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PURPOSE STATEMENT

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. American Theological Inquiry (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 roots.

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ATI was formed in 2007 by Drs. Gannon Murphy (PhD, Univ. Wales, Lampeter—Theology; Presbyterian/Reformed) and Stephen Patrick (PhD, Univ. Illinois—Philosophy; 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.

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2. The work has not been submitted elsewhere, or, permissory documentation is provided by the previous publisher indicating approval for publication in ATI.
5. Submit MSS or book reviews in a Microsoft Word, RTF, or text format.

Volume 2, No. 2., July 15, 2009

Minneapolis, Minnesota.

THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE

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OFFICIAL SELECTION — THE OTHER VENICE FILM FESTIVAL 2008
HONORABLE MENTION — BACAL INDEPENDENT FILM FESTIVAL 2008

SYNOPSIS

From Grassroots Films of Brooklyn, New York comes THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE – the story of a band of brothers who travel the world in search of the answers to the burning questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What is the meaning of life? Their quest leads them to sleep on the streets with the homeless of New York City, comfort the orphaned children of Peru, and seek out the abandoned lepers in the jungles of Ghana, Africa. What the young men discover changes them forever. They are captivated by the joy and love that they encounter; they are awakened to the beauty of the human person and the resilience of the human spirit. Along with one on one interviews with experts and amateurs from all walks of life, THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE weaves both commentary and drama into a deep reflection on what it means to be human.

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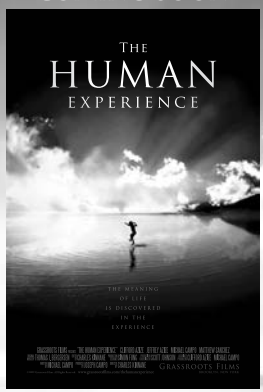

COMMENTARY FROM:

- **Dr. Alveda King, human rights activist** and niece of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- **Makoto Fujimura, artist and founder,** International Arts Movement
- **Dr. William Hurlbut,** The Neuroscience Institute at Stanford University Medical Center
- **Anna Halpine, founder,** World Youth Alliance
- **Rev. Richard J. Neuhaus, founder,** Institute on Religion and Public Life
- **Rabbi Simon Jacobson, scholar,** lecturer, founder, Meaningful Life Center

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AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY

July 15, 2009
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BOOK REVIEWS (con…)

PATRISTICAL READING

AGAINST HERESIES, III:1-6

St. Irenaeus[1]

Chapter 1

The apostles did not commence to preach the Gospel, or to place anything on record until they were endowed with the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit. They preached one God alone, Maker of heaven and earth.

1. We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith. For it is unlawful to assert that they preached before they possessed perfect knowledge, as some do even venture to say, boasting themselves as improvers of the apostles. For, after our Lord rose from the dead, [the apostles] were invested with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came down [upon them], were filled from all [His gifts], and had perfect knowledge: they departed to the ends of the earth, preaching the glad tidings of the good things [sent] from God to us, and proclaiming the peace of heaven to men, who indeed do all equally and individually possess the Gospel of God. Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia.

2. These have all declared to us that there is one God, Creator of heaven and earth, announced by the law and the prophets; and one Christ the Son of God. If any one do not agree to these truths, he despises the companions of the Lord; nay more, he despises Christ Himself the Lord; yea, he despises the Father also, and stands self-condemned, resisting and opposing his own salvation, as is the case with all heretics.

Chapter 2

The heretics follow neither Scripture nor tradition.

1. When, however, they are confuted from the Scriptures, they turn round and accuse these same Scriptures, as if they were not correct, nor of authority, and [assert] that they are ambiguous, and that the truth cannot be extracted from them by those who are ignorant of tradition. For [they allege] that the truth was not delivered by means of written documents, but *vivâ voce*: wherefore also Paul declared, But we speak wisdom among those that are perfect, but not the wisdom of this world. And this wisdom each one of them alleges to be

[1] St. Irenaeus (c.125–c.202), one of the great patristical theologians and defenders of the faith, was bishop of Lyons. A student of St. Polycarp, he is best known for his apologetical efforts against Gnosticism—especially manifest in his *Against Heresies*—as well as for combating Montanism and attempting to mediate the disputes of the Quartodeciman controversy.

the fiction of his own inventing, forsooth; so that, according to their idea, the truth properly resides at one time in Valentinus, at another in Marcion, at another in Cerinthus, then afterwards in Basilides, or has even been indifferently in any other opponent, who could speak nothing pertaining to salvation. For every one of these men, being altogether of a perverse disposition, depraving the system of truth, is not ashamed to preach himself.

