¹ Hunter, *To Change the World*, 247.

violent approach toward cultural engagement that is aligned with the Anabaptist tradition. But, if one can accept that transformation arises from faithful witness and pacifism rather than triumphalism, it is possible that Hunter would find common ground with Gunton.

Further, if the Spirit is the agent of transformation, should not the nature of the transformation reflect the purpose of the divine mission? Gunton contends that the Son and the Spirit are agents of the Father's love. If so, whatever the Spirit perfects and transforms derives from the Father's love. In divine love, the triune God reaches out to the creation through his two hands, the Son and the Spirit. This, I believe, frames the background for the nature of transformation by the Spirit.

Indeed, Gunton argues that the purpose of the Spirit's work is reconciliation, not domination. If so, there is no place in cultural engagement for violence or oppression. The triune God does not transform the created world so that he can dominate or overpower those who oppose him. The world is already under his reign. But, he transforms the created world to bring about reconciliation, harmony and unity between God and humanity, between human beings, and between humanity and creation.

3. A Contemporary example

Furthermore, although humanity is asked to participate in the divine transformation, we do not work apart from the Spirit who is the agent of transformation. On the contrary, we are to be directed by the Spirit. Thus, humanity has no ultimate power or ability to

change the world, or even to perceive how to change the world aright. Unfortunately, many Christians fail to grasp this point and misconceive their role in the transformation of the world.

It is the Spirit who transforms the world, and as Gunton argues, he transforms it by reconciling humanity with God, with each other and with the world. If so, humanity cannot change the world apart from the eschatological Spirit. The Spirit must first bring us to God. Only in the context of reconciliation does transformation of the world become possible.

One recent contemporary example of this, I believe, is the church shooting which took place at the Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, on the evening of 17 June 2015. The young gunman, Dylan Roof, killed nine people during a prayer service. Later, he was indicted on thirty-three federal hate crimes charges.

As much as such a heinous crime shocked the nation, what followed the killing astonished the country even more: The victims' families, appearing in front of Roof in court, forgave him for killing nine black attenders of the meeting. David Brooks of the *New York Times* called this extraordinary act an example of living faith and the one uplifting part of this horrific crime.

In the following days and weeks calls were made to remove the Confederate flag from the South Carolina state capitol—the same flag Roof had posed with in a widely circulated photo. On 22 June, the governor of South Carolina, Nikki Haley, also called for the removal of the Confederate flag, which eventually came down on 10 July 2015. Many other efforts to remove Confed-

erate flags have followed in various states, including Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee.

I believe that this was a moment when the Spirit worked among people to move toward reconciliation. The victims' families' extraordinary courage to forgive Roof and the humbleness they demonstrated at the court—even apologizing for their slowness to forgive him—are signs of their obedience to the Spirit's lead in reconciliation. At the same time, the nation's hearts and minds were opened by their testimony, pointing to the grace and love of God.

Surely the Spirit was at work in these events, bringing about transformation and reconciliation. Events such as this remind us that we must forsake triumphalism and seek peace and love instead. Further, we must rely on the Spirit to lead us to the right path. It is not human power or ingenuity that changes the world, but our faithfulness to the Lord that brings godly change.

V Criteria for Discerning the Spirit's Work

It is generally agreed that it is difficult to discern the work of the Spirit due to his elusive nature. Yet, this does not mean that the Spirit's eschatological work is completely hidden from us. Amos Yong rightly argues,

Christian discernment ... is intricately tied to moral discernment as well as to the development of the human faculties of perception, understanding, and judgment in their broad senses. Growth in love and knowledge is inseparable from the acquisition of deep moral and perceptual insight, and all contribute

to the continuing increase in the capacity of the Christian to accomplish moral and spiritual discernment.⁵²

Thus, Christian discernment is a 'skill that is developed over time'.⁵³ One of the challenges of discerning the Spirit's work is acquiring the requisite sensitivity and wisdom. Yong contends that although discernment is one of the spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:10), it takes time to develop. An essential aspect of nurturing our skills of discernment is to immerse ourselves in Scripture and Christian living.

Hence, discernment is not a supernatural ability that is instantly acquired, but rather a skill that is developed over time. If so, it is plausible to formulate criteria for discerning the Spirit's work. The criteria that I list in this section are by no means exhaustive. But, it is my hope that they move us forward in our attempt to discern the Spirit's work in culture in relation to public theology.

1. Positive criteria

The first criterion is Scripturalness. Discerning the Spirit's eschatological work requires testing by the Scripture. For example, when we encounter a social phenomenon that may look like the Spirit's work, it must be examined in the light of God's revelation. Nonetheless, Yong cautiously adds that 'such norms have to be sensitively applied to the concrete world of things'.⁵⁴

It is one thing to apply biblical norms to current affairs, it is another

⁵² Amos Yong, *Beyond the Impasse: Toward a Pneumatological Theology of Religions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 145.

⁵³ Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 146.

⁵⁴ Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 159.

to discern whether such norms are applied appropriately. Yong continues, "Life in the Spirit" ... requires reading both Scripture *and* the world accurately in order to ensure the appropriate applicability of scriptural norms to the world.⁵⁵ Christendom might have turned out differently had more caution been taken in applying biblical norms to the world appropriately.

The second criterion is Trinitarianism. As Gunton has shown, it is imperative to perceive the eschatological work of the Spirit in light of the Trinity. The Spirit does not work alone. On the contrary, he works in accordance with the Son and the Father. Yet, the Spirit is given his own distinct mission in relation to the Son and the Father.

Therefore, in discernment, this balance (distinction in unity) must be maintained. It is not enough to discern the actions of the Spirit alone. Rather, we must discern whether a putative action of the Spirit is compatible with the work of the Father and the Son within the scheme of divine redemption.

The third criterion is communion-enabling. This criterion is derived from the nature and character of the third person of the Trinity. If the Spirit brings redemption to the world by creating an eschatological community, the actions of the Spirit must be characterized by communion. In other words, when we see reconciliation, love, and peace, it is plausible to argue that we are witnessing the Spirit at work (though the totality of the circumstances has to be taken into account, of course).

Michael Welker argues,

One can readily see with one's own

eyes that love is the most complete of the forms of expression and communication in accordance with the Spirit. For in a differentiated way, love corresponds to the promised Spirit of righteousness and of peace.⁵⁶

A fourth criterion is other-person-centeredness expressed in love. When the eschatological Spirit is at work, people act for the benefit of others. The Spirit makes it possible for us to freely put others ahead of our own interests for the sake of the community.⁵⁷ Indeed, even an everyday thing like a father reconciling with his son or a mother with her daughter may be a sign of the work of the eschatological Spirit. Human love is fostered in our most basic relationships, such as family. If so, a reconciliation that takes place at home may go a long way in furthering the eschatological work of the Spirit.

Welker argues that love is 'in a way unmatched by any other power granted to human beings' because it is a

master in inventing exceptions that provide deliverance and promote life. Because love not only immerses itself in the beloved person, but also exercises a beneficial influence, both directly and indirectly, on that person's environment, love is continually building up new forms of life, both individual and communal.⁵⁸

Indeed, says Welker, 'With its free

⁵⁵ Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 159; italics in original.

⁵⁶ Michael Welker, *God the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 250.

⁵⁷ Welker describes this as 'free self-withdrawal for the benefits of others'. See Welker, *God the Spirit*, 252.

⁵⁸ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 250.

self-withdrawal, love is contagious.⁵⁹

One can appreciate Welker's comments in relation to public theology. The Spirit manifests the divine love by transforming the world through reconciliation, Gunton contends. Hence, any actions of the Spirit should not contradict his nature. Yet, we often quickly dismiss the efficacy of love. We are more attracted to something powerful and heroic.

But, the love that Christ exemplified on the cross is meek and humble. And if this is the love that the Spirit is testifying to in order to bring people to God, we should take a careful look at how we can promote God's love for the transformation of the created world. Indeed, all of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22) may be good criteria for discerning the work of the eschatological Spirit.

2. Negative criteria

One potential pitfall of discerning the Spirit's work is confusing it with demonic activity. Yong argues that discernment includes 'distinguishing between the divine, the human, and demonic'.⁶⁰ Hence, there is always the possibility that what we are witnessing may be the result of demonic forces. Yong suggests that 'evidence of demonic influence or infiltration consists in a thing's radical departure from its purposes and functions, thus affecting its relationships in a destructive manner'.⁶¹ Satan is cunning, and a master of deception. He disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Cor 11:14)

and can cause great destruction in the name of good.

In this light, we may also formulate negative criteria which suggest activities that are not of the Spirit but contrary to the Spirit's nature. For example, anything that does not produce the fruit of the Spirit is not the work of the Spirit (Gal 5:22). Attitudes or actions that display hatred, jealousy, rage, selfish ambition, and the like are the works of the flesh (and perhaps the demonic) rather than the work of the Spirit (Gal 5:19-21).

Our flesh thirsts for power, domination, and tyranny and seeks self-importance rather than humility and edification. Indeed, when we neglect to 'balance truth-telling with listening, justice with peace', the Spirit will not be among us 'because the Spirit is the Spirit of truth (Jn 16:12-13) and also the Spirit of love (Rom 5:5)'.⁶²

Further, the 'spirit' that denies the Father and the Son is not the Spirit of God (1 Jn 4:1-3). Yong argues, 'We discern the Spirit by discerning the Christ, but then also discern the Christ by the Spirit'.⁶³ Although elements of humility, justice, peace, and other moral goods may characterize certain social movements or activities, if these also explicitly deny core scriptural truths, they are not the work of the Spirit, but may be the work of the Enemy in disguise. As Jesus said, we must be alert

⁶² Kirsteen Kim, 'Case Study: How Will We Know when the Holy Spirit Comes? The Question of Discernment', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 33 (2009): 96.

