



AMERICAN
THEOLOGICAL
INQUIRY

A BIENNIAL JOURNAL
OF

Theology, Culture & History

*Apostolorum, Nicæno,
Quicunque, Chalcedonense*

Volume 4, No. 2.

MINNEAPOLIS

2011.

AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY

A Biannual Journal
of
Theology, Culture & History

ISSN: 1942-2709 (Print)
ISSN: 1941-7624 (Online)

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American Theological Inquiry (ATI) was formed in 2007 by Gannon Murphy (PhD Theology, Univ. Wales, Lampeter; Presbyterian/Reformed) and Stephen Patrick (PhD Philosophy, Univ. Illinois; Eastern Orthodox) to open up space for Christian scholars who affirm the Ecumenical Creeds to contribute research throughout the broader Christian scholarly community in America and the West broadly.

PURPOSE

To provide an inter-tradition forum for scholars who affirm the historic Ecumenical Creeds of Christendom to constructively communicate contemporary theologies, developments, ideas, commentaries, and insights pertaining to theology, culture, and history toward reforming and elevating Western Christianity. ATI seeks a *critical* function as much or more so as a quasi-ecumenical one. The purpose is not to erase or weaken the distinctives of the various ecclesial traditions, but to widen the dialogue and increase inter-tradition understanding while mutually affirming Christ's power to transform culture and the importance of strengthening Western Christianity with special reference to Her historic, creedal roots.

URL: <http://www.atijournal.org>

Indexing. This periodical is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database®, a product of the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606, USA. email: [atla \[at\] atla.com](mailto:atla[at]atla.com), <http://www.atla.com>.

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Volume 4, No. 2., October 1, 2011.

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Minneapolis, Minnesota

AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY

October 1, 2011
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PATRISTICAL READING

APOLOGY TO AUTOLYCUS, II.4

Theophilus of Antioch (c. 120-190 AD)*

Some of the philosophers of the Porch say that there is no God at all; or, if there is, they say that He cares for none but Himself; and these views the folly of Epicurus and Chrysippus has set forth at large. And others say that all things are produced without external agency, and that the world is uncreated, and that nature is eternal; and have dared to give out that there is no providence of God at all, but maintain that God is only each man's conscience. And others again maintain that the spirit which pervades all things is God. But Plato and those of his school acknowledge indeed that God is uncreated, and the Father and Maker of all things; but then they maintain that matter as well as God is uncreated, and aver that it is coeval with God. But if God is uncreated and matter uncreated, God is no longer, according to the Platonists, the Creator of all things, nor, so far as their opinions hold, is the monarchy¹ of God established. And further, as God, because He is uncreated, is also unalterable; so if matter, too, were uncreated, it also would be unalterable, and equal to God; for that which is created is mutable and alterable, but that which is uncreated is immutable and unalterable. And what great thing is it if God made the world out of existent materials? For even a human artist, when he gets material from someone, makes of it what he pleases. But the power of God is manifested in this, that out of things that are not He makes whatever He pleases; just as the bestowal of life and motion is the prerogative of no other than God alone. For even man makes indeed an image, but reason and breath, or feeling, he cannot give to what he has made. But God has this property in excess of what man can do, in that He makes a work, endowed with reason, life, sensation. As, therefore, in all these respects God is more powerful than man, so also in this; that out of things that are not He creates and has created things that are, and whatever He pleases, as He pleases.

* Theophilus of Antioch was the seventh bishop of Antioch. A convert from paganism, he embraced Christianity after his studies of Holy Scripture. Though the author of several works, the *Apology To Autolykus* is the only one extant.

¹ That is, God as first creative principle.

CHRIST'S SACRAMENTAL PRESENCE IN THE EUCHARIST: A BIBLICAL-PNEUMATOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE MYSTERY OF FAITH

Bruce T. Morrill, S.J.*

The Eucharist is God's fundamental gift to the church—as a body and in each of its members—whereby we come to know over and over again ourselves as sharing, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in the very life and mission of Christ Jesus. To reflect theologically on the church's traditional practice of the Eucharist is to delve into mystery, indeed, the mystery at the heart of Christian faith and the life of the church. The word mystery here is not meant to hinder believers' use of reason and imagination as they seek a greater appreciation and joy in celebrating the Eucharist. On the contrary, to speak of the Eucharist as mystery is a promising invitation to engage Scripture and tradition, faith and intellect. Indeed, mystery was the preferred term of the earliest Christians for referring to not only the Eucharist and baptism but all the concrete ways in which they experienced God entering into and shaping their lives in Christ. While Orthodox Christianity never lost the language of mystery for the sacraments (at least in practice¹), popularized scholastic metaphysical theologies in the West contributed to losing the biblical heart of sacramental tradition and, in the Reformation, the unity of the church. In wholeheartedly embracing the theology of paschal mystery borne of the Liturgical Movement, the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Liturgy proved a genuine source of reform and renewal for not only Roman Catholicism but also Anglican and Protestant communions as well. The present essay seeks to build on that momentum by turning to Scripture (especially John's Gospel) and tradition (particularly pneumatology) to articulate a theology of Christ's sacramental presence in the Eucharist.

Recovering Liturgy as Participation in Christ's Paschal Mystery

The Greek word *mysterion* occurs repeatedly in the New Testament, drawing upon Jewish biblical tradition, wherein God's knowledge is hidden, secret, beyond human comprehension, yet needed to solve earthly difficulties. The range of literature in the Hebrew Scriptures unfolds numerous ways God reveals God's plans, purpose, and wisdom to the people, including the law, words of the prophets, intermediaries such as angels, and visions. At times the divine mysteries, even when revealed, are too much for human comprehension, setting up a trajectory through the prophetic and apocalyptic literature toward a fullness of revelation to come at the end of the ages. The first believers in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God believed that in him the dawn of the final age had come. Thus, it is not surprising to find the New Testament authors regularly employing the language of mystery in reference to not only the gift of faith or the revelation of the kingdom but also

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¹ Alexander Schmemmann bemoaned what the "Western captivity" of Orthodox sacramental theology as a long deviation from patristic tradition propagating theories with no "organic connection" to the liturgy itself. See *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemmann*, ed. Thomas Fisch (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), 64, 71.

such inscrutable wisdom as the already-not yet tension of salvation in Christ or the incomprehensibility of the general resurrection (e.g. Rom 11:25; 1 Cor 15:51).

In Scripture and tradition, then, mysteries are about the revelation of divine wisdom as the fullness of life for the world (see 1 Cor 2:6-8), God's invitation into the seemingly unapproachable light piercing through the events of history. The gift of faith in Christ discloses Jesus—his person, mission, suffering, death, and glorification—as the fullness of revelation. Christ Jesus is not only the message but also the means, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, of sharing in the sure purpose of God for humans. Still, God remains God, the Lord of heaven and earth, whose ways are not our ways (see Is 55:8), the holy one so different from us humans in perfect justice and love as to give us in Christ a peace we cannot give ourselves (see Jn 14:27). Believers live by faith in the God who in Jesus showed himself utterly committed to the thriving of people in this good but fallen creation, by hope in the promises hidden in fragmentary moments of life, and by a love that in Christ-like attitude and deeds draws us into his way as the very truth of life itself.

Over the past century sacramental and liturgical theology has undergone a theoretical reformation and advanced a renewal in liturgical practice by identifying and adopting a concept of central importance to early church tradition: When Christians assemble for divine worship we, the church, participate in the reality of the *paschal mystery*, that is, in Christ's passion, death, resurrection and conferral of the Holy Spirit. To celebrate the liturgy is to share in the very life of God revealed in the saving deeds of Jesus, whose death and resurrection during the annual paschal (Passover) feast disclosed the meaning of all the acts of his mission that culminated in that ultimate mystery. The distinctive Christian belief in God as Trinity is founded upon an experiential knowing of God in and through the person of Jesus; thus, the early church fathers came to write of Jesus himself as the mystery of God. Jesus is the revelation of the trinitarian God of love.

The importance of recovering this ancient concept of the paschal mystery, French sacramental theologian Louis-Marie Chauvet argues, lies in locating and celebrating the source of salvation, as does the New Testament, in Jesus' death and resurrection. Chauvet emphasizes this in contrast to the classical Scholastic theology of the sacraments, which took the incarnation as its starting point, focusing on the question of how the divine Word could take on and sanctify human, created reality. The sacraments thereby came to be understood as "the prolongation of the redeeming incarnation," the liturgy as celebrating "the various 'anniversaries' of Jesus' destiny," and the church year as "a sort of immense socio-drama in which one would somehow mime the events that have punctuated this destiny."² Attendance at liturgy became a matter of watching the *completed* drama of Christ's life rather than entering into and thus *sharing in* the mystery of the Father's call and the Spirit's empowerment of Jesus for a self-emptying mission of service even unto death, but finally into life.³ The latter is a dynamic saving process that, while definitively inaugurated in Jesus' passover, has yet to reach its final completion in "a new heaven and a new earth" (2 Pt 3:13; Rv 21:1).

² Louis-Marie Chauvet, *The Sacraments: The Word of God at the Mercy of the Body* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2001), 156, 158.

³ See I. H. Dalmais, "Theology of the Liturgical Celebration," in *Principles of the Liturgy*, vol. 1 of *The Church at Prayer*, ed. A. G. Martimort, trans. Matthew O'Connell (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1987), 264.

Recognizing the vitality of that eschatological tension at the heart of the church's life and work, Russian Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemmann came to describe its liturgy as "an all-embracing vision of life, a power meant to judge, inform and transform the whole of existence, a 'philosophy of life' shaping and challenging all our ideas, attitudes and actions ... an *icon* of that new life which is to challenge and renew the 'old life' in us and around us."⁴ Such is the fundamentally eschatological nature of the mystery of Christian faith and, thus, of the liturgy as the lived knowledge of that faith.

Eschatology is, indeed, about the "last things" and "end of the age," but these not as something only to be imagined (dreadfully or otherwise) in the future but, rather, as already inaugurated in Jesus' resurrection yet awaiting completion in his second coming. This time "in between," living by faith in the "already" of Jesus' resurrection and the "not yet" of the ongoing history of the world's suffering, is the eschatological time of the church. We, the baptized, live this eschatological reality in the history of our time not only for our individual salvation, not merely for our personal piety, but for the sake of a world still so often bent on rejecting the merciful way of God's Christ. What sustains the church and its members as the body of Christ now sharing in God's life for the world is the Eucharist, the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving joining our lives to his, empowering us to be, as St. Augustine taught, what we place upon and receive from the altar.⁵

Ecumenical theologian Jean-Marie-Roger Tillard's writings bid us turn again to the New Testament to learn that we, the church, comprise a temple built of living stones, ourselves engaged daily in "spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pt 2:5) that glorify God by building up the goodness of humanity (see also, Rom 12:1; Heb 10:19-25). Contrary to the modern expectation that such a term would refer to sacred rituals, "spiritual sacrifices" in the earliest Christian writings (biblical and patristic) comprise believers' ongoing offering of their very lives in service to others. What makes such a life of virtues practiced in service to others, especially the poor, *holy* is the larger reality wherein Christians pursue it, namely, a sharing in the life and death of the Jesus who has become the final (eschatological) revelation of God. The deep, abiding knowledge of the mystery of God as self-emptying love for humanity the church shares in its members in celebrating the Eucharist: "In the Eucharist, the sacrifice of Christ and the 'spiritual sacrifice' of the church become one because Christ takes the members of his body into the embrace of his sacrifice."⁶ Thus, the eschatological nature of the liturgy carries an irreducible ethical and social imperative, our own call to know Christ by following him in words and deeds, participating in the reign of God that has come in him, the one who will come again. But to so live in Christ we need to know him, not merely to know about him or his teaching, but to know him intimately in a deep bond of friendship (see Jn 15:15).⁷ To know him now, to "have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68) written on

⁴ *Liturgy and Tradition: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemmann*, ed. Thomas Fisch (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990), 51-52.

⁵ For citations and discussion of Augustine's *City of God* 10.6 and Sermon 227, see J.-M.-R. Tillard, *Flesh of the Church, Flesh of Christ: At the Source of the Ecclesiology of Communion*, trans. Madeleine Beaumont (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001), 47-48, 133.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.

⁷ Friendship as fundamental symbol (sacrament) of divine love humanly experienced as grace, definitively in Jesus, has been a hallmark throughout Bernard Cooke's theological writings. For the most recent elaboration, see his *Power and the Spirit of God: Toward an Experience-Based Pneumatology* (New

our bodies in this time between his first and second comings, in this time of the church, Jesus left us the Eucharist as the sacrificial meal in which we share in his paschal mystery.

As is the case with any person, Jesus becomes known to his followers by what he says and does and, moreover, by sharing with them the memories that have established and continue to advance this most important of friendships. The saving, life-giving mystery of those memories the Spirit of the risen Christ imparts to the body of his church in the narrative word of Scripture, made effectively present through the ritual gestures of sacramental liturgy, and existentially appropriated through ethical lives characterized by justice and mercy, forgiveness and compassion. Historically, different traditions within the one church of Christ have emphasized different aspects or even the entire reality of this most fundamental mystery of the faith, resulting in a richness of diversity that nonetheless lent itself to distortions within the practices of the traditions themselves.

Eastern Orthodoxy has always thought of the mystical heart of the Divine Liturgy, celebrated strictly on Sunday and a few other major feasts, in terms of ascending into the perichoretic (mutually shared or inter-penetrating) love of the Trinity. Orthodoxy developed extensive normative elements for the worship space—the layout and decoration of the church interior, the choreography of movements and style of music, etc.—meant to raise participants into the heavenly banquet of the kingdom of God. The problem, however, is that such elaborate symbolism collapsed under its weight into fragments: popular piety developed hybrid meanings for individual symbolic elements (processions, gestures, vestments) in isolation from their function within the liturgy as a whole.⁸

As for the West, while Luther and Calvin recognized the primordial importance for the church of celebrating the Eucharist on the Lord's Day, the subsequent evolution across much of Protestantism and Anglicanism, often in polemical environments, saw a marginalization of the Lord's Supper to occasional enactments during the year. The preferred Protestant language of Lord's Supper, symbolizing the biblical warrant for the ritual action (see Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:25), highlights the authority of the word of God in Scripture over traditions of Eucharist or Mass. One can generally say that for Protestants, worship on Sunday became centered on the proclamation of the biblical word through the reading of Scripture, preaching, hymnody, and prayers.⁹ Roman Catholic sacramental practice and theology, on the other hand, during the medieval era and then all the stronger in the Counter-Reformation, developed an all but exclusive focus on the descent of Christ to the altar, the site of his real presence in the host. That the Latin term *hostia* means victim, understood as Christ's body sacrificed on the cross, is indicative of how narrowly the Roman Catholic understanding and practice of the Eucharist became focused on worshipping the "sacred species" of Christ's body in the sacrament.

York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 168-77.

⁸ See *Liturgy and Tradition*, 95-97, 123-125.

⁹ Methodist moral theologian Stanley M. Hauerwas has critiqued the extreme form biblical fundamentalist practices can take: "They [many 'conservative' Christians], of course, say they use the name of Jesus, but they fail to see that *how* Jesus' name is used makes all the difference. Without the Eucharist, for example, we lack the means to know the kind of presence Jesus' resurrection makes possible." "Worship, Evangelism, Ethics: On Eliminating the 'And,'" in *Liturgy and the Moral Self: Humanity at Full Stretch Before God*, ed. E. Byron Anderson and Bruce T. Morrill (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998), 101.

In the early twentieth century the impetus for reform and renewal of the liturgy emerged in Benedictine abbeys in Belgium and Germany in what became known as the Liturgical Movement. Historical and pastoral initiatives complemented scholarly theological work in monasteries and theological faculties in a number of European countries and, eventually, North America. The Movement realized steady ecumenical and official impact, evidenced in the 1950s by Pope Pius XII's encyclical *Mediator Dei* and the Church of England's establishing its Liturgical Commission, and still later, the 1982 Faith and Order paper of the World Council of Churches, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. The climax, nonetheless, came with the Second Vatican Council's *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the 1963 Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. The document not only promulgated reform of the Roman ritual but was also widely embraced by Protestants and Anglicans in their efforts at liturgical renewal.

Key principles of the Constitution include identifying the liturgy as the source and summit of the church's entire life (no. 10) and, therefore, the full and active participation by all the people as the highest priority for realizing the pastoral, humanly sanctifying potential of the liturgy (no. 14). As a corrective to the practical equation of worship with gazing at the sacrificial victim in the host, the council fathers recovered the "sound tradition" (no. 4) of liturgy as ritual activity singularly capable of nourishing the faith-lives of all through the full complement of its symbols, actions, and words.

... For in the liturgy God speaks to his people, and Christ is still proclaiming his Gospel. And the people reply to God both by song and prayer.

Moreover the prayers addressed to God by the priest who, in the person of Christ, presides over the assembly, are said in the name of the entire holy people and of all present. And the visible signs which the sacred liturgy uses to signify invisible divine things have been chosen by Christ or by the Church. Thus not only when things are read 'which were written for our instruction' (Rom. 15:4), but also when the Church prays or sings or acts, the faith of those taking part is nourished, and their minds are raised to God so that they may offer him their spiritual homage and receive his grace more abundantly. ...¹⁰

Celebration of the full range of words, symbols, and gestures in the liturgy disposes the faithful to receive the graces of drawing close to God in worship and gaining strength for practicing charity (no. 59). The council's teaching amounts to a splendid renewal of the ancient relationship between the liturgical assembly's sacrifice of thankful praise and the myriad spiritual sacrifices its members perform in their daily lives. "In doing this," writes Irénée Henri Dalmis, "the Church pursues its most essential purpose, which is to ensure the active presence of divine realities under the conditions of our present life—and that is precisely what 'mystery' means."¹¹

¹⁰ The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no. 33, in *Vatican Council II: Volume I: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, rev. ed., ed. Austin Flannery (Northport: Costello Publishing, 1996), 11-12.

¹¹ Dalmis, "Theology of the Liturgical Celebration," 266. Father Dalmis, a Dominican friar, served for years on the faculty of the Parisian *Institut Supérieur de Liturgie* and numbered among the scholars of the French Liturgical Movement so influential in crafting the reformed Roman rites mandated by the Second Vatican Council.

Encountering Christ in the Eucharistic Celebration: Life for the Church, Life for the World

The active presence of divine realities in the human work of liturgy is nothing other than another way to speak of mystery. And the mystery, as we have seen, is Christ Jesus himself. To celebrate the paschal mystery is to encounter the presence of a living person, Jesus the Christ, sharing himself with his sisters and brothers. Such intimate sharing in human friendship between the Lord, who has ascended bodily to the right hand of his heavenly Father, and earthly people comes through the divine power of the Spirit working through the ritual's human words and symbols. Christ relates to the earthly members of his body precisely in our bodily means of mutual presence and receptivity, that is, *sacramentally*, in the liturgy, touching senses and memory, intellect and emotion, to form us as his members. Just as the flourishing of human friendship requires multiple modes of symbolic communication, one person to the other, so the risen Lord's sacramental presence to the faithful comes through a number of distinct yet interrelated modes. Thus does the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy teach that Christ "accomplishes so great a work" by being present in the assembled people as they pray and sing, in the person of the presiding minister, in the proclamation of the word, and in the sacraments, "especially in the eucharistic species."¹² Here the distortions and old polemics valorizing one means of grace to the exclusion of others—e.g. preaching of the word versus adoring the consecrated host—fall away to the oblivion they deserve. For if the Word Incarnate is to take ever fuller form in us, then the divine Spirit who raised him from the dead (Rom 8:11) must work with all dimensions of our ritual bodies so that we might share in his saving work.

As Saint Augustine teaches, the mystery of the intimate union of our lives with Christ's, of ourselves as members of his body now in the world, is proclaimed so as to elicit our life-committing response:

Thus, if you wish to understand the body of Christ, listen to the Apostle, who says to the believers: You are the body of Christ and His members (1 Cor 12, 27). And thus, if you are the body of Christ and His members, it is your mystery that has been placed on the altar of the Lord; you receive your own mystery. You answer 'Amen' to what you are, and in answering, you accept it. For you hear, 'The body of Christ' and you answer 'Amen.' Be a member of Christ's body, so that your Amen may be true.¹³

This mutual abiding of Christ in us—members of his body as church, branches on him, the vine (Jn 15:5)—is what the Spirit initiates at baptism and nourishes at the one table of the word and Eucharist.¹⁴ This is what is meant by the sacramentality of our Christian lives and, thus, why the liturgical sacraments are needed as revealers of that abiding presence of the Word of God, of Christ, in the stories of our lives. Participation in the liturgy empowers us to interpret our human story, as individuals and corporately, according to the meaning

¹² The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no. 7.

¹³ Augustine, Sermon 272, *Patrologiae Latinae*, trans. J.-P. Migne, cited in Joseph M. Powers, *Eucharistic Theology* (New York: Seabury Press, 1967), 20.

¹⁴ "The Church ... never ceases, particularly in the sacred liturgy, to partake of the bread of life and to offer it to the faithful from the one table of the Word of God and the Body of Christ." Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation: *Dei Verbum*, no. 21, in *Vatican Council II: Volume 1: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, rev. ed., ed. Austin Flannery (Northport: Costello Publishing, 1996), 762.

disclosed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Through the tangible bonds of communion with Christ at the Eucharistic table—both in the sacrament of his very body and blood and the sacramental solidarity as members of his body—we are nourished for the journey, the mission we take up as the privilege of sharing in God’s practical love for the world.

The living out of the paschal mystery in our lives is impossible if we bypass the altar table (too often the Protestant mistake), that is, if we think we can hear the word and then go directly into the world to “make it happen.” On the other hand, if we bypass the table of the word so as directly to adore Christ the host on the altar (long the Catholic mistake), we are left to our own imaginations as to who he is and to what sort of life he is concretely inviting us. In either case, rather than “a life-giving spirit” (1 Cor 15:45) working in and through us, Christ functions as an external exemplar of the moral life to be imitated. But even that seems impossible, since popular theology long ago devolved into a certain simplistic narrative of the Son of God suffering and dying on behalf of sinful human sons and daughters: How could anyone even approximate the moral character of the perfect man Jesus (who, when one gets down to it, really is not considered human the way we are anyway)? And how could anyone imagine or perhaps even desire drawing close to such a God, the Father, who sends his darling son to be born miraculously among humans only to cut him down brutally in the prime of life in divine retribution for humanity’s disobedience? The sadomasochistic drama plays out on a stage over and above the terrain of we “regular” humans. The transaction between the Father and the Son is a matter settled between them on our behalf. The Father sacrifices his Son brutally, at the hands of men; the Son atones for humanity’s dishonoring of God. All we can do is shudder at the horrific torture and execution, resolve to do better with our own lives as some small way of “making it up” to Jesus for what he suffered, and hope to be found worthy of the promised heaven the crucified Christ opened for us. The Christian life is reduced to personal resolve and initiative for which divine judgment and reward ultimately await, rather than a mysterious participation in the life of the Son that God is offering here and now in the power of the Spirit.

The latter wisdom, not of humans but of God, comes only through Scripture. “Both the mystery of the Word and the mystery of the Eucharist send one back to the mystery of Christ Jesus.”¹⁵ Thus did the Vatican Council’s assertion of Scripture as “of greatest importance in the celebration of the liturgy,” with the “restoration, progress, and adaptation of the sacred liturgy” depending on the “lively appreciation of sacred scripture,” ring of evangelical truth and promise the ecumenical way forward.¹⁶ To further theological investigation of Christ’s abiding presence in the sacrament of Eucharist, then, requires turning repeatedly to Scripture. First, I shall explore Christianity’s struggle to align the notion of sacrifice, particularly as related to the Eucharist, with the biblical deposit of the faith. The fruits of current theological work on that question point to the revelation of the triune God’s self-giving love in the incarnate (fully human) Son as the key to the sacrificial, and thus sacramental, dimension of the Eucharist. The second step, then, will be a close look at how the Gospel of John grounds sacrament in the abiding presence of the absent, ascended Jesus, through the promised Spirit sent by the Father. While John discloses the meaning of the

¹⁵ Lucien Deiss, *Celebration of the Word*, trans. Lucien Deiss and Jane Burton (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1993), 21.

¹⁶ The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, no. 24.

Eucharist in the testamentary form of Jesus' farewell discourse at the supper, other early Christian literature provide cultic resources for the Eucharist as the ritual means for our sharing in that abiding presence of God in the crucified, exalted Jesus. A survey of the Eucharistic ritual pattern of taking, blessing, breaking, and sharing—all as an act of remembrance—will round out the article as an appreciation for the Jewish and early Christian roots of the church's real-symbolic communion in Christ's body and blood.

What Sacrifice To Offer?

The impotence of the conventional Christian myth of sacrifice and atonement at the dawn of the new millennium is evident in the “mainstream” churches' struggles for effective influence upon society—locally, nationally, or now globally—and in the lives of individuals. In their efforts to assess how the Christian message has lost its way both within churches and in relation to contemporary people theologians have turned directly to the symbols so powerfully dominating Christian imagination: for Catholics, sacrifice, and for Protestants, atonement.¹⁷ While both terms have roots in earliest Christian biblical and patristic literature, where they functioned as just two among numerous symbolic expressions for what God has done in Christ,¹⁸ they became in the second millennium the dominant, if not exclusive Christian myth, tragically untethered to the full mystery of the Gospel. Sacrifice or atonement theology by the end of the Middle Ages reduced more or less to the following; “(1) God's honour is damaged by sin; (2) God demanded a bloody victim to pay for this sin; (3) God is assuaged by the victim; (4) the death of Jesus the victim functioned as payoff that purchased salvation for us.”¹⁹

The crisis that eventually developed in the Reformation theologically concerned how humans connect to that payoff, to that salvation. The Medieval outcome functioned in the sacrifice of the Mass: Christ the victim (the host, *hostia* in Latin) offered in a non-bloody manner reprising the slaughter on Calvary, an atoning act of measurable merits that in each execution of the ritual could be applied as redemption for individual souls (of the dead). The Reformers raged in their rejecting this, asserting Christ as having died once for all sinners, whose justification lies only in their personal acceptance of that grace by faith. While differing in theological details and practical outcomes, Reformation leaders inevitably rejected the ritual and theology of the Medieval Mass, replacing it with services of the Lord's Supper celebrated as memorials of Christ's death and/or sacrifices of praise and

¹⁷ See S. Mark Heim, *Saved from Sacrifice: A Theology of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2006); Stephen Finlan, *Problems with Atonement* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2005), and *Options on Atonement in Christian Thought* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007); David N. Power, *The Sacrifice We Offer: The Tridentine Dogma and Its Reinterpretation* (New York: Crossroad, 1987); Erin Lothes Biviano, *The Paradox of Christian Sacrifice: The Loss of Self, The Gift of Self* (New York: Crossroad, 2007); and Robert J. Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice* (London/New York: T & T Clark/Continuum, 2009).

¹⁸ New Testament and extra-canonical metaphors for the fundamental grace that Christ is for humans include: adoption, new creation, birth from/being a child of God, gift of the Holy Spirit, being formed in the image of Christ, salvation, redemption, freedom (from slavery), reconciliation, peace/satisfaction, legal deliverance/justification, victory over alienating/demonic power, and more. See Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ: The Experience of Jesus as Lord*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1980), 468-511.

¹⁹ Daly, *Sacrifice Unveiled*, 4.

thanksgiving. The Council of Trent reacted in turn, condemning all who rejected Eucharistic doctrine as including the real substantial presence of Christ, sacrifice for the propitiation of sins, and the fruits of communion, both sacramental and spiritual (by desire).

Trent's decrees on those various elements, however, were formulated separately, lacking integration. The legacy right into the twentieth century was a Roman Catholic theology and practice of the holy sacrifice of the Mass amounting roughly to an enacted allegory of Christ's execution, for which the climactic moment was (and for so many Catholics, remains) the medieval gesture of the priest elevating his large communion wafer (the host, *hostia*) as the moment when the victim Christ once again really is present. All, priest and people, shared in the moment of the "gaze that saves," with the fruits of the consecration applying to an intended deceased soul as well as variably to those attending, who in general rarely "received communion."²⁰ In reaction to the isolation of the priestly action of the ordained minister at the altar, and this, moreover, to benefit the dead, Protestant theology and practice came to focus on the fellowship shared by all at the table of the Lord's Supper. The ritual's power rested not in the sacred hands and words of the priest but, rather, in the community's obedient response to the Lord's words of biblical command, "Do this in memory of me." Rather swiftly, however, the communal dimension tended to devolve into a fellowship of two: me and Jesus.

One can safely say that the biblically, historically, ecumenically grounded renewal in Eucharistic theology of the past several decades amounts to an integration of the notions of presence, sacrifice, memorial, and communion that Tridentine theology left fragmented. That fragmentation contributed to the internal distortions and largely fruitless polemics of Catholic and Protestant theology, rigidly pitting word against sacrament, presence against memory, meal against sacrifice, altar against table, thanksgiving against propitiation. As things turn out, careful exegetical and historical attention to Scripture and tradition finds the Gospel subverting all the conventional wisdom of those hardened positions. Set in the key of the paschal mystery, and the trinitarian God of love revealed therein, the seemingly opposed terms fall into their own harmony, albeit sung to the strange (but therefore freeing) tune of the Good News.

The dissonance between the Gospel and conventional and other religious understandings of sacrifice has led some at times to question whether the pastoral and theological effort should not be directed at expunging the notion of sacrifice from Christian liturgy and preaching entirely. Conventional notions of sacrifice entail painful loss and self-denial in the pursuit of some desired benefit, some greater good. Applying the concept to life and worship inevitably casts Christianity in a negative light, a mirthless (and for modern psychology) unhealthy pattern of self-deprivation or co-dependent denigration. A generic religious view of sacrifice imagines ritual repeated either occasionally or regularly to sustain contact and favor with some divinity. Depending on the nature of the god(s) in question, this may entail expressing gratitude or propitiation or purification through offering the best (unblemished) from crops or herds or (in the case of human sacrifice) the people themselves (beautiful, innocent youth) to express adoration or to elicit reconciliation with perfect divinity. Nothing could be at greater odds with the whole point of the Letter to the Hebrews, the New Testament's most fully developed treatment of sacrifice as a *metaphor*

²⁰ See Powers, *Eucharistic Theology*, 26, 31.

expressing the mystery of what God has done, how God has saved us sinful humans, in Christ Jesus.

In Hebrews the imagery of the Jewish temple priestly sacrifice of an animal's blood becomes the *metaphor* for Jesus offering his life as a single, perpetual gesture sealing the new and eternal covenant, the perfect worship of God through the sanctification of humanity (see 9:11-14). We need make no further sacrifices in the sense of atoning for our sins, for Christ has done this once for all. The author of Hebrews, rather, exhorts believers to live with hope in the assurance of that heavenly vision, "provok[ing] one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another ..." (10:24-25). The rhetoric of sacrifice, however, tends to defeat this sense of liturgically celebrated faith fostering solidarity and service by casting the work of Christ too much in terms of painful propitiatory ritual, perpetuating that sort of ritual institution as the foremost characteristic of Christian life and worship. It would seem, then, that the concept of sacrifice has too much going against it to contribute positively to the theology and practice of the Eucharist as a sharing in the presence of the risen Christ abiding in the church and, through the Spirit, active in its members.