2. But, again, when we refer them to that tradition which originates from the apostles, [and] which is preserved by means of the succession of presbyters in the Churches, they object to tradition, saying that they themselves are wiser not merely than the presbyters, but even than the apostles, because they have discovered the unadulterated truth. For [they maintain] that the apostles intermingled the things of the law with the words of the Saviour; and that not the apostles alone, but even the Lord Himself, spoke as at one time from the Demiurge, at another from the intermediate place, and yet again from the Pleroma, but that they themselves, indubitably, unsulliedly, and purely, have knowledge of the hidden mystery: this is, indeed, to blaspheme their Creator after a most impudent manner! It comes to this, therefore, that these men do now consent neither to Scripture nor to tradition.

3. Such are the adversaries with whom we have to deal, my very dear friend, endeavouring like slippery serpents to escape at all points. Where-fore they must be opposed at all points, if per-chance, by cutting off their retreat, we may succeed in turning them back to the truth. For, though it is not an easy thing for a soul under the influence of error to repent, yet, on the other hand, it is not altogether impossible to escape from error when the truth is brought alongside it.

Chapter 3

A refutation of the heretics, from the fact that, in the various Churches, a perpetual succession of bishops was kept up.

1. It is within the power of all, therefore, in every Church, who may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole world; and we are in a position to reckon up those who were by the apostles instituted bishops in the Churches, and [to demonstrate] the succession of these men to our own times; those who neither taught nor knew of anything like what these [heretics] rave about. For if the apostles had known hidden mysteries, which they were in the habit of imparting to the perfect apart and privily from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were also committing the Churches themselves. For they were desirous that these men should be very perfect and blameless in all things, whom also they were leaving behind as their successors, delivering up their own place of government to these men; which men, if they discharged their functions honestly, would be a great boon [to the Church], but if they should fall away, the direst calamity.

2. Since, however, it would be very tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the Churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; [we do this, I say,] by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also [by

pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops. For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its preeminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as the tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere.

3. The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate. Of this Linus, Paul makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy. To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric. This man, as he had seen the blessed apostles, and had been conversant with them, might be said to have the preaching of the apostles still echoing [in his ears], and their traditions before his eyes. Nor was he alone [in this], for there were many still remaining who had received instructions from the apostles. In the time of this Clement, no small dissension having occurred among the brethren at Corinth, the Church in Rome dispatched a most powerful letter to the Corinthians, exhorting them to peace, renewing their faith, and declaring the tradition which it had lately received from the apostles, proclaiming the one God, omnipotent, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Creator of man, who brought on the deluge, and called Abraham, who led the people from the land of Egypt, spoke with Moses, set forth the law, sent the prophets, and who has prepared fire for the devil and his angels. From this document, whosoever chooses to do so, may learn that He, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, was preached by the Churches, and may also understand the tradition of the Church, since this Epistle is of older date than these men who are now propagating falsehood, and who conjure into existence another god beyond the Creator and the Maker of all existing things. To this Clement there succeeded Evaristus. Alexander followed Evaristus; then, sixth from the apostles, Sixtus was appointed; after him, Telephorus, who was gloriously martyred; then Hyginus; after him, Pius; then after him, Anicetus. Soter having succeeded Anicetus, Eleutherius does now, in the twelfth place from the apostles, hold the inheritance of the episcopate. In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us. And this is most abundant proof that there is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the Church from the apostles until now, and handed down in truth.