⁶³ Yong, 'The Holy Spirit and the World Religions: On the Christian Discernment of Spirit(s) "after" Buddhism', *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 24 (2004): 203.

⁵⁹ Welker, *God the Spirit*, 250.

⁶⁰ Yong, *Beyond the Impasse*, 157.

⁶¹ Yong, *Beyond the Impasses*, 158.

for false prophets who come to us in sheep's clothing (Mt 7:15).

The process of discerning the Holy Spirit's work will necessarily involve balancing all of the preceding criteria, rather than taking one or two in isolation. For example, although the Nazi party created a community—the 'people's community' (*Volkgemeinschaft*) based on national unity—this community was motivated by racial denigration and thus not a result of the work of the Spirit. In any particular case under examination, both positive and negative criteria (e.g., community creating vs. debasing) must be taken into account in determining whether the Spirit is working.

In sum, we must rely on the triune God and Scripture for spiritual discernment. Prayers that seek wisdom for spiritual discernment are necessary, while love and obedience prepare our hearts to be sensitive to the Spirit's direction.

VI Conclusion

In this article, we have examined Colin Gunton's contribution to public theology and how it enables us to move forward in developing a trinitarian public theology. Gunton's robust pneumatology provides the resources necessary to move toward a more comprehensive, holistic and trinitarian public theology. By recapturing the work of the eschatological Spirit over the creation, Gunton enables us to explore the relation between the trinitarian God and the created world.

Gunton's pneumatology clearly delineates the Spirit as the agent of transformation in relation to the Father and the Son. In so doing, he succeeds in giving the eschatological Spirit a per-

sonal identity while maintaining unity among the three persons. As a result, Gunton's pneumatology helps us to identify the modes of the Spirit's work in the world.

This represents a fresh approach to public theology. To my knowledge, no public theologian has approached public theology from the standpoint of the nature and particularity of the Spirit's work in the creation. We have not been viewing the world through the eyes of the Spirit, nor wisely discerning how the Spirit may be working among us to transform the world. As a result, our attempts to discern the Spirit's work have been largely arbitrary.

Similarly, this fresh approach enables us to look beyond traditional modes of Christian cultural engagement that have been counterproductive. Drawing on trinitarian resources, Gunton identifies the Spirit as the divine love who transforms the world by reconciliation. If so, anything that is contrary to reconciliation or does not promote harmony and love may be a sign that the Spirit's work is not present.

Gunton's pneumatology shows that the transformation of the world happens when we reconcile with God, others and the creation. This means that the sphere of transformation by the Spirit is human relationships. This, in my opinion, significantly widens the approaches that Christians can take for cultural engagement, and may enable us to discern the Spirit's work in places we never expected it.

Gunton's contribution to public theology should not be overlooked because his pneumatology provides the resources needed to further pursue a trinitarian public theology.

Addressing the Scars on the Face of Christendom: World Mission and Global Persecution in an Age of Changing Intra-Church Relations

Thomas K. Johnson

WE HAVE AT LEAST two ugly bleeding scars across the face of Christendom that we need to address urgently if we wish to see a renaissance of evangelical Christianity in our time. Both have to do with perceptions that may be at odds with the best research of our historians. However, these perceptions, whether or not fully based on careful history, make us appear to some people as if we are monstrous Frankensteins, not representatives of the Suffering Servant, Good Shepherd, and Prince of Peace.

I Scars

1. Intra-Christian civil war

The first of these perceived scars is that Protestants and Catholics have been involved in a 600-year intra-Christian civil war, even if this civil war is sub-violent right now.¹ Of course

there have been conflicts; blood flowed, although some of the European wars I heard described in school decades ago as Protestant-Catholic wars of religion were more religious in result than religious in cause. Protestants and Catholics fought on both sides of many of the terrible battles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which suggests that religion was only one of many motivations for the wars.

Nevertheless, the perception of an endless intra-Christian conflict was a significant part of the roots of western secularism that still leaves many resistant to the biblical message. During the decades when I was teaching in secular universities in Europe and North America, students seemed to take 'the troubles' in Northern Ireland as typical of what would happen if Protestants and Catholics were not

the Czech Republic for twenty years, I may be excused for counting the beginning of Protestantism with John Hus.

¹ Because I have been living as a guest in

effectively restrained by completely secular governments. Whether or not we deserve it, this scar is on our collective face.

2. Anti-Muslim crusades

The second perceived scar is that since the Middle Ages, Christendom has been engaged in centuries of military crusades against Islam in its entirety, even if most Muslims would prefer to see the likes of ISIS, Al-Qaeda and Boko Haram defeated in the current wars which are partly with the western, formerly Christian powers. In 2007, I assisted in reporting about the three Christian martyrs in Malatya, Turkey because one of the young men killed had registered to take a theology class I was scheduled to teach in that country.

Shortly thereafter I exchanged emails with a Muslim journalist living in Istanbul. This Muslim journalist is not an extremist. He even maintains good relationships with relatives who are active Christians. Nevertheless, I was surprised to learn that he thought most Christians secretly want to reactivate the Crusades to destroy Islam militarily; he thought the reasons why all Christians are not united in a military war against Islam were a lack of courage, a lack of military force or the restraint of western governments that are controlled by secularism.

This perception makes him, and probably many millions of Muslims, resistant to the biblical message. I think that his perception of the intentions of Christians is mostly wrong, yet this is how we are perceived.

I long for an evangelical renaissance in our time, because every individual

needs to know Jesus and because all our cultures need the input of biblical wisdom to address terrible problems of fundamental injustice. For this renewal to happen, I believe, we need not only to look in the mirror ourselves; we also need to see the scars that others perceive to be on our faces.

That perception, I believe, is that Catholics and Protestants are just waiting for the right opportunity to begin persecuting each other again, while we Protestants and Catholics together are just waiting for the right opportunity to wipe Islam off the map, whether with military, political, educational or economic weapons. Both of these scars involve fears that we will be the ones persecuting, not allowing true freedom of religion for others.

II Promoting Freedom of Religion with Roman Catholics

Of course, one of the reasons why we evangelicals need to develop large-scale cooperation with our Roman Catholic counterparts in the realm of religious freedom is that 2015 was perhaps the worst year ever in Christian history with regard to persecution. Some of the Christians most vulnerable to persecution are neither Protestant nor Catholic, but the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox churches in the Middle East (although the people persecuting Christians may not care what variety of Christians they are persecuting). We need a joint Protestant-Catholic response that demonstrates visible love for Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Christians.

But to emphasize what might be obvious, we need public and clearly

seen cooperation between Evangelicals and Roman Catholics in the area of promoting religious freedom for all religions in order to remove these two scars from our faces. We need to demonstrate both to Muslims and to our secularized neighbours that we are not about to turn into Frankensteins who are almost ready to start new waves of persecution, whether against other Christians or against Muslims.

If we do this, then some of these people may be more open to hearing the biblical message from us. Our joint Evangelical–Roman Catholic response to persecution should be seen as more than a response to the current genocides; it should also be an attempt to heal the scars that others perceive on our faces so that they are not so afraid to listen when we proclaim Jesus.

This is why it was right for a group of evangelicals to invest time, money and energy into two recent documents, and this is why it is important for evangelical spokespeople to learn about those two documents. Both documents are organic parts of the changes happening in intra-church relations. Both documents are responses to the persecution of Christians. Both documents are set in the context of missions and also address the scars on the face of Christendom.

The two documents are ‘Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World’ (2011) and the ‘Message of the Tirana Consultation’ (2015). I am glad to have participated in the efforts related to both documents, though I was not an author of either text.

1. Christian witness in a multi-religious world

‘Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World’, which we sometimes describe as simply the ‘Code of Ethics in Mission’, was published jointly by the Vatican (specifically the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue), the World Council of Churches, and the World Evangelical Alliance, in June 2011. In principle, over 90 percent of the people in the world who are called Christians were represented, perhaps the highest percentage of Christians represented in an event since the Council of Nicaea in 325, though not everyone is fully informed about what we did.

a) Biblical themes: anti-conversion, anti-proselytism

Contrary to what some expected, the document is filled with neither the distinctives of Roman Catholic doctrine nor the themes that typically emanate from the World Council of Churches. Instead, it contains selected themes from the Bible applied to the situation of Christians who are under certain types of opposition because of their mission activities. Several countries have laws, the so-called anti-conversion laws, or enforced social expectations that prohibit people from changing religions. Other countries have laws that prohibit people from advertising for or publicly proclaiming their beliefs, the so-called anti-proselytism laws.

Behind such anti-conversion and anti-proselytism laws we frequently find the claim that Christians have used or are using inappropriate means to promote the Christian faith. The claim might be that we are using bribery, coercion, force or manipulation to

bring people into the churches, or that we are making education or humanitarian aid contingent on people accepting Christ.

The response, which took five years of preparation, was a big step in intra-church cooperation. It directly addresses the scar of public fears that we Christians might use violence to annihilate Muslims, force their conversion to Christianity, or try to restrict their freedom of religion.

The code begins with a carefully balanced preamble:

Mission belongs to the very being of the church. Proclaiming the word of God and witnessing to the world is essential for every Christian. At the same time, it is necessary to do so according to gospel principles, with full respect and love for all human beings.

Notice the two complementary principles. On the one hand, we have the true Word of God that we must proclaim to all people; this is a bold assertion of the truth of the gospel and the urgency of proclaiming that gospel to all people. On the other hand, we have to proclaim God's word with 'full respect and love for all human beings'.

This second principle addresses the perceived ethical scars on our collective Christian face. Ethics is not only about doing what is right when we stand before God; ethics is also about earning the trust of our neighbours. And for us to earn trust from our neighbours, they have to both hear our principles and also know that we will keep to them. Christendom has united to renounce the use of force, violence and manipulation to promote Christ or hinder another religion.