In pursuing more adequate expressions of the mystery of faith, however, most contemporary theologians recognize the impossibility of eliminating sacrificial discourse from Christianity, not only due to its pervasive persistence but also, some argue, because the complex symbolism of the word "sacrifice" actually does serve well the Gospel's truth. In a lucid article synthesizing Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox contributions, pastoral theologian Scott O'Brien frames the meaning of sacrifice as it "pertains metaphorically to the life and death of Christ as celebrated in the liturgy." The sacrificial metaphor, not despite but because of its contentious history within Christianity and in relation to world religions, is helpful for getting at what Christian liturgy as celebration of the paschal mystery is all about, namely, "a more fulsome appreciation of God's just mercy and our dignity as partakers of the divine life."²¹ Sacrifice, as a general religious phenomenon, is certainly about humans seeking union with the deity but, as ever for Christianity, a more fundamental question must govern the approach, namely, "What god exactly are people talking about?"

A biblically inspired way of framing sacrifice points not to a vengeful or jealous or despotic divinity but, rather, one whose chief characteristics are justice and mercy and whose chief posture towards humans is to draw them right into heavenly friendship, divine communion. The power of God lies in a communion of persons (Father, Son, and Spirit) who share an intimate love overflowing into creation. When extended to a humanity in the throes of injustice and suffering, the hallmark of that love is "a terrible yet tender mercy"²² given in Jesus' life unto death. The "costly love of friendship"²³ is the shape divine love takes in humanity. And so love, even from the side of God, knows a necessary pain in surrender if life-giving union is to be born and thrive freely with and among people. In the new covenant, "sacrifice" denotes both the divine-human relationship's need for ritual sustenance

²¹ Scott O'Brien, "Partakers of the Divine Sacrifice; Liturgy and the Deification of the Christian Assembly," *Liturgical Ministry* 18 (Spring 2009): 69.

²² *Ibid.*, 76.

²³ Barbara E. Reid, "From Sacrifice to self-Surrender to Love," *Liturgical Ministry* 18 (Spring 2009): 86.

and the inevitable suffering the practice of love for and among mortal, sinful humans entails. The whole affair is shot through with paradox, and that paradox, of course, is climactically located at the cross. The Eucharistic liturgy functions as Christian sacrifice by providing both the ritual (in the lineage of the Jewish sacrificial covenant meal) connecting humans to the divine love offered in Christ and the effective symbol of the unthinkable cost of that love.

God's Glory in Jesus: Mutual Presence in a Fierce, Abiding Love

To think biblically of the Eucharist as sacrifice, keeping word and sacrament together at one table, would normally conjure the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), with their drawing on the Sinai covenant. However, to meditate even more deeply on the mystery of the reality present in the sacramental celebration we do better to turn to John, whose treatment of Jesus' passion and death keep the paradox of salvation at a provocative pitch by proclaiming this human disaster the defining moment of God's glory. In John's Gospel the mission of Jesus, the meaning and purpose of his words and actions, are entirely oriented to his "hour" (see 2:4; 12:27; 13:1; 17:1) which, as Barbara Reid points out, John develops through a metaphor significantly different from sacrifice or atonement: giving birth to new life.

There is a unique detail in the crucifixion scene in the Fourth Gospel that brings this theme [of birthing new life] to a climax. After Jesus has died a soldier thrusts a lance through Jesus' side, to assure that he is dead. Blood and water come forth (19:34), the same two liquids that accompany the birthing process. The language of birthing is prominent throughout the whole gospel, culminating with this image of Jesus' death as a birth to new life. The theme is first sounded in the prologue which speaks about those who believe as being born of God (1:12-13). Then, when dialoguing with Nicodemus, Jesus talks about the necessity of being born again/from above (3:3). At the Feast of Dedication (7:38) he speaks about 'rivers of living water' that flow from his own and the believer's heart (*koilia*, which is literally, 'womb'), foreshadowing John 19:34. At his final meal with his disciples, Jesus likens the pain of his passion to the labor pangs of a woman giving birth (16:21-22). All these texts point forward to John 19:34, where the birth to new life that was begun with Jesus' earthly mission comes to completion in his death.²⁴

Note that in John's account of the supper Jesus uses a metaphor for pain (childbirth), indicating the suffering entailed in his death. Thus, the self-surrendering, pain-enduring dimension associated conventionally with sacrifice is not absent in Jesus' final words during the meal. The key, however, is the end for which such selfless endurance of pain is freely undertaken. In the Johannine metaphor it is to give life: But what life? The very life of God made possible for believers through their mutual abiding in Jesus, the Son (see 15:4). To elucidate so great a mystery Jesus, in John's Gospel, needs five chapters of discourse, making it quite a different presentation of the Last Supper than found in the Synoptic Gospels. As is true for all encounters with difference or otherness, however, John's unique rendition brings

²⁴ Ibid. Reid notes that such early Christian bishops as Ambrose of Milan and medieval mystics as Julian of Norwich capitalized on the birthing imagery in John to describe Christ as the virgin or mother giving birth to us believers.

a whole level of awareness and, thus, revelation of the truth, that otherwise might be lost on us.

The Last Supper account in John contrasts with those in Matthew, Mark, and Luke due to not only its extensive length—several chapters as opposed to a couple dozen verses or less—but also the complete absence of Jesus’ words and gestures over bread and wine at the table (traditionally called the “institution narrative”). What modern scripture scholars have made of such a glaring omission in this gospel has proven a function of their biases concerning the meaning and even appropriateness of sacramental rites in the life of the church. Opinions have ranged from seeing the Fourth Gospel as purposely and polemically anti-sacramental to concertedly emphasizing and promoting the sacraments, with the German Lutheran scholars Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976) and Oscar Cullmann (1902-99) serving as early champions of the respective extremes.

Taking up the decades-long debate over Johannine sacramentalism, Sulpician Father Raymond Brown (†1998) approached the question of the sacraments’ function in the saving union of Christ and the believer in a profitably broader fashion. For Brown the key to properly recognizing the sacramental symbolism in John is the evangelist’s “general insight that the life-giving power of Jesus was effective through the material symbols employed in the deeds and discourse of the public ministry.”²⁵ The sacraments, *per se*, are only a present reality for John’s community, as they live in the time after Jesus’ ascent to the Father. To represent the sacraments explicitly in the literary genre of a gospel would be anachronistic. Nor should scholars seek their contemporary concern for precise accounts and theologies (including institution narratives for baptism and Eucharist) in the thought of early Christians. Indeed, the imprecise outlook on the sacraments in John fits that gospel’s pattern of having the deeper meaning of things only understood later.

It is in this sense of a “deeper secondary meaning intelligible to the Christian after the Resurrection” that Brown finds a real, and not merely “peripheral,” sacramental interest in the Gospel of John.²⁶ John’s readers are able to grasp the further sacramental aspect when Jesus employs apposite symbolism (most notably water and spirit in 3:5 and bread from heaven/his flesh and blood as true food and drink in 6:51-58), whereas the people in the story with Jesus could only be expected to hear the primary meaning. British Methodist C. K. Barrett likewise insists on the futility of seeking any explicit or developed reference to the sacraments in John, arguing that one must look not to hierarchical or Hellenistic-mystery influences but within the gospel itself to explain John’s sense of the church’s sacramentalism. While the people in John’s stories grapple with the symbolism in Jesus’ teaching, only those imbued with the gift of faith in the glorified Son hear in those words the meaning of the sacraments as their personal knowledge of and “ontological” relation with God (that is, on the intimate level of their very being).²⁷ Barrett thereby concludes that there is “no sacrament without the word, no benefit in the sacrament without faith, and nothing at all apart from the descent and ascent of the Son of man.”²⁸

²⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *New Testament Essays* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1965), 52.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 95. See also, Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John I-XII*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 29 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966), cxiv.

²⁷ C. K. Barrett, *Essays on John* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), 80, 89.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 97.

Turning to John's account of the Last Supper we find Jesus disclosing the ontological meaning of his passion as the glory of the faithful Son returning to the loving Father, who will give their abiding Spirit to Jesus' friends as a share in such great love unto death. Dominating John's account is not the symbolism of the supper table but, rather, this *night* (see 13:30) as the turning point of Jesus' entire mission, the final *hour* disclosing who the Son, and therefore *God*, is a communion of abiding love offered for humans to share in mutual, humbling, but thereby life-giving service. This divine-human sharing, however, becomes possible for us only by Jesus' passing through the night, the time when the "world" does what it does only too well, which is, tragically, its worst. Enduring the sort of injustice, inhuman violence, and satanic judgment (altogether, *sin*) so widely inflicted on and among humanity—especially the powerless and poor, and too often in the name of God—is Jesus' way to the Father, his ascent. Divine glory paradoxically unfolds in the very situation people (in Jesus' day, whether Jew or gentile) would consider most utterly godless, death by crucifixion. It is this meaning of such magnitude that John has Jesus convey in the literary form of a final (farewell) testament, rather than, as in the Synoptic Gospels, recounting the cultic tradition of Jesus' words and actions over the bread and cup. Both the cultic and the testamentary traditions, Xavier Léon-Dufour argues, are indispensable for the church. The former provides the symbolic means for the ascended Christ Jesus to remain present to his followers. This is what St. Augustine and theologians thereafter called the *sacramentum*, that is, the symbolic rite itself. In John, on the other hand, the testamentary tradition discloses the *res sacramenti*, that is, the life or ultimate goal the rite signifies. "The 'sacrament' has value only because of the 'thing' [*res*], that is, that which it signifies, namely, Jesus Christ and the love in the Church ... since the ultimate purpose of the Eucharist is to intensify in this world that fraternal love which is divine in its origin."²⁹

Indeed, John seems to take for granted that once he opens the passage by mentioning Passover, "hour," and "the end" (13:1-2) his readers know that the setting is the Last Supper (with the taking, blessing, and sharing of bread and cup that entailed). Verse 3 has the mere dependent clause, "And during supper," before describing at length Jesus' interior thoughts in rising from the table to wash his disciples' feet. That prophetic symbolic gesture discloses the attitude with which the disciples are to share in this special meal at table with Jesus, an attitude not of superior, lorded privilege but of ready, mutual self-giving love. And so Jesus concludes the gesture by giving the new commandment: "Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another" (13:34). This is how people know—in mind, body, and spirit—their communion with Jesus, know their discipleship, know themselves now as the Lord's "friends" (15:14) at table, the ones graced with the privilege of carrying on his last will and testament.

Jesus' farewell discourse in John is a stellar example of testament, a literary genre occurring some forty times in the Bible and Jewish apocryphal literature. The basic testamentary form entails a man near death calling together his immediate relatives, the leaders, or even the entire people, characteristically calling them "my children," as does Jesus in John 13:33. The testator bids them farewell in a lengthy exhortation reviewing God's faithfulness to them with him, presenting his life as exemplary of they now must carry on, especially in communal peace and harmony: "I am giving you these commands so that you

²⁹ Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The witness of the New Testament*, trans. Matthew O'Connell (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 95, 251.

may love one another” (15:17). Further testamentary features prominent in John 14-17 include prophetic prediction—“If they persecuted me, they will persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also” (15:20); the designation of a successor—“the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name” (14:25); and prayers of intercession to God on the heirs’ behalf—“Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me ... protect them from the evil one” (17:11, 15). In addition, the final gathering of his “children” with Jesus is a meal, a relatively frequent motif of the testamentary genre:

From the viewpoint of the testator the meal, when it occurs, does not simply serve as a framework for his farewells; it *is* this farewell in action; sometimes it has a cultic context. From the viewpoint of the heirs, the meal is a sign of communication with the testator (who communicates God’s favor) and among the heirs themselves (because of their communion with the testator).³⁰

Unique to Jesus’ testamentary meal is the nature of such communion, namely, an abiding share in the very life of God as a mutual indwelling of powerful love in practice, the total abandon of Father in Son and, through the Spirit, of these divine persons in Jesus’ beloved friends. In this resides the glory of God (see 17:22), pointing to the very heart of the paschal mystery, as John conveys it.

Jesus gives his farewell testament at the onset of “his hour ... to depart from this world and go to the Father” (13:1). The glory of which he speaks in his departing meal is of a piece with his crucifixion, which paradoxically is exaltation, not humiliation. The cross begins Jesus’ ascent to the Father and, with that, his saving Lordship, manifesting his power to give eternal life to all who believe, to all who see “the only true God” (17:3) in this Jesus who finishes the loving work the Father sent him to do (see 17:4). The community, in turn, glorifies God (Father and Son) by living in the Spirit Jesus gives over (19:30) at his death, with the water and blood flowing from his pierced side signifying baptism and Eucharist as the life-giving sacraments whereby the Spirit comes to abide in his friends.³¹ The Spirit, the water, and blood all “testify” (1 Jn 5:7) to the Christ Jesus from whose flesh they flow, making them the source of the “presence of the absent one.”³²

Accustomed as we contemporary Christians are to associating the sacrament primarily with bread and body, we might puzzle over how in John blood signals Eucharist. But this circles us back to the sixth chapter’s discourse on the bread of life, “a key for the interpretation of the fourth gospel as a whole, since it has to do with the mystery of the Lord’s presence.”³³ As with the farewell dinner, the timing of this discourse is also just before Passover (see 6:4), with Jesus using the same terminology of life-giving presence as in his testamentary meal: “Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life ... [they] abide in me, and I in them” (6:56). And so the mystical, symbolic movement back and forth in John (in contrast to the straightforward institution narratives we moderns would

³⁰ Ibid., 92.

³¹ See Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 396, 161. Recall that even Bultmann recognizes the water and the blood as symbols of the two sacraments, while nonetheless denying the verse’s authenticity to the Fourth Gospel.

³² Francis J. Moloney, “Johannine Theology,” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. R. Brown, J. Fitzmyer, R. Murphy (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990), 1426.

³³ Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 252.

prefer) is at play, with all moving toward Jesus' death (on Passover) as exaltation. The mystery of his exaltation as including, rather than following, his death likewise plays out between the farewell dinner discourse, the crucifixion scene, and the resurrection appearances. Most notable for our purposes is Jesus' promise of abiding presence through the Holy Spirit in the supper testament, delivering the Spirit (along with the sacraments) on the cross, and then his breathing the Holy Spirit into them on Easter Sunday night (see 20:22). The latter explicitly sets in motion the time of the church, life in the present era that nonetheless finds its source and meaning in the concrete life of Jesus of Nazareth. The ascended Jesus is experienced as alive and active through the Spirit abiding in the community, in those who have been born of water and Spirit (3:5) and abide in him through sharing in "true food" and "true drink" (6:55), the effective symbols of his life-giving body and blood.³⁴

This mystery as *our* reality is what the church celebrates, shares, experiences, knows every Sunday, every Lord's Day, the primordial Christian feast effectively conveying the life-giving power of the crucified and risen Jesus to his friends through word and sacrament. But the Christian community, as we saw in chapter two, dwells more deeply on this mystery through the annual Easter Season, the fifty days spanning from Easter to Pentecost. This the church does not so as to reenact Jesus' death, resurrection, and gift of the Spirit as so many separate dramatic events but rather, following Johannine theology, as one continuous ascent glorifying God through the sanctification of his friends "in truth" (17:19).³⁵ Jesus testifies to the Father in his farewell discourse, "your word is truth" (17:16); it is that word which unfolds the content of the paschal mystery. Through the Easter Season the church's lectionary cycle, in all three years, has as its gospel reading on the Second Sunday John's account of Jesus' Easter evening appearance and breathing of the Holy Spirit on the disciples (20:19-31). Later, on the Fifth through Seventh Sundays of Easter, the Gospel is taken from Jesus' Last Supper discourse, a total of nine pericopes (over the three year cycle) selected from John 13 through 17. The assembled faithful on those Sundays do not find themselves asking why they are hearing *about* the Last Supper when it is already Easter time (as if the liturgical year were a chronological reenactment of the Jesus story). On the contrary, the successive Sundays of Easter are the time for being immersed in Jesus' Passover-ascent to God as *our* mystery, as our abiding in the Spirit who enables us to remain in Jesus, to bear fruit to God's glory, to love as friends in the one who is the way, the truth, and the life. Such reflection on the meaning of the Eucharist during the Easter Season follows in the church's ancient tradition of *mystagogy*,³⁶ preaching directed to the recently initiated (while beneficial to all) on the sacred mysteries revealed in the sacrament as our communion, a "share" (Jn 13:8), in the ascended Lord. Hearing selections from the Last Discourse each year in Eastertide gives us the opportunity to appreciate ever more deeply what we do ritually in every Eucharist we celebrate, week in and week out throughout the year.

³⁴ See *ibid.*, 270.

³⁵ See Schillebeeckx, *Christ*, 417-21.

³⁶ See Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation*, rev. ed. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2007), xviii, 125, 229, 295.

Sacramental Rite: Christ's Presence in Remembrance

The testamentary tradition in John's Gospel treats the Last Supper in the genre of a farewell meal wherein Jesus' parting words to his disciples disclose the profound meaning of the meal in relation to his death-exaltation. John's account reveals the ultimate purpose (later in Latin, the *res*, the "thing") of the symbolism at the table to be a real participation in the love of God that is a self-giving love for and among humans. That participation, however, like all group sharing and communication, can take place only through the bodily activity of symbols, of words and gestures, and these in a stylized, liturgical fashion whose repetition connects generations of followers to the Lord's promised presence in the command, "Do this in memory of me." With those words (see 1 Cor 11:24; Lk 22:19), along with Jesus' proclamation over the bread and cup (in Mk 14:22-25; Mt 26:26-29; Lk 22:17-20; 1 Cor 11:24-25), we may feel like we are on more familiar Eucharistic ground. Indeed, Jesus' words concerning the bread and cup, accompanying his actions of taking, blessing, breaking (the bread), and sharing, comprise the shape and content of the earliest believers' liturgical (cultic, sacramental) tradition. The power in the cultic dimension of the Eucharist resides in the words and gestures, the entire ritual complex, to actualize an encounter with the crucified and risen Lord, whose identity is conveyed through the words of prayer and whose presence is affected by his promised, abiding Spirit.

Many Christians, however, since the Reformation period in the West, and all the more in the modern spread of biblical fundamentalism around the globe, have questioned and even rejected what to them seems an excessively complex rite in the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglo-Catholic traditions. The problem focuses on the lengthy Eucharistic Prayer (or anaphora) that the presiding minister proclaims over the bread and wine. While the content of this form of prayer is suffused with biblical referents, including in most cases the chanting of the "Holy, holy" based on Isaiah 6:3, it nonetheless is not a word-for-word proclamation from the Bible. The exception would be what widely is called the "Institution Narrative," which midway into the prayer changes its genre from an address to God (extolling God's work in creation and history) to a rehearsal of the Last Supper account of Jesus' words and actions with the bread and wine. The latter amounts to what many Protestants came to consider permissible, namely, a short table service for which the words are a direct reading from a gospel account of Jesus' words and gestures at the supper as the "biblical warrant" for the cultic action. The long eucharistic prayers and symbolic gestures in the "liturgical churches," they argue, abet the clericalism, magical superstition, and idolatry that cripple the proper vocations of the baptized, diverting them from genuine faith in the biblical God of Jesus. There is historical evidence to support some of that criticism. In fact, the whole impetus and success of the modern Liturgical Movement,³⁷ with the reform and renewal of the rites in Roman Catholicism and other "mainstream" Protestant churches, resides in the historical, biblical, and theological work of scholars being applied practically in the revised liturgical books and rites. The effort has been to retrieve and follow sound, ancient tradition in ways that enable the active participation of believers in contemporary contexts. Those reforms over the past several decades have nonetheless met resistance and even backlash from the other end of the spectrum, namely, ritual conservatives among Catholics (both Roman and Anglo) infuriated by the loss of obscure language and arcane symbolic gestures

³⁷ See above, ms pp. 7-8.

that they experienced as mystical, transcendent ritual singularly appropriate to the realm of the sacred.

The nub of the Eucharistic liturgical reform comes down to question of how the early church actually obeyed the Lord's command: "Do this." The command refers to the entire liturgical action.³⁸ Tantalizing, and pastorally beneficial, scholarly work has included the investigation of how the basic biblical sketch of Jesus taking, blessing, breaking, and sharing came by the fourth century to entail quite complex prayers and rituals all across the Christian churches. It is, indeed, only as late as the fourth century that we have complete, reliably dated texts of extensive Eucharistic prayers, homilies, and catechetical instructions on the liturgy and sacraments. One dominant misguided approach to this challenge has been the (anthropologically predictable) desire to find a pure line of practice tracing back to Jesus' words and actions or, put another way, a universal form of Eucharistic practice in the early church to which all the current rites should conform. Things are not that simple.³⁹ Taking, blessing, breaking, and sharing do constitute the basic elements of the cultic tradition, as found in not only the New Testament but also the extremely early (Syrian, perhaps Palestinian) church order, the *Didache*, and the mid-second century *Apologia* of Justin, martyred in Rome. Still, the exact content and order of those elements of Eucharistic celebrations varied from the start, as would only be expected of oral, house-based, local traditions.

The blessing component of the ritual is what I would argue is most important yet haplessly lost on the biblical fundamentalists in their rejection of robust Eucharistic liturgy. The New Testament accounts all mention the blessing as part of what Jesus does *prior* to his words of command, "Take this . . . eat . . . drink . . . do this in memory of me." Jesus was a Jew celebrating that meal in the company of his disciples, fellow Jews. We do have solid historical knowledge of what "blessed" would have meant in such a meal context. The historical evidence supports the Jewish forms of blessing as crucial sources in the development of the liturgical Eucharistic traditions—in ritual words, symbols, and gestures.

Whether the Last Supper was a Passover Seder (as in the Synoptic Gospels) or a festive meal celebrated a day before Passover (the scenario in John), the basic type of ritual entailed would have been the same, namely, the communion sacrifice or peace offering. Such meals entailed multiple blessing prayers, including one with bread and up to several over cups of wine. Liturgical historians caution us that the earliest textual evidence for Jewish blessing prayers at table is found in the second-century C.E. rabbinic collection called the Mishnah.⁴⁰ That book, along with the Hebrew Bible and literature from the period between the Old and New Testaments, nonetheless provide the bases for outlining what the prayer pattern would have been at the Last Supper and help explain the shape Eucharistic rituals took in the earliest Christian generations. The Mishnah instructs that a *berakab* (a blessing of God) was to be said before anything was consumed, and it provides short *berakoth* (plural for *berakab*)

³⁸ See Bruce T. Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory: Political and Liturgical Theology in Dialogue* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000), 169-70.

³⁹ See Paul F. Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship: Sources and Methods for the Study of Early Liturgy*, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 52-53, 97.

⁴⁰ Here I follow the brilliant critical summary in Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, 43-46.

to be said for specific items. If three or more were gathered at table, then one was to say the blessing on behalf of all. While it is doubtful that formally set wordings of blessings for wine and food existed prior to the second century C.E., blessings nonetheless were surely said. In addition, while the Mishnah does not provide textual content, it does indicate a well-established pattern of three *berakot* at meal's end, for which the basic substance can safely be assumed corresponds to what eventually became the formal closing grace, the *Birkat hamazon*.

The purpose of *berakah* is to praise God for God's favor (*hesed*, grace) toward the people, with the most basic expression including a dependent clause describing what God had graciously done (specifically or in general). A *berakah*, nonetheless, could be more complex. The *anamnesis* (remembrance) could expand to a full narrative of God's works as the basis for asking God to continue to be so gracious, with the supplication leading back to praise in the form of a closing doxology (praise of God). Similar in pattern—remembrance, supplication, doxology—was another type of praise to God, the *hodayah*, a thanksgiving in the form of acknowledging how God has been gracious that later was rendered *homologeō* or *eucharisteō* in Greek. The tripartite combination of those forms of praise, as found in the later *Birkat hamazon*, is found in the second-century B.C.E. *Book of Jubilees*, wherein Abraham delivers a grace comprised of: “a blessing of God for creation and the gift of food; thanksgiving for the long life granted to Abraham; and a supplication for God's mercy and peace.”⁴¹ Thus, while we have no detailed textual content of the Jewish blessing-prayers at meals in Jesus' lifetime, we have ample indication of the pattern that the blessings with food and cups took, including an extended grace at meal's end. For the early church, then, to “do this” in memory of Jesus was to enact a form of communion sacrifice, taking gifts of food and drink in blessing of God, sharing them in fellowship as the people graced by God's faithfulness, and anticipating God's continued favor and deliverance of Israel.

Given the flexibility of wording and content of Jewish blessing prayers in that period, we can understand how Jesus at table could not only highlight or integrate certain aspects of the Jewish remembrance heritage but also even do something utterly new within it. The person presiding over the grace chose the material to be remembered, that is, what gracious deeds and beneficial actions those at table were calling to mind in blessing, which would of course be specific to festival days. The festive framework for the Last Supper is Passover (whether the Seder proper, as in the Synoptic Gospels, or the evening before, as in John).⁴² We could well expect, then, that the blessings beginning, during, and at meal's end included narrative remembrance (*anamnesis*) of the exodus, with supplications that God continue to remember Jerusalem, the deliverance of Israel, and the promised Messiah (as is prayed at the end of Passover meals to this very day). What Jesus uniquely did was to see “the meal as the appropriate way of drawing the symbolism of Passover, and all that it meant in terms of hope as well as of history, on to himself and his approaching fate.”⁴³

In Paul and Luke's accounts of the Last Supper Jesus words his command after blessing and sharing the bread and cup—“Do this in remembrance [*eis anamnesin*] of me” (1 Cor

⁴¹ Ibid., 45.

⁴² See N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 555-59.

⁴³ Ibid., 556.

11:24; Lk 22:19)—in parallel fashion to YHWH’s command in Exodus: “This day shall be a day of remembrance [*lezik karôn*] for you. You shall celebrate it ... ” (12:14).⁴⁴ Scholarly analyses of the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Jewish Bible), the Mishnah, and other sources point to the Greek word for remembrance (*anamnesis*) in New Testament texts being rooted in the Hebrew term *zikkaron*, a ritual act of commemoration.⁴⁵ The words commanding remembrance included the entire cultic action that came before, where further similarities in ritual exist between the two texts. In each, the meal takes place on the eve of the crucial divine act of deliverance (the exodus, Jesus’ death), with the symbols shared in blessing referring not only to that immediate future event but also, by virtue of the command of repetition, to an extended future. The entire ritual action, then, is not only cultic but also prophetic in character, first insofar as the symbolic gestures put in motion the historical events that God immediately brings about the next day (the escape from slavery, Jesus’ crucifixion). This means, however, that subsequent generations in celebrating the communion sacrifice do not somehow reenact or repeat the singular historical event. Their remembrance, rather, recounts the prophetic pre-figuration of that event, whose symbols were “pregnant with the future”⁴⁶ of those generations’ celebrations, of their lives as a people together in communion with this God, and of the still awaited fulfillment of the reign of God the meal anticipates.

The continuity between the structures of the meal rituals depicted in Exodus and the Last Supper accounts bespeak the fundamental Christian belief in the single God whose purpose in creation and redemption is the thriving of people in covenant with him. The radical difference, nonetheless, lies in the prepositional object added to the end of the Christian anamnesis: remembrance is kept “of me,” that is, of Jesus. To “proclaim the Lord’s death” by eating this bread and drinking the cup (1 Cor 11:26) is to be drawn into Jesus himself, the entire life and person who gave fully of himself in that final act.

The symbols ordering Israel’s life and hope were redrawn, focusing now upon Jesus himself. The final meal which he celebrated with his followers was not, in that sense, free-standing. It gained its significance from his own entire life and agenda, and from the events which, he knew, would shortly come to pass. It was Jesus’ chosen way of investing those imminent events with the significance he believed they would carry.⁴⁷

In the Passover context of that meal Jesus was identifying in the bread and cup himself not only as known in his words and deeds, but those as carrying forward the gifts of creation and God’s unending covenant-love to Israel and, through them, to all nations. In the Semitic world bread signifies food as needed by humans to live. Moreover, “in the context of the Passover, bread suggests the good will of Yahweh toward his special people and therefore his constant presence.”⁴⁸ The cup, containing the “fruit of the vine,” signifies the Creator’s gifts through the productive land but, when raised as in a toast (blessing), it also symbolizes shared love and friendship. In the context of the festive meal it functions as a sacrifice of

⁴⁴ See Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 110.

⁴⁵ See David Gregg, *Anamnesis in the Eucharist*, Grove Liturgical Study 5 (Bramcote Notts: Grove Books, 1976), 22.

⁴⁶ Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 111.

⁴⁷ N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 558.

⁴⁸ Léon-Dufour, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread*, 58.

thanksgiving, a brimming cup of salvation, as in the psalms, celebrating “communion with the God of the covenant, with him who is himself said to be the ‘cup’ that is Israel’s lot.”⁴⁹

Done now as memorial (*anamnesis*) of *Jesus*, the taking, blessing, and sharing of bread and cup is the ritual means of the absent (risen, ascended) Christ’s presence as life-sustenance, life itself, as life in the new covenant, empowering participants for a shared love in service “until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26). Alien to dualistic philosophies dividing body and soul, the Semitic heritage of ritual remembrance engages participants integrally, such that memory poses not the problem of how people can connect to a past event but, rather, the challenge of how to live the reality the commemoration actualizes among them.

Eucharistic Prayer: Transformative Power in Word and Spirit

During the first several centuries of the common era Christianity developed alongside the rabbinic forms of Judaism that were likewise emerging in the wake of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 C.E.⁵⁰ The Syrian church-order collection called the *Didache*, conservatively dated to the early second century but now largely agreed as coming from the first, contains instruction for celebrating the Eucharist that correspond to the three steps of the supper in Luke: “He took a cup. ... He took bread. ... After supper.”⁵¹ This is, as we saw above, the Jewish cultic prayer pattern for a festive meal or communion sacrifice in this period. Moreover, the *Didache*’s prayer texts for each of those ritual steps comprise brief *berakoth* for the first two and then for the last, a lengthy narrative *berakah* replete with remembrance (of what God has done in Jesus), supplication (for the safety, unity, and holiness of the church and the coming of the kingdom), and doxological praise. The blessings thank God for the gifts of creation and for the “holy vine of David,” that is, for Israel, from which follow the remembrance of Jesus, the supplication for the present church, and the eschatological invocation of the coming kingdom. The prayer closes with *Maranatha*, an Aramaic term that, depending on its inflection, can mean either “The Lord has come,” or “Come, Lord!”⁵² Thus, the prayer bespeaks the already-not yet reality the church experienced, sharing in the life of the Messiah yet, in the Eucharist, celebrating also the anticipation of the full coming of God’s reign in him.

Andrea Bieler and Luise Schottroff explain the implications of the fact that the *Didache*, belongs to a non-Jewish environment:

The text reveals the existence of Christian communities that were not Jewish in origin and yet were thoroughly rooted in Jewish tradition. They regard themselves as those who have come to Israel through God’s grace, a community who take nothing away from Israel and inherit nothing. The ‘holy vine of David’ has been revealed to the community through Jesus (9:2). ... As we already saw when we discussed the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 59. Léon-Dufour cites Psalms 23:5; 16:5; and 116:13.

⁵⁰ See Mary C. Boys, *Has God Only One Blessing?: Judaism as a Source of Christian Self-Understanding* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000), 75-85, 102.

⁵¹ Robert Cabié, *The Eucharist, The Church at Prayer*, ed. A. G. Martimort, trans. Matthew O’Connell, vol. 2 (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1986), 25. Translation of the full text of *Didache*, nos 9 and 10, the Eucharistic material, may be found at pp. 23-24. On the dating of the *Didache*, as well as another translation, see Thomas O’Loughlin, *The Didache: A Window on the Earliest Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 25-27, 161-71.

⁵² See Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory*, 197-98.

covenant theology of the early Christian Eucharist,⁵³ the Gentile church at this time was not seen to be separated from Israel in any negative sense. It has received honorary membership ... Jesus Messiah has shown it the way to the God of Israel. Israel's ancient hope for the healing of the community of nations is expressed again here.⁵⁴

Thus, the document is a treasure in its conveying both how some early Christians followed Jesus' command, "Do this in memory of me," and how even as the mission spread quickly among gentiles, the Jewish character of both the prayer and the Messianic reign of God could not be dispensed with, even if tensions between the nascent church and emergent rabbinic Judaism had already begun to flare up.