4. But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried [on earth] a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom, departed this life, having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time,— a man who was of much greater weight, and a more steadfast witness of truth, than Valentinus, and Marcion, and the rest of the heretics. He it was who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus caused many to turn away from the aforesaid heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received this one and sole truth from the apostles—that, namely, which is handed down by the Church. There are also those who heard from him that John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall

down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within. And Polycarp himself replied to Marcion, who met him on one occasion, and said, Do you know me? I do know you, the first-born of Satan. Such was the horror which the apostles and their disciples had against holding even verbal communication with any corrupters of the truth; as Paul also says, A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sins, being condemned of himself. There is also a very powerful Epistle of Polycarp written to the Philippians, from which those who choose to do so, and are anxious about their salvation, can learn the character of his faith, and the preaching of the truth. Then, again, the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles.

Chapter 4

The truth is to be found nowhere else but in the Catholic Church, the sole depository of apostolic doctrine. Heresies are of recent formation, and cannot trace their origin up to the apostles.

1. Since therefore we have such proofs, it is not necessary to seek the truth among others which it is easy to obtain from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man [depositing his money] in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth: so that every man, whosoever will, can draw from her the water of life. For she is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and robbers. On this account are we bound to avoid them, but to make choice of the thing pertaining to the Church with the utmost diligence, and to lay hold of the tradition of the truth. For how stands the case? Suppose there arise a dispute relative to some important question among us, should we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches with which the apostles held constant intercourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear in regard to the present question? For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary, [in that case,] to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the Churches?

2. To which course many nations of those barbarians who believe in Christ do assent, having salvation written in their hearts by the Spirit, without paper or ink, and, carefully preserving the ancient tradition, believing in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and all things therein, by means of Christ Jesus, the Son of God; who, because of His surpassing love towards His creation, condescended to be born of the virgin, He Himself uniting man through Himself to God, and having suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rising again, and having been received up in splendour, shall come in glory, the Saviour of those who are saved, and the Judge of those who are judged, and sending into eternal fire those who transform the truth, and despise His Father and His advent. Those who, in the absence of written documents, have believed this faith, are barbarians, so far as regards our language; but as regards doctrine, manner, and tenor of life, they are, because of faith, very wise indeed; and they do please God, ordering their conversation in all righteousness, chastity, and wisdom. If any one were to preach to these men the inventions of the heretics, speaking to them in their own language, they would at once stop their ears, and flee as far off as possible, not enduring even to listen to the blasphemous address. Thus, by means of that ancient tradition of the apostles, they do not suffer their mind to conceive anything of the

[doctrines suggested by the] portentous language of these teachers, among whom neither Church nor doctrine has ever been established.

3. For, prior to Valentinus, those who follow Valentinus had no existence; nor did those from Marcion exist before Marcion; nor, in short, had any of those malignant-minded people, whom I have above enumerated, any being previous to the initiators and inventors of their perversity. For Valentinus came to Rome in the time of Hyginus, flourished under Pius, and remained until Anicetus. Cerdon, too, Marcion's predecessor, himself arrived in the time of Hyginus, who was the ninth bishop. Coming frequently into the Church, and making public confession, he thus remained, one time teaching in secret, and then again making public confession; but at last, having been denounced for corrupt teaching, he was excommunicated from the assembly of the brethren. Marcion, then, succeeding him, flourished under Anicetus, who held the tenth place of the episcopate. But the rest, who are called Gnostics, take rise from Menander, Simon's disciple, as I have shown; and each one of them appeared to be both the father and the high priest of that doctrine into which he has been initiated. But all these (the Marcosians) broke out into their apostasy much later, even during the intermediate period of the Church.

Chapter 5

Christ and His apostles, without any fraud, deception, or hypocrisy, preached that one God, the Father, was the founder of all things. They did not accommodate their doctrine to the prepossessions of their hearers.