I have presented these two principles as complementary, and most evangelicals will think, 'Of course'. But outside the Christian world, these two principles are often separated. On one hand, much of late modern secularism assumes that strongly held religious truth claims are incompatible with tolerance and promoting freedom for people who hold different beliefs; if we want tolerance and peace in society, many think, we have to stop proclaiming strongly held truth claims.

On the other hand, many of our neighbours who are not part of late modern secularism find it entirely natural to impose their strongly held religious truth claims upon their neighbours by force. ISIS may be the most extreme version of religious extremism, but it is not the only one. And even non-violent forms of religious nationalism in some countries will say that one cannot be a good citizen of that country without following the majority religion, whether one says India is for Hindus or Saudi Arabia is for Muslims. This leads to powerful social coercion to accept the claims of the majority religion.

Strangely, multiple religions, including extremist forms of Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam, agree with secularism in finding a conflict between proclaiming strongly held religious truth claims and practising love, respect and tolerance for others. But in our Christian code of ethics for missions, we have joined together proclamation of truth claims with full respect and love for all, because one of the truths we proclaim is that all people are created in the image of God.

Both individual Christians and Christian movements can become one-sided, distorting the full counsel of God

one way or the other, so that they over-emphasize either the proclamation of truth claims or respect for those who think differently. By the power of God's Word and Spirit we have to embody and hold together two principles that are pulled apart by all sorts of unbelief. We must boldly proclaim the truth of the Word of God while we truly love and respect people who may initially reject and ridicule everything we say and believe.

b) Missions

These complementary themes are expanded in the several paragraphs of the code for missions. On the one hand, paragraph two says,

Jesus Christ is the supreme witness (cf. John 18:37). Christian witness is always a sharing in his witness, which takes the form of proclamation of the kingdom, service to neighbour and the total gift of self even if that act of giving leads to the cross. Just as the Father sent the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit, so believers are sent in mission to witness in word and action to the love of the triune God.

This is a bold assertion that we can and must participate in the very mission of God; as the Father sent the Son, and as the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit, so also the Triune God has sent us into the world. On the other hand, paragraph six of the code notes,

If Christians engage in inappropriate methods of exercising mission by resorting to deception and coercive means, they betray the gospel and may cause suffering to others. Such departures call for repentance and remind us of our need for God's

continuing grace (cf. Romans 3:23).

Whether or not I personally have used deception or coercion to lead people to Christ, whether or not my church has used force or manipulation to promote Christianity, some Christians have used inappropriate means to promote the faith. But now Christendom collectively, as part of the new intra-church relations of this century, has publicly repented of this past.

We have to let the world know that this repentance is real. The Crusades are a matter of old history, not to be repeated; even our Muslim neighbours should see that this scar is healing. A careful study of the document, 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World', with issues such as these in mind will be a valuable exercise.

2. Tirana 2015

We now turn to the 'Message of the Tirana Consultation' from November 2015, which, I believe, is an important step in changing intra-church relations in the context of our common need to respond to persecution. This consultation addressed also one of the ethical scars on the face of Christendom. To introduce the context and purpose of our consultation, let me quote the opening lines of the message.

For the first time in the modern history of Christianity high level leaders and representatives of the various Church traditions gathered together to listen to, learn from, and stand with discriminated and persecuted Churches and Christians in the world today.

This global gathering of 145 people took place from 2–4 November 2015, in Tirana, Albania, a country

that was declared by its constitution to be an atheist state in 1967, and now has flourishing churches in a framework of religious freedom even though some discrimination may remain.

The Consultation, entitled *Discrimination, Persecution, Martyrdom: Following Christ Together*, was convened by the Global Christian Forum together with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Roman Catholic Church), the Pentecostal World Fellowship, the World Evangelical Alliance, and the World Council of Churches... .

We have come together because discrimination, persecution and martyrdom among Christians and people of other faiths in the contemporary world are growing due to a complex variety of factors in different realities and contexts.

a) Religious persecution 'to do' lists

About half of the delegates came from persecuted churches, and half came from the free world. It was an extremely diverse group of people who are called 'Christians'. There were Roman Catholics and Evangelicals, Greek Orthodox and North African charismatics, Armenian Orthodox and Presbyterians, European Lutherans, and Pentecostals from several countries. The delegates represented significant differences in style of worship and about some themes in theology, though I believe almost every person there strongly affirmed the doctrines of the Trinity and the two natures of Christ, along with the Incarnation and the Resurrection, so that we had much in common.

We were driven to talk with each

other because of globally growing levels of discrimination, persecution, and martyrdom of Christians. We met in secret, choosing a place rich in symbolic value, and one where we thought religious terrorists would not find us. And just as the procedure of carrying out the meeting was very practical, intended to avoid the martyrdom of the participants, so also the goal of the meeting was very practical, to find new and better 'to do' lists that may reduce the persecution and discrimination of Christians in the long-term.

It seems to me that the Holy Spirit gave wisdom to the participants, such that if the 'to do' lists are implemented, Christians can take steps that will lead to a reduction in religious persecution globally. For example, in just two of the several items in the 'to do' lists, representatives of almost all Christians called on

All media to report in an appropriate and unbiased way on violations of religious freedom, including the discrimination and persecution of Christians as well as of other faith communities.

And they then called on

All educational institutions to develop opportunities and tools to teach young people in particular about human rights, religious tolerance, healing of memories and hostilities of the past, and peaceful means of conflict resolution and reconciliation.

In addition to addressing the media and educational institutions, the representatives of almost all Christians issued several other such calls or public appeals.

b) Intra-Christian persecution

Seemingly along the way, in a manner that did not seem to me to be planned far in advance, a theme that directly addressed one of the scars on the face of Christendom, viz, intra-Christian persecution, surfaced. This theme was addressed in the consultation message prior to the practical lists, as an acknowledgment that, before asking others to turn firmly away from persecution based on religion, we should do it ourselves. The consultation said, 'We repent of having at times persecuted each other and other religious communities in history, and ask forgiveness from each other and pray for new ways of following Christ together.'

My inner response when I heard this statement at the consultation was simply, 'Wow!' In the discussion of this statement, it seemed clear that the leadership of the Catholic Church strongly wanted this public repentance proclaimed. And in the meetings, repentance was immediately shared among representatives of almost all branches of Christendom in light of the history of intra-Christian persecution.

I thought I saw visible love. This does not mean that our theological differences are finished; for example, I am still a Protestant who disagrees strongly with some parts of Roman Catholic doctrine. But it does mean that we should view intra-church relationships in a new light, as friends, not as enemies.

Careful study of the 'to do' lists contained in the Tirana message is needed. If we implement them wisely, with the enablement of the Holy Spirit, I think it is possible for the body of Christ to take effective steps to reduce the persecution of Christians on a global

level. Love for persecuted Christians requires that we try to do so.

Also, please notice the extent to which the other great bleeding scar still perceived to be on the face of Christendom, the fear that Christians will unite to attack Islam, is being treated in the context of our more unified response to persecution. Peace has been declared among the different branches of Christianity while all those branches of Christianity also went on record as promoting freedom of religion for all peaceful religions, even if that message has not yet penetrated to every tribe and village. Now we have to let the watching world know.

III Demonstrating Visible Love

I started by saying that there are two bleeding scars on the face of Christendom, the scar represented by the Crusades and the scar represented by the intra-Christian wars of religion; these scars seem to frighten people away from our message. These two scars have now been addressed, so that healing is occurring in the changing intra-church relations of this century as parts of our more unified response to the persecution of Christians.

One of the books that heavily influenced me as a young man was Francis Schaeffer's *The Mark of the Christian*.² As Schaeffer applied John 13:34–35, he said that Jesus has given our unbelieving neighbours the astonishing right to evaluate our claim to be disciples of Jesus. They may make this evaluation on the basis of our visible love. This has

² Francis Schaeffer, *The Mark of the Christian* (L'Abri Fellowship, 1970), now available from InterVarsity Press.

influenced how and why I have participated in the process of addressing the scars on our collective Christian face. Even if we think we have practised love, some of our neighbours think they have seen something else. We, as evangelical spokespeople, should talk openly about visible love replacing our old scars.

I would encourage you to read in their entirety the two primary sources cited here. They can be easily found through an Internet search for 'Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World' and the Tirana Consultation, 'Discrimination, Persecution, Martyrdom'.

When Faith Turns Ugly

Brian Harris

Following the huge success of *The Tortoise Usually Wins*, 2012, and *The Big Picture*, 2015, in *When Faith Turns Ugly* Brian Harris explores why the Christian faith sometimes wears two masks – usually life-serving and transforming, but occasionally escapist, illusionary and even poisonous. What are the warning signs that faith is at risk of turning toxic? What do we mean by the conviction that the gospel liberates? Brian Harris's take on what constitutes life-serving faith is refreshing and will be appreciated by all who would like to be sure that their obedience to Jesus the Christ will help to build a world with a better name.

Toxic faith is such a blight on Christianity. It unravels our unity, muzzles our message and ruins our reputation. In When Faith Turns Ugly, Brian Harris fearlessly opens the wound of poisonous faith, digs around to find the causes, and offers both insightful healing and powerful hope. You will find the book provocative, challenging, and deeply satisfying. I loved it. Here is just a taste: 'The opposite of faith is not doubt but certainty.' Mull over that and read the book for much more.