The other early voice we have for the Eucharist is Justin, a Palestinian from a Greek pagan family who eventually converted to Christianity and became a prolific writer and defender of Christianity for some thirty years before his martyrdom in Rome in 165. Only two of his writings survive, one of which, found in fragments, is the oldest known Christian apology (or defense) against Judaism, a mid-second century witness to what would gradually become a "supersessionist"⁵⁵ understanding of the church in relation to Judaism. Shortly before composing that tract, however, Justin wrote to the emperor his *First Apology*, defending the reasonableness of Christianity, which includes descriptions of baptism and the Eucharist. Justin speaks of the assembly of the church, one person presiding, a lector proclaiming readings from the apostles and prophets, the president exhorting all to imitate what they have heard, and then all the faithful standing to offer prayers. He continues:

When the prayers have concluded, we greet one another with a kiss. Then bread and a cup containing water and wine are brought to him who presides over the assembly. He takes these and then gives praise and glory to the Father of all things through the name of his Son and of the Holy Spirit. He offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at his hands. When the presider has concluded these prayers and the thanksgiving, all present express their consent by saying "Amen." In Hebrew this word means "so be it." And after the presider and all the people have given their consent, those whom we call deacons give to each of those present a portion of the eucharistic bread and wine and water and take the same to those who are absent.⁵⁶

Thus within a few Christian generations we have an account of the Eucharist that resonates with the features of Luke's Emmaus story: presider (in the story, Jesus), assembly (disciples in Luke), unfolding of the Scriptures, and the table ritual of taking, blessing, breaking, and sharing. Justin continues with a straightforward explanation of what the community believes in doing this:

⁵³ Present author's note: See above, ms pp. 25-33.

⁵⁴ Andrea Bieler and Luise Schottroff, *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread, and Resurrection* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 65-66.

⁵⁵ "Supersessionism, from the Latin, *supersedere* (to sit upon, to preside over), is the theological claim that Christians have replaced the Jews as God's people because the Jews rejected Jesus ... Judaism is obsolete, its covenant abrogated." Boys, *Has God Only One Blessing?*, 10-11.

⁵⁶ In Lawrence J. Johnson, *Worship in the Early Church: An Anthology of Historical Sources* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2009), 67-68.

We call this food the ‘Eucharist.’ No one is permitted to partake of it except those who believe that the things we teach are true and who have been washed in the bath for the forgiveness of sins and unto rebirth and who live as Christ directed. We do not receive these as if they were ordinary bread and ordinary drink, but just as Jesus our Savior was made of flesh through God’s word and assumed flesh and blood for our salvation, so also the food over which the thanksgiving has been said becomes the flesh and blood of Jesus who was made flesh, doing so to nourish and transform our own flesh and blood.⁵⁷

As we saw earlier, here again is the ancient Mediterranean/Semitic holistic understanding of the human person in motion: The Eucharistic flesh and blood of Christ transforms the bodies of the baptized, empowering them to “live as Christ directed.” This they do, Justin goes on to explain, by living in unity, offering mutual instruction, and helping the needy.

For all that wealth of information, Justin nonetheless leaves various aspects of the ritual vague,⁵⁸ not the least of which is the lengthy “prayers and thanksgiving” the president says over the bread and cup. Fragments of two Eastern anaphoras from the third-century exist. Only from the fourth century forward do we have complete extant Eucharistic prayers, which largely sustain the basic thanksgiving-petition structure of the long Jewish *berakoth*, recast in terms of Christ Jesus, while nonetheless demonstrating much variation in the details of their anamneses, supplications, and doxologies. The sacramental dimension of the Eucharistic action comes through an increasingly formalized anamnesis, “which expresses the ‘today’ of the mystery being commemorated: the bread and wine become sacraments of the self-offering of the dead and risen Christ.”⁵⁹ Here again we find variety in this element, with the offering-in-remembrance often including not only commemoration of the saving acts of Jesus in the past but also an expectant reminder of the promised future coming of Christ. As for the supplication or petitioning of divine power, the part of the prayer called the *epiclesis*, ancient churches invoked in a few cases the Messiah or the Word, while others beseeched either the Son or the Father to send the Spirit to abide in the gifts and, in many cases, the assembled church sharing them.⁶⁰ By the end of this period throughout the churches (although not in the Roman Canon) the power the epiclesis invoked on gifts and people was that of the Holy Spirit, the divine agent of creation and bodily transformation.⁶¹

In analyzing the Eucharistic prayers in this period (the fourth to eighth centuries) we must keep in mind the Trinitarian and Christological controversies through which the church only gradually arrived at creedal consensus in ecumenical councils. Even then, the decisions of the councils at Nicaea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon were called symbols and used as standards, rather than set formulas to be recited word for word in each local church’s liturgy. The orthodox consensus about the persons and power of Father, Son, and

⁵⁷ Ibid., 68.

⁵⁸ For Bradshaw’s cautions, see *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, 98-99.

⁵⁹ Cabié, *The Eucharist*, 35.

⁶⁰ See Bradshaw, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, 136-37.

⁶¹ In his catechetical homilies the fourth-century Syrian bishop Theodore of Mopsuestia produced a masterly synthesis of orthodox teaching on the Holy Spirit’s role in creation, incarnation, resurrection, and sacraments. See Bruce T. Morrill, “The Many Bodies of Worship: Locating the Spirit’s Work,” in *Bodies of Worship: Explorations in Theory and Practice*, ed. Bruce T. Morrill (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), 19-37.

Spirit, nonetheless, gradually found expression in the Eucharistic prayers of the churches embracing it. At the same time, the ritual environment in which local churches celebrated the rites necessarily shifted from large houses (as late as the third century) to basilicas, a style of public building used for administering justice, political assemblies, and other civic or social gatherings. The basic structure was a vast rectangular space with rows of interior columns supporting the roof and, often, a semicircular apse at one end, where was seated the presiding officer or judge. In the case of the church, the apse became the location of the presiding minister (bishop), altar table, and reading table (ambo), all facing the assembly. While much variety in details of design and decoration evolved markedly between East and West, the overall impact of an increasingly imperial-style space, vesture, and ritual gestures inevitably impacted how people experienced and understood the Eucharist.

The history going forward from the early church into subsequent periods up to modernity is, of course, complex and fraught with controversies, many divisive, as could only be the case given how central and powerful a ritual the Eucharist is in a social-cultural-political entity as wide reaching as Christianity. My purpose in this article, however, has been to focus on the primordial sources for the church's belief in and celebration of the real, abiding presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist so as to get at the purpose for the rite: its participants' transformation as members of Christ's body.

REGNUM SPIRITI: THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND NEOPAGAN SPIRITUALITY

Mark Saucy*

The yearning of the human spirit for the transcendent—for contact with the Divine which is both personal and transformative, takes different profiles within and outside of the church. Outside one can often hear the profession of a “spirituality that is not religious,” while within the church spiritual formation is the rubric for various projects intended to recover to the existential heart of Christianity. In their own ways both are seeking to move beyond mere advocacy and apologetic for religious lists of beliefs.

For Christians the person of Jesus Christ is obviously central to spirituality inside his church, but strangely enough his core message of the kingdom of God finds little place in accounting for the present transformative and personal experience of the faith. Jesus preached the kingdom as both present and future, but in spiritual formation discussions the kingdom remains largely sidelined as the goal of the transformative process or somehow the nebulous domain of its activity.¹

In this paper I want to suggest that Jesus’ teaching of the present nature of the kingdom is integral both to the church’s understanding of its own spirituality profile and also to its engagement with the rival spirituality that calls itself Neopagan.² I will do this in three parts.

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¹ The Already-Not Yet consensus on the kingdom has been building since the period following WWII. For an overview of its development, see Eldon Jay Epp “Mediating Approaches to the Kingdom: Werner Georg Kummel and George Eldon Ladd,” in *Kingdom of God in Twentieth-Century Interpretation*, ed. Wendell Willis (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), pp. 35-52; and Russell D. Moore, *The Kingdom of Christ: The New Evangelical Perspective* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004).

For the kingdom theme in current discussions of Spiritual Formation, see the offerings of Bruce Chilton, “Kingdom of God,” *Encyclopedia of Religious and Spiritual Development*, eds. Elizabeth M. Dowling and W. George Scarlett (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006), pp. 249-251; John L. Kater Jr., “Reign of God,” *The New Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, ed. Philip Sheldrake (Louisville: WJK, 2005), pp. 535-536; and Thomas P. Rausch, “Kingdom of God,” *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1993), pp. 584-586. A notable exception to these would be Dallas Willard, who places the kingdom central in spiritual formation project (Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998], chap. 1). For the kingdom, Willard approves of the Already-Not Yet moniker of Ladd (28), but so presses the kingdom’s presence in Jesus’ announcement and ministry that by the end one is left wondering of what the kingdom’s Not Yet consists and whether his message would have been understood by first century Jews to whom Jesus appears simply preaching the kingdom without definition (cf. Mark 1:15 and pars.). Regarding Jesus’ proclamation, Willard says, “the kingdom of God is not essentially a social or political reality at all” (p. 25), but something only existential and personal akin to the range of God’s effective will in the believer’s life (pp. 21, 25). Jesus’ announcement that the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt 4:17) means the availability of divine life for all who would submit their own kingdom to God’s by dependence upon and confidence in Jesus (pp, 20, 27).

² Neopaganism is a subset of “alternative” or “countercultural” spirituality (New Age) wherein

In the first part of this essay I will locate the presence of the kingdom in the person and work of the Holy Spirit from the teaching of Jesus and the NT. Second, I will utilize the kingdom-Spirit interchange to identify the primary emphases of the kingdom spirituality for the present age. This will then lead in part three to a reflection on these kingdom priorities against the spirituality of Neopaganism in our culture. The conclusion will be a sharpening of the key elements between Christian and Neopagan spirituality for the purpose of refining our own attention to the kingdom's aims for spirituality inside the church of Jesus Christ, and so that we might be most effective for those still outside the church.

Part 1: Kingdom Spirituality in the Person of the Spirit

Jesus' message is a kingdom message from beginning to end, as are his deeds kingdom deeds.³ Even after the resurrection Jesus continues his kingdom proclamation until the

“alleged spiritual powers are utilized to enact change, often through ritual or the occult (Jon P. Bloch, *New Spirituality, Self and Belonging: How New Agers and Neo Pagans Talk about Themselves* [Westport/London: Praeger, 1998], p. 1). According to its adherents Neopaganism is “a broad term covering contemporary practice of many nature-based spiritual paths that honor the Divine as immanent in creation. Some Neo-Pagan traditions try to reconstruct pre-Christian pagan religions; others base practices on ancient pantheons newly interpreted for a modern world. Neo-Pagans are generally polytheists, honoring more than one Deity, although many Neo-Pagans are also monists, believing that the many Gods and Goddesses are all aspects of a single Source.” (Cecylina and Dagonet Dewr, “Neo-Paganism -The Divine In All Creation,” *Branches Magazine* [1994]; available at: <http://www.paganpride.org/resources/pdf/NeoPaganism.pdf>; cf. also the definition offered by Craig S. Hawkins, “Neo-paganism and Witchcraft,” in *Truth and Error*, ed. Alan W. Gomes [Zondervan, 1998], p. 68). Perhaps the most concise definition is that reported by Sarah Pike of a Neopagan psychologist, Dennis Carpenter, who considers Neopagans as “nature-worshipping pantheists” (Sarah M. Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* [Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001], p. 27).

A more insidious side of Neopaganism, one that is not as readily offered for public consumption in Neopagan sources like those noted above, includes the harnessing of occultic powers and esoteric knowledge for personal gain and influence over others. Occultic cursing and hex “layings” are Neopagan expressions of this quest of knowledge and power in addition to other rituals of personal transformation like the reading of Tarot cards (cf., for example, Paul Huson, *Mastering Witchcraft: A Practical Guide for Witches, Warlocks and Covens* by Paul Huson [Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, 2006], chapter 6, “Vengeance and Attack”; and the older seminal work *17 Verses and Curses* by Marie Louise Burke (San Francisco: Marie and Jackson Burke, 1940). Wiccan-style metapsychometry offers “health, happiness, power, wealth; you name it, it can be yours” and the ability to manipulate enemies with harnessed negative energy (Gavin and Yvonne Frost, *Meta-psychometry: Key to Power and Abundance* [West Nyack, NY: Parker, 1978], 11, 15-16). Peter Jones, who has widely studied the Neopagan movement through his numerous works (*The Gnostic Empire Strikes Back: An Old Heresy for the New Age*, [1992] *Gospel Truth, Pagan Lies* [1999], *Spirit Wars: Pagan Revival in Christian America*, [1997], *Capturing the Pagan Mind* [2003], and *On Global Wizardry: Techniques of Pagan Spirituality and a Christian Response* [2010]), has recently chronicled the rise of a more organized Neopaganism in the public square under the guise of addressing the world's economic and ecological problems. The ultimate agenda of such groups calls for complete change of world view with elimination of all opponents. See Jones' essay “Confronting Neopaganism in the Culture and the Church,” available at: <<http://truthxchange.com/lectures/2011/04/12/confronting-neopaganism-in-the-culture-and-the-church/>>.

³ Mark 1:15—Jesus begins his public ministry by preaching the very message of John: “The kingdom of God is at hand.” It is the same message his disciples preach (Matt 3:11 [John], Matt 4:17 [Jesus], Matt 10:7 [disciples]). The kingdom of God, or God's reign over his creation, is the theme of

moment of his ascension (see Acts 1:3ff.). But what is significant for our purposes here is the connection of the Holy Spirit's presence in Jesus to the presence and activity of the kingdom of God on earth. Jesus' own statement in Matt 12:28 (par. Luke 11:20), "If I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you," marks a beginning of such a connection. What the prophets had foretold of a new movement of the Spirit that would eventually permeate the entire human social and political order, Jesus says had arrived in the Spirit's working now through him. Theologian Jürgen Moltmann has thus rightly observed, "...the Spirit makes [Jesus] the 'kingdom of God in person.'"⁴

Jesus' understanding of the Spirit's presence as the locus of kingdom power in the present age is taken up in different ways in the rest of the NT. In the Pauline corpus, for example, the Spirit-kingdom connection is explicit as the basis of an argument Paul makes to the Romans for unity in morally neutral questions: "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17). Similarly, the writer to the Hebrews uses then-current categories and speaks of the possibility of now tasting of the "powers of the age to come" for those in peril of an inadequate faith (Heb 6:4). Between the two passages, kingdom, Spirit, and the power of the age to come are at least in some degree present realities.

The Spirit-kingdom connection is implicit in the way the kingdom theme developed in the early church's kerygma. Specifically, Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels repeatedly preaches about the kingdom (95+ times), but we find little mention of the Spirit (13 times) in those works. Conversely, Paul and John, whose attention is primarily given to realized eschatology, speaks little of kingdom *per se* (βασιλεία and cognates only 23 times for Paul and 21 times in John's gospel), but much of the Spirit (110 times for Paul; 17 times for John). This interchange of terminology has prompted further inquiry at deeper levels. For example, Hamilton's investigation of the common eschatological framework the Synoptics share with Paul brings him to the conclusion that, "Just as in the Synoptics the future kingdom breaks into the present in the action of Jesus, so in Paul the future age has broken into the present by the action of the Spirit."⁵ Likewise, Youngma Cho's study of common themes of sonship, life/eternal life, resurrection and righteousness between the Synoptics and Paul support the conclusion that life in the kingdom for Jesus is the equivalent to life in the Spirit for Paul.⁶

Jesus' preaching mentioned more than 90 times in the Synoptic Gospels. His message is the "good news [τὸ εὐαγγέλιον] of the kingdom" (Matt 4:23, 9:35). The miracles of Jesus also function as enacted parables of the kingdom he preached in their occasion, power, subjects, motive and kind (see Mark Saucy, "Miracles and Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom of God," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 153 [1996], pp. 281-307.)

⁴ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), p. 4. Moltmann echoes Origen of Alexandria's earlier description of Jesus as the *autobasileia*—the kingdom itself (Matt tom 14.7). The same idea is present in Jesus' words to the Pharisees in Luke 17:20-21 that by means of his presence the kingdom is "among you."

⁵ N. Q. Hamilton, *The Holy Spirit and Eschatology in Paul* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1957), pp. 23-24.

⁶ Youngmo Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom in the Writings of Luke and Paul* (Eugene, OR: Wipf Stock, 2005), chap. 3. Cho has an extensive bibliography of Spirit-kingdom biblical studies. Theological reflection connecting kingdom and Spirit begins as early as the Montanists (2nd century) and later among the Cappadocian fathers (4th-5th centuries), who asserted distinct kingdoms for the Father, Son and Spirit

The bottom line of all this for biblical spirituality is that in the person of the Holy Spirit, who is now poured out and active in the church as the one guiding believers' formation into the image of Christ, we have real activity of the *kingdom of God*, or better, activity of the power of the kingdom, as Cho puts it.⁷ In the present age all questions about the kingdom are in fact questions of the Spirit and vice-versa. The life and power of the Spirit quickening believers is real kingdom life and kingdom power. Armed with this understanding we are prepared to take the next step and sketch some specific aims and means of the Spirit-kingdom for the present age that engage human spirituality.

Part 2: The Locus of Kingdom Spirituality in the Present Age.

Short of undertaking a complete pneumatology, which is where the preceding discussion would in fact compel us, the burden of this section will be to present under three headings the principle emphases of the Spirit-kingdom for spirituality in the present age. These three headings bring into strong relief the particular aims and means of the Spirit-kingdom in the present day, and as such serve to identify the chief areas of conflict between the kingdom of God and the spirituality of Neopaganism in the present day.

1. *Announcement and apprehension of the grace of forgiveness.* The first locus of the Spirit-kingdom activity in relation to spiritual formation combines two prominent activities of Spirit in the present age. First is the well-known work of the Spirit to empower the proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ according to the familiar words of Acts 1:8. When the promise of the Spirit has come, Jesus simply says the disciples "will be my witnesses."⁸ A point that is not to be missed however is that this proclamation is *in se* a word specifically about the *repentance for the forgiveness of sins*. Both in the Lukan "Great Commission" text in Luke 24:36-49, (esp. v. 47—"...that repentance for forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem"), and in the record of Acts, it is forgiveness of sins that is played out as the particular character of the Spirit-empowered message.⁹ The rest of the NT also connects the Spirit's activity to this

ruling sequentially through history (cf. Tertullian *De exhortatione castitatis* 4 [MPL2.969] and *De jejuniis* [MPL 2.1020-23]). Ambrose is another who makes an early connection of the Spirit to the kingdom through Rom 14:17 and Matt 12:28 in his work, *On the Holy Spirit*, 3:20 (cited by J. P. Lewis, "The Kingdom of God is...Righteousness Joy and Peace in the Holy Spirit (Rom 14:17): A Survey of Interpretation," *Restoration Quarterly* 40 [1998], p. 62). The Spanish reformer Juan Valdes said, "by the 'Kingdom of God'...he [Paul] means the rule of the Holy Spirit, for it is by his Holy Spirit that we begin to enter, meaning that we, in this present life, take possession of the Kingdom of God, and that in the life eternal we shall continue in it, rising again glorious, impassible, and immortal" (*Commentary on Romans* [LCC 25.315; cited by Lewis, p. 62). Calvin also made a direct connection with the Spirit's agency and the kingdom of God (*Institutes*, 3.20.42; cited by Lewis, p. 63). Joachim of Fiore, a 16th century Calabrian abbot, called for a distinct kingdom of the Spirit in his theology of history, though for him the Spirit's kingdom was likely still future (Mark Saucy, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* [Dallas: Word, 1997], pp. 215–16 nn. 24, 25).

⁷ Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom*, p. 105.

⁸ On the missionary emphasis of the Spirit in Luke, see especially, Cho, *Spirit and Kingdom*, and John Michael Penney, *The Missionary Emphasis of Lukan Pneumatology* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic, 1997). According to H. C. Kee, the primary role of the new community [in Acts] is proclamation (H. C. Kee, *Good News to the Ends of the Earth: The Theology of Acts* [London: SCM, 1990], p. 89; cited by Penney, p. 56).

⁹ The theme of forgiveness (ἄφεσις) functions as the rubric of the church's proclamation in Acts

message of forgiveness so much so that Michael Welker, a prominent contemporary scholar of pneumatology, argues that forgiveness of sins is “the central theme of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁰

The Spirit’s promotion of the message of forgiveness engages the second activity of the Spirit under this heading and the one most significant for biblical spirituality. When the message of repentance and forgiveness is first received the believer enters into the new life of the Spirit—John even says the believer *is* spirit in the rebirth (John 3:6), but this does not mark the end of the Spirit’s work on this count. Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 2:12 show us the substance of the Spirit-kingdom’s activity in our ongoing spiritual formation: “now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, *that we might know the things freely given* [χαρισθέντα] *to us by God.*” However, it is important to note that with these words Paul is not offering a vague expression of God’s favor and blessing the Holy Spirit brings to us. No, grace [χάρις] for Paul is very concrete in the cross of Christ which defines all of God’s daily benefits, large and small. It is in the forgiveness of the cross where the Spirit’s work in spirituality follows his work in proclamation of the gospel of forgiveness of sins.¹¹ It is also why it is no accident that for Paul χάρις is both the event of Christ and also a near synonym for the Spirit (at least according to the New Testament scholar, James Dunn).¹²

In short, the Spirit (-kingdom) works in the believer to deepen the understanding of the “graced” state wrought in the forgiveness of the cross. Here the Spirit plies the bundle of profound salvation blessing-realities that we are elect, adopted, joint heirs with Christ, sons, beloved, washed, justified, sanctified, God’s dwelling/temple, etc.¹³ But he does it always in a “Christ-shaped way,” as Dunn says.¹⁴ For in Christ’s cross we see God’s true disposition toward us—how he indeed accepts us to himself freely and unconditionally in our belief. This is why the writer of Hebrews can remind us that it is grace, not “foods,” that “strengthen the heart” (Heb 13:9), and why Paul says we are transformed by gazing into the face of Jesus (2 Cor 3:18-4:6). For in Christ we see the One who loves and accepts; the One

2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18, Cf. also the conceptual parallels to forgiveness in ‘washing away’, ἀπολούω, Acts 22:16) or ‘wiping away’ sins (ἐξαλείφω, Acts 3:19).

¹⁰ Michael Welker, “The Holy Spirit,” *Theology Today* 46 (1989), pp. 5-20, citation p. 6. Welker’s major pneumatology is *God the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994).

¹¹ For Paul, grace is oriented to the “historical manifestation of salvation in Christ... God’s favor is identical with the crucifixion” (H. Conzelmann, “χάρις,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 9: p. 394).

¹² James D. G. Dunn, “Towards the Spirit of Christ: The Emergence of the Distinctive Features of Christian Pneumatology,” in *The Work of the Spirit: Pneumatology and Pentecostalism*, ed. Michael Welker (Cambridge, UK/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), p. 19. Cosgrove has demonstrated the association of cross and Spirit in Galatians. According to Cosgrove Paul’s rhetoric about justification by faith versus law is really aimed at the ultimate issue of having or not having the Spirit by participating in the cross (C. Cosgrove, *The Cross and the Spirit: A Study of the Argument and Theology of Galatians* [Macon: Mercer, 1988], chap. 1).

¹³ Gordon Fee finds the apprehension of these and other “graces” specifically connected to the Spirit’s work (Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994], pp. 841-842).

¹⁴ James D. G. Dunn, *The Christ and the Spirit, Pneumatology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 78.

who is radically *for us*. Only when convinced of such things at the deepest part of our heart are we free to come out from hiding in the shadows of our moralism and be wholly genuine and real.¹⁵ This is the kingdom's work in our spirituality today.

2. *Unique lordship of Jesus Christ*. The heart's capture by forgiveness/love wins its allegiance and this is also the Spirit-kingdom's work in biblical spirituality. The Spirit is the only means, Paul says, by which anyone can willfully take upon himself the lordship of Christ: "...no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus is accursed"; and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor 12:3). Whether Jew or Greek—each with their own cultural resistance to Jesus' lordship¹⁶—the NT makes clear that at its core spirituality truly amounts to transformation into greater submission to Christ *and* transformation out of slavery to rival "lords." It is also just as clear that the NT brooks no claim for neutrality in this struggle. Human beings are willing subjects of one of two kingdoms—darkness or light (Col 1:13), that each are ruled by two rival lords seeking domination of their subjects, albeit in different ways.¹⁷ Any spirituality that rejects the categorical and unique claim of Jesus Christ to be lord of all is party to the dominion of darkness, a fellowship with demons (1 Cor 10), dead idols (1 Thess), advancing *the* lie with futile speculations (Ro 1:18-25), and under the domination of "the prince of the power of the air who is now working in the sons of disobedience" (Eph 2:1). Undoubtedly, these are difficult and intolerant words.

This contention for the lordship of Jesus Christ in the believer's life too is the Spirit-kingdom's work in the present age, and it is a work that sounds the repentance-forgiveness refrain in another key—a darker key, perhaps. Nevertheless, it is a work of the Spirit that raises the believer's awareness of the deceit of other gods' pretense to satisfy our deepest longings. It is thus a work of the Spirit-kingdom to leverage the NT's warnings to believers against idols (1 John 5:21), alien heart treasure (Matt 6:19-21), serving other "masters" (Luke 16:13), being conformed to or having friendship with the world (Rom 12:1; James 4:4), etc. So, when Paul exhorts us to stand firm in the strength of the Lord (Eph 6:10), to take every thought captive (2 Cor 10:3-5.), to pray at all times in the Spirit (Eph 6:18), he is making profound statements of the locus of the Spirit-kingdom's present work to press the unique lordship of Jesus Christ in the lives of the sons of light.

¹⁵ John H. Coe, "Resisting the Temptation of Moral Formation: Opening to Spiritual Formation in the Cross of the Spirit," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 1 (2008), pp. 54-78.

¹⁶ Jesus' lordship confronted Jewish monotheism and Greek polytheism. See Darrell L. Bock, "Embracing Jesus in a First Century Context: What Can It Teach Us about Spiritual Commitment?" *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 3 (2010), pp. 128-139.

¹⁷ David Brown describes the Spirit as the means of Jesus' lordship over believers in a mode of the believer's transformation: "The Spirit is distinguished from the Father by intention, namely the Spirit intends or presses to be 'subject' of our lives... Paul thought of the indwelling of the Spirit always as subject which gave the individual Christian a pure channel of grace. A pure channel of grace is not aware of this in the same way that we are not aware of being in good health or the way that we become 'engrossed' while reading a novel. Awareness of sickness and consciousness of the fact that we are reading means a separation of subject/object that is different from the indwelling Spirit" (David Brown, *The Divine Trinity* [La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1985], 201-202). The channel of grace Jesus intends for his subjects in transformation always allows them to retain choice. "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thess 5:19). "...the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" (1 Cor 14:32). Demonization depicted in the Gospels is anything but. It leaves the victim helpless and self-destructive.

3. *Presence and perseverance in community.* The character of the believer's own experience of Christ through the Spirit-kingdom has a collective dimension in the community of the church. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor 12:13). In this collective dimension of the Spirit-kingdom, believers can experience kingdom power (*δύναμις*) directed to mutual edification through service to one another in love (Eph 4:10–16; Gal 3:5; 1 Thess 4:8). The kingdom's power can be manifest in miraculous expressions (1 Cor 2:4–5; Gal 3:5; Rom 15:19) and the less spectacular, but in many ways more potent, power to remain steadfast in the faith (Col 1:11), abound in hope (Rom 15:13), and to grasp the fullness of Christ's life indwelling them (Eph 3:16–10). Paul's rare use of kingdom-language with regards to the present age shows up in this kind of context for the church at Rome. The kingdom is manifest in their presence when by the Spirit they learn to defer to one another in matters of conscience: "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness, joy and peace in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14:17).

Gathered in community and with each one empowered with the new life of forgiveness in Christ, the believer has opportunity to learn both to receive and give the forgiven life. Since they have been forgiven they can forgive (Col 3:13). Captured more and more by the love of God in the cross, they can give more of themselves to one another. For the same reason important NT thematic of the Spirit (kingdom) is *unity and reconciliation*—which is another nod to the corporate nature of biblical spirituality. The radical possibility that Jew and Greek could unite in one body for Paul is only because of the Spirit. As Fee notes: "...for Paul both the revelation of it and the actual inclusion of Jews and Gentiles together in Christ (1:13–14; 2:18, 22) are the work of the Spirit.... Such an understanding could have come only through the Spirit's revelation, both through Jews' and Gentiles' common experience of the Spirit (1 Cor 12:13) and the cognitive understanding of what Christ and the Spirit had done."¹⁸

The collective nature of the Spirit-kingdom's work, though appearing last in this taxonomy, really needs to be seen as the dynamic underscoring the entire project of human spirituality for the present time. Namely, it is in a spiritually-formed *community* that the Spirit has his most potent means of proclamation to the world of the redeeming power of forgiveness in Christ (John 13:35). It is also in this kind of community that believers together grow in their own apprehension of God's gracious acceptance as they see it reflected in the deeds of love and forgiveness of their brothers and sisters. Finally, it is in the Spirit-formed community that Christ's unique lordship for each one is pursued and defended most effectively.

Part 3: The Kingdom of God and the Rival Spirituality of Neopaganism

With the contours of the kingdom spirituality in the present age now sketched out, we are in a position to sharpen some contrasts with the alternative spirituality of Neopaganism. As we shall see for each of the present Spirit-kingdom objectives noted above, Neopagans make radically different claims. The stark differences in the two kingdoms on these grounds will serve to focus the church as (1) the kingdom's principal work among its people in this age and (2) the core of the kingdom's challenge to Neopagan spirituality.

¹⁸ Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*, p. 852.

Before addressing the first Spirit-kingdom priority of advancing the word of grace in forgiveness, we shall set the overall context of the Neopagan worldview in one fundamental belief shared by all Neopagans. This would be the assertion of radical self-autonomy. Whether it stems from the belief that each person is the God/ess, which is very widespread in Neopaganism,¹⁹ or not, every Neopagan worshipper has considerable latitude to construct a very personal system of belief.²⁰ Indeed such latitude is the ideal and hallmark of the Neopagan worldview: each person's beliefs and practice *should* be their own.²¹ In Neopaganism of all stripes, everyone in this world is meant to find their "own way" in an ongoing journey of self-exploration and self knowledge. The range of individuals in the world therefore equals the effective diversity of the individual pathways that are possible.²² It cannot be understated how this common capital of the individual's autonomy undergirds everything in Neopaganism and really functions as the matrix for the Neopagan's rival spirituality to the kingdom of God in the present age. Now on to the Spirit-kingdom priorities as reflected in Neopaganism.

1. *Atonement as resolution of the human plight.* As we have seen, the Spirit-kingdom in this age is intent on advancing the message and experience of grace in the cross of Christ. This message naturally entails an account of the urgent need of humanity for this grace, so the nexus of plight and solution runs together in this first point. According to the Spirit-kingdom narrative, the human plight is languishing under the effects of sin—personally, corporately, and cosmically. The choice for autonomy from God, which summarizes the Bible's account of the source of this ruin, yields corruption in all dimensions of human relationality: self to God, self to self, self to other selves, and self to the rest of the creation. Into this ruin comes the kingdom's message of grace, of a radical move by God to win the heart of his human creatures by coming and healing the broken relationship through his incarnate Son's death and offering forgiveness and wholeness to all who would turn from

¹⁹ "Goddess" is the symbol for the divine in which all reality, including human beings, subsists: "She *is* reality, the manifest deity, omnipresent in all of life, in each of us. The Goddess is not separate from the world—She *is* the world, and all things in it: moon, sun, earth, star, stone, seed, flowing river, wind, wave, leaf and branch, bud and blossom, fang and claw, woman and man" (Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979], p. 8; also Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers and Other Pagans in America Today*, 2nd ed. [Boston: Beacon, 1986], chap. 3).