1. Since, therefore, the tradition from the apostles does thus exist in the Church, and is permanent among us, let us revert to the Scriptural proof furnished by those apostles who did also write the Gospel, in which they recorded the doctrine regarding God, pointing out that our Lord Jesus Christ is the truth, and that no lie is in Him. As also David says, prophesying His birth from a virgin, and the resurrection from the dead, Truth has sprung out of the earth. The apostles, likewise, being disciples of the truth, are above all falsehood; for a lie has no fellowship with the truth, just as darkness has none with light, but the presence of the one shuts out that of the other. Our Lord, therefore, being the truth, did not speak lies; and whom He knew to have taken origin from a defect, He never would have acknowledged as God, even the God of all, the Supreme King, too, and His own Father, an imperfect being as a perfect one, an animal one as a spiritual, Him who was without the Pleroma as Him who was within it. Neither did His disciples make mention of any other God, or term any other Lord, except Him, who was truly the God and Lord of all, as these most vain sophists affirm that the apostles did with hypocrisy frame their doctrine according to the capacity of their hearers, and gave answers after the opinions of their questioners,—fabling blind things for the blind, according to their blindness; for the dull according to their dulness; for those in error according to their error. And to those who imagined that the Demiurge alone was God, they preached him; but to those who are capable of comprehending the unnameable Father, they did declare the unspeakable mystery through parables and enigmas: so that the Lord and the apostles exercised the office of teacher not to further the cause of truth, but even in hypocrisy, and as each individual was able to receive it!

2. Such [a line of conduct] belongs not to those who heal, or who give life: it is rather that of those bringing on diseases, and increasing ignorance; and much more true than these men

shall the law be found, which pronounces every one accursed who sends the blind man astray in the way. For the apostles, who were commissioned to find out the wanderers, and to be for sight to those who saw not, and medicine to the weak, certainly did not address them in accordance with their opinion at the time, but according to revealed truth. For no persons of any kind would act properly, if they should advise blind men, just about to fall over a precipice, to continue their most dangerous path, as if it were the right one, and as if they might go on in safety. Or what medical man, anxious to heal a sick person, would prescribe in accordance with the patient's whims, and not according to the requisite medicine? But that the Lord came as the physician of the sick, He does Himself declare saying, They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. How then shall the sick be strengthened, or how shall sinners come to repentance? Is it by persevering in the very same courses? Or, on the contrary, is it by undergoing a great change and reversal of their former mode of living, by which they have brought upon themselves no slight amount of sickness, and many sins? But ignorance, the mother of all these, is driven out by knowledge. Wherefore the Lord used to impart knowledge to His disciples, by which also it was His practice to heal those who were suffering, and to keep back sinners from sin. He therefore did not address them in accordance with their pristine notions, nor did He reply to them in harmony with the opinion of His questioners, but according to the doctrine leading to salvation, without hypocrisy or respect of person.

3. This is also made clear from the words of the Lord, who did truly reveal the Son of God to those of the circumcision— Him who had been foretold as Christ by the prophets; that is, He set Himself forth, who had restored liberty to men, and bestowed on them the inheritance of incorruption. And again, the apostles taught the Gentiles that they should leave vain stocks and stones, which they imagined to be gods, and worship the true God, who had created and made all the human family, and, by means of His creation, did nourish, increase, strengthen, and preserve them in being; and that they might look for His Son Jesus Christ, who redeemed us from apostasy with His own blood, so that we should also be a sanctified people—who shall also descend from heaven in His Father's power, and pass judgment upon all, and who shall freely give the good things of God to those who shall have kept His commandments. He, appearing in these last times, the chief cornerstone, has gathered into one, and united those that were far off and those that were near; that is, the circumcision and the uncircumcision, enlarging Japhet, and placing him in the dwelling of Shem.

Chapter 6

The Holy Ghost, throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, made mention of no other God or Lord, save him who is the true God.

1. Therefore neither would the Lord, nor the Holy Spirit, nor the apostles, have ever named as God, definitely and absolutely, him who was not God, unless he were truly God; nor would they have named any one in his own person Lord, except God the Father ruling over all, and His Son who has received dominion from His Father over all creation, as this passage has it: The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand, until I make Your enemies Your footstool. Here the [Scripture] represents to us the Father addressing the Son; He who