Steve Brady, Principal, Moorlands College, Christchurch

Brian Harris, who is the Principal of Vose Seminary and Pastor at Large for the Carey Movement in Perth, Australia, is also the author of *The Tortoise Usually Wins* (Paternoster, 2012) and *The Big Picture* (Paternoster, 2015)

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Dying to Be the Church: 1 Corinthians 15 and Paul's Shocking Revelation about Death and Resurrection

Rob A. Fringer

IN 1 CORINTHIANS 15, Paul makes important theological claims concerning the resurrection of Christ and believers. For this reason, it has been held in high esteem by the church throughout the ages and has stood as a hallmark of hope. However, many in today's church, like those in the Corinthian church, have sought inclusion in future resurrection without significant contemplation of the implications of Christ's death and its impact on believers' identity and action in the present. For those seeking a trouble-free life in the present or a swift escape to a future celestial reality, Paul's words in 1 Corinthians will be shocking. They are full of hope, but it is a hope that is only made possible through death and through fruitful participation in Christ's mission in the present.

In this article, I will argue that this text is not just about future resurrection but provides vital information on how believers should embody Christ's life, death and transformation in the present. After a brief examination of the historical situation, I will explore

the importance of the dual themes of life and death found throughout this chapter. I will conclude with a brief exploration of 15:1–11 and Paul's profound example of death and life in the present.

I The Historical Situation

1 Corinthians 15, while being the most theological chapter in the book, serves a very pragmatic purpose in that it addresses the fundamental issue of embodied faith, which was lacking in the Corinthians' own secular-spiritualized and individualized actions. Their salvation had evidenced itself in outrageous acts of carnality rather than Spirit-led transformation and sanctification.¹

¹ See Kent Brower, *Living as God's Holy People: Holiness and Community in Paul* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2010), 80–5; Bruce Winter, 'Carnal Conduct and Sanctification in 1 Corinthians: *Simul sanctus et peccator?*' in *Holiness and Ecclesiology in the New Testament*, ed. K. E. Brower and A. Johnson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 184–200.

Thus Paul concludes the entirety of his argument with his clearest expression of how the eschatological event of Christ's death and resurrection, and the believers' connection to Christ, has shaped and continues to shape both the present and the future, both their belief and their actions, both their dying and living.

The external impetus for Paul's immediate polemic was a group of Corinthians who denied *anastasis nekron* (12). Contextually it may be concluded that the Corinthians had (at least at one time) accepted Christ's resurrection since Paul spoke of the Corinthians having 'received' and 'believed' the gospel message (1–3a), which would have included teaching about Christ's resurrection (3b–5) and general (believer) resurrection (12–14).² The main question is whether the Corinthians' initial acceptance of Paul's gospel included 'bodily' resurrection or if they assume a different conclusion based on their own cultural understanding of the term.

Wright³ and Segal⁴ have convincingly shown that most Greeks and Romans believed in an afterlife (see 29) and that a dominant view consisted of some sort of immortality of the soul

apart from the body. However, Wright argues that both Jews and non-Jews only understood the concept of resurrection in terms of a bodily phenomenon; although the majority of non-Jews would have rejected the possibility of resurrection, they nevertheless would have understood the (Jewish) Pauline meaning of it.⁵ Still, Paul's language of *anastasis nekron* and his polemic in verses 35–50 purport an argument around the 'bodily' aspect of resurrection, which seems to assume an acceptance of the broad idea of resurrection apart from the specific element of corporeality (see 6:14; 15:1, 11).

It is more probable that the Corinthians had either initially misunderstood Paul's teaching⁶ or had recently come to abandon the bodily aspect of resurrection⁷ that they formerly accepted.⁸ Furthermore, since the thought of an embodied afterlife would have been objectionable to most (see 50),⁹ it stands to reason that Jesus' bodily

2 Pace Margaret Mitchell, 'Rhetorical Short-hand in Pauline Argumentation: The Function of "The Gospel" in the Corinthian Correspondence', in *Gospel in Paul: Studies on Corinthians, Galatians and Romans for Richard N. Longenecker*, ed. L. Ann Jervis and P. Richardson (Sheffield: Sheffield, 1994), 74.

3 N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 32–84.

4 Alan Segal, *Life after Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 204–47.

5 Wright, *Resurrection*, 82–3.

6 Both Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 755 and PHEME PERKINS, *First Corinthians* (Paideia; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 182 allude to the possibility of a misunderstanding about Christ's bodily resurrection.

7 It is not as Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letter to the Corinthians*, trans. by J. E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 156–9 argues that they were Gnostic Christians who never believed in a bodily resurrection and that Paul had misunderstood the problem.

8 Ronald Sider, 'St Paul's Understanding of the Nature and Significance of the Resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:1–19', *Novum Testamentum* 19 (1977): 124–41.

9 Segal, *Life after Death*, 425.

resurrection would have been at least equally as objectionable; and if the Corinthians were abandoning the idea of their own bodily resurrection, they were likely also abandoning this same element with regard to Christ's resurrection. Most scholars have argued the latter while denying the former. That is to say, they see the Corinthians as denying their own bodily resurrection while fully accepting Christ's bodily resurrection.¹⁰ However, this does not adequately explain why Paul includes verses 1–11 and especially the extended 'appearance' list (5–8).

Additionally, Malcolm has convincingly argued that besides a disregard for the body there was a general disregard for the dead.¹¹ This was not unique to the Corinthians but reflected wider Greco-Roman views about the inferior state of the dead. This disdain towards death and related concepts, actions, and attitudes led to significant misunderstandings related to Christ's death and the requirements of his followers and had caused significant divisions amongst the body of Christ in Corinth.

It was one thing to be conformed to Christ's resurrection but quite another to be conformed to his death. For Paul, these two phenomena were inseparable; a person could not understand the significance of the resurrection if they did not understand and accept the significance of death, both Christ's and believers'.

II Death and Resurrection: A Dual Theme

The Corinthians' attitude towards death helps explain what otherwise appears to be a perplexing secondary focus to resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, namely death.¹² Paul uses the adjective *nekros* thirteen times,¹³ the verb *apothnēskō* five times,¹⁴ the noun *thanatos* six times,¹⁵ and the euphemism *koimao* four times.¹⁶ By comparison, in regard to resurrection, Paul uses the verb *egeirō* nineteen times,¹⁷ the noun *anastasis* four times,¹⁸ and the euphemisms *zōopoieō* three times¹⁹ and *allassō* two times.²⁰

In order to understand the importance of Paul's 'death' language, a brief analysis of how the language is being

10 So Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (IBC; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 253; Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale, 1995), 106; Robert Nash, *1 Corinthians* (Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary; Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 2009), 401; Wright, *Resurrection*, 83, 322.

11 Matthew Malcolm, 'Paul and the Rhetoric of Reversal: Kerygmatic Rhetoric in the Arrangement of 1 Corinthians' (PhD thesis, University of Nottingham, 2011), 263–301. See also Christopher M. Tuckett, 'The Corinthians Who Say "There Is No Resurrection of the Dead" (1 Cor 15:12)', in *The Corinthian Correspondence*, ed. R. Bieringer (BETL 125; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 261.

12 See Insawn Saw, *Paul's Rhetoric in 1 Corinthians 15: An Analysis Utilizing the Theories of Classical Rhetoric* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1994), 182–3.

13 Vv 12 (twice), 13, 15, 16, 20, 21, 29 (twice), 32, 35, 42, 52.

14 Vv 3, 22, 31, 32, 36.

15 Vv 21, 26, 54, 55 (twice), 56.

16 Vv 6, 18, 20, 51.

17 Vv 4, 12, 13, 14, 15 (three times), 16 (twice), 17, 20, 29, 32, 35, 42, 43 (twice), 44, 52.

18 Vv 12, 13, 21, 42.

19 Vv 22, 36, 45.

20 Vv 51, 52.

used throughout the epistle becomes necessary. The adjective *nekros* is only found in chapter 15 and is always used in correlation with resurrection (e.g. *anastatis nekron; nekroi ouk egeirontai*) and always refers to those who have physically died, irrespective of their standing in Christ. Martin has argued for the translation ‘corpse’, which was common in classical Greek.²¹ As an adjective, it does appear to need a qualifier and this qualifier is likely either ‘person’ or ‘body’. Therefore, the translation ‘corpse’ or ‘body’ is justified. Paul uses *nekros* to stress the bodily aspect of the resurrection.

Paul’s use of *apothnēskō* is much more nuanced. It can refer to literal physical death for both believers and non-believers (9:15; 15:32), and is especially used for Christ’s death (8:11; 15:3). Additionally, it can be used metaphorically, as when Paul says, ‘I die every day!’ (15:31). These words are not a reference to physical death. Nor are they hyperbole, a way of saying that his life is very difficult. Rather, Paul’s *apothnēskō* is because of and in line with Christ’s *apothnēskō*.

The last two uses of *apothnēskō* are more difficult to interpret: ‘For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ’ (15:22) and ‘What you sow does not come to life unless it dies’ (15:36). Both could be construed as references to physical death. However, the context does not warrant this. The former is part of an Adam/Christ typology and the latter an elaborate metaphor concerning the ‘changed’ resurrection body, and both are making a similar

point. Those in Adam are marked by death, in the present and in the future, both physically and spiritually.

Nevertheless, those in Christ are made alive (*zōopoieō*) and freed from the finality of death both in the present and the future. Likewise, the seed which must die does so in order to be made alive (*zōopoieō*), changed from death to life in both the present and the future.

This is an important point in Paul’s elaborate argument. He is not saying that all believers must or will die a physical death. In fact, he says the exact opposite in 15:51. Instead, Paul alludes to another type of death that all believers must undergo. It is a death that Paul has undergone and continues to experience daily (15:31); it is a death like Christ’s. It is a death to his own carnal desires, whether noble or self-serving. It is a death to the constraints of the present evil age, which allows for the embrace of a new, eschatological age.