²⁰ This radical individuality is understood within a common broad ideological context of the definitions offered in n. 2 above. The one rule of ethics governing most Neopagans is the basic Wiccan Creed—"An ye harm none, do what ye will" (Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon*, p. 101; cf. also the general contours of the Neopagan/witchcraft worldview in Raymond Buckland, *Buckland's Complete Book of Witchcraft* [St. Paul, MN: Llewellyn, 1998], pp. 13-24, along with a statement on the ethics of witchcraft in Janet and Stewart Farrar, *A Witch's Bible* [Blaine, Wash.: Phoenix, 1984], chapter 13).

²¹ Spirituality in Neopaganism is not assumed to involve anyone but the self. The emphasis is on the individual's *self story* (Bloch, *New Spirituality*, p. 30). These stories may be mutually contradicting to the stories of others, not just in application, but in the perceived nature of reality. Contradiction is not threatening in Neopaganism (Bloch, *New Spirituality*, 3). Anti-*Absolutism* welcomes and even requires it (Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance*, p. 188), which has sponsored the judgment that Neopagans seem to be "extreme religious postmodernists" (Sarah Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves: Contemporary Pagans and the Search for Community* [Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001], p. 222).

²² On the radical individualism of Neopagans, see the helpful summaries by Pike (*Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves*, p. 27) and Bloch (*New Spirituality*, pp. 31-39).

their autonomy to lives of dependence upon and ordered underneath God's provision as Life-giver and Sustainer.

The Neopagan narrative, because of the template of radical individualism, rejects the kingdom account of plight-to-solution at all points. To begin, the human condition is not a matter of sin requiring forgiveness. For Neopagans, such an assertion is part of the "only one truth" message of Christianity that has wrought only untold misery.²³ No, while there is definitely need of healing—healing of ourselves, our communities and our planet—Neopagans see this healing achieved through individuals gaining new knowledge of their "true self" that is already in harmony with the universe.²⁴ We suffer and cause suffering because we are disassociated with the forces (God/esses) of being in the universe. Often for Neopagans this solution of self-knowledge and self-transformation is tied to affirmation of the divinity of all nature (pantheism), including the deity of each person. Genuine self-exploration will reveal this God/ess within and show the way out of one's detachment from the Divine in the rest of the universe, too. Magic and occult practices are means of both this self transformation and finding harmony with the ultimate Reality in all of nature.²⁵ Some Neopagans believe that a collocation of individuals who are in harmony with the Reality of nature and practicing their occult craft together can synergistically effect greater healing of the disassociation suffered by modern humanity.²⁶

2. *Unique lordship of Jesus Christ.* The second prong of the Spirit-kingdom's program in the present, that of the unique lordship of Jesus Christ, is also roundly rejected by Neopagans. For some, the common capital of anti-Christianity brings them to reject Jesus altogether as a mere construct of the "Great Man" spirituality.²⁷ Others, though, will grant Jesus status

²³ Margot Adler, a prominent Neopagan spokesperson, emphatically asserts there is no such thing as sin and no one way to salvation (Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon*, pp. ix, 23). Valerie Voigt writes, "...we are aware of our own goodness and strength. We are not sinners and we know it. We don't have a Devil to blame our mistakes on and we need no Savior to save us from a non-existent Hell" (Voigt, "Being a Pagan in a 9-to-5 World," in *The Modern Craft Movement*, ed. Chas S. Clifton [St. Paul: Llewellyn, 1993], p. 173; so also Starhawk, *Spiral Dance*, pp. 11, 25). Radical anti-Christianity is another common capital of Neopagans. While individualism can make it more difficult to discern what Neopagans are *for*, there is no doubt about what they are *against*—whatever is perceived to them as mainstream Christianity. Bloch found the anti-Christian ethos very strong in the 22 Neopagan subjects of his study (Bloch, *New Spirituality*, pp. 4, 31). For an attempt at an historical account of the rivalry between Christianity and Pagans, see Buckland, *Complete Book of Witchcraft*, pp. 3-6.

²⁴ Pike's introduction gives a good account of the Neopagan concern for healing through reconnected union with the divine in the universe (Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves*, esp. p. xxi). See also Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon*, pp. vii-ix, 4, 24-38.

²⁵ Magic is useful because it is an "unlimiting experience." According to one Neopagan, "Magic consists of removing the limitations from what we *think* are the earthly and spiritual laws that bind or compel us." Through magic "we can be anything, because we are All" (Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves*, p. 12).

²⁶ Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves*, pp. xxii-xxiii.

²⁷ "...there are no comforting, all-knowing father figures who promise answers for everything at the price of one's personal autonomy" (Starhawk, *Spiral Dance*, p. 101; *Dreaming in the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics* [Boston: Beacon, 1988], pp. 21-22). One way or another, the model of Jesus as God incarnate who makes atonement for sin is considered by Neopagans to have been constructed by early Christians and is not true of the historical Jesus. In the literature one often finds exploitation of the Bauer Thesis about the "other Christianities" to explain the interpretation of Jesus in orthodox

within the overall Neopagan system. For these, the historical Jesus was a witch very capable with the occult.²⁸ Or, he was a bodhisattva, the highest of reincarnated beings who is no longer in need of reincarnation, but who does so to help others.²⁹ However, for all Neopagans, authoritatively “unique” anything, let alone “unique lordship,” is anathema. A world view that recognizes no authority but the individual must of necessity do away with Jesus Christ, “King of kings and Lord of lords.”

3. *Community of the forgiven.* The Spirit-created community that lies at the heart of the kingdom’s proclamation and transformational agenda for the present age is something of a conundrum for the Neopagan. This is because the desire for community does resonate at a very base level for them—Starhawk commits an entire chapter to processes for “Building Community”³⁰—yet the radical individualism endemic to Neopagan spirituality is fundamentally intolerant of it. Oil and water. This, of course, is not to say that community is always well-realized in the kingdom’s people. Indeed Neopagans are keen to the ways the Christian community can fail its professed end.³¹ Nevertheless the other-preferring love-ethic of the Spirit-kingdom is the only means to establishing community that is transformational to the individual and society. This potential is what utterly eludes Neopagan pursuit of spiritual community.

Sarah Pike’s work on Neopagan festivals is a study of the tension. For Neopagans festivals function as pilgrimages to self-awareness, as journeys to finding their “astral selves” in new sacred space away from *mundania*, as they call mainstream life.³² So laden with great expectations for self-transformation in the presence of others also on the same journey—people like themselves who are marginalized by the mainline populace—they arrive at their journey’s end in the festival’s campsite. Unfortunately, they soon learn that Neopagan ideals of egalitarian tolerance, inclusion *and* untrammled self-expression work better in isolation or in smaller more like-minded groups.³³ The solitary ethic of “do what thou wilt but harm none” quickly becomes qualified and circumscribed as the diverse individual expressions of the sacred collide together. Contention and division appears, just like that from the disconnected world of *mundania*. Authority figures arise with their voices rising over others as they set rules of comportment around the evening ritual Fire. “We are not trying to be drunken primitives,” one such authority will say, “but,” as Pike observes, “this is exactly what some festival goers are “trying to be.” For Maddog [a festival goer], chaotic behavior of

Christendom that Neopagans are against. See Farrar, *A Witch’s Bible*, pp. 115-116, 177-178.

²⁸ Doreen Valiente, *An ABC of Witchcraft* (Custer, Wash.: Phoenix, 1973), xvi; Janet and Stewart Farrar, *Witch’s Bible*, p. 302, n. 7.

²⁹ Janet and Stewart Farrar, *Witch’s Bible*, pp. 121-122. Arnold and Patricia Crowther consider Jesus to have been a witch who worked magic and led a coven (Crowther, *The Secrets of Ancient Witchcraft with Witches Tarot* [Secaucus, NJ: University Books, 1974], p. 164).

³⁰ Starhawk, *Dreaming in the Dark*, chapter 6.

³¹ Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves*, p. xiii.

³² Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves*, p. 210.

³³ Pike documents how festivals are occasions for formation of new home, alternative families and non-traditional kinship groups, tribes or clans (in Neopagan nomenclature) that maintain contact after festivals close. Unlike their blood relatives from *mundania*, from which Neopagans experience ostracism, the alternative families are selected of their own choice (Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves*, pp. 29-37).

this sort is sacred.”³⁴ For some, the path to self-transformation is ritual drumming—all night long ritual drumming—but this of course neglects those who wish to sleep. And the community’s evening ritual Fire is riven by what the inner voice of each participant says that ritual is for.

Conclusion

The struggle of Neopagan spirituality to realize a personalized transformational religion that does not neglect the importance of relational factors directs our conclusion in several directions. First, we are reminded of the answer to the Neopagans’ tension in the spirituality of the kingdom of God. In the intentions and power of the Holy Spirit, Christianity does have the Creator’s answer for what Neopagans are seeking for in spirituality that is both personal and transformative. The kingdom’s spirituality truly is something more than a list of beliefs, of dos and don’ts, of what institution/denominations one attends. But it is also important to realize that in the kingdom of God transformation does not take place in isolation from community. Spiritual Formation is not an individual quest in the body of Christ; it is a *communal, family* quest and this is the means to the spirituality the kingdom of God aims to advance. Unfortunately, there is much testimony, including that of many disillusioned and embittered Neopagans,³⁵ that the community of the kingdom on earth must always have an eye to its own charter as community of those forgiven by God’s grace in the cross of Christ.

And second, as Neopagan spirituality offers itself as a clear rival spirituality to that of the kingdom of God, it is important to be clear as to what fronts the rivalry is most keen. The three priority loci of the Spirit-kingdom—(1) proclamation and deepening apprehension of the grace of the cross of Christ, (2) his unique lordship, and (3) community created and sustained by grace—sharpen for us the points at which the kingdom’s stewards stand to be most productive because these are the areas where the Spirit is clearly active. Cultivation of these areas strengthen the church in its kingdom identity, which also establishes the means for the church to remain itself in the face of rival claims, such as those from Neopagans.

Derivatively, and finally, attention to the three Spirit-kingdom priorities also highlights where the counterclaim of Neopaganism should be addressed apologetically. Central is not that Neopagans employ the occult or magic. It is not the excesses of personal expression “outside the box” of conventional morality. It is not the belief in reincarnation that most hold. But it *is* the claim for a different lord; it *is* the claim for the radical self-autonomy that can offer no real community and admits no fault before God, others or creation. But these are not merely three talking points for apologetic dialogue and debate with Neopagans. What Neopagans, together with everybody else outside the pale of the gospel, need to hear and see from those of the Spirit-kingdom is the grace of Christ manifest in the community and family of the body of Christ. This is what made the early patristic church so potent. As Greer notes: “The example of Christian community life was probably more persuasive to

³⁴ Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves*, p. 214.

³⁵ One of Bloch’s subjects, “Jerry,” for example, states that he left the Catholic church because, “I couldn’t deal with the politics that go with that...And, now I can have my own religion” (Bloch, *New Spirituality*, p. 36). In the anti-Christian capital of Neopaganism, “politics” can mean anything from the intolerant views of the mainstream communities towards Neopagans to supposed dysfunctional “community” inside the community (Pike, *Earthly Bodies, Magical Selves*, p. xiii).

unbelievers than the proclamation of the Christian message. It is impossible to resist the conclusion that at one level the Church grew rapidly more because its common life acted as a magnet attracting people than because the Christians were effective in their public preaching.”³⁶

Such community is what Neopagans are seeking for; they know it, but they are trying to replicate it outside of the kingdom community. Unfortunately for many, when they tried the church they found something different than ought to be—something quick to condemn and something unable to see deep wounds that would eventually seek solace in the counterfeit of Neopaganism. Of course the commitment to radical self-autonomy inherent to the Neopagan world view cannot suffer the lordship of Jesus Christ, which is the basis of Christian community, but one wonders how many of those now enslaved in the counterfeit would have been open to a different road if the churches they tried had been more true to their calling. May the Lord of the Church give his people grace to show to the world the same grace and powerful life we were given on Calvary’s cross!

³⁶ Rowan A. Greer, *Broken Lights and Mended Lives* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986), pp. 122-123.

BEAUTIFUL INTERRELATION WITH NATURE: DIVINE HARMONIES AND CREATION'S FULFILLMENT

L. Clifton Edwards*

A powerful connection exists between natural beauty and the way in which human beings interact with the natural environment. For as we interact with nature, we not only perceive her beauty, but we must live our lives in and amongst it. Such interaction, says environmental philosopher, Holmes Rolston, is the substance of environmental aesthetics: “the beauty of life in dialectic with its environment, the landscape as a place of . . . satisfying adapted fit.”¹ Rolston emphasizes ecological science, but ecology² intertwines with the arts because art also fits humanity into an environment, such as through architecture and landscape painting. An ecological-artistic approach to environment relates to Paul Tillich’s theological approach: for him a human worldview expresses itself symbolically in relation to an environment, revealing something about both the world and humankind in their encounter. As a result of this encounter, the environment achieves a theological significance.³ In line with Tillich’s claim, Muslims, the Chinese, and Christian monastics all find paradise in their gardens, while aborigines find sacred space in their tribal homelands.⁴ Thus if natural beauty requires harmony with an environment, and encounter with environment indeed reveals something about the world and humankind symbolically, then beauty or ugliness in that encounter redoubles its theological significance and must be explored. A symbolic natural beauty, as natural revelation, could speak artistically amid nature’s vicissitudes and our disharmonious relations with nature, along the lines of Tillich’s revelatory styles in art. This “divine art,” to use Augustine’s term,⁵ would allow the religious percipient to “read” beauty as a leitmotiv within Creation’s ambivalent “text.”⁶ Within this

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¹ Holmes Rolston, III, ‘Does Aesthetic Appreciation of Landscapes Need to be Science Based?’ *British Journal of Aesthetics* 35 (1995): 374–86.

² I use *ecology* broadly speaking to describe all interactions between organisms and their environment—that is, interactions in addition to aesthetic appreciation. I do not use the term in the narrower sense focusing on environmental conservation; however, ecology broadly speaking does encompass issues of environmental conservation.

³ See Paul Tillich, ‘Environment and the Individual,’ in *On Art and Architecture* (ed. John Dillenberger; New York: Crossroad, 1987), 200.

⁴ See Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (trans. Willard R. Trask; New York: Harvest, 1959), 33–34, 116, 153–54. *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries: The Encounter between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Reality* (trans. Philip Mairet; London: Collins, 1968), 66.

⁵ Augustine, *On the Trinity* (De Trinitate) 6.12 (vol. I/5 of *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*; ed. John E. Rotelle; trans. Edmund Hill; Hyde Park, N.Y.: New City Press, 1991), 213.

⁶ I use *text* as literary metaphor related to the theological concept of Creation’s ‘book.’ By text I mean a significant (but not necessarily verbal) reality in need of interpretation. For Paul Ricoeur, a text can be ‘any set of signs that may be taken as a text to decipher, hence a dream or neurotic symptom, as well as a ritual, myth, a work of art, or a belief.’ This understanding of text involves ‘an enlarged concept of exegesis.’ *Frend and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (trans. Denis Savage; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1970), 26.

text, a beautiful harmony between nature and humanity takes on the character of an artistic image, evoking fulfillments of divine intention for both nature and humanity.

In the human relationship with nature, a dialectic arises between human and non-human order and between human and non-human life, as highlighted in the book of Job (Job 38–39). The non-human holds a special connection with beauty, because the lack of human interference in nature (the lack of human conceptions of order), often contributes to natural beauty. The beauty of wilderness often surpasses that of the most lavish gardens, and it is a beauty that is easily marred by fences and power lines. Natural beauty is especially susceptible to human destruction when it depends upon untouched landscapes or delicate ecosystems. Even so, human beings are still called to be stewards of Creation, and destruction of natural beauty is essential to human life: we must at least destroy plants and animals to eat and build shelter. Nature and humankind seem, at least to this extent, out of joint. Thus the Maasai bushman apologizes to the antelope before killing it. Furthermore, as much as our architecture may mimic nature, nature eschews right angles, and we never quite fit with natural beauty despite our best efforts. In contrast to artificial forms of construction, John Ruskin observes that “the universal forces of nature, and the individual energies of the matter submitted to them, are so appointed and balanced, that they are continually bringing out curves . . . in all visible forms.”⁷

Nonetheless, I do not hold up nature as a perfect ideal, since it can display its own ugliness. And I do not imply that because God is the superior artist, human art can do nothing but mar a natural ideal. The most ornate human art is not completely alien to natural order, although it always lacks something of nature’s inimitable givenness and mystique. Annie Dillard says as much when she remarks that if there were but one tree in the world, all living creatures would make a pilgrimage to see and touch it.⁸ And Ruskin goes so far as to claim that whatever does not imitate nature is ugly.⁹ But it would be better to say that whatever is beautiful is in accord with the created order. That which does accord with nature is, in Ruskin’s words, an “image of God’s daily work, and an arrested ray of some star of creation.”¹⁰ Creation is beauty’s natal home even if most natural beauties are but “a solemn moderation” compared to the masterpieces of human art.¹¹

This created order, which also pervades human art, produces the raw and uncanny beauty of many natural landscapes, where elements seem thrown together almost, but not quite, by chance. In the case of mountains in particular, the lines and masses most jarring to strict mathematical order often appear most beautiful. Yet we still detect an objective natural order contributing to beauty that prevents us from locating beauty solely in subjective responses to nature. This uncanny, inhuman sort of order matches Tillich’s description of “numinous realism.” Tillich uses this label to describe an artistic style that distorts our sense of order and perspective. This style can be discerned in the divine art of wilderness by the religious perceptive, insofar as the landscape presents itself strangely, “laden with . . .

⁷ John Ruskin, *Modern Painters* (5 vols.; vols. 3–7 of *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn; London: George Allen, 1903), 2:106.

⁸ Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, by Annie Dillard (London: Picador, 1980), 85.

⁹ John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: George Allen, 1900), 190.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 268.

¹¹ Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, 2:140.

ambiguous power,” and we receive a sense of ultimate reality shining mysteriously though the landscape.¹² One thinks especially of stark tundra, undulating prairies, precipitous glaciers, and bleeding lava fields—the alien architecture of wind-carved mesas and arches—Hebridean bens or Saharan dunes. These are strange and mysterious landscapes in contrast to human ways of designing, building, and landscaping.

If beauty arises from a numinous natural order, then the beauty of human life with nature also depends upon harmony with this order. But herein is the problem of integrating the human with the divine. Animal life integrates with, or adapts to, nature with a beauty somewhat diminished in domesticated animals and humans. But humans are also more or less adapted to the natural environment (which includes other humans), and the better our habitation “fits,” the more likely it is to be beautiful. In fact, fittingness or compatibility of landscape elements is the property most correlated with judgments of beautiful landscape in psychological studies.¹³ And our desire to fit with landscape is reflected in the demand for property with waterfront access or mountain views. But the problem is that this sort of development does not “fit” quite as well as it might, and usually ends up marring natural beauty. This is partly because our individual values, such as the desire for beautiful views, however good and even revelatory they might be, are not compatible with global values related either to our neighbors or the environment.¹⁴

But in addition to the less fitting ski lodges or beachfront hotels, there is also the Romantic ideal of the stone cottage or log cabin that blends almost seamlessly with the surrounding landscape. Still, when we attempt to live out this ideal in practice, the harsher realities of nature forbid any true and abiding harmony. Consequently, the people who are forced to live closest to nature often rebel against an indifferent natural beauty by destroying it as necessary to obtain a better life. These realities defy the modern wilderness cult, which, like Romanticism, sees wilderness “as an earthly version of sacred order and perfection.”¹⁵ But it is instructive that the Athabaskan natives of Alaska, who live much closer to the land than Native Americans in more developed regions, welcome any and all technological advances that might help them acquire food or shelter in their brutal environment. They still remember their grandparents’ stories, full of the suffering inherent to a nomadic lifestyle before modern conveniences reached their villages. So the situation seems to be that if the human does not obliterate the natural through roads, power lines, and condominiums, the natural often obliterates the human through thirst, hunger, disease, and exposure. And so an ideological divide remains between wilderness purists and those who actually make a living from the wilderness.¹⁶

It is also interesting to note a similar ideological divide even among different age groups. Researchers find that in adolescent through middle-aged people, beauty-judgments correlate

¹² Paul Tillich, ‘Art and Ultimate Reality,’ in *On Art and Architecture* (ed. John Dillenberger; New York: Crossroad, 1987), 143.

¹³ See J. Douglas Porteous, *Environmental Aesthetics: Ideas, Politics and Planning* (London: Routledge, 1996), 120.

¹⁴ Rolston notes this clash of individual with communal and environmental values. ‘Environmental Ethics and Religion/Science,’ in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science* (ed. Philip Clayton and Zachary Simpson; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 918.

¹⁵ Porteous, 78.

¹⁶ Porteous notes this ideological divide. *Ibid.*, 77.

with lack of human influence on landscape. But children and the elderly make no such connection: they are just as likely to call a landscape with buildings beautiful as one without.¹⁷ This finding could be the result of socialized preferences, but perhaps adolescents and the middle-aged are more sensitive to the effects of the human blight upon nature, while children still focus on the inherent goodness of human existence. And perhaps the elderly have developed a greater appreciation for the benefits of human intervention (including medical intervention) in nature.

These less-than-ideal aesthetic and ecological realities reflect a created order where beauty is often quite at home amid natural evil and the harsher realities of nature. And given these realities, human disharmony with nature is not entirely different from the disharmony already within nature. This disharmony even surfaces in the human practice of harvesting animals. The human hunter finds a beauty in her quarry, whose body she will soon destroy and render ugly, albeit useful. The hunter takes an aesthetic pleasure in the live animal and a practical pleasure in the carcass. Ideally, she takes no pleasure in the act of destroying life and beauty but takes a practical pleasure in the act of harvesting an animal. The hunter does not ignore as irrelevant the aesthetic concern by killing—this is evidenced by the frequent attempt to restore the carcass as close as possible to living beauty through taxidermy. Both the aesthetic and the practical concerns are always present, but they are in irreconcilable conflict. In the created order, beauty and ugliness, natural good and evil, are interwoven inextricably, and in such a tapestry there is as much cause for grieving toward Creation as there is rejoicing in its beauty. Indeed, natural beauty amid evil manifests an artistic style that, according to Tillich, ‘shows ultimate reality by judging existing reality.’¹⁸

In addition, nature’s hazards and difficulties, such as produced by mountains and other forbidding terrain, prevent us from construing earth as paradise. But even within such a world, Jesus comments on the divine provision for lilies and ravens, implying that these creatures enjoy more harmony with their environment than do humans, and affirming such harmony as an ideal (Luke 12:24–27). The ideal of harmony reflects God’s ordering activity in the Genesis Creation account as contrasted with a postlapsarian disharmony. The biblical description of the antediluvian world as ‘full of violence’ connotes a structural collapse, whereas the law and tabernacle begin to restore the created order in terms of divine-human and human-human relationships. Likewise, the new Creation is also a temple that fully re-establishes the created order. In this light, although natural beauty mysteriously integrates with natural evil, beauty is still a created and ordered reality that is profoundly ‘right’ in the world, and can therefore oppose evil artistically. Thus, by an artistic modality, beautiful harmony with nature begins to speak of a triune God who is harmony, and in whose harmony we can hope for an ultimate repose not yet possible in nature.

But to apply this Trinitarian harmonic to nature is not, as Austin Farrer fears, to sap nature of her procreative vitality or to impose engineering upon Creation’s art.¹⁹ Creation’s vitality, at its heart, does not necessitate the destructive competition of life-forces, such as lambs and crocodiles, nor are we obliged to honour the procreative vitality of cancer or

¹⁷ See *Ibid.*, 126.

¹⁸ Tillich gives Daumier’s, *The Butcher*, as an example of this artistic style. ‘Art and Ultimate Reality,’ 147. The painting focuses on a butcher’s expression of dissatisfaction while going about his work.

¹⁹ See Austin Farrer, *Love Almighty and Ills Unlimited* (London: Collins, 1962), 53, 58.

viruses. Rather, natural beauty as an image of divine harmony envisages an imaginative transformation of nature's vitality toward mutually compatible ends, as in the ideal society, which requires no law because of each person's concern for the other. Natural beauty can image such a transformation despite nature's competition; for nature is not all competition but is also symbiosis. Therefore, no created life-force, no leviathan or behemoth, however sublime, can ultimately be allowed to play God. Perhaps these combative life-forces could not have been prevented given God's aims for Creation, but we might imagine that they could yet be reshaped—reshaped perhaps even by the creative rule of redeemed humanity, much as Jesus commanded the wind and the waves. In this way, Creation as art opens up these new possibilities unavailable to Creation as machine; for one misplaced part halts a machine, whereas art secures an infinite space for creative re-placements. Redemption, then, might be less like repairing Creation's broken mechanisms, and more like repainting a brighter, more integrated landscape of the human with the natural. It would be less like surgery on the broken body of the world and more like a resurrection—a resurrected world where potentialities in both nature and humanity find beautiful realization.

A repainted, 'resurrected' world finds expression in landscape painting, such as Sir Peter Paul Rubens' painting of his house as integrated into the landscape, and Samuel Palmer's *Coming from an Evening Service*, where trees frame a church and suggest the integration of God, nature, and humanity. Claude Lorraine in many of his paintings achieves a beautiful integration of past and present, human and divine works, classical grandeur and natural scenery.²⁰ In a more contemporary expression, even outdoor sports photography integrates nature and humanity, through a climber poised on a cliff or a tent situated in a landscape. These expressions of the nature-human interface match Tillich's understanding of idealistic art, or the expression of future reality through images of present perfections. And so Wordsworth suggests that 'a willing mind . . .

might almost think, That Paradise, the lost abode of man,
Was raised again; and to a happy Few,
In its original beauty, here restored.²¹

Thus a beautiful harmony with nature becomes a category of images within Creation's art, evoking not only anamnesis of paradise, but, through Christ, evoking the realized, resurrected potential of Creation itself:²² 'Behold,' says Christ, 'I make all things new' (Rev 21:5, RSV).

²⁰ See, for example, his *Seaport with the Embarkation of the Queen of Sheba* in the National Gallery, London.

²¹ William Wordsworth, *The Excursion* 9.712–16 (eds. Sally Bushnell, James A. Butler, and Michael C. Jaye; Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007).

²² Cf. Tillich on idealistic art as anticipating paradise and evoking the potential of existence. 'Art and Ultimate Reality,' 148–49. But he also notes that even ordinary objects can mediate a reality that transcends them, such as 'a world in a grain of sand / And a Heaven in a wildflower.' William Blake, 'Auguries of Innocence,' in *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (ed. David V. Erdmans; Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1965), 481. See the excerpt from Tillich's own draft of *Systematic Theology* vol. 3 in the Tillich Archives, Andover-Harvard Library, the Divinity School, Harvard University, ed. Robert Scharlemann, in *On Art and Architecture*, 159. Such mediation seems to be the common currency of religious phenomena: 'In each case we are confronted by the same mysterious act—the manifestation of something of a wholly different order, a reality that does not belong to our world, in objects that are an integral part of our natural "profane" world.' Eliade, *Sacred and Profane*, 11.

WOUNDS OF THE EMPTIED GOD: THE ROLE OF KENOSIS AT THE CROSS IN THE CHRISTOLOGIES OF JÜRGEN MOLTMANN AND SERGIUS BULGAKOV

Samuel J. Youngs*

There can be little doubt that twentieth century Christian theology saw an unprecedented movement toward the consideration—and, in many quarters, acceptance—of the idea of a God who can and does suffer.¹ Over and against more traditional conceptions of God (i.e. what Charles Hartshorne termed “classical theism”) many modern theologians have consistently sought to repeal the notions of divine immutability and impassibility. This turn in theological formulation has been spurred on in part by the specter of two World Wars, accompanied by death and suffering on a scale never before seen. In the face of such pain, a God who is unmoved by the sufferings of his creation began for some to seem well-nigh monstrous.² With this shift in the understanding of God’s being and relation to the world, other concentrations within theology began to undergo gradual renovation,³ with the admittance of a passible deity engendering relational categories in the study of cosmogony, eschatology, and even Christology. In the case of the latter category, two theologians of markedly different circumstances and backgrounds have made impactful statements by approaching the concept of divine suffering in tandem with a kenotic approach to Christology.

The first of these theologians is the German Protestant Jürgen Moltmann. Moltmann’s inimitable theological perspective must be understood in light of his formative experiences as a prisoner-of-war during World War II. These circumstances confronted him profoundly and concurrently with both the hope of faith in Christ and the problem of evil and suffering.⁴ These themes run like a many-branching river through Moltmann’s theology, but are nowhere more fully exemplified than in his Christology. By deliberately departing from traditional theological categories, composing a broad and interactive understanding of God’s love, and applying kenotic reasoning to his Christology, Moltmann’s views on Christ and the

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¹ Ronald Goetz, “The Suffering God: The Rise of a New Orthodoxy,” *Christian Century*, April 1986: 385-386.

² *Ibid.*, 387; see also Jürgen Moltmann’s powerful condemnation of the impassible God in light of the Holocaust horrors: *The Crucified God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993 ed.), 273-274.

³ Goetz wants to argue that this more general shift has not occurred in any substantial way (“The Suffering God: The Rise of a New Orthodoxy,” 386), but with the continued perpetuation of process theology, openness theology, narrative theology (see e.g. William Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994]), and the various “postmodern” theologies which reject most traditional metaphysics out of hand (e.g. Jean Luc Marion, *God Without Being* [University of Chicago, 1995]), it would certainly appear as though the perception of God as relationally possible has significantly touched many spheres of theological discourse.

⁴ See Millicent C. Feske, “Christ and Suffering in Moltmann’s Thought,” *The Asbury Theological Journal* 55.1 (2000): 86; Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh, T&T Clark, 1995), 1; Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 1.

cross present a picture, often critically challenged though admittedly poignant, of a messiah whose crucifixion brings the history of suffering into the full deepness of the Godhead.

The second theologian is Russian Orthodox thinker Sergius Bulgakov. Bulgakov's thought has given rise in its own right to disparate critical reactions over the course of his theological journey and the continued circulation of his works since his death in 1944. The most controversial element of his theology has been his "sophiology," a conception of the God-world relation that caused Bulgakov to be condemned as a heretic by both the Moscow Patriarchate and a synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.⁵ Despite the palpitations of his career, which survived both the charges of heresy and an earlier exile from communist Russia, Bulgakov's work offers often-brilliant contributions to Orthodox thought and to theology in general. One of his most important works is *The Lamb of God*, which presents a Christology centered in a robust conception of divine kenosis that provides insight into God's relationship with the world and, indeed, its sufferings.

This paper shall first seek to summarize and elucidate both the "floor plans" of these two kenotic Christologies, after which several parallels and some differences in their approaches to kenosis will be noted. An attempt will then be made to address the relation between kenosis and suffering in these systems by focusing on the crucifixion, and then to determine what the benefits and detriments are that can be derived from them. In both of these principal sections, Moltmann's thought will be treated first, followed by Bulgakov. In conclusion, some critical points will be raised, using each Christology to inform the commentary on the other, and tentative steps will be attempted toward amalgamations of their strongest material.