Paul’s use of *thanatos* is also quite versatile and closely aligns with *zōopoieō* in regard to physical death in general (3:22; 11:26). Yet *thanatos* takes on a life of its own in chapter 15 and is personified similarly to how Paul personifies sin in Romans 5:12–8:3.²² Paul describes ‘Death’ in anthropomorphic terms as one who has come through Adam (15:21) and as an enemy waiting to be destroyed (15:26). Likewise, the poetic discourse of 15:54–56 (cf. Is 25:8; Hos 13:14) is a mocking of Death, who has lost all power as a result of Christ’s resurrection and the im-

²¹ Dale Martin, *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale, 1995), 107–8; see p. 271 n. 9 for a list of Greek sources.

²² See James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1998), 111–14.

pending resurrection of believers.

Just as death to self is a plausible reality in the present through Christ, so too is the power of resurrection in the life of the believer. In effect, believers defeat the finality of physical death in the present as they acknowledge and live out the lordship of Christ. This too is part of the new eschatological reality wrought through Christ.

Paul uses the word *koimaō*, meaning to 'fall asleep', as a euphemism for death. However, for Paul, it is not synonymous with *apothnēskō*. The former is always used to refer to actual physical death, *but* only of believers in Christ. This is because *koimaō* 'carries with it the expectation of *awaking to a new dawn and a new day*, i.e., the expectation of resurrection and the gift of renewed life and vigour'.²³

Therefore, it was to believers (*adelphois*)²⁴ that Christ appeared, both those living and those who had *koimaō* (15:6). Paul speaks about those who have *koimaō* 'in Christ' (15:18) and refers to Christ as the first fruit of resurrection for those who have *koimaō* (15:20). Likewise, when speaking about marriage, Paul says it is the woman who is 'in the Lord' who is free to remarry only after her husband, who was also 'in the Lord',²⁵ falls asleep

(*koimaō*), as long as her next marriage is also 'in the Lord' (7:39).

Therefore, when Paul says that 'we will not all die (*koimaō*), but we will all be changed' (15:51), he means that *not* all believers will face a physical death. However, this does not negate the need for believers to experience some type of death (*apothnēskō*) in order to be made alive in Christ (15:36).

Paul's use of *apollumi* (to perish or destroy, used six times²⁶) needs also to be evaluated. Similar to *apothnēskō* and *thanatos*, it can pertain to actual physical death or destruction (10:9, 10). It can also refer to the destruction of abstract phenomena such as wisdom (1:19). However, unlike the others, it is exclusively reserved for unbelievers, those who have no hope. Thus, Paul can say the gospel is 'foolishness to those who are perishing' (1:18), in reference to unbelievers. Likewise, when he speaks of believers being destroyed by other believers (8:11), it is a reference to the shattering of their faith.

The latter meaning helps clarify 15:18, 'Then those who have died (*koimēthentes*) in Christ have perished (*apōlonto*).' Paul argues that if Christ has not been bodily raised then living believers are still in sin (15:17) and are no different from unbelievers. Furthermore, if Christ has not been bodily raised, then believers who have fallen asleep are actually dead, without hope.

III Paul's Example: A Brief Exploration of 15:1–11

The opening section of chapter 15 (verses 1–11) is of utmost importance

23 Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1220, emphasis his.

24 Paul regularly uses *adelphos* as a reference to those who are in Christ. See H. von Soden, 'Adelphos', *TDNT* 1:143-46.

25 That the deceased husband is a believer is clear from the passage. So Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 355 n. 37. Such is also the case in 11:30.

26 1 Cor 1:18, 19; 8:11; 10:9, 10; 15:18.

in understanding how Paul employs death and resurrection to correct Corinthian misunderstandings of both. Unfortunately, many scholars have been distracted because they mistakenly take this section (especially 8–10) as part of an apostolic apologia.

For Bailey,²⁷ Fee,²⁸ Fitzmyer,²⁹ and others, Paul's autobiographic insertion adds little to the current pericope, or to the chapter as a whole. Rather, it highlights an underlying strife and demonstrates that Paul is willing to insert and assert his authority in the midst of important theological and ethical arguments, although these insertions distract from the main issue (unless apostolic apologia is the main issue³⁰).

However, when apostolic apologia is set aside, the importance of this pericope can be seen. This pericope prepares Paul's audience for his discussion concerning death and resurrection and Paul's autobiographical statement provides an example for the Corinthians to emulate in the present.

It has been recognized that the *ōpsthē* references (5–8) form a chiasm based on grammatical structure and

lexical repetition. However, there is a larger chiasm encompassing the entire pericope (1–11), which is based on thematic and semantic structure.³¹ See Figure 1 on the next page.

Verses 1 and 11 (A/A¹) frame this section around the themes of proclamation and acceptance. Paul's use of *gnōrizō* is meant to do more than simply 'remind' the Corinthians of a previously accepted kerygma³² or to introduce new information about the gospel and resurrection.³³ The only other place Paul uses this form of *gnōrizō* to open an argument is in Galatians 1:11, where he also speaks about his call/conversion and in which he 'reveals' information about his gospel.³⁴

Likewise, Paul begins this section by setting his argument in the form of a revelatory proclamation. In so doing, Paul elevates the conversation and highlights the divine power behind the gospel he and others proclaim and behind the Corinthians' previous acceptance of this same gospel. He is able to remind the Corinthians that *to euangelion o euēngelisamēn* is a 'demonstration of the Spirit and of power' (2:5) and not a demonstration of 'human wisdom' (2:4–5; cf. 1:17). Furthermore, *gnōrizō* should be understood as introducing

²⁷ Kenneth E. Bailey, *Paul through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), 33–53.

²⁸ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 719.

²⁹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; New Haven: Yale, 2008), 551.

³⁰ This seems to be the claim of PHEME PERKINS when she writes, 'The logic of Paul's construction is clearer if one presumes that he is deliberately trying to extend *apostolos* beyond the circle of the twelve' [*Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984), 200, see also 221.

³¹ See Bailey, *Paul*, 422.

³² Pace Fee, *First Corinthians*, 719; and Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 540, 544.

³³ Pace Walter Radl, 'Der Sinn von *gnōrizō* in 1 Kor 15,1', *BZ* 28 (1984): 243–45. Nor is it a 'ceremonious introduction', pace Hans Conzelmann, *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 250.

³⁴ See Timothy Churchill, *Divine Initiative and the Christology of the Damascus Road Encounter* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010), 129.

Figure 1

- A ¹ Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received,
- B in which also you stand, ² through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.
- C ³ For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, ⁴ and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas,
- D then to the twelve.
- E ⁶ Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time,
- F most of whom are still alive,
- F¹ though some have died.
- E¹ ⁷ Then he appeared to James,
- D¹ then to all the apostles.
- C¹ ⁸ Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹ For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am,
- B¹ and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.
- A¹ ¹¹ Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe.

the whole of Paul's argument (15:1–58) and not just this pericope.

While much of the information introduced in verses 12–58 (esp. 35–58) is new to the Corinthians, Paul presents it as a continuation of the revealed gospel, which they have already received.³⁵ It is part of the eschatological reality to which they now belong.

The kerygma and extended appearance list, which includes Paul's autobiography (3–10a), form the climax of this pericope and begin the dual themes of death and resurrection that are explicated in verses 12–58.

Argumentation over which phrases

are Pauline and which are pre-Pauline creedal material is not the focus of this reading and cannot occupy much space. It is likely verses 3b–5 form the traditional material with *hoti* acting as quotation marks and *kai* adding emphasis and that verses 6–8 are Pauline additions,³⁶ with verses 9–10 being definite additions.

³⁶ So Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, 'Tradition and Redaction in 1 Cor 15:3-7', *CBQ* 43 (1981): 582–89. Birger Gerhardsson, 'Evidence for Christ's Resurrection According to Paul: 1 Cor 15:1–11', in *Neotestamentica et Philonica: Studies in Honor of Peder Borgen* (NovTSup 106; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 79–80, argues that all of verses 3–8a (minus v. 6b) is a quotation by Paul of what he had previously told them and that this is signalled by the *tini logō* in v. 2.

³⁵ Similarly Mitchell, 'Rhetorical Short-hand', 74.

It is also likely that verses 3b–5 represent the agreed-upon premises of the Corinthians.³⁷ Paul is arguing from a common held belief as a platform for what follows in verses 6–10. This does not mean that the pre-Pauline material is insignificant; quite the contrary. Reference to Christ's death and resurrection is of 'first importance' (v. 3).³⁸

Since Paul's audience is rejecting a bodily resurrection, not resurrection in general, it is odd that Paul does not include reference to Christ's body directly or via the empty tomb tradition.³⁹ It is obvious that Paul had no problem adding to the tradition (see 6–8). However, Paul intentionally leaves this out in order to emphasise the dual themes of death and resurrection that are important to his argument.

This does not mean that bodily resurrection is unimportant. This is indeed the surface issue that stimulates this very discussion. Nevertheless, Paul's concern is not just for correcting the Corinthians' erroneous theology. Throughout this epistle, Paul has been trying to shape their identity to motivate them towards genuine and lasting transformation in the present.

In essence, Paul is trying to help them embrace their new eschatological identity as those who have died to their old life and have been raised to

new life. This necessitates Paul's theologically profound discussion concerning death and resurrection, of which Christ's example is the prototype.

Many hypotheses have been set forth concerning the six resurrection appearances and the order in which they appear.⁴⁰ Important here is the recognition that the list begins with Cephas and ends with Paul. Peter and his position are known in Corinth (1:12) and Paul is the founder of this church (4:14–15). Since Paul's apostleship is not in question, their unified testimony about Christ's resurrection would have been significant enough proof of the resurrection (cf. Deut 17:6; 19:15).

Additionally, Paul's mention of the five hundred witnesses with the extended description 'most of whom are still alive, though some have died' (v. 6) occupies a climactic position in these verses (F/F¹). Murphy-O'Connor has recognized this climax, contending that this best served Paul's apologetic purpose, not in arguing for his apostleship but for the reality of resurrection.⁴¹ Therefore, he places the emphasis on the witnesses who are still living rather than on those who have died.

This is a common reading for those who see Paul as addressing the issue of bodily resurrection (Fee, Hays, Thiselton, Fitzmyer, Ciampa and Rosner)⁴². Those 'still alive' are seen as authoritative witnesses to the resurrection. On the other hand, those who believe

³⁷ Anders Eriksson, *Traditions and Rhetorical Proof: Pauline Argumentation in 1 Corinthians* (ConBNT 29; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1998), 73–96.

³⁸ The reference to burial serves as proof of death and references to appearances serve as proof of resurrection. In this way, Paul stresses the dual themes of death and resurrection.

³⁹ Wright, *Resurrection*, 321 argues that this is implicit in the resurrection language.

⁴⁰ For detailed analysis see Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 1198–1208.

⁴¹ Murphy-O'Connor, 'Tradition', 588–89.

⁴² Fee, *First Corinthians*, 730–31; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 257; Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 1205–06; Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 550; Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 749–50.

Paul is addressing a denial of the futurity of resurrection (Barth, Conzelmann, Tuckett, Lindemann, Garland)⁴³ emphasise 'some have died' and the reality that death precedes resurrection.

However, this may not be an either/or but rather a both/and situation. As noted above, the language of death and of resurrection share equal footing. This reference provides Paul with another opportunity to stress both death and resurrection.

This explanation may better explain why Paul includes his extended autobiography in reference to Christ's appearance to him. When verses 8–10b (C¹) are examined closely, there are some striking parallels with verses 3–5a (C). Paul's description of himself as *ektrōma* (8) is difficult to interpret⁴⁴ and yet is arguably part of his 'death' language.

In scripture it is only found here and three times in the LXX (Num 12:12; Ecc 6:3; Job 3:16), where it always refers to a still-born child, and thus to literal physical death. Outside of scripture, its use is well attested in Greek literature in reference to miscarriages, abortions and possibly 'untimely births'.⁴⁵

The last option, at first, appears viable. When taken together with Paul's use of *eschatos*, *ektrōma* could

be a reference to the lateness of Paul's new birth.⁴⁶ Still, Mitchell has shown that the predominant use of the word speaks more to pre-mature birth than late birth.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, Mitchell's own apostolic apologia reading is not convincing, seeing *ektrōma* as referring to Paul's understanding of being rejected and cast aside from among the apostles.⁴⁸ Likewise, seeing *ektrōma* as some type of derisive epithet given by Paul's critics requires the postulation of a rift between Paul and the Corinthians, for which there is no substantial evidence.⁴⁹

More profitable are the readings that give credence to the 'death' aspect of *ektrōma*. Hollander and van der Hout see Paul's reference as self-deprecating, referring to his deplorable (death-like) state prior to his conversion when he persecuted the church; his unworthiness to be an apostle thus highlights the grace of God in calling him.⁵⁰ Garland, relying heavily on Hollander and van der Hout, but seeing Paul's self-abasement as sincere, writes, 'Before his call and conversion he was dead, but he was miraculously given life through God's grace.'⁵¹

43 Karl Barth, *The Resurrection of the Dead*, trans. H. J. Stenning (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1933), 151; Conzelmann, *First Corinthians*, 257–58; Tuckett, 'Corinthians Who Say', 263; Andreas Lindemann, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (HNT 9/1; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 333; David Garland, *1 Corinthians* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 689–90.

44 See Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 691–93 for a survey of prominent views.

45 Schneider, 'Ektrōma', TDNT 2:465–66.

46 Ciampa and Rosner, *First Corinthians*, 751.

47 Matthew Mitchell, 'Reexamining the "Aborted Apostle": An Exploration of Paul's Self-Description in 1 Corinthians 15:8', JNST 25.4 (2003): 469–85.

48 Mitchell, 'Reexamining', 482–85.

49 Pace Fee, *First Corinthians*, 733–34; Hays, *First Corinthians*, 258.

50 H. W. Hollander and G. E. van der Hout, 'The Apostle Paul Calling Himself an Abortion: 1 Cor. 15:8 within the Context of 1 Cor. 15:8–10', *Novum Testamentum* 38 (1996): 224–36. Yet they too see Paul as using this to defend his apostolic position.

51 Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 693; see also Fitz-

However, Paul's use of *ektrōma* to reference his own figurative death is not necessarily limited to his past life. After all, he writes, 'I die every day!' (15:31), and from the immediate context it can confidently be stated that Paul sees God's grace as continually working in and through him (15:10) and not just at the moment of his call/conversion. Instead, it seems more plausible that Paul uses his own situation to emphasise the necessity of death prior to resurrection. He emphasises the necessity of *apothnēskō* (not *koimaō*) in the life of the believer so that they will not *apollumi* at the hand of *thanatos*, and this is part of their present and future hope for *anastasis nekrōn*.

Here, Paul's own example of a transforming grace both received and lived out (8–10) provides a corrective to the Corinthians whose lives are marked by God's grace and yet appear to lack the necessary transformation, which should serve as proof of God's grace in their lives. Paul reveals this contrast by stating that his faith is not in vain whereas the Corinthians' faith is dubious at best (B/B¹). In this way, and through his own example, Paul calls the Corinthians to the same Christ-centred death, a death that leads to resurrection.

In Malcolm's words, 'There can be no leaping ahead of present labour to manifest glory and immortality. Rather, the one pre-requisite for resurrection immortality is the inhabitation of death—Christ's death—in the

present.'⁵² It is not enough for them to accept the gospel or to believe in the death and resurrection of Christ; they need to embody it and be transformed by it, both individually and corporately.

This takes place as they die to themselves, to their own kind of wisdom, their own kind of power, their own kind of spirituality; as they die to the present evil age and as they presently live under the resurrection power of Christ as part of a new eschatological people of God. By embodying the death and resurrection of Christ in the present, they are assuring that their faith is not without result (15:14) and that their labour in the Lord is not in vain (15:58).

IV Conclusion: The 'Shocking' Revelation

Paul's opening words in chapter 15 have set the stage for the shocking revelation that both death and resurrection are part of the believers' present calling. It is only as the Corinthians embrace the sacrificial death of Christ in the present that they are also able to embrace the transforming resurrection of Christ in the present. Paul's own life is an example of both these realities, and he invites the Corinthians to walk with him in death so as to walk with him in life, both in the present and in the future.

This same truth rings true for the church today. There is no resurrection apart from death and there is no hope other than the hope of sharing in both the death and resurrection of our

myer, *First Corinthians*, 552; Wright, *Resurrection*, 327–29.

⁵² Malcolm, 'Paul and the Rhetoric of Reversal', 289.

Lord and Saviour both now and forevermore. The irony of my title is that it speaks of Paul's words as 'shocking'. Quite the contrary. Paul's words are a reminder of Jesus's words: 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it' (Lk 9:23–24 NRSV).

The most shocking aspect of these words of Jesus and Paul is that they have often been downplayed and ignored by those who call themselves followers of Christ. Paul's words are a

warning of the implication of following after a cost-less gospel; we do not want to be a divided and ineffective church! Likewise, they are a reminder of both the joys and costs of following a crucified Saviour.

May our lives emulate Paul's as he emulates Christ (1 Cor 11:1), both in our daily dying to self and in our daily living in and for Christ. May we experience both the sacrifice of Christ's death and the incredible joy, peace and power of the resurrection of Christ. In other words, may we be 'dying to be the church'.

STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN HISTORY AND THOUGHT

Participation in Christ and Eucharistic Formation

John Calvin and the Theodrama of the Lord's Supper

Mary Patton Baker

This wonderful book proposes a theological model for understanding Eucharistic celebration that demonstrates its centrality to the Christian believer's sanctification and spiritual formation. Centring on John Calvin's understanding of the Lord's Supper, founded on the believer's union with Christ, and bringing Calvin's Eucharistic theology into conversation with contemporary speech act philosophy, Kevin Vanhoozer's divine/communicative ontology, biblical theology, and historical and liturgical theology, this multi-disciplinary work provides a biblical and theological foundation for understanding the role the Eucharist plays in the worship, sanctification, and formation of the church and her communicants.

Nothing ails the church that Mary Patton Baker's Participation in Christ can't fix. What the church needs is sustained attention to and participation in the Lord's Supper, an embodied dramatic realization of the communicant's union with Christ. Baker makes a compelling case for viewing the Supper itself as a powerful means of spiritual formation – just the dose of theological good sense that is needed at present.

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Books Reviewed

Reviewed by David Parker

Donald G Bloesch

The Paradox of Holiness/Faith in Search of Obedience

Reviewed by Ronald T. Michener

Luke Timothy Johnson

The Revelatory Body: Theology as Inductive Art

Reviewed by John Lewis

Shao Kai Tseng

Karl Barth's Infralapsarian Theology: Origins and Development 1920-1953
[New Explorations in Theology Series]

Reviewed by Raymond J. Laird

Keith L. Johnson

Theology as Discipleship

Reviewed by Anthony G. Siegrist

Oliver O'Donovan

Finding and Seeking: Ethics as Theology, vol. 2

Book Reviews

ERT (2017) 41:2, 185-186

The Paradox of Holiness/Faith in Search of Obedience

Donald G Bloesch

Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2016
ISBN 978-1-61970-773-3

Hb, xxiii+ 155, viii+92, indices, illus;

*Reviewed by David Parker, Editor,
Evangelical Review of Theology*

The last two books from evangelical theologian, Donald G Bloesch have now been published, but in an unusual way. Bloesch, who died in 2010 at the age of 82, was well appreciated as a mediating evangelical theologian who aimed at maintaining both the 'essential evangelical theology' (to quote the title of one of his best known books) emphasising both 'Word and Spirit' (the opening title of his last 7-part series, *Christian Foundations*) and drawing upon the insights and experiences of the wider church. He authored 36 books (as listed in the

credits) over his career, which was spent almost entirely at the University of Dubuque Theological School, Iowa (1957-1992), where he was well known for his personal interest in and pastoral care of students

What is unusual about these last two books is that they are bound together in one hardback volume, each with its own title and list of contents, pagination and indices. The first one, *The Paradox of Holiness*, taking up 120 pages of text, is an exposition of Christian graces or virtues. A chapter is devoted to each of 14 different graces including faith, meekness, holy boldness, interior peace and especially love and piety.