The Protest and the Active-Sufferer: Toward Moltmann's Kenosis

Moltmann is a notoriously "modern" theologian, pervasively focused on the challenge of Christianity's relationship to a world that seems to constantly threaten it with irrelevancy. In light of modern pressures, Moltmann has sought to open doors of dialogue concerning Marxism, feminism, Judaism, ecumenism, liberation theology, ecology, and issues in theodicy.⁶ Though all of these things are insinuated into Moltmann's discourse by varying degrees, often toting either great insight or topical distraction,⁷ none of them is more formative for his Christology than theodicy, the problem of suffering and its relation to God. For Moltmann, the way to understand suffering is through Christ, and the way to understand Christ is through the cross,⁸ something that he sees as being inadequately emphasized by certain earlier theologians:

⁵ On the "Sophia Affair", see Paul Valliere, *Modern Russian Theology: Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 287-289; Sergei Hackel, "Diaspora problems of the Russian emigration," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity: Eastern Christianity*, ed. Michael Angold (Cambridge, 2006), 552-554.

⁶ Donald Macleod, "The Christology of Jürgen Moltmann," *Themelios* 24.2 (Feb. 1999): 35; Feske, "Christ and Suffering in Moltmann's Thought," 86; Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 2-3.

⁷ So Macleod, "The Christology of Jürgen Moltmann," 36.

⁸ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, x, 204-205. Note here that Moltmann's theology of the cross forms "the other side" of his 'theology of hope' (see *ibid.*, 5), retaining a distinct dialectic between the cross and the empty tomb. As we are here concerned more with the spiritual and even metaphysical mechanics

The rather solemn-sounding ‘death of God theology’ has at least been successful in compelling theologians to begin with christology and thus to speak of God for Jesus’ sake, in other words to develop a particular theology within earshot of the dying cry of Jesus. The theological traditions have always considered the cross and the resurrection of Jesus within the horizon of soteriology....This is by no means false, but it is not radical enough.⁹

The “radical” elements which Moltmann wants to present via his Christology-of-the-cross must, for him, address the question: What does suffering mean for God? This is a question which Moltmann sees as perennially bound-up with the issue of unbelief, which often appears as “protest atheism,” arising when the evils of the world are seen as indications that there is no beneficent God over the universe, only “a capricious demon, a blind destiny, a damning law or an annihilating nothingness.”¹⁰ Ultimately then, Moltmann’s crucified-Christology hinges on his conception of the cross as “a *theodicy trial*, wherein God must give an answer for the wretchedness of the earth” (emphasis original).¹¹

This orientation serves as the primary scaffolding from which Moltmann descends upon the traditional Christian concept of deity and the classical categories of Christology. The immutably omnipotent God cannot provide an answer to the world’s suffering, and for Moltmann it is not this deity that we encounter at the cross of Christ. His critique of previous theology is multi-faceted and debatably uneven, but can be summarized along two lines: (a) If God is truly loving, he must *suffer* (overturning much classical, “metaphysical” theology),¹² and (b) If Christ is truly the God-Man, the quiet docetism (that Moltmann perceives) in much of two-natures Christology must be overcome.¹³ Moltmann proposes an understanding of divine love which allows for suffering yet does not confound divine freedom, rather this love exemplifies freedom by willingly entering into the sufferings of the creation; it is thus “active suffering.”¹⁴ The foremost exemplification of this active suffering is to be found in Christ, where the divine and human natures most fully meet and interact. It is in this context that Moltmann proposes an understanding of the christological *communicatio*

of the crucifixion and kenosis, dealing with this other side of Moltmann’s outlook in any great detail is beyond this study’s purview.

⁹ Ibid., *The Crucified God*, 201.

¹⁰ Ibid., 220.

¹¹ Peter Schmiechen, *Saving Power: Theories of Atonement and Forms of the Church* (Eerdmans, 2005), 137.

¹² On Moltmann’s critique of patristic and Reformed theology on this point, see Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 214-219; *The Trinity and the Kingdom* (Fortress, 1993 ed.), 21-25; Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, *The Kingdom and the Power: The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Fortress, 2001), 77-78; Richard Bauckham, “‘Only the suffering God can help’: Divine Passibility in Modern Theology,” *Themelios* 9.3 (April 1984): 10.

¹³ For Moltmann’s most pronounced discussion of this, see *Crucified God*, 227-235.

¹⁴ Ibid., 229-230, 248-249; *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 23; Bauckham, “Divine Passibility in Modern Theology,” 8; *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 49-50; Macleod, “The Christology of Jürgen Moltmann,” 41, 43.

idiomatum formula that allows the human nature to affect the divine, *contra* much of earlier theology, which primarily saw affection only flowing from the divine to the human.¹⁵

It is in this conceptual climate that *kenosis* enters Moltmann's thought as the primary strand which binds these themes together. The notion of divine self-giving in active suffering is deeply commiserate with a thoroughgoing kenosis;¹⁶ and this kenosis—and thus also divine love and active suffering—is portrayed most ultimately at the cross and specifically in the dying cry of Christ, the suffering cry from Golgotha. The kenotic emptying of Christ not only helps Moltmann define his rethinking of the two-natures of Christ and the inner-trinitarian relations,¹⁷ but it also provides the interpretive easel on which he can portray a God of abundant freedom and sacrificial love who is fully revealed in the incarnation and the cross.¹⁸ Of course, the latter of these two will receive his fullest attention, in particular as it relates to the question of divine suffering. In contrast, Sergius Bulgakov's understanding of kenosis—to which we will turn next—is much more incarnation-focused; however, its movements in the direction of divine suffering parallel Moltmann's in some interesting ways.

Chalcedon and Incarnation: Toward Bulgakov's Kenosis

Kenosis is a far more pervasive orientating category for Bulgakov than it is for Moltmann. Moltmann utilizes kenosis as a helpful way to convey his understanding of divine love and co-suffering through the life and actions of Christ, whereas Bulgakov progresses in an almost inverse way by centering his Christology upon kenosis, and from there progressing to formulations about Christ's love and suffering. Also contrary to Moltmann, and highly significant, is Bulgakov's sustained effort to maintain a productive interplay with traditional theological affirmations, in particular, as one would expect in the Eastern tradition, from patristic theologians. However, it should be reiterated that, as mentioned on page 2 above, Bulgakov is by no means a non-controversial or "traditional" thinker. In terms of his Christology, he displays a decided blend of respect for traditional dogma alongside vibrant theological insight based on more experiential categories. But it must be emphasized that Bulgakov's Christology abundantly honors the Chalcedonian definition:

The Chalcedonian dogma is a new birth....[T]hat which is impossible for men is possible for God, and that which was beyond the powers of theology was made manifest above the heads of the theologians—in anticipation of the future achievements of theology—to the divine instinct of truth, to the inspiration of the fathers of the Council of Chalcedon.¹⁹

Alongside his great respect for the tradition is his critical and creative theological method, which often posits striking things, but things which do not erase tradition, but rather seek to

¹⁵ Moltmann builds on Luther here, though he acknowledges that Luther's conception of the *communicatio* was not very thoroughly trinitarian: *Crucified God*, 232-234; on Moltmann's conception of the two natures as existing in a "reciprocal relationship," see 245.

¹⁶ Kenosis here being understood, based on the kenotic *locus* of Phil. 2.6-11, as any action by the deity which involves a diminishment-of-self in some sacrificial manner for the sake of the world.

¹⁷ Jürgen Moltmann, "God's Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World," in *The Work of Love: Creation as Kenosis*, ed. John Polkinghorne (Eerdmans, 2001), 139-142;

¹⁸ Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 31-34.

¹⁹ Sergius Bulgakov, *The Lamb of God*, trans. Boris Jakim (Eerdmans, 2008; orig. published in 1933), 51.

treat areas which Bulgakov sees as being untouched or left unclear in much patristic thought.²⁰ Seeing Chalcedon as providing a primarily negative definition, Bulgakov's Christology takes on its uniqueness and energy by claiming kenosis as the way toward a *positive* understanding of Chalcedon. In fact, Bulgakov claims that Chalcedon cannot be fully understood apart from a thoroughgoing kenosis: "[I]f one does not recognize the *real kenosis* of Christ, the Chalcedonian dogma inevitably leads either to docetism or to monophysitism" (emphasis original).²¹ This docetism, which Bulgakov detects in several patristic writings,²² is seen as an under-emphasis of Christ's humanity for fear of diminishing his deity. This "diminishing" is, after a fashion, precisely what Bulgakov suggests, a deity who kenotically limits himself in the act of the incarnation. This self-limitation of the divine nature, and the corollary increase of focus on Christ's true humanity, leads Bulgakov, though by a different path, to proclaim as Moltmann does that the doctrine of *communicatio idiomatum* must allow the human nature to truly affect the divine nature.²³

But Bulgakov's conception of kenosis is by no means a theological back door by which he gains free reign to modify patristic teaching; it is rather what Bulgakov sees as the proper way of understanding the incarnation when one fully apprehends the nature of the love of God. As with Moltmann, Bulgakov formulates his conception of God around the notion of sacrificial love. Whereas Moltmann does this in terms of active suffering, Bulgakov goes a step further and argues for an eternal inter-kenotic relationship within the immanent Trinity. Again like Moltmann, this love and vulnerability should not be seen as limiting God: "[T]his suffering is not a result of external limitation, for nothing can limit the absolute being from outside, but rather is an expression of the reality of sacrificial love."²⁴ Coupled with this insight is a critique of immutability and impassibility in favor of God's transcendent freedom, which includes the freedom to suffer and love in suffering: "Nothing can limit God's freedom in His proper life."²⁵

This thoroughgoing kenotic theology, conceived in much more detailed narrative fashion than Moltmann's, should be briefly circumscribed here in its broad strokes. The kenosis is seen as the defining aspect of the incarnation which allowed both the divinity and the humanity to develop alongside each other and interpenetrate one another. This allows Bulgakov to understand Christ's ignorance of the time of the eschaton, his prayer life, his temptations, and his apparent struggles (e.g. in Gethsemane) as real occurrences and instances of kenotic limit in the God-Man;²⁶ indeed Jesus was rendered akin to a prophet

²⁰ This pattern is prevalent throughout *The Lamb of God*; see also Valliere, 338-339.

²¹ Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, 236; see also 249 n. 24.

²² E.g. St. Cyril—see *The Lamb of God*, 256-257—though Bulgakov charitably labels it "unintentional docetism."

²³ *Ibid.*, 210-211, 248-249, 258-259.

²⁴ Paul L. Gavriilyuk, "The Kenotic Theology of Sergius Bulgakov," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58.3 (2005): 256; also on the nature of God's suffering love and its relation to the cross of Christ, see Sergius Bulgakov, *Churchly Joy: Orthodox Devotions for the Church Year*, trans. Boris Jakim (Eerdmans, 2008), 2-3, 89.

²⁵ Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, 222.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 253-254, 262-265, 292-297; many of these limitations also imply a subordination to the Father, an issue which Bulgakov also handles with reference to his kenotic schema: *Lamb of God*, 283-284.

whom the Holy Spirit descended upon and empowered.²⁷ Bulgakov travels this christological route for two express purposes: he views kenosis as the only way of understanding Chalcedon and rendering the incarnation intelligible,²⁸ and he views kenosis as the way in which the incarnation *should* occur, owing to his understanding of God's self-giving love. An orthodox Christology is thusly conceived as one that admits a self-limiting deity, who in freedom and love participates in creaturely existence for the sake of his creation.²⁹

A few concise points of comparison between Bulgakov and Moltmann may be mentioned at this juncture. Both hold to an understanding of God's love that supposes a self-giving, co-suffering deity.³⁰ This is the fundamental pivot upon which both of their Christologies turn. However, Bulgakov claims to stay within the bounds of Chalcedon, and regularly employs very traditional categories (albeit, to often untraditional ends) in his understanding of kenosis, whereas Moltmann is far more relational and modernist in his approach, neglecting or critiquing tradition for the most part.³¹ Both of their stances can be distinguished from a "minimal kenoticism" which sees the Second Person as only limiting certain of his attributes, and a "radical kenoticism" which sees him as actually foregoing his deity.³² They rather present their deeply kenotic approach as corrective to older, allegedly docetic Christologies because it allows for a stronger focus on Christ's humanity, based on an understanding of divinity that, in itself, is self-giving and self-lessening. From here, it is only a small step for them both to propose a two-way conception of the *communicatio idiomatum*. A key factor in their agreement on these points is that they both also view God as limiting himself in some kenotic fashion by the act of creation³³ and that kenosis is thus indicative of one of the primary ways in which God chooses to relate to the world; basically God is eternally self-giving (which, of course, works in tandem with both Moltmann's and Bulgakov's definitions of divine love). The actual intelligibility and theoretic value of their kenotic propositions will be considered further on. Now, however, we turn to the crucifixion, the event which both of these theologians consider to represent the fullest depth of the kenotic emptying and offer the truest insight into divine suffering.

Christ and the Cross—Suffering of History and Trinitarian Travail

Moltmann places the cross undeniably in the center of his overall theological project:

The death of Jesus on the cross is the *centre* of all Christian theology. It is not the only theme of theology, but it is in effect the entry to its problems and answers on earth.

²⁷ Ibid., 445; Valliere, 323.

²⁸ "If we accept Christ's self-humiliation as the foundation of the union of the natures, the main difficulty in understanding this union is then removed" (*Lamb of God*, 259).

²⁹ Ibid., 344.

³⁰ Gavriilyuk notes this significant correspondence, see "The Kenotic Christology of Sergius Bulgakov," 256 n. 19.

³¹ Donald Macleod notes that "Moltmann [in his book *The Way of Jesus Christ*] achieves the extraordinary feat of writing over 300 pages on Christology without once mentioning Chalcedon" ("The Christology of Jürgen Moltmann," 35).

³² These distinctions come from Gavriilyuk, "The Kenotic Theology of Sergius Bulgakov," 254-255.

³³ E.g. Moltmann "God's Kenosis in the Creation and Consummation of the World," in Polkinghorne, 146-147; Bulgakov, *Churchly Joy*, 4; more on Bulgakov's kenotic creation: Gavriilyuk, 257-259.

All Christian statements about God, about creation, about sin and death have their focal point in the crucified Christ.³⁴

Because of this robust *theologia crucis*, all of Moltmann's understandings about God must be interpreted "staurologically." Indeed, the cross is seen first and foremost as revelatory; it is the most intimate example of God's self-communication, and it is how we can learn the most about his character and being.³⁵ It is here fitting that we reiterate Moltmann's impassioned commitment to a portrayal of a co-suffering deity. In this framework, God has been empathetic with his people, in all their trials and difficulties;³⁶ however, it is the cross which is thought of as providing the primary encounter between God and human suffering, as we shall see.

Moltmann connects the revelation of the cross and the divine answer to the history of human suffering when he states, "Only when [Christian theology] has recognized what took place between Jesus and his Father on the cross can it speak of the significance of this God for those who suffer and protest at the history of world."³⁷ And thus we have arrived at the sticking point for Moltmann's Christology: What *does* happen at the cross between Jesus and his Father? This is where Moltmann's conception of kenosis, though not brought to bear with the kind of rigorous detail we find in Bulgakov, is extremely informative. Two significant and interrelated points may here be made. First, the kenosis of Christ leads directly into the Godhead, so that at the crucifixion the actual relations of the immanent Trinity undergo a distinct travail, a real suffering.³⁸ Because Moltmann's kenosis entails a real limit in the divine nature, and because he sees a two-way affection in the *communicatio idiomatum*, the divine nature suffers, and through the mutual relations of the Trinity, the whole of God's triune being is brought into the event of the crucifixion. This is one of Moltmann's most scandalized yet important points. To avoid patripassianism, Moltmann insightfully distinguishes the suffering of the Father from the death of the Son, saying that the Son suffers the death and abandonment by his Father, while the Father suffers the loss of his Son. The eternal relations of Father and Son are affected.³⁹ This suffering is a mutual kenosis, a divine event of humiliation and tragedy: "[T]he giving up of the Son reveals the giving up of the Father. In the suffering of the Son, the pain of the Father finds a voice. The self-emptying of the Son also expresses the self-emptying of the Father. Christ is crucified 'in

³⁴ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 204; see also Müller-Fahrenholz, 63.

³⁵ Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 47-49; Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 212-213.

³⁶ Moltmann especially detects notions of this through the work of Old Testament scholar Abraham Heschel, who described Yahweh's real *pathos* in his relationship with Israel, and through a mystical interpretation of the Shekinah, where God actually dwells among his people in the midst of their trouble (see e.g. *Crucified God*, 270-273; *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 25-30; cf. Bauckham, "Divine Passibility in Modern Theology," 9).

³⁷ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 227.

³⁸ E.g. *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 82-83; see also n. 39 below and page 17 below in this paper.

³⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 241-244; *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 80; Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 55-58; Macleod, 42. Note that the Spirit's relation to the event is somewhat unclear, though Bauckham makes a valiant attempt at explication in *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 56. Further discussion on this controversial element in Moltmann's thought is presented in this paper's conclusion, page 17 below.

the weakness of God? (II Cor. 13.4).⁴⁰ This great sundering is what Moltmann finds lying in the depths of Jesus' cry of forsakenness from the cross (Mark 15.34); it is what he refers to as a great and terrifying mystery ("God's silence, the hiding of his face, the eclipse of God, the dark night of the soul, the death of God, hell"⁴¹) but one which he feels must be confronted. Kenosis is one of the key features that leads his Christology here, as we have seen. Just as Christ dies in love, and God gives up his Son to die in love, so must this love be understood as an active suffering, which is not conveyed by the incarnation of an impassible divine nature, but by a true kenosis:

God does not merely enter into the finitude of men and women; he enters into the situation of their sin and God-forsakenness as well. He does not merely enter into this situation; he also accepts and adopts it himself, making it part of his own eternal life. The kenosis is realized on the cross.⁴²

The second point which can be made about the relation between the kenosis and the cross is closely related to the first. By taking on the suffering of the world, but entering into that afflicted situation (and doing it by self-emptying and taking on humanity), the crucified God reveals the world's redemption. This could be termed Moltmann's "atonement thought," his explanation of *what the cross does*, though Moltmann himself expressed contention with some traditional understandings of the atonement.⁴³ The cross displays God's solidarity with mankind in the face of suffering; he suffers with us in true "compassion."⁴⁴ The whole of the Trinity is involved in this suffering.⁴⁵ Moltmann links this explicitly to the kenosis:

The Son of God empties himself of his divinity and takes the way of the poor slave to the point of death on the cross. If we look at the divine power and sovereignty, this is a path of self-emptying. If we look at that solidarity with the helpless and the poor which it manifests, it is the path of the divine love in its essential nature.⁴⁶

However, Moltmann wisely perceives that it is not enough for God to merely suffer with us; the suffering of humanity must be healed, not merely empathized with. The kenosis leads here as well, allowing the cross to accomplish both "fellowship, which can never be lost"⁴⁷ and healing from pain and death.⁴⁸ This fellowship and healing ushers in the new creation. Just as the kenosis is an emptying that is later filled with the glory of the resurrection, so too does the suffering of God, the humiliation of pain and death, inaugurate newness and fullness of life. Moltmann ties all of these together:

The sufferings of Christ' are God's suffering...because out of them the new creation of all things is born....Solidarity, vicarious power, and rebirth are the divine

⁴⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (Fortress, 1993 ed.), 176.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 167.

⁴² Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 119.

⁴³ Particularly with what he saw as the divine "emergency measure" of penal substitution, as well as the functional apotheosis of patristic thought, see *ibid.*, 114-115. See also below, n 50.

⁴⁴ See Schmiechen, 137-138; Moltmann, *Way of Jesus Christ*, 178.

⁴⁵ *Crucified God*, 245-247.

⁴⁶ *Way of Jesus Christ*, 178.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 116.

dimensions of the sufferings of Christ. Christ is with us, Christ is for us, and in Christ we are a new creation.⁴⁹

In summary, the points we have here established are that it is the kenosis, specifically, (a) which brings about the great suffering within God and Trinitarian travail at the crucifixion (Moltmann's controversial concept of divine *pathos*) and (b) it is also this kenosis that allows God, through the divine *pathos*, to be the com-passionate God, the God who suffers with humanity, and in that suffering forges the way to redemption, fellowship and the new creation.⁵⁰ This enduring of pain with humanity, and the offering of hope beyond that pain, is Moltmann's primary way of tackling the issues of theodicy which he is so concerned about, to which we will return in our concluding section.

Christ on the Cross—Suffering, Trinitarian Travail, New Adam, Sin and Death

Since Moltmann primarily identifies love as the willingness to co-suffer, although his definition of active suffering is more expansive than just that, his primary stauological hermeneutic is that of willing, kenotic co-suffering in love. On this point, Bulgakov's view of the cross is resoundingly analogous:

The cross is the sacrificial character of love, for love is self-sacrifice, self-surrender, self-renunciation, voluntary self-depletion for the sake of the loved one. Without sacrifice there is no reception, no meeting, no life in another and for another. There is no bliss of love *except* in sacrificial self-depletion, which is rewarded by an answering fulfillment.⁵¹

As with Moltmann, the cross entails, again, real divine suffering. The history of this suffering is conceived of differently than in Moltmann's paradigm; this suffering is an ever-present part of the Godhead because of the pre-temporal loving decision for the cross. This decision of ultimate self-emptying for the sake of the world is what Bulgakov refers to as "the metaphysical Golgotha" which precedes the "historical Golgotha."⁵² Thus, in the first place the kenosis of the cross is an eternally-present pain within God, manifested most fully in the historical crucifixion: "According to Philippians 2, this acceptance of death represents the extreme depths of the Son's kenosis....The slightest doubt concerning the authenticity of the death on the cross, the slightest hint of docetism here, leads to the denial of the entire work of the Incarnation."⁵³

⁴⁹ *Way of Jesus Christ*, 181.

⁵⁰ A discussion that is only tangential to the more focused topic of this study is whether or not Moltmann's "atonement" paradigm is actually atonement at all. Specifically, Reformed strands of Protestant theology have often accused Moltmann of not taking "sin" and "substitution" or "satisfaction" very seriously in his overall theology of the cross (e.g. Macleod, 40, 42-43). A brief reply here would simply mention that, though it is hardly the *focus* of Moltmann's stauology, he does not disparage the need for redemption from sin and in fact affirms it (e.g. Schmiechen, 140; Moltmann *Way of Jesus Christ*, 181-189; *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 116). But Moltmann's great project is to expand the cross' redemptive power in many ways (see the listing in *Way of Jesus Christ*, 189). Though atonement has been often treated as a purely forensic category, Moltmann's goal is more expansive.

⁵¹ Bulgakov, *Churchly Joy*, 3, emphasis original; see further 2-4.

⁵² *Lamb of God*, 232; see also Gavriluk, 256.

⁵³ *Lamb of God*, 312.

The cross does not only afflict the Son, but the entire Trinity. Though Paul Gavrilyuk claims that “Bulgakov denies that there is tragedy or unresolved suffering in the immanent Trinity,”⁵⁴ there are grounds for Trinitarian travail in the heart of Bulgakov’s understanding of the cross. For one thing, Bulgakov fully affirms the mutual kenosis of the entire Godhead in its immanence; the relations of the triune deity are all self-emptying in some capacity; all of the Persons find themselves each in the other.⁵⁵ These kenotic relations are manifest by a *spiritual* co-suffering of the Spirit and Father with the Son at the crucifixion:

When we speak of the spiritual “co-crucifixion” of the Father and of the Holy Spirit with the Son, we only express the Church doctrine of Their participation in the work of the redemption. God in his Eternity, as the “immanent Trinity,” is above the world; but the same Holy Trinity, as Creator, finds itself in an “economic” interrelation to the world....the Son directly unites himself with the world and suffers in it, whereas the other hypostases, who do not have such a direct connection with the world, *spiritually* co-suffer with the Son....⁵⁶

This makes a key point about Bulgakov’s specific understanding of Trinitarian travail. Rather than vindicating Gavrilyuk’s point that the immanent Trinity in Bulgakov experiences no “tragedy,” the immanent Trinity experiences the greatest tragedy; the death of the Son. True, the Spirit and Father cannot be affected by the world in the same way that the Son is, for they have not taken on humanity as he has. But the death of the Son, as a spiritual reality, is a deep and pervasive inter-Trinitarian event. Bulgakov refers to this preemptively by referring to the incarnation as an acute difference in the Trinity,⁵⁷ which is expressed in the agony of the “sacrifice” of the Father.⁵⁸ At the actual moment of crucifixion, Bulgakov claims that the Father “*assumes* the Son’s death and thus participates in it,” and that there is a “co-participation of the Holy Spirit in the kenosis of the Son, in His suffering on the cross.”⁵⁹ Thus, though the world can only relate to the economic Trinity, the death of the Son, who suffers—as Bulgakov forcefully argues and as has been discussed—in his divine nature,⁶⁰ does indeed, in the depths of its kenosis, bring travail into the immanent Trinity itself.⁶¹

But the kenosis is not only operative in the tragic sense; it is also a key redemptive factor. Bulgakov understands the results of the self-diminution in three primary ways. First, the Son, having been poured fully into death by way of kenosis, offers the profound sacrifice of self-giving love for the sinfulness of humanity: “The Son removed from Himself the Divine glory...became man, and bore the entire weight of the life of the sinful world.... The Son gave *all* of Himself, His *entire* life....The sacrifice of the Divine love does not tolerate limitation.”⁶²

⁵⁴ Gavrilyuk, 256.

⁵⁵ See Valliere, 333.

⁵⁶ *Lamb of God*, 372, emphasis original.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 229.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 260.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 313, 314.

⁶⁰ See esp. *ibid.*, 258-259.

⁶¹ Valliere recognizes this as well, see 332.

⁶² Bulgakov, *Churchly Joy*, 116-117.

Second, Christ's sacrifice is the death of the Old Adam and the power of death: "Adam's sin was death-bearing for the entire world....death became a bitter necessity for him. But the Son of God, who in His human essence had defeated the death-bearing selfhood, had power over life[.]"⁶³ The kenosis is manifested here most fully, with the holy Son of God's full identification with sinfulness: "If in itself the Incarnation is already the kenosis of Divinity, then Christ's redemptive sacrifice—His taking upon Himself of human sin and His suffering...God's wrath and the distancing from God...represents the extreme limit of this general kenosis."⁶⁴ From this kenotic death, redemption flows; the New Adam is born.

And finally, the kenosis leads to the destruction of death itself: "[Christ] was abandoned by the power of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit. But this was a salvific abandonment, for it opened the way to the salvific feat of death....the victory of death over death."⁶⁵ It was only by the fullness of truly experiencing death that Bulgakov sees the triumph over it taking place. And that fullness of death could only be accomplished by a thoroughgoing kenosis.⁶⁶

Conclusion—Comparisons and Difficulties

Both of these highly original theologians conceived of kenosis as a cornerstone of their Christology and their understanding of the cross. However, despite the many similarities, several of which have already been touched upon, there are some significant points of divergence in their programs. It is to a critical examination of these points that we must now turn, as well as to more general difficulties that may exist in their theological frameworks.

First, let us discuss the issue of the Trinity's involvement with the cross and suffering. Moltmann has been battered on this point in two specific ways: (a) the way in which he discusses the wills of the Father and the Son opens the door for the charges of brutality within the Trinity; the Father who kills the Son, and (b) Moltmann's language of the sundering which occurs at the "death" of Christ renders his Trinitarian outlook somewhat confusing. On the first point, raised against Moltmann by feminist theologians in particular, Peter Schmiechen sums up the defense nicely: "Moltmann insists that the cross is an event in the relation of the Father and Son. The Son freely accepts the role and the cross also involves the suffering of the Father."⁶⁷ Moltmann is not as open as he appears to the charge of inter-Trinitarian brutality because he proposes an inter-Trinitarian agreement for the separation and pain of the cross. The Father and Son agree to their separation and to the cross.⁶⁸

However, this leads directly to the heart of the second, and far more substantive, issue: What is the nature of the Trinitarian separation at the cross? It is here that Moltmann proposes that the Son actually dies, and in actually dying *ceases to be the Son, and, as a result the*

⁶³ Ibid., 117-118.

⁶⁴ Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, 351; see further 350-352.

⁶⁵ Bulgakov, *Churchy Joy*, 118-119.

⁶⁶ For an excellent, and very personal, series of insights on this topic see Sergius Bulgakov, "Dying before Death," in *A Bulgakov Anthology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), 22-27, esp. 26-27.

⁶⁷ Schmiechen, 139-140; see also Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 244.

⁶⁸ Cf. Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, 304-312; Bulgakov understands the conformity of wills between the Father and Son in terms of the Son's kenotic subordination to the Father; this creates a similar, though not exactly parallel, relation as conceived in Moltmann: "The Son's death is the direct will of the Father, and it is accepted by the Son's obedience" (*Lamb of God*, 312).

*Father ceases to be the Father.*⁶⁹ Moltmann links this explicitly to the death-cry from Golgotha: “If we take the relinquishment of the Father’s name in Jesus’ death seriously, then this is even the breakdown of the relationship that constitutes the very life of the Trinity...the Son does not merely lose his sonship,...The Father loses his fatherhood as well.”⁷⁰ This is a very problematic point, for any understanding of the Trinity, in order to stave off the charge of tri-theism, must define the Trinity in terms of its triune relationships: without the relationships, the mutual indwelling, the *perichoresis*, the Trinity cannot be understood as traditionally formulated by theologians and the councils. In fact, Moltmann himself defines the Trinity in these terms.⁷¹ Thus, the idea of the Father and Son losing the filial relation at the cross seems that it would constitute not simply a “breakdown in the relationship” in the Trinity, but a literal breakdown of the Trinity itself. This is no small point, and raises a tremendous question mark over Moltmann’s system. In his desire to justify God before the world’s suffering, Moltmann has insisted on bringing a deeply kenotic and shattering blow into the Godhead, and appears to have given up serious ground in cohesion as a price.⁷²

Given what we have seen with Bulgakov, especially the discussion about the immanent Trinity on pages 14-15 above, one wonders if a similar charge could not be leveled against him. However, upon a closer look, Bulgakov defends himself from this difficulty by focusing on the kenosis of the Son that, while it certainly brings travail into the Trinity, does not lead to any real discontinuation of the Trinitarian relationships. He does this by stating that, rather than the death of Christ being the end of the kenotic humiliation, it is merely a perpetuation of it, which continues as Christ descends into hell. The Trinitarian relations are here carefully preserved even in this depth of kenosis—Bulgakov maintains that the Son’s spirit, which he gave up at the cross, reposes in the loving care of the Father⁷³ (though it does remain associated with his soul, which is in hell).

This key difference—that Moltmann sees the death of Christ as the ultimate end of his kenosis which shatters the Trinitarian relations, whereas Bulgakov sees the death as another step in the kenotic, Trinitarian work of the God-Man—takes us back, ultimately, to their starting points and reasoning for their kenotic Christologies. We will remember that Moltmann’s primary concern is the pain of the world, and as such the cross serves as a “theodicy trial” which justifies God. Moltmann’s primary way of accomplishing this justification is to bring the pain of the world into God through the kenotic path of Christ (to the ultimate end of the disrupted Trinity). This is one of the principal goals of Moltmann’s

⁶⁹ Moltmann, *Crucified God*, 243.

⁷⁰ *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 80.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 174-178. For more discussion on the necessity of this point, see e.g. Placher, 72-75; Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity, and the Trinity* (Fortress, 2001), 38-41. Bulgakov also defines the Trinity in these terms: “[T]he Father is the Father because the Son and the Holy Spirit exist; the Son is the Son because the Father and the Holy Spirit exist; the Holy Spirit exists in relation to the Father and to the Son.” (*Lamb of God*, 305).

⁷² On this critique, see also Paul Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 202-203.