Typically each chapter consists of an overview of the particular grace, setting out and explaining its chief features and value, distinguishing it from other concepts (especially the classic virtues and other purely ethical or moralistic concepts), and showing its relationship to other theological and spiritual mat-

ters. Then there is a section showing the biblical basis of the virtue, and pointing to great exemplars in the Bible and Christian history. Each of these chapters is full of practical wisdom, reflecting the author's own values. There are also many quotes from a wide range of writers, including the great Christian mystics and spiritual leaders of a diverse range of traditions.

These chapters are surrounded by an introduction and a conclusion in which the author emphasises that 'Holiness is paradoxical because it is both God's work and our work' (3) and because it 'contains both faith and discipline'. (4) These chapters are so full of robust devotional and spiritual content that they are best read slowly and a chapter or two at a time rather than straight through.

The second part of the volume, consisting of 74 pages of text, contains a spiritual and theological autobiography by the author, covering his family background, education, theological and academic training, and his career as a theologian. It reveals his theological development from his original upbringing in evangelical Lutheran pietism through various stages, including 'anti-Catholicism', 'Reformed ecumenism', 'centrist evangelicalism' and a 'theology of paradox' (44), to his final position which he characterised as a 'theology of Word and Spirit in which the living Word, Jesus Christ, works out his purposes in our lives through the power of the Spirit' (45). The narrative is enhanced with 16 pages of photographs, and like the first part, is introduced by several pages of introduction and is fully referenced with end-notes and indices.

The title of this book, *Faith in Search of Obedience*, exemplifies another one of the long standing motifs of his productive

and influential life as a Christian and as a theologian, educator and especially a spiritual guide.

This twin book production is highly unusual. It was probably done here for reasons of economy because each book in itself is not too long. They are also the last of his books to appear, the work of his widow Dr Brenda Bloesch who was ready to take up an academic career in her own right when they met and married in 1962, but instead dedicated herself to be Donald's research assistant and copy editor. She has faithfully worked with him and helped to produce all his vast output.

Yet despite these practical reasons for such a composite volume, upon completing a reading of the entire publication, it is apparent that the combination of spiritual guidance and personal biography is entirely appropriate—each part supports and gives meaning to the other. Bloesch's theology and professional and ministerial work was characterised by an emphasis on evangelical spirituality, so it is fitting that this last work is on this topic. And his autobiography gives the personal background which supports and explains that focus. (Interestingly there are parts of the autobiography, especially towards the end where the narrative of his life gives way once again to his exposition—in fact, chapter 15, 'The Disciplined Spirit', really belongs in the first part of the book as the discussion of another grace!)

So this volume is a fitting testimony, in a physical and a conceptual way, to the happy and productive marriage of Donald and Brenda, and an insightful unfolding of the dynamic that formed and sustained one of the 20th century's most interesting and helpful evangelical theologians.

ERT (2017) 41:2, 187-188

The Revelatory Body: Theology as Inductive Art

Luke Timothy Johnson

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015

ISBN 978-0-8028-0383-2

Hb., pp. 256, indices

*Reviewed by Ronald T. Michener,
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Belgium.*

In our world of mass technology and virtual communication, this book offers a refreshing and welcome reminder that Christian theology is foremostly about embodiment; it must not be reduced to words on a page or screen. In fact, Luke Timothy Johnson offers much more than a reminder—he gives deep, provocative, yet clear reflections on the rightful place the body plays in the formation and application of theology.

Drawing from rigorous scholarship and his own life experience, Johnson affirms the high value of Scripture while also suggesting the human body itself is most significant for God's revelation through his Spirit (6-7). He claims that he is not attempting to replace the importance of Scripture or the creeds, but rather doing what Scripture itself has intended from the beginning (5). Theology is primarily inductive, Johnson argues, because 'revelation is not exclusively biblical but occurs in the continuing experience of God in the structures of human freedom ...' (25). Further, Scripture itself arose in the context of God working through the experiences of the human bodies (40, 51, 59).

Nonetheless, evangelicals may take issue with Johnson's startling claim that Scripture itself demands that the body be given 'the privileged place' for 'the revelation of God's Spirit in the world'.

Indeed, if Scripture makes this demand, then by implication it seems that Scripture itself is already at a 'privileged place' for God's revelation. Scripture is interpreted via the resources of the body, but at the same time Scripture is seen as the authoritative source for championing the body's instrumental position for both receiving revelation and doing interpretation. With this in mind, assigning a 'privileged place' to either Bible or body becomes difficult to assess. Regardless, Johnson's perspectives challenge the reader to be more attentive to a robust embodied spirituality that is often overlooked in more Enlightenment based, cognitive centred expressions of Christian spirituality. God is the God of creation and 'human bodies provide access to God's visitation in all of creation' (65).

Following initial chapters that engage the place of Scripture and Spirit with regard to the body, in succeeding chapters Johnson insightfully discusses the body at play, pain, passion, and work. The experience of play, he argues, provides the body with a transcendent experience linking oneself to a larger collective body involved in the play. The rules of the form of play (for instance as in games) become the liturgical repetitions giving the ultimate freedom of play. For Johnson, play results in a profound, deeply satisfying expression of what it truly means to be human. Conversely, deep, painful experiences of suffering also point to authentic embodied existence as human beings. Suffering points us to Christ's suffering for us and for the sake of renewal of all creation (127-28). Suffering also confronts us with the need for demonstrating compassion to others as part of the body of Christ.

Johnson forthrightly embraces the passion of the body as 'pertinent to theology as an inductive art' (155). Living pas-

sionately moves us to pursue excellence in all activity that manifests God's work through the body, from the intimacy of sexual relationships to music, art and all aspects of human work. Passion is not reduced to hedonistic pursuit of pleasure, but neither is pleasure ignored. Passion must be pursued with rigorous discipline and effort, as it is with musicians, athletes and scholars, who must endure the pain of exercise to attain pleasurable success. By cultivating our passions in this sense, we are cultivating our will to God's work in and through the body.

In his chapter 'The Body at Work', Johnson appears less optimistic than in previous chapters. He writes, 'Scripture provides abundant testimony to work as a fact of life, but is ambivalent with respect to its worth' (163). Since the toil of work is endured as an everyday, necessary part of our existence, it tends to be seen as that which constrains the human spirit. Although one may contest Johnson's perspectives with regard to how Scripture portrays work, he effectively argues that our work as humans created in the image of God, allows us the opportunity to be a part of, and instrumental in God's ongoing creation in the world.

Johnson's final two chapters bravely address 'The Exceptional Body' (involving sexual differences and disability) and 'The Aging Body'. He argues that God's Spirit is displayed through a rich variety and diversity of bodily manifestations, beyond what is esteemed as 'normal' due to one's own discriminations. He refers to obvious physical disabilities as well as more difficult and less obvious conditions such as intersexuality. The final chapter on ageing reads more like an autobiographical account of Johnson's honest, frank experience of the diminishing of his physical condition, integrating

both scriptural and philosophical reflections. Ultimately, Johnson concludes that as a bodily process, ageing can 'bear witness' to 'human worth and dignity' requiring a 'deep and mutual interdependence' (227).

This book is clearly written in an engaging and provocative style. One possible exception, in this reviewer's opinion, appears at several points in the book (76, 94, 156, 229) when Johnson refers to the human spirit transcending the body to 'give expression to God's Holy Spirit ...' (229). In view of Johnson's robust presentation of embodiment, his use of transcendence in this context seems to present a confusing dualism. Regardless, this book would be a welcome addition to any university or seminary level course on theological anthropology, and it will certainly stir up vibrant discussions on the critical place of the body in practised Christian spirituality.

ERT (2017) 41:2, 188-190

**Karl Barth's Infralapsarian
Theology: Origins and
Development 1920-1953**

New Explorations in Theology Series

Shao Kai Tseng

IVP Academic, Downers Grove,
Illinois, 2016

ISBN 978-0-8308-5132-4

Pb, pp304, Indices

*Reviewed by John Lewis, Bridgewater, South
Australia*

Dr. Shao Kai Tseng presents a detailed and well-considered argument for his thesis that Karl Barth's self asserted 'purified' supralapsarianism is, after all, really a form of infralapsarianism. The author begins to carefully unfold the argument with a background explanation of the terms. 'Supralapsarian

(*supra-lapsum*: above or before the fall) contends that in God's eternal decisions God has in mind unfallen human beings as the object of election and reprobation; *infralapsarian* (*infra-lapsum*: below or after the fall) argues that when God eternally issued the double decision of election and reprobation the human object was considered as fallen (21).⁷ However, it is the means by which Barth came to his mature theology that becomes the focus of Shao Kai Tseng's presentation. While John Webster might well have pointed to the influence of historic Reformed theology (26), it remains, after all, one influence among others. An important distinction must be made between the type of European Reformed dogmatics that Barth incorporated into his theological system and the stark Calvinism that ultimately emerged in North America.