⁷³ See Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, 315-316.

stauology: “Not using Moltmann’s words, one could say that the cross is the event in which God makes all human suffering his *own*.”⁷⁴

In contrast, Bulgakov’s starting place is not a modern concern with theodicy, but rather one of the oldest and most perennial issues of Christology: the relationship between the two natures. Kenosis is seen as the way to truly understand the definition of Chalcedon, and because Bulgakov works through his kenosis unflinchingly, he does end up claiming that Christ, in his divinity, suffers. But, and this is the key distinction, he does not posit this in order for Christ to give an answer for the world’s pain; he posits it in order to offer a cohesive bridge between the two natures, so that Christ can be truly man (which entails real suffering) and thus truly save man. Bulgakov’s view is not that God came to the cross to justify himself, or even co-suffer with the history of the world, but to save and serve mankind; an idea that he carries further in the kenotic descent into hell, which was undertaken so that “[Christ] might continue to serve men even beyond the grave.”⁷⁵ Bulgakov’s Christ co-suffers in that he suffers, in his true humanity, in the ways in which we suffer,⁷⁶ whereas Moltmann’s Christ suffers in that the whole of the world’s pain comes to rest upon him, to such a degree that the unity of the Godhead is challenged.

Throughout this paper, I have presented Moltmann’s material first and Bulgakov’s as a follow-up, despite the fact that Bulgakov precedes Moltmann chronologically. This has been done intentionally because Moltmann has been very widely read and summarily appropriated in many contexts, whereas Bulgakov is only recently being made widely available in English translations; thus, in terms of actual encounter, Bulgakov’s thought will come second for many. But I have also done so because I feel that Bulgakov’s handling of traditional categories and more thoroughly applied kenosis serve to fill some gaps that are presented by Moltmann’s kenotic Christology. Though they parallel each other in a great many ways—their understanding of divine love, their robust Trinitarian hermeneutic, their more open view of God and his relationship to change and suffering, *et cetera*—Moltmann’s kenosis ultimately exists for the purposes of pain entering the Godhead, whereas Bulgakov’s, in consistency with God’s loving and saving character, sees kenosis as the steps that had to be taken to effect salvation. As discussed above (see n. 50), Moltmann also has a broad understanding of salvation and redemption, but this is not the apparent purpose of his kenosis, which is a category that ultimately seems to get away from him and confound his Trinitarianism. Overall, as can be seen from the examination above, Bulgakov’s soteriological categories are broader, and give at least a greater place to dealing with sin than do Moltmann’s. And although Moltmann’s attempt at a *theodical* Christology is commendable, Bulgakov’s conception of co-suffering also functions in a similar way to at least partially address some theodical issues, and it does so without the sacrifices that Moltmann’s system calls for.

Both Christologies present the journey to the cross, understood in terms of kenosis, as providing a pathway through sin, pain, and death, grounded in a conception of God’s self-

⁷⁴ Bauckham, *Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, 57, emphasis original. This language is close to Moltmann himself, see e.g. *Crucified God*, 246-247.

⁷⁵ Bulgakov, *Lamb of God*, 316.

⁷⁶ See Valliere, 332-333.

giving love. But Bulgakov's self-emptied Christ takes us on a more robustly interpreted peregrination, which presents fewer methodological and doctrinal difficulties along the way.

THE CRISIS OF EVENTAL-TRUTH IN BADIOU AND KIERKEGAARD

David Matcham*

This article has a dual purpose, the first of which is to show how the concept of crisis undergirds and engages with the notion of subjectivity in two thinkers, Søren Kierkegaard and Alain Badiou. Both men share similarities in how they conceive an individual becomes a subject; a conception, moreover, that radically limits those who do.¹ For separate reasons, both have placed considerable emphasis on Christianity, and significant figures and events within it (Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac for Kierkegaard, and the resurrection preached by Paul for Badiou), as being emblematic of the process whereby one becomes a subject. Both men, moreover, constellate the human within a framework that hinges upon a decisive moment of crisis that has been noted by theologian John Milbank to bring the one into the theoretical orbit of the other.² How one responds to that which the crisis instantiates decides both how and to what the life one lives is orientated, whether it is a form of Marxism (Badiou), God (Kierkegaard), a science, art, or erotic love.³ Indeed, both men situate the subject within similar (if not identical) frameworks: in Kierkegaard, we have the aesthetic, ethical, and religious stages of existence; in Badiou we have aesthetic (art), ethical (love, politics, and science) as modes in which the subject enunciates truth. For both men the crisis of decision takes the form of an external challenge to the individual, and a necessary internal response; for Kierkegaard in particular, responding affirmatively opens the way to a second crisis more crushing than the first. Badiou acknowledges the similarity between the apostle Paul and Kierkegaard when he writes that for Kierkegaard,

the key to existence is none other than absolute choice [...] which sums up all the others, into the instance through which the subject comes back to himself so that he may communicate with God.⁴

The second purpose for this article is itself two-fold, in that the thought of Badiou offers a different perspective on Kierkegaard's analysis of what he called the 'teleological suspension of the ethical', whilst the latter in turn offers an advance on the contradictory aporia between religion and subjectivity in the former's theory of the event. It is hoped that through bringing Badiou into an encounter with Kierkegaard an intervention or crisis can itself be achieved in the former's thought, not to resolve the contradiction, but to bring it to light in such a way as to make it stand more aggressively as a contradiction. Kierkegaard in turn could indeed be criticized for disallowing all of Badiou's four domains of truth, in that

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¹ Peter Hallward, *Badiou: a subject to truth* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), xxv.

² Slavoj Žižek and Alain Badiou, *Philosophy in the Present*, trans. Peter Thomas and Alberto Toscano (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 156.

³ Alain Badiou, *Ethics: an essay on the understanding of evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London: Verso, 2001), 28.

⁴ Alain Badiou, *Logic of Worlds: Being and Event 2*, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, 2009), 425.

for him an individual is only *truly* a subject in relation to one's Christian belief.⁵ The point for Kierkegaard is, however, precisely the degree of uncertainty involved in that which the self chooses to cling; for Badiou, Christianity is too impossible, whereas for Kierkegaard, art, science, love, and politics are not impossible enough.

The choice of Kierkegaard's reading of the story of Abraham in this endeavor makes a better example than simply arguing the case for or against the resurrection espoused by Paul because it requires a truly horrifying suspension of the ethical in the face of eventual-truth, whereas the resurrection merely requires a suspension of the believable. Primarily, the contradiction that is explored through this choice relates to Badiou's paradoxical exclusion of Christianity (which, he never tires of reminding us, is a fable) from the domains of truth. Contemporary philosopher Slavoj Žižek comments:

[Badiou's] supreme example of a truth-procedure [...] is a kind of religious interpellation. So no wonder that the best example, it's religious! But paradoxically there is no place for religion. You know the irony is that the supreme example of the seminal structure of truth event that he tries to articulate, and it doesn't count as a truth-event.⁶

Žižek is speaking here about Badiou's reading of the apostle in his *Saint Paul*. For Badiou, the apostle, whom he describes as 'a poet-thinker of the event'⁷ represents a paradigmatic example of the theory of the subject he has expounded since at least the publication of *Being and Event* in 1988. According to Bruno Besana, the notion of the subject has been central to Badiou's entire *oeuvre*, being that which is neither free of material determinants nor limited to them, but constituted by how it is within and in excess of a given material situation.⁸ In *Being and Event*, Badiou draws a distinction between everything that falls within an existing knowledge-economy (the various multiplicities of Being), and the event, which is that in a given situation or knowledge-economy which cannot be accounted for or has been refused consideration.⁹ Peter Hallward refines Badiou's project to the asking of a set of questions which his theory sets out to answer¹⁰:

How can something entirely new come into the world? What sorts of innovation fully invite and deserve universal affirmation? How can the consequences of such

⁵Søren Kierkegaard, "Sickness Unto Death," in *The Essential Kierkegaard* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 369.

⁶Joshua Delpech-Ramey, "An Interview with Slavoj Žižek :On Divine Self-Limitation and Revolutionary Love," in *Journal of Philosophy and Scripture* [2004], online: <http://www.lacan.com/zizpaul.htm> (accessed May 15th, 2011). The Journal of Philosophy and Scripture website appears to no longer be available.

⁷Alain Badiou, *St Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 2.

⁸ Bruno Bresano, "The Subject," in *Alain Badiou: Key Concepts*, ed. A. J. Bartlett and Justin Clemens (Durham: Acumen, 2010), 40.

⁹ Jared Woodward, "Faith, Hope, and Love: the inducement of the subject in Badiou," in *Journal of Philosophy and Scripture* 3 [2005], online: http://scholar.googleusercontent.com/scholar?q=cache:GBZQshoFP7Mj:scholar.google.com/+Faith,+Hope,+and+Love:+The+Inducement+of+the+Subject+in+Badiou&hl=en&as_sdt=0,5 (accessed: 29th May 2011). Due to the non-availability of the Journal of Philosophy and Scripture, the only available copy of this work appears to be a cache version on Google Scholar.

¹⁰ Hallward, *Badiou*, xxi.

innovations be sustained in the face of the world's inevitable indifference or resistance? And how can those who affirm these consequences continue their affirmation?

Coming from a given configuration of contingencies, the event cannot be understood from within that which brought it forth, requiring a wholly new interpretation, which is the truth of the event.¹¹ Distinct from knowledge of things, truth for Badiou is essentially something that *takes place* and is located in the conditions of the time and place it emerges.¹² Consequently, the event cannot be known within an existing knowledge-economy either as an event or as truth because it constitutes a decisive break with that regime, appearing at best opaque and at worst as a non-event.¹³ In order for the truth to appear within a given contingency it is necessary for someone to recognize that an event has occurred; his or her tenacity in articulating this occurrence constitutes the coming to subjectivity of the individual in evental-truth.

For Badiou, the event, be it the political, artistic, amorous, or scientific, constitutes a restructuring of an individual's subjectivity in fidelity towards that which has brought about the new situation. If it were possible to make a decision based on current knowledge, then the event would not be an event, because what makes it an event cannot be known in advance from a given situation, which is why an unprovable event requires a personal decision, an interventionist break with the current possibilities of the known. The subject is thus defined as one who 'decides an undecidable'.¹⁴ Objectively uncertain, the event imposes the need for a response on a given individual. The choice that the individual encounters in the universality of the event (for or against fidelity) is a crisis of a very personal variety because it is undecidable; indeed, thereafter, the choice determines the whole character of that individual's encounter with the world. Once the event has been recognized, it not only enters into the existing regime of knowledge, but re-organizes it, as in the case of Galileo, whose cosmological investigations created not just new knowledge but a new type of physics.¹⁵ In this sense, the event requires a new way of thinking and speaking because the truth of the event cannot be enunciated from within or according to the terms of the reigning orthodoxy.¹⁶ Galileo is a good example here, because the new physics were not just subjectively true, but were, as with all events of truth, universal in scope. The potential for universality in the evental-truth is Badiou's criteria for one becoming a subject. Hallward writes:

Individuals become subjects in Badiou's sense of the word if and only if this [event], conceived as a new criterion for action, is further consistent with a properly universal principle – that is, only if it is an [event] with which everyone can in principle identify.¹⁷

¹¹ Bresano, "The Subject," 41.

¹² Hallward, *Badiou*, xxv.

¹³ Žižek and Badiou, *Philosophy*, 18.

¹⁴ Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005), 407.

¹⁵ Badiou, *Being*, 38.

¹⁶ Bresano, "The Subject," 43.

¹⁷ Hallward, *Badiou*, xxvi.

Moreover, the choice for or against fidelity is one which only that individual can make, being quite literally a life-defining crisis through which they leave the world of merely animal needs and desires and, it follows, become genuinely free in everything except the continued fidelity which grounds them.¹⁸ Through fidelity the new subject enters a new way of being in the world which Badiou calls 'immortality'. The idea of the immortal for Badiou is the transcendence of the merely animal life which constitutes not just the physical in human existence, but also the petty struggles in which we find ourselves embroiled (be it struggles for work, status, the latest gadget, etc). He writes:

The fact that in the end we all die, that only dust remains, in no way alters Man's identity as immortal at the instant in which he affirms himself as someone who runs counter to the temptation of wanting-to-be-an-animal to which circumstances may expose him.¹⁹

In this break the critical nature reveals itself in the event as that which cannot be sought or chosen in advance by the potential subject; rather, he writes, '[t]o enter into the composition of a subject of truth can only be something that happens to you'.²⁰ The choice (if it can be called that) comes in the decision to be faithful to the event of truth, not in choosing how the event will arrive. For Badiou, the apostle Paul's decision to remain faithful in enunciation to the event of the resurrection as universally true (thus breaking with all previous modes of human being), made Paul an ideal example of a subject of evental-truth; however, the undoubted impossibility of resurrection means that there has been no event or truth in which to remain in fidelity: Paul is a fraud. He writes:

What is important about Paul is that we can read the texts he left behind, quite independently of the story of his personal grace, and of the way this grace itself did or did not depend on the resurrection. Paul's thought is a thought of the event, a thought of the truth as consecutive to an event, a thought of fidelity, and also a certain thought of the universal, and what interested me was to examine it as such.²¹

Thus the paradox of the primary example of a subject of evental-truth being excluded from any possible truth-domain on the grounds that resurrections are outside the realm of the possible. That Pauline Christianity should have a paradoxical relationship to Badiou's own theory is not surprising, considering that Badiou himself recognizes Christianity as 'one of the possible names for the paradox of truths'.²² The paradox here though is not in whether or not Badiou believes in resurrections (which of course are impossible), but in the two-fold contradiction in which Paul becomes for Badiou a supreme example of the subject of evental-truth, whilst the truth he espouses is impossibly undecidable. Badiou and Žižek both insist that it is because of the rise of a scientific knowledge-economy that Paul's claim cannot be accepted.²³ This remains a valid point, but surely Paul knew as well as Badiou that the event he enunciated precisely did not fit any religious or philosophical discursive system,

¹⁸ Hallward, *Badiou*, xxxi.

¹⁹ Badiou, *Ethics*, 12.

²⁰ Badiou, *Ethics*, 51.

²¹ Badiou, *Ethics*, 123, 124.

²² Badiou, *Logic*, 428.

²³ Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject* (London: Verso, 1999), 142, 143.

remaining literally impossible and unnameable in those terms.²⁴ As with himself, Žižek indicates that Badiou's interest in Christianity is tactical.²⁵ Through openly acknowledging his theoretical political debt to Christianity Badiou keeps his friends close, and his enemies closer, thus warding-off the return of Christianity in repressed form. It is because, moreover, Badiou wants to preserve both the idea of scientific truth in an age of anti-philosophical relativism *and* the theoretical structure of truth, which he sees in Paul, that the apostle is both admired and discredited.²⁶ What we have in Badiou's appeal to the structure of Paul's thought in rejection of the content, to borrow from Žižek much-repeated observation, is the theo-philosophical equivalent of the arid super-ego injunction to enjoy everything as much as possible, with the malignant content of that enjoyment removed. In Žižek's terms, this is: "[C]offee without caffeine, cream without fat, beer without alcohol [...] the list goes on."²⁷

In the case of Badiou, what we have is the supreme subject of a truth-event (Paul) with neither a truth (Christianity) nor an event (resurrection); we have, in effect, a Christianity deprived of its mythological (and thus malignant) content, and Paul the peddler of a fable.²⁸ The celebrated resurrection of Paul for contemporary philosophy turns out to be as fantastical and empty of content as that of Christ's. Indeed, by including Paul within his *oeuvre*, Badiou strategically negates in advance any comparisons between his thought and the apostle's, permanently ensuring Paul's exclusion from the domains of truth. As a consequence of the impossibility of Christ's resurrection being recognized within *any* knowledge-economy, even Paul's own,²⁹ no amount of proofs or counter-proofs solve anything: it is literally Paul's word against Badiou's. Not being provable is in any case how Badiou understands the existence of an event within a given situation.³⁰ An intervention is required to break the dead-lock of circular thinking; and so we turn to Kierkegaard, who, theologian Marcus Pound says, himself turned to the story of Abraham as a means of traumatizing his contemporaries against their neurotic quest for objective certainties and religious guarantees.³¹ An intervention in this sense follows Badiou's own use of the word, in which what is important or interesting is not the circular debates regarding whether an event has taken place, but rather the enunciation of it.³² In the case of Kierkegaard's Abraham, there is no event to speak of; there is only fidelity to a truth that makes impossible (and immoral) demands that explicitly contradict earlier pronouncements.³³ The implications of drawing Badiou into closer orbit around Kierkegaard is for a challenging and deepening of the theological discussion regarding his work that he has welcomed, if not encouraged.³⁴

²⁴ Badiou, *St Paul*, 46.

²⁵ Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute* (London: Verso, 2000), 2.

²⁶ Badiou, *St Paul*, 6, 108.

²⁷ Slavoj Žižek, *A Cup of Decaf Reality*, Lacan.com, online: <http://www.lacan.com/zizekdecaf.htm> (accessed 21st May 2011).

²⁸ Badiou, *St Paul*, 3.

²⁹ Badiou, *St Paul*, 45.

³⁰ Hallward, *Badiou*, 115

³¹ Marcus Pound, *Theology, Psychoanalysis, and Trauma* (London: SCM Press, 2007), 97, 112.

³² Hallward, *Badiou*, 125.

³³ See Genesis 15.

³⁴ Adam Miller, *An Interview with Alain Badiou: "Universal Truths and the Question of Religion"* in *Journal of Philosophy and Scripture* 3 [2005], 41, 42, online: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/57058854/Badiou-and->

The form of Badiou's concept of immortality was mirrored in a pseudonymous text by Kierkegaard called *The Concept of Anxiety* (1844). Briefly, in this text man is a synthesis of the psyche and, like Badiou, the animal body; just as in Badiou, for whom the evental-truth raises man above merely physical and psychological needs and desires, man becomes fully human (or 'immortal') through the synthesis of the spirit to the psyche and the body. The spirit's role in this synthesis is to interrupt the easy relationship between psyche and body that the purely psycho/somatic man enjoys, and introduces the empty anxiety of future possibility: in other words, freedom.³⁵ Kierkegaard sums it up through saying that 'anxiety is freedom's actuality', meaning that the possibilities opened up for man by having the freedom to choose (he knows not what) a potential future induces existential anxiety in the present.³⁶ For Kierkegaard, as that in man which introduces existential anxiety of the sort only humans can experience, the spirit disrupts the merely physical/psychological relations of man to world and opens him up to the possibility of genuine freedom, for which he is made rightly anxious. This crisis of anxiety over existential freedom thus introduces temporality into the subject's experience for Kierkegaard, by opening up the way for freedom to come into the present from a future possibility. Through openness in the present to both seizing and being seized by a future unimaginable possibility, freedom is able to be approached as something not characterized by slavish adherence to objective certainties, but rather one that means something for the individual concerned. The psychosomatic unity now becomes a moment in the unfolding of freedom's possibility, thus making room for temporality of a different order for the human, and, through this unfolding of freedom's possibilities, this psychosomatic unity becomes genuinely human.³⁷ Equally, for Badiou, rather than an indefinite physical existence, immortality is a fidelity to the event, the leaving behind of merely animal concerns (however sophisticated), and the assumption of full human subjectivity. In this sense, just as the mortal becomes immortal for Badiou through evental-fidelity, for Kierkegaard, the anxiety brought about by the possibility of freedom introduces temporality into human experience through the synthesis with spirit. In this synthesis the present and the eternal touch each other allowing for the temporal as future possibility to come into existence. The eternal, as with Badiou's 'immortality', is not here defined by a quantitatively infinite duration, but rather with an external God-like relation to time. Kierkegaard puts it thus: "The moment is that ambiguity in which time and the eternal touch each other, and with this the concept of temporality is posited, whereby time constantly intersects eternity and eternity constantly pervades time."³⁸

At this point the charge could be brought against both philosophers that this definition of truth appears individualistic to the point of solipsism. For Badiou, though, the four paradigms to which he refers the evental-truth all include a social dimension in the outworking of that which seizes the artist, the politician, the scientist, or the lover. Likewise, for Kierkegaard, the subjectivity of truth does not collapse within itself, as though the subject were capable of remaining faithful to a reality of their own private imagining. The

Miller-An-Interview-With-Alain-Badiou-Universal-Truths-and-the-Question-of-Religion (accessed 27th May 2011).

³⁵ Kierkegaard, "*The Concept of Anxiety*," in *The Essential Kierkegaard*, ed. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 140.

³⁶ Kierkegaard, "*The Concept*," 139.

³⁷ Kierkegaard, "*The Concept*," 140.

³⁸ Kierkegaard, "*The Concept*," 152.

necessarily created finitude of man for Kierkegaard always mitigates against any charge of solipsism. Thus he is not proposing that the individual creates that to which he remains faithful, but is instead subject to it, being seized as much as seizing.

From this perspective, moral dilemmas are no substitute for the decision of whether or not to cling, or to continue clinging, to that which has seized one as a truth-event and which constitutes the defining moment of one's life. The conclusion of which, is that it is better to cling to that which has come upon one as a crisis of eventual-truth than it is to worry about the universal ethical concerns of society. For Badiou, one is either true to that by which one has been seized, or one is not in a relation to the truth at all; there can be no relation to truth in general. Once more, as will be discussed below, the shadow of Kierkegaard goes before Badiou.

Abraham: Monster Or Saint?

In his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), Kierkegaard works through his idea that any truth which is merely the correspondence of mind with its object is the worst kind of truth: a truth that is boring because it is true only in an objective sense. Who would die, for example, to defend the truth that $1 + 1 = 2$? 'In a mathematical proposition [...], the objectivity is given [as certain], but therefore its truth is also an indifferent truth'.³⁹ The more objectively certain we can be about a truth, the less personal stake such a truth can claim for itself. Only that which is grasped subjectively as an internal truth in which the individual has a personal stake, as with Badiou's 'event', is a truth for Kierkegaard worthy of the name. Thus, to stake one's life on what does not give certainty, security, and guarantee in an objective sense is the 'highest truth'. He writes: "An objective uncertainty, held fast through appropriation with the most passionate inwardness, is the truth, the highest truth there is for an existing person."⁴⁰

To stake one's life, therefore, on that which can be objectively guaranteed is to not stake one's life at all; it is merely to be in possession of the existential version of a receipt. For Kierkegaard, one can be entirely correct, but still be in untruth, because the point is to take the risk even of being wrong in order to emerge as a subject of truth. The point is that such a truth is inherently risky, because one's whole subjective orientation is directed towards that which cannot be objectively verified, but can only be grasped in and as that which is uncertain.

If this did not seem crisis-ridden enough, in an earlier pseudonymous text, *Fear and Trembling*, (1843) Kierkegaard pushed the logic of this subjective, eventual-truth to what looks like its murderous conclusion. As with Badiou's assertion of eventual-truth over the demands of a universalizing ethic, Kierkegaard uses the example of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis to illustrate the kind of crisis one would expect from the subjectivity he espouses; he calls it the 'teleological suspension of the ethical,' by which he means the paradoxical rising of the singular individual above the demands of universal ethics without actually transgressing them.⁴¹ The story of Abraham had received philosophical treatment forty-five years earlier when Immanuel Kant insisted that Abraham, on the grounds of a rationally

³⁹ Kierkegaard, "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," in *The Essential Kierkegaard*, 207.

⁴⁰ Kierkegaard, "Concluding Unscientific Postscript," 207.

⁴¹ Kierkegaard, "Fear and Trembling," in *The Essential Kierkegaard*, 99.

deduced morality should have declined to obey the (supposedly) divine voice, replying: “That I ought not to kill my good son is quite certain. But that you, this apparition, are God – of that I am not certain [...]”⁴²

The moral horror with which Kant views the story is not lost on Kierkegaard. Yet, it is precisely this disjuncture between the ethical duty of care for one’s son and obedience to God which propels the tension of the story; he writes, ‘I cannot understand Abraham – I can only admire him.’⁴³ More recently, the philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas, not surprisingly, recognized the possibility in Kierkegaard’s reading of the story to transcend the ethical through fidelity to the objectively uncertain (i.e. religious belief) and justify violence. He writes:

Harshness and aggressivity in thought [...] henceforth justify this violence and terrorism. It is not just a question of literary form. Violence emerges in Kierkegaard at the precise moment when, moving beyond the esthetic stage, existence can no longer limit itself to what it takes to be an ethical stage and enters the religious one, the domain of belief.⁴⁴

Kierkegaard, in this respect, is closer to Badiou than Lévinas, for whom the latter’s ethics precludes the possibility of anything breaking with the hegemony of that which is ethically certain within a given situation.⁴⁵ Summing up the central dilemma, Ronald Green writes: “*Fear and Trembling* [...] produces a jarring inconsistency. [It] seems to hold up as exemplary and somehow worthy of imitation a kind of conduct that we cannot possibly encourage, defend, or understand in terms of general moral values.”⁴⁶

As with Kant, Kierkegaard acknowledges that the ethical is universal in its claims, whereas the individual is singular; unlike Kant, he sees faith as the reversal of this order, placing the commands of ethics below his fidelity to God. From Badiou’s perspective this means that the truth by which Abraham has been seized, and which he in turn seizes, calls for him to sacrifice the son who, not incidentally, had originally come to him as a result of his prior fidelity to this truth. In Kierkegaard’s case this truth refers to the God of the Bible; for Badiou, by contrast, the religious category of evental-truth is absent. For him, while being able to see the form that the event of truth took in the writings of Paul, the suspicion remains that Christianity, or religious thinking in general, could become a means of reintroducing abstract universal ethical truths through the backdoor, so to speak. God becomes, in this case, not so much an instantiation of evental-truth as a guarantor of bourgeois morality. Badiou thus dismisses any attempt by Lévinas, to insinuate religion back into philosophical discourse, under the cover of and via investigations into the phenomenology of otherness. He writes:

⁴² Immanuel Kant, “*The Conflict of the Faculties*,” in *Religion and Rational Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 283.

⁴³ Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (Princeton: Princeton university Press, 1983), 112.

⁴⁴ Emmanuel Lévinas, “*Kierkegaard: Existence and Ethics*,” in *Proper Names*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford: Stanford university Press, 1996), 72.

⁴⁵ Woodward, “*Faith*,” 35.

⁴⁶ Ronald Green, “*Developing Fear and Trembling*,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard*, ed. Alistair Hanney and Gordon Marino (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 263.

The Other, as he appears to me in the order of the finite, must be the epiphany of a properly infinite distance to the other, the traversal of which is the originary ethical experience.

This means that in order to be intelligible, ethics requires that the Other be in some sense *carried by a principle of alterity* which transcends mere finite experience. Lévinas calls this principle the ‘Altogether-Other’, and it is quite obviously the ethical name for God.⁴⁷

For Badiou, Lévinas’ attempt to found an ethics on the inter-relationship between self and other, a relationship which is grounded upon an absolute Other (God), merely restates the idea in philosophically sophisticated language of the impossibility of moral goodness without a guarantee provided by the divine. It amounts to saying, he writes, that ‘[t]here can be no ethics without God the ineffable’.⁴⁸ Such philosophy, according to Badiou, is not philosophy, but has, rather, been ‘annulled by theology’ that is not so much a theology as an excuse to find a stable ground for ethics.⁴⁹ As a potential category of truth religion thus occupies a highly unstable space within Badiou’s thought, bearing the formal characteristics of an event as epitomized by St Paul, whilst ostensibly moving in the opposite direction back towards an ethics of conventional morality. In drawing Kierkegaard close to Badiou one can see an opposite effect occurring. The point here, though, is not to argue for or against either Badiou or Lévinas, and certainly not for the inclusion of religion as a guarantor of universal ethics of society within the former’s categories of evental-truth. In this, no doubt, Kierkegaard and Badiou would be in complete agreement, insofar as any attempt to secure for ethics a hook in objective certainty, religious or otherwise, misses the movement that the event of truth takes within the coming to humanity of the one caught up in the crisis of it. The point here, rather, is to peel back the layers of the original crisis which precipitates the event of truth for the subject in Badiou, to an illumination of that which is a crisis *for* the original crisis, and for which Kierkegaard’s study of Abraham is the best example. What this means for Kierkegaard is that Abraham’s continued fidelity to the uncertain event of faith placed the subject (himself) of that event necessarily in doubt; e.g. is Abraham righteous in his faithfulness (and justified thereby) or is he simply a moral monster? It is within what Kierkegaard described as the ‘teleological suspension of the ethical’ that can here be seen a step beyond the avowedly a-religious model of evental-truth espoused by Badiou; not as a step towards a spurious objective certainty but towards a fidelity which is itself a crisis of the first order. The use of bringing Kierkegaard into a discussion of Badiou’s notion of evental-truth becomes clearer, in that the former is able to both confirm the latter’s position whilst also radicalizing it and allowing for that which is the exemplar of an event to be readmitted without slipping an ethics of religious certitude into the bargain.

The crisis for Abraham consists, then, not in making the initial leap into the uncertain subjective truth to which he adheres (and for which he had shown his fidelity by submitting to the call to leave Mesopotamia, a name change, and circumcision⁵⁰), but in his continual submission to such a truth in the teeth of universally valid ethical demands that rightly

⁴⁷ Badiou, *Ethics*, 22.

⁴⁸ Badiou, *Ethics*, 22.

⁴⁹ Badiou, *Ethics*, 23.

⁵⁰ See Genesis 12: 1-9; 17:1-14.

condemn infanticide. Kierkegaard is right to point out here that for Abraham the temptation is not to some morally dubious perversion, but rather a temptation to the ethical itself, a temptation to not murder his son in the face of the demands of that which constitutes his eventual-truth.⁵¹ The religious, or however one wants to frame that which has become the truth of Abraham, can hardly here be seen to be supporting an objectively certain ethics in the model of, say, the Kantian Categorical Imperative to make one's actions universally valid for all people at all times.⁵²

In Badiou's terms, by orientating himself in fidelity towards the eventual-truth, Abraham faces this second crisis when that truth brazenly conflicts with universally valid ethical demands. By staking his life in fidelity to the eventual-truth that had seized him, Abraham not only placed his trust in that which was objectively uncertain (God), but in that which was in direct opposition to the objectively valid demand that a father must not murder his son: his fidelity literally knew no bounds, neither good nor evil. In order to stay true, to remain a human subject of the kind Badiou describes, Abraham faced the soul-destroying possibility that this event, this God, to whom he is faithful may be either non-existent, mad or evil. Abraham's situation represents an extreme form of the 'personal crisis' which beset people from time to time. In this case, the crisis does not consist so much in a transition from one sense of personhood to another (as in, for example, 'coming out' narratives), but rather in clinging to that which for him by constituting his horizon of truth made him who he was. Insofar as fidelity to the original event constitutes the horizon of possible subjectivity, freedom, and being 'immortal' the crisis encountered by Abraham consisted in being faithful to the point at which that very subjectivity, freedom and 'immortality' themselves are at stake. This is the chief crisis to which this essay has been aiming, the crisis of the possibility in Kierkegaard of subjective annihilation through that which has been opened up by the eventual-truth described by Badiou. Through entering into fidelity Abraham attains to what Kierkegaard describes as the...

...teleological suspension of the ethical. As the single individual he became higher than the universal. This is the paradox that cannot be mediated. [...] If this is not Abraham's situation, then Abraham is not even a tragic hero but a murderer.⁵³

The stakes, indeed, are high, and in one sense, then, Abraham gets off lightly in his crisis from faith for faith because God provides a ram for the sacrifice, allowing Isaac to live. In another sense there is very little to distinguish Abraham from a murderer except his fidelity to a truth-event which posits the teleological suspension of the ethical described by Kierkegaard. The problem that Lévinas might rightly have with both the believer Kierkegaard and the atheist Badiou is that they posit the potentially terrifying possibility of a good beyond ethics, of a good not grounded in morality (conventional or otherwise) but still requiring fidelity in the absence of certainty. In this regard, Badiou also exposes the amorality made explicit in Paul's writings through his fidelity to the event of the resurrection.⁵⁴ We do not have here the certainty of religious fundamentalism (which is

⁵¹ Kierkegaard, "Fear," 100.