Most notably, one must note Barth's dramatic change in direction while pastoring at Safenwil, which ultimately led to his mature theology of the Word of God. Indeed, Barth's closer affinity with *infralapsarianism*, Tseng's primary contention, arises out of a pietistic concern for the salvation from sin through Jesus Christ; a belief encouraged by Eduard Thurneysen and Christoph Blumhardt, during Barth's early struggle to deliver meaning from the pulpit in early twentieth-century Western Europe. Therefore, the author is right to assert that Barth's increasingly Christological orientation promoted increasing *infralapsarian* conclusions.

To be sure, Barth's theology of predestination and his Christology finally merge and become inseparable (34). More precisely, Christ *is* the covenant, as both electing God and elected (225). The 'election of Christ is to overcome the gulf of sin and death that separates the world from God' (230). None-the-less, as

the author astutely observes, the debate regarding Barth's *lapsarian* theology has to do with emphasis, rather than any clear delineation.

'Sure enough, Barth's ever-present claim that Jesus Christ is the beginning of all God's ways and works carries *supralapsarian* overtones. However, on Barth's view, the incarnate *Logos* eternally present at the beginning by virtue of God's pretemporal election is revealed by Christ's concrete history to be one who is eternally determined to take on the sin of all humankind, whose incarnation was made necessary by sin' (245).

In his handling of the period of the *Church Dogmatics*, ultimately Barth's mature theology, the author makes the seemingly bold claim that Barth's *lapsarian* definitions are 'not precise enough for him to see that he is in fact closer to the *infra* side than he thinks' (63). 'Seemingly', since modern Barthian studies are in the habit of questioning the Swiss theologian's self-awareness and the observations of his most respected contemporaries, such as Thomas Torrance. However, the author is not totally dependent on the observations of Bruce McCormack and George Hunsinger. Indeed, Dr Tseng provides an interesting critique of some of McCormack's conclusions (273ff). Nonetheless, he provides a targeted discussion within the confines of his circle of influence and therefore seeks to identify with them.

However, Dr. Tseng's real strength in this book is in presenting Barth as a unique and creative theologian who did not self-identify with pre-described designations, but carved out his own theology by ingeniously integrating the fruit of his substantial research. Indeed, as Tseng craftfully outlines, with impressive attention to detail, Barth's theological development, whether to be

described as turns or shifts in emphasis, emerged over many years, and is signposted by significant publications.

This is a fascinating analysis for those already immersed in Barth's theology and who appreciate a detailed and thorough investigation.

ERT (2017) 41:2, 190-191

Theology as Discipleship

Keith L. Johnson

Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic,
Intervarsity Press, 2015

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pbk.);

Pb, pp191, indices

*Reviewed by Raymond J. Laird, ThD,
Australian Catholic University, Centre for
Early Christian Studies.*

This reviewer must admit that he has never read a theology quite like this volume. The title signals a good topic for discussion, and Dr Johnson, PhD, Associate Professor of Theology at Wheaton College, has produced a fascinating work that is not a theology of discipleship, but true to the title, is an exegetical approach to theology, explaining how theology should be and may be an exercise in Christian discipleship.

Johnson aims at a target audience of first year seminarians in introductory classes, and lay-people in church Bible-study groups, the point being to introduce students to theology gently, biblically, and practically. For the lay-reader, a similar aim is in mind, but with the purpose of removing the fear often associated with theology as being esoteric, beyond grasp, and divorced from worship and daily life as a follower of Christ.

Johnson's conviction is that theology

should be taught as an exercise in biblical exegesis. This book certainly proves the point. In 170 pages of relevant text, there are more than four hundred biblical references. It is obvious that Johnson closely follows his stated methodology: 'the argument proceeds under the conviction that theological claims should be offered together with the biblical exegesis that supports and shapes them.' His claims are very well supported from Scripture with due attention to the context of the texts chosen for support.

He also recognises that often there is need to go beyond the letter in order to be true to it. Thus, for explanation, we frequently find him placing texts in the wider contexts of redemption history, an exercise that he performs with perception and care. Johnson ranges widely in the Scriptures in this work. Only three books of the New Testament have not been cited: Philemon, 3 John, and Jude. As for the Old Testament he refers to eleven: Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy, 1, 2 Samuel, Job, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos.

My first reaction was that Johnson does not engage with the major theologians of the past and present. On closer acquaintance I found that not so. He does not engage with them much in the text, only briefly, but there are sixty-five names in the footnotes, ranging from the Church fathers, Athanasius, Basil the Great, Gregory Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandria and Augustine; then there is the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas; John Calvin of the Reformation era, and in our times, Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, C. S. Lewis, and N. T. Wright, just to name a few of the many that occur in his notes. As Johnson is addressing the needs of novices and lay-people, he is probably making sure of avoiding those 'scholarly rabbit trails' that frighten off readers.

This approach indicates that Johnson is not forsaking the universal consensus of the faith, as formed in the history of the church, to replace it with unconnected individual revelations that may be self-destructive. Rather, he desires that theology, in the sense of the truth as it is in Jesus, be brought back into the centre of the church and to its individual members, as a dynamic pattern of life and service. Johnson works through the various steps of that return journey, carefully, simply, but deeply in that he touches the human spirit as well as the mindset of those who rise to the challenge to set out on the journey. In that way theology becomes discipleship.

Every movement of substance requires leadership. Leaders are required to show and lead the way, guiding companions to achievement. Thus, besides the two intended target readers of this book as mentioned above, it must be said that there is also a third target, namely professional theologians, who as part of their calling ought to be actively engaged as teachers in the life of their churches. Johnson wants to call them away from their ivory towers (although not completely!) to be active participants in educating the laity. Johnson looks back to the formative centuries of the church when the theologians, as bishops of the churches were the teachers. They were also the persons who together produced the consensus that has preserved the truth of the Nicene Creed for the church for more than 1500 years. This may seem a tall order, but Johnson has produced a worthy template of how this may be done.

Here is a book that should be read by every church leader, in whatever role. It is a book for every lecturer in theology, and one that could be introduced with profit to church members. This reviewer highly commends it.

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**Finding and Seeking: Ethics as
Theology, vol. 2**

Oliver O'Donovan

Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014

ISBN 978-0-8028-7187-9

Pb., pp 249, index

*Reviewed by Anthony G. Siegrist, Ottawa
Mennonite Church, Canada*

During my graduate studies a story was circulated of a PhD candidate who finished his dissertation with remarkable speed and efficiency. It was a short piece of work, highly abstract and lexicologically independent. Its author thought it was quite brilliant. He thought he had settled one of philosophy's longstanding problems. The faculty, however, were not so impressed. The dissertation was rejected and its author never heard from again—at least that is the story.

The academy is a fickle place when it comes to highly conceptual work. It seems as though one must earn the right to be difficult to read. Oliver O'Donovan's book *Finding and Seeking* is a difficult read. One of the endorsing blurbs on the cover notes that the book demands and deserves careful reading. The first is self-evident; the second is the important question. However, few living theologians have earned the right to be difficult as much as Oliver O'Donovan.

Finding and Seeking is the second volume in O'Donovan's *Ethics as Theology* project, a project that, according to his description, offers an ordered reflection on the assumptions and procedures of moral thought and teaching in light of the gospel. This is meta-ethics and, thus, deep currents swirl throughout the volume. To the navigation of these waters O'Donovan brings the tools of

orthodox Christianity. For instance, near the end of the book he treats the topic of deliberation. In assessing three objections to his view, he charges each with failure to be fully Trinitarian (192).

If this signals the theological orientation of *Finding and Seeking*, the development of the subject matter begins with the bud of self-awareness and continues through the flowering of decision. O'Donovan links these two psychological realities to the theological virtues of faith and hope. In the context of the first O'Donovan discusses purpose and meaning. In the second he discusses anticipation, deliberation and discernment. Sandwiched between his treatment of these thematic clusters are three chapters discussing 'The Good of Man', 'Wisdom and Time' and 'Love and Testimony'. In the projected third volume O'Donovan will treat the content of purpose and hope.

The preceding paragraph shows the sweep of *Finding and Seeking*. It also illustrates the meditative quality of the volume. Though O'Donovan uses various organizational tools and presents an argument, the book's purpose remains elusive. Throughout the volume O'Donovan engages in some polemics. For instance he critiques theologians who try to draw specific moral directives from the concept of hope. O'Donovan writes, 'Hope cannot be the answer to any question of the form, "what shall we do next?" It is the *condition* on which that question can be raised and answered—answered on its own terms according to criteria of practical reasonableness' (165). Yet for the varied thrusts and parries like this, it remains difficult to place O'Donovan's argument in relation to the contemporary discipline of theological

ethics. To be more direct, it is unclear what O'Donovan's argument is intended to change.

That is not to say there are not moments of illumination in *Finding and Seeking*. There certainly are. For instance, in the opening paragraph of the fifth chapter, titled 'Wisdom and Time', we read: 'The call of wisdom, then, is the call of the world's temporal openness to knowledge, a call addressed to our power of living through time' (100). There is a remarkable precision in such a statement. Or consider this from the chapter, 'Faith and Meaning': 'To refuse self-knowledge is to refuse to find ourselves in the world God loves, to refuse to love ourselves for the sake of God's love for us' (55). There is something vaguely medieval here, illuminating, winding and self-confident. O'Donovan moves easily, and admirably, between theology and philosophy. His work articulates convincingly with the scriptural world. For instance, the triumvirate of faith, love and hope undergird the whole project. That is something of an achievement given the sombre existential tone of the book.

O'Donovan is obviously well-read and insightful, yet it is difficult to tell if *Finding and Seeking* is masterfully independent or just aloof. The book's payoff are the moments of illumination, new descriptions of the everyday, which shine through the fog of O'Donovan's otherwise winding meditations. Specialists will find the book a worthwhile read and some will even borrow a few of O'Donovan's incisive and economical phrases. Those not aware of the issues beneath the surface of *Finding and Seeking* will be put off by its sprawling obscurity.