⁵² Immanuel Kant, "Groundwork for a Metaphysic of Morals," in *The Moral Law*, ed. H. J. Paton (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1976), 67.

⁵³ Kierkegaard, "Fear," 101.

⁵⁴ Badiou, *St Paul*, 101.

simply the degeneration of faith to the level of an imagined objective guarantee), but the uncertainty of fidelity; and this fidelity, as Badiou bears witness to, is as much a potential danger for each of his four secular categories as it is in the case of Abraham's religion. This of course highlights the necessarily ambiguous nature of that which Badiou has attempted to illustrate through his idea of the event. That is, that where fidelity itself is raised to the level of the prime good, where fidelity defines that which is good, the result may well look to those under the sway of social morality as either unambiguously good or unambiguously evil: only time (which itself is opened up by this event) will tell. In the story of Abraham this was circumnavigated through the displacement of Isaac on the altar by a ram provided at the last moment (though Abraham was given no assurance that this would be so). This further underlines the point made by Badiou that the truth of such events are not necessarily known either before or during their occurrence, but rather awaken retroactively in the hole that is punched by them in the prevailing knowledge-economy.⁵⁵ This ambiguity is that which Lévinas justly fears, and Kierkegaard acknowledges so much when he states that, contrary to the idea that actuality is heavy and possibility light, 'possibility is the weightiest of all categories. It is true that we often hear the opposite stated [...]'. He continues:

[I]n possibility all things are equally possible, and whoever has truly been brought up by possibility has grasped the terrible as well as the joyful. So when such a person graduates from the school of possibility, and he knows better than a child knows his ABCs that he can demand absolutely nothing from life and that the terrible, perdition and annihilation live next door to every man [...].⁵⁶

What we have then is a situation in which for Lévinas ethics, being founded upon an absolute Other, is not saved from being in thrall to socially recognized morality; indeed, the absolute Other acts to guarantee the continued reign of such an ethical system. Badiou recognizes this and rightly condemns Lévinas' position as a philosophy infiltrated by a form of thinly disguised theo-ethics. For Kierkegaard, however, if one reads him following Badiou's theory of the event, the absolute Other by no means guarantees the realm of ethics, but instead monstrously subverts that system by making ethical behavior itself a temptation to be resisted. The monstrosity of Kierkegaard's God is a monstrosity in the Kantian sense of the mathematically sublime, as being the inability of the imagination to apprehend that which confronts it in the demands it makes upon the fidelity of one such as Abraham to those demands. Kierkegaard would seem to agree with both Lévinas and Kant when he points out the inherent dangers of this as being the potentially terrible perdition of the one who 'graduates from the school of possibility.' Freedom, then, as the possibility of future potentiality both allows for the coming-to-be of who or what we are, and draws that very same fidelity-orientated subjectivity into the orbit of the philosophical/ethical version of a black hole, the centre of which provides no objective certainty. The problem with Badiou's exclusion of Christianity from the domains of truth is not that he doesn't believe in God, but that he too reasonably draws back from the empty abyss marked by the absence of God. By rejecting the religious category in evental-truth he makes his philosophy safe from this abyss in a way that Kierkegaard was manifestly not afraid to do.

⁵⁵ Badiou, *Ethics*, 43.

⁵⁶ Kierkegaard, "*The Concept*," 154.

In fidelity to the truth-event the subject is left in radical uncertainty, which only retrospectively reveals itself as being what it is. Clearly, what is not being argued for here is the idea that the principle of the event can be applied to determine any kind of socially recognized ethics, since what then would distinguish the labor of a Ghandi from the labor of a Hitler except the judgment of historians? Indeed, to argue for an ethics based on the model provided by either Kierkegaard or Badiou would be inherently antithetical to that model since any event or choice cannot be forced. One can argue that Kierkegaard both provides a way out of the theo-ethics of bourgeois morality apparently espoused by Lévinas, and beyond the contradictions of Badiou, who by tearing evental form from content in a figure like Paul effectively turns wine into water.⁵⁷ That such a position opens the subject to terrifying possibilities is par for the course for Kierkegaard for whom certainty is no basis on which to stake one's life.

⁵⁷ Kierkegaard, "Fear," 95.

BOOK REVIEWS

***Understanding Catholicism* (2nd edition). By Monika K. Hellwig. Paulist Press, 2002 (1981), 194 pp.**

Monika Hellwig died in 2006 at seventy-five years. She received her doctorate from The Catholic University of America and was a professor of theology at Georgetown University for over thirty years. For the decade prior to her death she was Director of the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities. She was an apostle of Christian orthodoxy during her entire distinguished career and a widely respected Catholic theologian. This book is a second edition of a 1981 book which has had a wide circulation in Catholic colleges, a circulation that, I hope, will continue to grow.

There are many introductions to Catholicism in use. Her's is characterized by a unusually deep grasp of the Christian faith and a concentration on the faith that places the highly evolved ecclesiastical structure of Roman Catholicism in second place to a theology of Christianity, and service of that structure to the church well ahead of its powers. In other words, the Roman Catholic Church's understanding of itself (ecclesiology) is subordinated to an orthodox theology of God, Christ and the Christian gospel. The book is not an apology for the Catholic Church institutionally conceived but is an understanding of "Catholicism" as a communal way of living Christian faith. As one eulogist put it, Hellwig was Catholic with a small "c" as well as a Roman Catholic, and she was a very able Catholic ecumenist.

The four parts, with eleven chapters, are: (1) Human Life before God; (2) Jesus the Compassion of God; (3) The Spirit in the Church; and (4) The Mystery of the End. Its eleven chapters are tightly woven. Hellwig never speaks down to the reader and the student. The book is not easy reading, although it is beautifully written. It introduces, yes, but makes high intellectual demands. It may be well beyond the ability of some freshman college students but it will be an engaging text for brighter and more serious students. I used it a course for thirty students, half of whom appreciated it and half of whom seemed mystified by it. It is theologically substantive and intellectually challenging, with a touch of mysticism (she was a holy woman) thrown in.

Take, for example, the second chapter (on Creation). She concentrates on the creation story as a myth which is as much about the present and the future as it is about beginnings. She doesn't get caught in an argument with Creationists who are a great bother to many theologians but rather spins a theology of divine presence. In her view the doctrine of creation is formulated on the basis of the story (the myth) but both are about the meaning of our lives, now as well as then., about finitude and contingency and the burden of freedom, about companionship and community, about unity (All is created by God), and about unification (Something's wrong! What do we do to stem the chaos?). Her method is to uncover the questions which the text (story) answers and then to place the story's meaning as an answer to an existential question. This is, of course, a widespread approach among teachers of theology and it is not at all the same as demythologization. She thinks and believes that the doctrines are true. I don't think Bultmann did.

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***For God So Loved, He Gave: Entering the Movement of Divine Generosity.* By Kelly Kopic & Justin Berger. Zondervan, 2010, 281 pages.**

Undercurrents of academic philosophical excitement encroach only rarely into conservative Christian theology, and even more rarely into the lay Christian consciousness. This book by Kelly Kopic confounds that pattern. For the past decade, philosophers of a more postmodern persuasion have been fascinated by the notion of “the gift” and “givenness,” often reflecting a resurgence of religious-sounding language, due in no small part to the “theological turn” that has flowed from the pens of prominent phenomenological philosophers such as Jean-Luc Marion (*Being Given: Toward a Phenomenology of Givenness, Prolegomena to Charity*, et al.). Heavy-hitting theologians have appropriated pieces of this discourse (which includes weighty moral notions of forgiveness, hospitality, and charity, an element that owes no small debt to Jacques Derrida) and applied it to examinations of doctrine—John Milbank’s *Being Given: Ontology and Pardon* is a prime example. However, all the texts and thinkers just mentioned, while sporting strident command of theological and philosophical themes and a broad originality of thought, are woefully unreadable for anybody but the specialist. If notions of gift, grace, generosity, and givenness are so dynamic and meaningful, why can they not be distilled into simplified lines of thought and paired with relevant biblical texts to allow the laity access to their catches? This is the difficulty which Kopic’s book thrives in curing, though not in a self-conscious manner. While imperfect in some regards, this work is one of the first explorations of this late-modern philosophical current which is both imminently accessible and thoroughly biblical.

The book is divided into three parts, each corresponding to a different element in the Christian metanarrative: (1) the fall of humanity, (2) the salvation wrought by Christ and the empowerment of the church by the Spirit, and (3) the manifestation of these realities in believers’ lives today. The first chapter establishes what its title proclaims: “All things belong to God.” Kopic sketches a theology of creation which resonates perhaps most deeply with Catholic thought, describing all of nature as God’s “gift” which reflects the attributes of its giver (17-21). This sets the stage for the second chapter, which describes the primal sin as a “turning and taking,” a non-reciprocal and selfish reception and usage of God’s gifts. This “hermeneutic of givenness” (my term)—with God as giver and sinful humanity as the taker—cleverly posits a theological anthropology which indicates that humans are ineradicably “owned;” in their proper state, they are owned by God—if fallen, then by sinful propensity (15-17). The third chapter lights the stage for the “coming of the king”: Jesus’ messianic triumph as the ultimate answer to mankind’s taking. God does not restore creation by taking it back from mankind’s sinful hands; rather, beautifully and unexpectedly, he gives a gift that is even greater—himself. “This self-giving movement will be the great display of his power, of his authority, of his kingship” (55).

The second part of the book opens with Chapter 4, detailing in greater precision God’s self-gift in Christ. This chapter also contains an interesting discourse on the atonement, which is notable on two fronts. Positively, Kopic delivers a clear and helpful exposition of a “canopy” theory of the atonement (which includes most of the major theories and themes—justification, ransom, victory, etc.) (69-74). Negatively, in spite of all the emphasis on God’s grace and generosity, Kopic never seriously engages one of the strongest challenges to traditional atonement thought: “Why could God not simply forgive mankind gratuitously?”

A short excursus on not “pitting God’s love against his justice” is all we find on the difficult notion of the necessity of Christ’s suffering and death.

The next two chapters deliver meditations on the role of the Holy Spirit as a gift from God (but also a self-giving gift, to avoid wrecking orthodox Trinitarianism) and the role of salvation as a gift. The final three chapters of this section—while spotted with moments of keen insight into the life of faith—begin an unfortunate trend of repetition, with similar themes and imagery being consistently called upon to make only slightly different points. For example, all three of these chapters (on pages 109-110, 127-128, and 132-133, respectively) make exceedingly similar points related to inaugurated eschatology—how God’s gifts are enacted now in particular ways which foreshadow the completion of God’s purposes. While the passages are needful contextually, their redundancy is prominent.

The final section of the book narrows the focus to Christian life in the world, and, as just mentioned, continues a trend of repetition that serves to reinforce key concepts, but also wears on the reader. Chapter 10 is the most substantive, and stands alongside Chapter 4 as the strongest in the book. Here we see some pinpoint elucidation of a “kenotic” or “self-emptying” church, both in Christians’ personal walks and through their role in the church body. Kacic presents a rousing picture of a sacrificial and corporate faith: “[In Romans 12:1-2] Christians are called to lay down their individual ‘bodies’ (plural) as ‘a living sacrifice’ (singular)... [Sacrifice] is the vocation of the community as a whole” (156). The next chapter, on “Resurrection Faith and Work,” gives a powerful presentation of the role of “work” in the Christian life. (A discussion of Martin Luther’s perspective on “works” is also present here, but it seemed a bit slanted toward vindicating him; his troubling aversion toward the Book of James goes unmentioned.)

The following chapters of the book, rather than increasing in power and vision, either plateau or decrease, as it becomes predictable what will be said about various topics. By the time we get to the final chapters, when Kacic raises an issue like the sacraments, we can guess that baptism is the “gift” of cleansing from sin and that communion is the “gift” of remembering Christ’s sacrifice (198-200). It’s not that these points are objectionable on a surface-level, it’s that they seem to neglect the opportunity to take this hermeneutic of givenness into deeper theological waters. The epilogue concludes with a genuinely hopeful outlook on the church’s appropriation of God’s grace, especially in light of a cultural situation which seems, at least in some regards, favorable to its expression.

One point bears a dab of dwelling on a theological level. Kacic, a professor at Covenant College, is thoroughly Reformed in his leanings, and strong Calvinism can sometimes makes waves when paired with a more “relational” theological paradigm. A key case in point would be the discussion of salvation in Chapter 5. The entirety of the “gift” paradigm hinges on the fact that it is freely given and freely received, else coercion darken any notion of actual love. The idea of a gift ostensibly involves a beneficent giver *and* an autonomous receiver—one who freely gives, rather than forces, his gift to another, and one who freely receives the gift as his own. But Kacic feels obliged to affirm that faith itself, the ability to receive God’s gifts, is itself a gift of God and thus contains no human agency. Kacic has two ways to go here: either affirm the problematic nature of this juxtaposition of our receiving a *salvific gift* alongside God’s *absolute prerogative* in the economy of salvation, or introduce an infinite regress whereby the question is asked, “If God gives us a gift that allows us to receive faith, how do we receive *that* gift?” He opts for paradox, one of the most familiar in all of Calvinist

thought, but its situation in the midst of this givenness hermeneutic pushes the paradox dangerously close to contradiction. The notion that God not only gives to us but also necessarily enables us to receive suggests that we are neither free to receive or reject his gift. This confounds the understanding of authentic gift and giving that is experientially sustained among all human relationships and muddies Kacic's vision of God's undiluted generosity to his people. This represents an area where (a) more time might have been spent on sifting through possible problems with the paradigm and (b) the Reformed undertow of the work slightly confutes its relational ambitions.

However, one of the most appealing aspects of this book is its intention to capture the *motivation* of God's actions toward us, and to right our often-flawed understanding of *why* we live in ways that we know we should not. Kacic (and Borger, the contributing author) emphasizes that our call to charity and justice is motivated by the Spirit's gift to us, countering a deeply entrenched view in some Christians' lives that we act out of *indebtedness* rather than as a reaction to the generosity of God. Kacic could have taken this shimmering insight one step further and explicitly emphasized the motive of gratefulness, rather than obligation, as the most fitting incentive for becoming a vessel of God's gifts to others.

Overall, this book is excellent. Repetition and occasional lack of depth render it taxing at some points, but the total experience is one of *reward*. Kacic spreads the notions of givenness and generosity across a biblically-rooted theology and inspirationally-rendered vision for the church. We immensely enjoyed working through this piece of devout scholarship, and sincerely hope that it be read by both clergy and laity, academic and not, for the grace of God is not often rendered in terms so compelling as this.

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***Divine Worship and Human Healing: Liturgical Theology at the Margins of Life and Death.* By Bruce T. Morrill. Liturgical Press, 2009, 274 pp.**

That the worship of God is coextensive with all of Christian life is a theme announced on the opening pages of Morrill's book. With that theme the book concludes, emphasizing that even death itself is taken up into the worship of God. This central insight, along with the corollary that worship of God involves also the sanctification of men and women, is a leitmotif throughout the text, which weaves reflections on the author's pastoral experience with the sick and the grieving together with insights offered by theologians and writers from a number of disciplines. The net result is a book that is timely and thought-provoking not only for those in the world of academic theology proper, but for all those who take pastoral care of the sick to mean a serious, faith-filled, informed and compassionate extension of the healing mystery of the cross and resurrection.

The book is divided into three parts ("Liturgy and Healing," "Scripture and Tradition," "Rites of Healing") and a conclusion. The first part establishes the author's view that, especially given the roots of Eucharist in the shadow of the crucifixion, Christian worship involves a God who has embraced the suffering dimensions of human existence and that

therefore the worship of God has an important place in the Christian experience of suffering and loss. In good times and bad, Christian worship involves “a deeper affective knowledge of ourselves as part of the history God revealed in Jesus” (17). Just as Christian faith is neither individualistic nor merely cognitive, so too human medical conditions are neither exclusively self-regarding nor matters only of what can be measured (e.g., a fever) or counted (e.g., blood cell counts). Rather, illness affects the entire circle of the one who is ill *and* the entire person of the one who is ill (as well as having effects on the surrounding circle). Anointing of the one who is ill, therefore, is directed to the whole of the person who is ill and to the circle of friends and family.

Turning to “Scripture and Tradition” in Part II, the author demonstrates that illness in Jesus’ cultural milieu involved real and perceived exclusion from the Jewish community. Hence, Jesus’ ministry to the ill was at least as much about restoring their social integration as much as it was about relief from symptoms. It is on this level, then, that anointing has its primary objective: “a transformation of people’s experience of illness, misfortune, and death such that they find renewed meaning . . . for life and death in the presence of God and within their world” (94). The author warns against isolating Jesus’ healing ministry from his mission as a whole, arguing persuasively that it must be seen in light of the paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of the Son of God which first and foremost calls believers to embrace terrestrial existence as opposed to hoping for an escape to immortality. Part of understanding the applicability of the paschal mystery to all aspects of life is regular participation in the Church’s sacramental celebrations.

Part III (“Rites of Healing”) offers a pair of narratives that are as full of scholarly theological reflection as they are touching and poignant. Repeatedly, the author emphasizes that estrangement from the rites of the Church (all too often attributable to rites minimally performed by under-informed clergy), makes the healing rites of the Church that much less effective since they draw heavily on the entire experience of Christian worship and on a range of Scriptural themes. In this section, the author draws very effectively on the notion of the triple body of culture, nature, and tradition as developed by Louis-Marie Chauvet.

Practically the only drawback to this text is the frequency of spelling errors (“surplus” instead of “surplice”; “affect” instead of “effect”). One hopes that this work will go into a second printing with these errors corrected.

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***The Conceptual Coherence of the Book of Micah, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 322.* By Mignon R. Jacobs, Sheffield Academic Press, 2001, 284 pp.**

Not for the faint of heart, this study of the phenomenon of coherence in the little prophetic book of Micah is nevertheless extremely valuable for those seeking to understand this important canonical text. This text had an earlier life as a dissertation at Claremont Graduate School and was supervised by the distinguished Old Testament Scholar, Rolf Knierim. Although the book is a decade old, it definitely deserves more publicity than it has received.

Jacobs is concerned to study the text as it is, not how it came to be, and not some particular theory of what the text once was. In light of that fact, it would have presented itself to its first audience as a completed whole and with a message that could be understood as a whole. Jacobs's study has as its goal the uncovering of the logical design of the book, which she labels "conceptuality." This design generates the "content, structure and logical progression of the text" (p. 51). This, of course, for the most part lies underneath the text's surface structure but all the same is responsible for that surface structure. It is something like theme but not quite. Theme shows up more in the surface structure, conceptuality lies more underneath as explaining the text's existence, something like its overall purpose, "guiding principle" or "overarching idea" (pp. 48-49). Consequently coherence can be assumed as part of the design, and this coherence will be evident in the words, clauses and sentences in the text.

Jacobs gives a helpful introduction on works of coherence dealing with the book of Micah in the first chapter and she shows how three assumptions have been involved in the course of this study: 1) the composite nature of the text led to an emphasis on literary excavation—the earlier literary strata the better. 2) a false understanding of the conceptuality of the entire book often in the absence of a full scale analysis of such a claim. 3) a false understanding of what coherence means. These particular assumptions are addressed by Jacobs in her book.

As for the first assumption, Jacobs does not doubt that the book has a literary history but her concern is with the final form of the text—the coherence that is there at the level of the final redaction. The other assumptions are dealt with as the study progresses. Through an analysis of the macro-structure of the book (ch. 3), Jacobs convincingly shows that the book is divided into two basic sections: chapters 1-5 and chapters 6-7. At the same time there is evidence which suggests that a major division is also found at the beginning of chapter 3. Jacobs argues that when this evidence is considered with other factors, Micah consists of two major units. Each initiates a major legal case in which heaven and earth are witnesses to great sins: those of the nations in chapters 1-5 and those of Judah in chapters 6-7. While understanding the logic of her conclusion, I think that it would be more accurate to argue for a basic tripartite division of the book. The use of oracles of hope at the end of chapter 2, 5, and 7 balance the notes of judgment in those sections and thus chapters 1-2 provide the first division, 3-5 the second, and 6-7 the third. Further supporting this is the use of an identical imperatival formula at the beginnings of these divisions (1:2, 3:1, 6:1).

Jacobs could have more explicitly articulated the relationship of each of her two main divisions of Micah to each other. The movement from justice to mercy in each is clear, judgment on the nation and mercy for the remnant. But what is missing from the first section and is found in the second is the reason for the mercy—it is rooted in the divine character and election (7:18-20).

Chapters 4-5 form the core of the book with their analysis of levels of coherence which aim at "a unit-by-unit analysis of the book of Micah aimed at identifying the conceptual basis of the coherence of the major units and the interrelationship of these units" (p. 99). Thus these chapters deal with not only the book's macro-structure but its micro-structure. Chapter 4 examines Micah 1-5 and chapter 5, Micah 6-7. The real strength of this section is that there is an attempt to show the relationship between texts which seem logically incoherent on the surface. Through a detailed study of the micro-structure there is clearly an

underlying conceptual coherence for what at first seems clear semantic incongruity if not downright contradiction. E.g. the exaltation of Zion (4:1-5) as a beacon for universal peace for all the nations follows the destruction of Zion (3:12). These different texts are not the products of a different hand or different times but they logically follow one another. The exaltation of Zion will happen *after* the humiliation of Zion. Similarly, 4:1-5 sketches out the exaltation of Zion in the remote future (“in the latter days” 4:1) while 4:6-5:14 “depicts the path toward the actualization of the future announced in the introduction” (p. 148). Thus while the nations are beating their swords into ploughshares as a result of their pilgrimage to Zion, this does not contradict 4:11-13 when Israel beats nations into pieces with bronze hooks and iron horns. The latter is not to be viewed “as a characteristic of the future, but as part of the present that forms the path to the future” (p. 152). This analysis is extremely helpful. Rather than seeing these different themes as deriving from different hands stressing competing visions of the future, they can be viewed as complementary.

In chapter 6, Jacobs looks at the fundamental concepts of the book, which she determines to be as follows: justice, sin, judgment and hope. Again she shows the importance of proper interpretation. Salvation oracles are not seen to be in competition with judgment oracles. The former are regarded “as indicators of the fate of Israel *beyond* the circumstances of judgment, not in replacement of those circumstances” (p. 210, emphasis mine). It is important to note that within the book itself there is an awareness of competing perspectives. The words of Micah’s opponents “promising the moon” and arguing that judgment would never occur to God’s chosen people need to be evaluated for what they were—totally false views of judgment (2:6-11, 3:11). “This ...is not the governing perspective in the book...its presence illustrates the challenges to the judgment” (211). Jacobs shows the inextricable relationship to all of the fundamental concepts of the book: justice assumes a moral order, and sin violates the moral order, which leads to judgment, which leads to hope because of the divine character. The hope itself in the book presumes the distress of judgment.

While Jacobs shows the interconnectedness of these concepts—their conceptual coherence, I am left wondering about the huge hermeneutical iceberg beneath the surface of the text of Micah. That iceberg is not the overarching idea which generates the text but the overarching idea of Israelite traditions which generate any possible understanding of Micah. Thus the opening oracle—“Hear all the peoples!” (1:2)—is a direct quote from 1 Kings 22:28b which Micaiah ben Imlah speaks to all the people who doubt his judgment oracle against Israel and the house of Ahab. Similarly the theophany which follows 1:2, resulting in disintegrating mountains and quaking valleys draw on many biblical texts (1:3-4). And of course the ancient Israelite credo at Sinai, Exodus 34:6-7, is a powerful sub-text of the entire book of Micah. Micah gets this text right, his opponents get it wrong. Texts like these, and there are many more—not the least of which is the reference to Bethlehem in 5:1-2—provide an overarching coherence to the book’s themes, without which the book would remain an unsolvable riddle.

A final chapter synthesizes the material of the book and brings everything to a conclusion. Jacobs discusses the vexed problem of a composite history and concludes that the issue of coherence is the work of the final redactor who reconceptualized older materials in the light of his concerns (pp. 224-225). One interesting conclusion is the relevance of the study to Old Testament theology: both tasks need to examine the presuppositions of the

various concepts of their texts and both entail the systematization of the data according to the content of those same texts. Thus there is a concern in both for finding the overarching idea which generates not only the text of Micah but also the text of Scripture.

I was very much impressed with this book. While it tends to use jargon and the writing is a bit stilted, it is an excellent study. It is well worth reading and deserves a wider audience. When any monograph stimulates thinking about a biblical book, it is worthwhile. After reading the book, it seems to me that there is a clear reason why Micah provides his own apology for prophecy in 3:8. This particular apology could have been placed anywhere in the book but, as most scholars note, it suits its literary context in which judgment is pronounced on false prophets. But what these scholars do not see is that Micah's apologetic immediately precedes the unthinkable word of judgment on the holy city of Jerusalem and the sacred temple. Thus before announcing the unthinkable, Micah is portrayed as defending his calling in the strongest possible terms. His prophetic credentials were impeccable. While Jacobs' work does not contain this insight, it certainly led to it. A valuable book indeed!

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***Theology as Conversation: The Significance of Dialogue in Historical and Contemporary Theology. A Festschrift for Daniel L. Migliore.* Bruce L. McCormack and Kimlyn J. Bender, editors. Eerdmans, 2009, xii + 362 pp.**

Daniel Migliore retired as Charles Hodge Professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary in May 2009 after a forty-seven year teaching ministry. He is most well known perhaps for his popular and influential textbook *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Eerdmans, 1991 and 2004). In three appendices to that work Migliore includes a series of fictitious but historically and theologically informed dialogues on natural theology, the resurrection, and political theology. These are simply brilliant and creative dialogues which showcase a master theologian and a master teacher going about his work. The editors of *Theology as Conversation* have, in what can only be called an insightful and brilliant move, taken up the focus on dialogue as the theme for this *festschrift*. All contributors were asked to write on a real or fictitious 'dialogue' which had or would help to shape theological reflection. In the editor's words, "What we were looking for is the kind of creative/synthetic thinking that breaks up a long-standing impasse and contributes to moving a stalled conversation forward or that creates conditions needed for new conversations to get off the ground" (p. xii). In this the volume succeeds admirably.

It is very pleasing to see that *festschriften* are still something publishers are interested in and Eerdmans is to be thanked for producing such an attractive volume as this. Scholars, students, and alumni are always interested in *festschriften* which are well written, well produced, and contain a healthy dose of established scholars along with some new and emerging ones. *Theology as Conversation* excels in all these areas. Twenty contributors present essays divided into three parts: engagements with the theology of Karl Barth (6 essays), conversations with traditional theological topics (10 essays), and theology in dialogue with society and culture (4 essays). This structure reflects the key emphases of Migliore's scholarship—the theology of Karl Barth (and Jürgen Moltmann), theology in conversation, and political theology. Of the contributors several are senior international scholars such as Jürgen Moltmann, Gerhard

Sauter, George Hunsinger, and Michael Welker, several are members of the Princeton-Kampen Barth Consultation, of which Migliore is a member, and eight were former doctoral students of Migliore. Sadly, not every essay can be commented on in a review but what follows illustrates what the volume delivers.

Throughout the volume the contributors have presented new (for the most part), lucid, and interesting essays which explore a broad range of topics in a broad range of ways! Gerhard Sauter, for instance, reflects upon the Barth–Brunner debate, and in his introduction draws upon the profound wisdom of one of his little grandchildren who objected to a table prayer prepared for the occasion. Bruce McCormack continues his elaborate and sophisticated project of constructing a new actualistic ontology which he believes is directly derived from Barth’s theology. In his chapter entitled “God *Is* His Decision: The Jüngel-Gollwitzer ‘Debate’ Revisited” (the ‘debate’ here is fictional and “remained stillborn because one of its members chose not to participate” [p. 48]), he offers what will no doubt be a controversial reading of Jüngel’s theology, as controversial, one suspects, as his earlier “Grace and Being” article on election in the *Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth!* According to McCormack, Jüngel’s *Being and Becoming* was his way of overcoming a highly classical metaphysical doctrine of God set forth by Gollwitzer, by means of a *thoroughly* anti-metaphysical account of Barth’s theology (p. 50 n. 5). That is, McCormack sees Jüngel as a precursor and thus an ally to his own work today. On McCormack’s reading of Jüngel “there is no such ontological priority of trinity over election in Jüngel’s reading of Barth...I would like to say as clearly as I can that I think Jüngel has gotten Barth exactly right” (p. 60 and p. 61). Those following McCormack’s theological program will not want to miss this essay.

Other essays also deserve mention. One of the more delightful is offered by Cynthia Rigby as she reflects on a dialogue Moltmann *could* have had with Barth over a theology of play. Weaving together the theology of play found in Barth and Moltmann’s work, with experiences of her own young children, a homeless community, and the artist, Rigby challenges ministerial colleagues and others to consider work as an aspect of play, and both as subsumed under a theology of the Kingdom of God. Rigby reminds readers that playing is risky business as it confronts our over-inflated views of our own work, while at the same time reminds us that our work is of eternal significance. This is a timely and winsome chapter. In another essay Dawn DeVries examines Calvin and Schleiermacher on the notions of orthodoxy, heresy, and most importantly, heterodoxy in “‘Inspired Heterodoxy?’ The Freedom of Theological Inquiry and the Well-Being of the Church,” and concludes with the advice that “If theology is to be something more than a mindless repetition of formulas from the past, heterodoxy is inevitable. The potential risks involved in really creative theological reflection need to be squarely admitted” (p. 141). Thomas Thompson offers a charitable reading of Moltmann’s ‘orthodox’ doctrine of the Immanent Trinity, and suggests that to understand Moltmann’s theology one must recognize three distinct phases of theological progression: emergence, broadening, and clarification. It is only when read back to front, as it were, that Moltmann’s mature theology of the immanent Trinity can be understood, most clearly in *The Trinity and the Kingdom*. While I am not persuaded by Thompson’s arguments, he does offer a hospitable reading of Moltmann’s theology and provides lines of arguments any interaction with Moltmann’s theology would have to traverse.

Another outstanding essay is that of Katherine Sonderegger, “The People of God in Christian Theology,” wherein she argues eschatologically for an understanding of the People of God over-and-against conceptions of *people’s* of God. “The ‘people of God’ is an eschatological category above all else, and it is from this Omega point that Christians should begin their work” (p. 216). She continues, “We will seek to join together Christology and the peoples of God in an eschatological vision, grounded by Revelation and guided by Augustine. In the end, we shall say that the doctrine, people of God, only lies in completeness ahead of us. It is the *telos* of the Church, the healing of the nations, and the fulfillment of the covenant” (p. 218). Sonderegger “believes that properly the Christian doctrine of the people of God will comprise a certain form of Supersessionism, and that the book of Revelation sets out just how this reign of the Lord and the Lamb will replace and succeed both Temple and Church” (p. 218). In the end the Lord will, through Christ, cleave to himself the many yet one people of God. This is a thrilling chapter and one sure to provoke and stimulate further reflection.

One final essay deserves comment and it is that of Jürgen Moltmann, “Will All Be Saved, or Only a Few? A Dialogue between Faith and Grace.” In this creative dialogue between the personification of Faith and Grace, Moltmann presents what is probably his clearest and most forthright affirmation of universalism yet. Only six pages long (pp. 235-240), Moltmann concludes: “And then Faith says to Grace: I owe everything to you, my redeemer, my liberator, my mother. I am nothing. You are everything. You are there not only for me. You are universal and without conditions, and run ahead to meet all and everyone. If I can be saved through your mercy, who, then, cannot be saved? Whom do you not then embrace?” (p. 240). No polemic, no intricate theologizing, simply a narrative account of universalism, a parting position stance for any who care to read.

One of the unusual and annoying features of the book is that there are no chapter numbers in the contents page or at the start of each of the chapters. There is also no index of names or subjects. While not uncommon, a select index would have been helpful for future reference. That said, this is a delightful, informative, stimulating, and most of all, appropriate *festschrift* for Daniel Migliore, a theologian who is, himself, all these things.

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***The Problem with Evangelical Theology: Testing the Exegetical Foundations of Calvinism, Dispensationalism, and Wesleyanism.* By Ben Witherington III. Baylor University Press, 2005, 294 pp.**

Ben Witherington’s book *The Problem with Evangelical Theology* proves to be an excellent attempt at analyzing and critiquing various popular systems of thought, specifically within the realms of Calvinism, Dispensationalism, and Wesleyanism. Though the proper title may not shed light on Witherington’s method, the subtitle (*Testing the Exegetical Foundations of Calvinism, Dispensationalism, and Wesleyanism*) makes it obvious that the book is not an unsophisticated rant on fundamentalism or dogmatism. Witherington is, by training, a historian and theological exegete and the book is written within that vein. Probably the greatest strength of the book is that while it is written with a scholarly hand for scholarly or pastoral minds, it remains accessible to the average layman who, in the end, has the real

ability to influence culture and drive the church forward in a particular direction. It is, after all, things like dispensationalist theology and Pentecostalist speaking in tongues that have been mobilized by popularization.

The author divides the book up into four sections. The first deals with the Reformed theological system of T.U.L.I.P and the Augustinian approach to reading scripture. This chapter is sure to generate controversy, not least because of its tone towards the Calvinist model. The author argues that there has been and continues to be a vast misunderstanding of the Romans 7 text, of which much Reformed theology bases its notions of original sin, total depravity, and irresistible grace. By providing the imagery of a dark, back-dropped Rembrandt painting, Witherington critically engages in the discussion, spending much time on a proper interpretation of Romans 7. He splits the passage out into two separate, but related discussions in Vv 7-13 and Vv. 14-25. The Reformed problem, he argues, is that they read the passage as a whole and do not give it the separation it deserves.

The first, Vv. 7-13, represent an autobiographical narration from someone that is not Paul. Witherington's argument for this is based upon a number of markers found in the text which make it difficult to argue for a more Augustinian reading of the text. Specifically, we find allusions to covetousness, the existence of merely one covenant, living without the Law, the personification of sin, and the speaker's awareness of sin only through the commandment (26-27). However, Vv. 14-25 take a noticeable change in the tone of voice and lead us out of the Adamic reading and into a Pauline reading. Here, still, Paul is not describing the Christian experience but a pre-Christian experience. With the fresh translations of the text by the author, one can see more explicitly that Paul is setting up an argument which leads one to the notion that Christ is the answer to bondage, sin, and the Law. The argument presented by the author is not entirely unique as other Wesleyan theologians have also made the same observation. But Witherington's approach as a textual exegete serves to strengthen the theological case. Further, the chart the author provides (25-26) is helpful not in the least because it provides one with a side by side contrast with the two passages.

The next two sections tackle the question of how Luther viewed the Law and how Calvin spoke of predestination and election. In these two sections the author wisely does not reject whole heartedly the views of Reformed thinkers and is wise to credit them where he finds them to be on solid ground. But in regard to the Law, the author finds Luther's views to be more reactionary to Catholic legalism than sound exegesis. Luther's context of reading emphasized a complete Pauline rejection of Law, which in the author's opinion is incorrect. In some respect, Paul still avowed the parts of the Law (namely, that which was reaffirmed in the new covenant) and found obsolete other parts of the Law. However, it is this section of Witherington's book which does not appear to be the most perspicuous. Certain statements seem to be at odd with one another at times, which can lead to confusion on the part of the reader.

The discussion on the Reformed view of election is also quite revealing. Probably the most helpful section of the chapter is the discussion of how the Jewish and early Christian fathers failed to see the issue of God's sovereignty and human moral choices as an either/or situation; rather, as the author reminds us, we see a stronger both/and situation in the early views (60-61). It is likely that Paul would, even if he previously held a deterministic Pharisaic version of election,—which was certainly more corporate than it was individualistic (63)—

have revised his way of thinking of election due to his eschatological and soteriological outlook.

The discussion on election also includes a superb discussion on the oft quoted Romans 8 passage. No stops are pulled here, as Witherington obviously finds the Augustinian reading of this text, which he believes to be based upon a previous influence of Manichaeism, to be quite insufficient. Witherington pushes the thought world of Paul, noting that Paul's language is seen from an eschatological end, not a linear time-frame. Thus, Paul's language of being predestined is based upon God's foreknowledge of who would, in the end, accept and persevere in the faith. The author succeeds in affirming Paul's notion of election while not denying the existence of election altogether. His denial is focused not on the actuality of election, but in the Reformed definition of such.

Witherington moves forward past the issue of Reformed theology into an issue which has more social and political influence: Dispensationalism. This movement, which has been supported by unaware clergy to conservative politicians and presidents, has the ability to shape our world like few other systems of thought. As Witherington notes, one does not need to look far to see individuals standing in the way of Middle-East peace processes as if war in the middle-east will somehow speed up the eschatological time-table.

Apocalyptic and eschatological literature must be understood within their proper theological, literary, and historical contexts—none of which, as the author states, dispensationalists do. Apocalyptic literature is generally understood as “minority literature” (106) for a people that are oppressed, downtrodden, subverted, or out of place. The writers of apocalyptic literature are not writing chronological timetables of the end times—rather, they are providing hope for a generation that was asking questions related to persecution, martyrdom, exile, and how God's dominion was to be brought into reality.

The historical and literary contexts of a particular passage are extremely important as can be shown by Witherington's analysis of some of the popular dispensationalist passages concerned with rapture theology. The notion that Jesus' first return will include an earthly ascent to the clouds, a retreat to heaven, and a final return at the actual second coming lacks exegetical support. Jesus was, in fact, an eschatological prophet and spoke at certain times with such tones. When we find passages Mt 24.40-41, which describe one individual being taken away, we must be able to follow the Rembrandt-like background of the passage where it leads. Witherington's analysis of this passage (and others like it) show that the idea of one person being taken away while the other is left is not, in reality, meant to infer some sort of glorious uplifting into the sky. Rather, the one being taken away is being judged just as in Noah's day judgment swept away all those that were not righteous. Such an interpretation lies at odds with the dispensationalist interpretation, as the one being swept away is not the righteous one; he is rather the unrighteous one.

The point is, especially when it comes to how one is to interpret Israel's role in history, one must contextualize. Witherington continues to reiterate throughout the book the simple point: Without a context, a text can be used to support any particular pretext or bias one holds. It is thus imperative that when it comes to things such as Dispensationalism, one be prepared to do the exegetical work to determine its validity.

Moving onward, Witherington hits something closer to his own theological home: Wesleyan theology. He wisely notes his own commitment to the system because of what he finds to be more persuasive. Arguably, the author has not pushed the impact of bad Wesleyan theology to the extent that he has done with Calvinist and Dispensationalist theology. However, he critiques the Wesleyan view of Prevenient grace and Perfectionism, though noting that often times Armenian scholars and theologians mean different things by such terms. It appears that the authors biggest problem with these notions is that they have the ability to muddle up the true gospel presentation: free will does not mean libertarian free will. Prevenient grace misses the true nature of sin's bondage (though still comporting with God's image) and it would probably be more proper to speak of one being "enabled by grace" in a moment of crisis and despair. Perfectionism should be clarified to mean how we can experientially recognize the perfect love of God here and now while still having to wait for true perfection of both body and soul.

The most practical of Witherington's critiques on Wesleyanism comes in his engagement with kingdom theology, something which he tackles in some of his other books. A simple but impacting point is made in the limiting translation of *basileia* as "kingdom." The word "dominion" seems to carry more of a realized eschatological definition of God's kingdom. It represents both a "is and is not yet" kingdom of God, wherein dominion is both a rule and a ruling place. God's reign, his dominion, was brought with Christ. He is ruling here and now. Yet, we also look to a fuller kingdom which awaits the future. Though Wesley did speak more and more of a future kingdom as he grew in age, there is a danger in simply extracting a here and now kingdom/dominion theology from his writings.

Perhaps one of the greatest allegations that can be made about this book is that while the author deals with the exegetical weakness' of all three systems mentioned above, he seems to give Wesleyanism more of a slap on the wrist while providing a major blow to the other systems of thought. Wesley's theology is treated with more respect and the theological weakness are not presented as being so dire. It should be mentioned though that as Witherington is a Methodist, he does well to admit his own bias (171) and even notes that Wesleyanism, for all of its misgivings, has a greater amount of explanatory power in its interpretation of scripture than the other systems. The author certainly takes it easier on Wesleyan theology, but this may in fact be conscious.

It must be to the author's credit that he does not simply write this book to expose the theological weaknesses of certain systems of thoughts. He does spend time with the last couple chapters of his book delineating a pragmatic approach towards doing theology. For armchair theologians, scholars, and pastors there is a list of a dozen steps one can take in order to more fully "do theology" proper (245-247). In a book that deals with diversity, the last step is extremely important: "Perhaps, too, it is time for us to redraw the boundaries, and not just continue to nurture and appreciate our differences...The world is laughing at us because our witness is so divided..." The point is that while we can and should appreciate diversity, the world should see unity far and above. It is this reviewer's opinion that this point should have been highlighted earlier on in the book and not left till the end as, taking Witherington's own advise, it serves as a context for his critiques. It is, in any case, a point that deserves recognition and action. In a world in which individuals are looking for meaning and purpose, a story is influential in its unity, not in its disagreements.

Witherington's entire book can be summed up in so many words: "You start filling in gaps that the Bible does not speak to, and before long you distort what it does say about correlative matters. This is as much of a problem in popular theologizing as it is in the scholarly enterprise of systematic theology," (209). This is where the three systems of thought appear to be connected (though, one may still wonder why these three systems of thought are discussed and not others). It is certainly true that the theme running through these chapters is how one particular view can influence and predetermine interpretations of other materials. It is necessary then that we be aware of what we bring to the table, be willing to listen to the views of others, and be able to critique all views equally. It is only then that we have the ability and opportunity to discover the truths found within scripture.

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***The Historical Jesus: Five Views.* James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy, editors. IVP Academic, 2009, 312 pp.**

The Historical Jesus: Five Views opens with a broad survey of historical Jesus research lucid enough to give the uninitiated a feel for the major historical contours of the field, yet still packed with enough facts, figures, and theories that a second or third reading would be rewarded. This is a prelude to the main portion of the book, the five essays and twenty responses from Robert M. Price, John Dominic Crossan, Luke Timothy Johnson, James D. G. Dunn, and Darrell L. Bock.

Robert Price argues for the Christ-myth theory from the absence of secular citations of Jesus' miraculous activity, the historical precedent of dying and rising god myths that could explain the veneration of a resurrected Jewish sage, and the epistles not evidencing a historical Jesus. Where did most of the gospels material come from? That, he says, is creative midrash, the evangelists taking Old Testament texts, twisting, adding, deleting, and renaming them until they have a product worthy of their fertile imagination or religious community. Complaining that Price's Jesus vanishes by denying all the evidence that makes him visible, Luke Timothy Johnson nevertheless admits that proper historiography and the limits of the verifiable evidence only yield a small amount of sure historical facts about Jesus. Noting that the four gospels disagree at so many points with each other, he suggests redirecting one's focus from historical facts to the gospels' remarkable convergence on Jesus' character – his obedient faith in God, his self-disposing love towards others, and his example for discipleship. According to Johnson, this narrativ reading is publicly available, gives a richer picture than many sociological depictions would, and provides the best historical access in regard to Jesus.

James Dunn and Darrell Bock dispute such meager territorial claims for the historian, both finding in the gospels more historical facts than Johnson would admit. Dunn protests against key methodological assumptions of the quest for the historical Jesus. The "Christ of faith", he says, does not obscure the view of "the historical Jesus," the relationship between the earliest tradition and the Synoptics is not mainly literary, and looking for a Jesus distinctive or different from his environment is misguided as a working assumption. To these three protests he adds his own constructive proposal, culminating in a thoroughly Jewish Jesus, one evoking faith and memory from the beginning, and remembered through

an informally controlled oral tradition. Bock ties Jesus' kingdom of God to God's vindication of Jesus. Jesus reached out to the fringe of society, calling for total commitment while extending forgiveness and the mercy of God. Then came Peter's confession of Christ, and Jesus at last fully revealing the centrality of his own person in God's kingdom – evidenced in his temple clearing, the last supper, and Jesus' applying Psalm 110 (and probably Daniel 7) to himself, a centrality vindicated by God in the resurrection. These, according to Bock, are solid historical facts around which something more than a skeletal Jesus can be fleshed out.

John Dominic Crossan understands the message of John the Baptist and Jesus in very different terms than Bock and Dunn. John the Baptist centered a movement on himself, heralding the imminent arrival of a fiery and vengeful God. But John died, and his God never came. So Jesus changed his view of God, Crossan says, and insisted that God was already here, waiting for his people to join him to bring about his kingdom. Jesus' message was an invitation to come, see how he lived, and live like him. What that amounted to was healing the sick, eating with those you healed, and announcing God's presence in that mutuality.

This volume is a handbook in historical method. With regard to methodology, Price's principle of analogy, which neatly precludes the miraculous in a manner similar to Hume's take on miracles in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, seems suspect, and his negative use of the criterion of dissimilarity rejects wide swaths of authentic Jesus tradition. On the other end, Johnson's concern for proper historiography poses a substantial challenge, even if frequently surmountable, to more defined pictures of the historical Jesus. Crossan's sociological approach to the rise of John and Jesus also brings to the fore the ongoing question of how much Galilean economics and politics shaped (or did not shape) the identity of these two figures.

As important as this last question is, responses to Crossan leave the reader with the impression that only one side of the story has been told. Johnson accuses him of "playing fast and loose with sources, with logic and with his own painstakingly elaborated methodological principles" (140), a point echoed in Dunn's own observation that the "selective acceptance of one sequence of texts, and effective dismissal or denigration of others ... is poor scholarship" (145). Crossan, of course, would object, but the agreement of Dunn and Johnson against Crossan points to a danger inherent in five views books. Equal attention to every view, necessary though it is for the genre, risks the impression that all five views are equally plausible. They are not. Although Price and Crossan's views are interesting, the most plausible account of the Historical Jesus seems closer to that of Johnson, Dunn, or Bock.

Overall, the quality of the contributions, responses, and introductory essay make the book worth the price, the time spent pondering its disagreements rewarded, and the intended reader prepared to delve still further into the most fascinating figure of history.

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***An Introduction to the Trinity.* By Declan Marmion and Rik Van Nieuwenhove. Cambridge University Press, 2011, x + 254 pp.**

Perhaps no feature has been as prominent throughout the entirety of the wider Christian tradition in the last century than the doctrine of the Trinity. Countless books and articles have been and are being offered with increased rapidity, at a rate bordering the obscene. New(?) ideas have been brought to bear with little or no regard for the tradition/s out of which they may have historically incarnated in an earlier era, or with very little connection to the contemporary context into which they are being placed, and how they may have a bearing on the rest of the systematic loci, to which the doctrine of the Trinity necessarily stands in relation.

These factors have prompted numerous survey treatments of the doctrine of the Trinity, which throughout the last ten years have also been plentiful. Contrary to what may have been assumed by some, not everything in recent trinitarian speculation has been or ought to be welcomed. What should always be welcomed, however, has often not appeared—the sober assessments of trinitarian theology both in recent history and in the depth of the greater Christian tradition. This doesn't necessarily have to take the form of a contestation of trends in the contemporary trinitarian resurgence, although this seems to be taking place with increasing fortification.

The present offering under review is given by a pair of Irish Catholic theologians seeking to explicate anew a framework for understanding some of the difficulties inherent in a trinitarian conception of God whilst also exploring the relevance of the doctrine of the Trinity for the contemporary Christian community. In their historical assessment, they make it part of their aim to show that some of the recent understandings, at least within and of the Western theological tradition, have been largely misrepresented by the most recent trinitarian radicalizers. What Marmion and Van Nieuwenhove hail as trinitarian theology's "renewal" is the "resourcement" or return to the doctrine's medieval and patristic roots, which seeks to overcome the characterization of the Western tradition as a monolith. As they see it, the real trinitarian revival, bringing implications of the doctrine to bear on all theology and life, has yet to be fully implemented (27-28).

After the first chapter sketches the importance of theology, the limits of theological language, and reflections on Rublev's icon and its relationship to the concept of experientially participating in the life of the Trinity, chapter two considers the doctrine of the Trinity's scriptural roots. Reflecting on God's revelation of Godself in the OT through Word, Wisdom and Spirit, this God also keeps something of himself hidden. The OT God, however, is not merely seen as one who *is*, but a God who *does*, who participates in Israel's story, and whose presence is symbolized in many ways. The NT revealed this God as the Father of Jesus, the latter claiming to be the very Son of God, sharing God's character without being the Father, and without there being two gods. As a real personification of the *Logos*, Jesus embodied God's wisdom. Jesus also uniquely bore the Spirit, whose action and identity (especially in the apostle Paul's understanding) brought about real, experienced faith and worship of God for believers. Similar to the OT, the NT never develops a "*theology of the Trinity*" since the emphasis is on divine activity, and Christ's message of salvation, which through his life, death and resurrection, and his sending of the Spirit, believers are drawn into and included in the very life of God.

Chapter three considers the emergence of the doctrine of the Trinity and its early development within the Christian community. It is claimed that despite a gradual trinitarian consciousness, in the second-century the general pattern of Christian prayer was to God *through* Christ, who serves as active mediator but also receives devotion along with God. In developments seen in Irenaeus and Tertullian, God's unity was affirmed whilst also distributed in attempts to overcome modalist tendencies. Arius's ideas appeared, receiving the firm response from Nicaea and Athanasius that the Son is *homoousios* with the Father. Later, Eunomius's "Neo-Arian" subordinationist ideas were refuted by the Cappadocians, who supported Nicaea in their formulations, but gave greater (ontological) prominence to persons than nature or substance. Following this, Augustine's exposition of trinitarian doctrine invoked the innovation or relations of reference within the divine being, with the divine names signifying the mutual relations of reference, designating that Father, Son and Holy Spirit are distinct from each other. Whilst asserting that false-dichotomy's ought to be avoided between so-called Eastern and Western developments, Marmion and Van Nieuwenhove highlight the methodological strength of orthodoxy's development precisely as articulated in their respective contexts vis-à-vis the subversive theologies that sought to undermine the deity of the Son or Spirit. This methodological patristic strength is crowned by Augustine's apophaticism, which sought to make statements pointing in the right direction whilst never claiming to apprehend or grasp God, which are features found as equally in the Cappadocians as Augustine.

A survey of significant ideas from Richard of St. Victor to the Reformation comes into focus with chapter four. Building from Augustine's theology (esp. pneumatology) of love, Richard's doctrine is developed from this analysis of love, bearing the notion *condilectus* ("co-beloved") by which the Trinity is seen as a mysterious community of interpersonal, "ecstatic" Love. The often underexplored work of Bonaventure is examined as a "sapiential" approach attempting to harmonize the interpersonal and intrapersonal models offered by Richard and Augustine. Aquinas is then considered as one who understood relations as identical to the divine essence, yet implying distinction through a relation of origin. Relations thus subsist in the divine being because of the simplicity of the divine nature. Next, Flemish mystic Jan Van Ruusbroec's work is considered, which described the inner life of the Trinity as a personal, vibrant, never-ending dynamic of ebbing and flowing, which further shaped his contemplation on theological anthropology. Luther and Calvin follow as representatives of reformation trinitarianism, especially for the challenges the *sola scriptura* principle brought to trinitarian theology. Luther's (over?)emphasis on the economic Trinity developed the notion of Christ's universal sinfulness, and Calvin's notion of the Son's impassibility led to what is known as the *extra calvinisticum*, that Christ's deity exists outside his human nature, which further included his reluctance (contra Luther) to press the *communication idiomatis* since he saw it as a means of undermining the integrity of Christ's two natures. According to Marmion and Van Nieuwenhove, all of this bore witness to "the growing divisions between faith and reason, and between Scripture and tradition" (141).

The penultimate chapter begins with the trinitarian theologies proceeding from the Enlightenment, beginning with Schleiermacher and Hegel. The former receives a more generous (albeit brief) treatment than in recent surveys, and highlights his understanding that the reception of Christian theology characterizes self-consciousness that is essentially dependent on infinite being. Hegel's philosophical dialectical approach then is shown to chart an alternate discourse on trinitarian theology, viewing God as subject to processes and

history. These developments were then met with the major twentieth-century trinitarian proposals: Karl Barth's revelational trinitarianism; Karl Rahner's self-communication trinitarian dwelling in humans, understood at both the historical and transcendental-anthropological levels; Jürgen Moltmann's theology of a suffering God; Hans Urs von Balthasar's understanding of the trinitarian kenosis and the paschal mystery; and John Zizioulas' understanding of the priority of persons over nature and being, with its significant implications for ecclesiology and culture. In a summary, the authors recap the (not all helpful) developments that occurred over the centuries in trinitarian theology: (1) the collapse of the synthesis of faith and reason; (2) the rise of different readings of Scripture; (3) the connection between soteriology and trinitarian theology; (4) the tension between the developments of interpersonal and intrapersonal models of the Trinity; and (5) the important link between theology and spirituality.

Traditional trinitarian developments leave manifold problems and prospects for the contemporary situation, which is the subject of the book's final chapter. Among these are the anthropological issues brought about by social trinitarian developments (e.g., Moltmann, LaCugna, Zizioulas), various undercurrents linked with "postmodernity" (e.g., Radical Orthodoxy, postliberalism and other developments related to trinitarian ontology and metaphysics), and conceptions that have sought to integrate trinitarianism with religious pluralism (e.g., Knitter, Heim, D'Costa, Panikkar). Very surprising was how this book reflects on the challenge of global trinitarianism, and ends abruptly with two brief paragraphs on the need for a pneumatological-trinitarianism to resource the church's living and imaging of the self-giving God (241-42).

While much more could be developed in the argument of the book, itself often difficult to discern at times, it seems to be moving contra any sort of "Christocentric inclusivism," said to limit the Spirit's action rather than indicate the Spirit's dynamic, extra-ecclesial promotion of new life (242). Yet ultimately, as summarized in the Epilogue, the authors are keen to display the importance of "a participative and sapiential" understanding of theology which resists any separation of faith and reason, while also remaining linked to spirituality. This is perhaps a strength of the work, recovering the very best contributions of often misrepresented (e.g., Augustine, Aquinas, Schleiermacher) and seldom explored (e.g., Bonaventure, Ruusbroec) trinitarian voices in order to argue for the development of a "constructive and participative theology" that shows how "the Trinity is not a conceptual puzzle but a living reality related to the whole of human existence" (246). Interestingly, it is not as though this straw-man argument has not been made elsewhere in recent literature, but each time it is rearticulated, I wonder if one source might be presented of someone viewing the Trinity as merely a conceptual puzzle. As the others, Marmion and Van Nieuwenhove come up empty-handed.

Another surprise from this survey is who was missing from the list, especially the one who some theologians deem the most significant heir to trinitarian theology after Barth: Wolfhart Pannenberg. Significant developments within British trinitarian theology are also absent, as are contributions from North American evangelical theologians like Kevin Vanhoozer (Grenz and Volf receive mention), and developments from Neo-Barthian scholars like Bruce McCormack. One wonders too if, as this survey concludes, is the postmodern sensibility really the direction that trinitarian theology must now go? Or is this simply an inchoate groping from within the confines of an ecclesiology seeking to find a way

to continue its expansion without reckoning with the substantial ecclesiologies that have both shaped and been shaped by much of the recent trinitarian developments. Belated sensitivities also emerge elsewhere throughout the book, especially nodding to feminist concerns.

The primary strength of this book is found in its survey-style, which ultimately supports the author's somewhat mild-mannered argument. In such a treatment by Catholic theologians, however, one might have wished for a much more robust treatment of offerings from within the Roman Catholic tradition itself, or perhaps even a more trenchant critique of Protestant or Enlightenment bequeathments. Although clearing up a number of misconceptions along the way, especially from their own Western tradition, they might have offered a better argument for continuity with the tradition, or perhaps for perils of recent arguments for radical discontinuity, or contemporary re-appropriations of by-gone developments, some of which was done, especially related to contemporary dogmatic conclusions (66-69). Yet this survey did not dispel difficulties with a number of the dubious developments in recent trinitarian theology. And so whilst being a helpful addition in some ways, its underwhelming argument leaves this reviewer looking elsewhere for both a sound assessment of the contemporary situation within trinitarian theology, as well as its way forward.

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***Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word: A Model of Faith and Thought.* By Douglas A. Sweeney. InterVarsity, 2009, 208 pp.**

One of the more active recent scholars in the study of the life, though, and ministry of Jonathan Edwards has been Douglas Sweeney. In his recent book, *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word*, Sweeney attempted to provide a biography of Edwards that would be readily accessible to a wide audience. This book argued that the Bible was the central focus of Edwards' life and ministry.

A couple of useful features appear at the beginning of this book that should be beneficial for both the uninitiated and those with more in-depth knowledge of Edwards. Sweeney included both a timeline of Edwards' life and a short listing of his immediate family members that provide quick reference to important events in the life of the pastor/scholar who has often been called America's greatest theologian. Sweeney began his account of Edwards' life with some useful background information regarding the seventeenth-century background of his subject. He argued that many young ministers trouble themselves for not being able to duplicate the ministry of their model. The author pointed out quite adeptly that the world of Edwards was much different than the world of the twenty-first century. He posited that "Puritan New England may have been the most biblically oriented and literate society in the world before the time of Edwards. (28) Early Puritan society focused upon the Bible for worship, their legal system, and their way of life. In contrast with many liturgical churches that focused upon the sacraments, the Puritans focused almost entirely on the Word, even going so far as to consider attractive buildings as distractions that took away from the focus of the parishioners on the Bible.

For much of this work, the author relied on a narrative approach that told the story of Edwards' life in a generally chronological manner. Sweeney began with Edwards' early life and his success as a child prodigy who graduated first in his class in with a B.A. from Yale at the age of sixteen in 1720. By the time Edwards was twenty-four, he had already served as pastor in Manhattan and Bolton, Connecticut, and was called to assist his grandfather Solomon Stoddard in Northampton. Much of the rest, including Edwards' activities during the Great Awakening, is very well-known. However, Sweeney focused his narrative upon Edwards' love of the Word and how this characteristic impacted the rest of his life and ministry. He also attempted to right some common misconceptions about the Congregationalist divine, such as the popular beliefs that paint Edwards as having a cold scholarly demeanor and as a monotone speaker who read his sermons. To make his argument, the author referred frequently to published letters and papers on the New England minister.

Sweeney did not paint a completely rosy picture of Edwards. He pointed out that Edwards frequently had depression over the spiritual state of his congregation, even in the wake of the greatest stirrings of the Great Awakening. However, the biggest negative attribute that Sweeney described dealt with Edwards' view of race. Edwards owned slaves, and the author made no attempt to sweep this unsavory fact under the rug. In addition to his enslavement of other humans, Edwards "was not an ideal missionary" in an intercultural context. In addition to saving souls, his post-Northampton work among Indians at Stockbridge, Massachusetts, also included an attempt "in 'civilizing' the Indians (i.e., making them more English)." Furthermore, Sweeney described Edwards as "something of a racist" who "preached and taught in English." (180) The work concluded with seven theses that provide practical opportunities for reflection on what the life of Edwards can contribute to the life of believers in the present.

Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word had a couple of areas that could have been a bit better. In discussing Edwards' expulsion from his Northampton pastorate, Sweeney could have provided a more in-depth explanation of the half-way covenant and the conflict that this concept occasioned throughout New England. It appears as more of a local issue in his account. The other area that seemed a bit awkward was the fifth chapter that served as a somewhat abrupt parenthesis to the general narrative structure of the book. In this fifth chapter, titled "With All Thy Mind", Sweeney gave a reasonably in-depth summary of four books that cemented Edwards' place as quite possibly the greatest theologian in North American history, namely *Freedom of the Will*, *Original Sin*, and his *Two Dissertations*. While this chapter may be somewhat difficult sledding for some readers who are less-familiar with theological terminology, its biggest problem is its position in the narrative. The chapter could most likely have been effectively integrated in the chapter on Edwards' time as a missionary to the Indians, which was the main time period in which he wrote these theological works. Notwithstanding this slight criticism, *Jonathan Edwards and the Ministry of the Word* provides a very good introductory biography of Edwards that should be easily accessible for most readers. In this respect, Sweeney ably accomplished his goal in writing the book.

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THE ECUMENICAL CREEDS OF CHRISTIANITY

The Apostles' Creed (Old Roman Form)

I believe in God the Father Almighty. And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary; crucified under Pontius Pilate and buried; the third day he rose from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of the Father, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. And in the Holy Spirit; the holy Church; the forgiveness of sins; [and] the resurrection of the flesh.

The Nicæno-Constantinopolitan Creed

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate; He suffered and was buried; and the third day He rose again, according to the Scriptures; and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; and He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spake by the Prophets. And I believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins; and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Athanasian Creed

Whoever desires to be saved must above all things hold to the catholic faith. Unless a man keeps it in its entirety inviolate, he will assuredly perish eternally.

Now this is the catholic faith, that we worship one God in trinity and trinity in unity, without either confusing the persons, or dividing the substance. For the Father's person is one, the Son's another, the Holy Spirit's another; but the Godhead of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is one, their glory is equal, their majesty is co-eternal.

Such as the Father is, such is the Son, such is also the Holy Spirit. The Father is uncreate, the Son uncreate, the Holy Spirit uncreate. The Father is infinite, the Son infinite, the Holy Spirit infinite. The Father is eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Spirit eternal. Yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal; just as there are not three uncreates or three infinities, but one uncreate and one infinite. In the same way the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, the Holy Spirit almighty; yet there are not three almighties, but one almighty.

Thus the Father is God, the Son God, the Holy Spirit God; and yet there are not three Gods, but there is one God. Thus the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, the Holy Spirit Lord; and yet there are not three Lords, but there is one Lord. Because just as we are compelled by Christian truth to acknowledge each person separately to be both God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the catholic religion to speak of three Gods or Lords.

The Father is from none, not made nor created nor begotten. The Son is from the Father alone, not made nor created but begotten. The Holy Spirit is from the Father and the Son, not made nor created nor begotten but proceeding. So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons; one Holy Spirit, not three Holy Spirits. And in this trinity there is nothing before or after, nothing greater or less, but all three persons are co-eternal with each other and co-equal. Thus in all things, as has been stated above, both trinity and unity and unity in trinity must be worshipped. So he who desires to be saved should think thus of the Trinity.

It is necessary, however, to eternal salvation that he should also believe in the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now the right faith is that we should believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is equally both God and man.

He is God from the Father's substance, begotten before time; and He is man from His mother's substance, born in time. Perfect God, perfect man composed of a human soul and human flesh, equal to the Father in respect of His divinity, less than the Father in respect of His humanity.

Who, although He is God and man, is nevertheless not two, but one Christ. He is one, however, not by the transformation of His divinity into flesh, but by the taking up of His humanity into God; one certainly not by confusion of substance, but by oneness of person. For just as soul and flesh are one man, so God and man are one Christ.

Who suffered for our salvation, descended to hell, rose from the dead, ascended to heaven, sat down at the Father's right hand, from where He will come to judge the living and the dead; at whose coming all men will rise again with their bodies, and will render an account of their deeds; and those who have done good will go to eternal life, those who have done evil to eternal fire.

This is the catholic faith. Unless a man believes it faithfully and steadfastly, he cannot be saved. Amen

The Definition of Chalcedon

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach men to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten, God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets from the beginning have declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.