gave Him the inheritance of the heathen, and subjected to Him all His enemies. Since, therefore, the Father is truly Lord, and the Son truly Lord, the Holy Spirit has fitly designated them by the title of Lord. And again, referring to the destruction of the Sodomites, the Scripture says, Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrha fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven. For it here points out that the Son, who had also been talking with Abraham, had received power to judge the Sodomites for their wickedness. And this [text following] does declare the same truth: Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever; the sceptre of Your kingdom is a right sceptre. You have loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, Your God, has anointed You. For the Spirit designates both [of them] by the name, of God— both Him who is anointed as Son, and Him who does anoint, that is, the Father. And again: God stood in the congregation of the gods, He judges among the gods. He [here] refers to the Father and the Son, and those who have received the adoption; but these are the Church. For she is the synagogue of God, which God— that is, the Son Himself— has gathered by Himself. Of whom He again speaks: The God of gods, the Lord has spoken, and has called the earth. Who is meant by God? He of whom He has said, God shall come openly, our God, and shall not keep silence; that is, the Son, who came manifested to men who said, I have openly appeared to those who seek Me not. But of what gods [does he speak]? [Of those] to whom He says, I have said, You are gods, and all sons of the Most High. To those, no doubt, who have received the grace of the adoption, by which we cry, Abba Father.

2. Wherefore, as I have already stated, no other is named as God, or is called Lord, except Him who is God and Lord of all, who also said to Moses, I am that I am. And thus shall you say to the children of Israel: He who is, has sent me unto you; and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who makes those that believe in His name the sons of God. And again, when the Son speaks to Moses, He says, I have come down to deliver this people. For it is He who descended and ascended for the salvation of men. Therefore God has been declared through the Son, who is in the Father, and has the Father in Himself — He who is, the Father bearing witness to the Son, and the Son announcing the Father.— As also Esaias says, I too am witness, he declares, says the Lord God, and the Son whom I have chosen, that you may know, and believe, and understand that I am.

3. When, however, the Scripture terms them [gods] which are no gods, it does not, as I have already remarked, declare them as gods in every sense, but with a certain addition and signification, by which they are shown to be no gods at all. As with David: The gods of the heathen are idols of demons; and, You shall not follow other gods. For in that he says the gods of the heathen— but the heathen are ignorant of the true God— and calls them other gods, he bars their claim [to be looked upon] as gods at all. But as to what they are in their own person, he speaks concerning them; for they are, he says, the idols of demons. And Esaias: Let them be confounded, all who blaspheme God, and carve useless things; even I am witness, says God. He removes them from [the category of] gods, but he makes use of the word alone, for this [purpose], that we may know of whom he speaks. Jeremiah also says the same: The gods that have not made the heavens and earth, let them perish from the earth which is under the heaven. For, from the fact of his having subjoined their destruction, he shows them to be no gods at all. Elias, too, when all Israel was assembled at Mount Carmel, wishing to turn them from idolatry, says to them, How long do you halt between

two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow Him. And again, at the burnt-offering, he thus addresses the idolatrous priests: You shall call upon the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the Lord my God; and the Lord that will hearken by fire, He is God. Now, from the fact of the prophet having said these words, he proves that these gods which were reputed so among those men, are no gods at all. He directed them to that God upon whom he believed, and who was truly God; whom invoking, he exclaimed, Lord God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, hear me today, and let all this people know that You are the God of Israel.

4. Wherefore I do also call upon you, Lord God of Abraham, and God of Isaac, and God of Jacob and Israel, who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God who, through the abundance of Your mercy, hast had a favour towards us, that we should know You, who hast made heaven and earth, who rule over all, who is the only and the true God, above whom there is none other God; grant, by our Lord Jesus Christ, the governing power of the Holy Spirit; give to every reader of this book to know You, that You are God alone, to be strengthened in You, and to avoid every heretical, and godless, and impious doctrine.

5. And the Apostle Paul also, saying, For though you have served them which are no gods; you now know God, or rather, are known of God, has made a separation between those that were not [gods] and Him who is God. And again, speaking of Antichrist, he says, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped. He points out here those who are called gods, by such as know not God, that is, idols. For the Father of all is called God, and is so; and Antichrist shall be lifted up, not above Him, but above those which are indeed called gods, but are not. And Paul himself says that this is true: We know that an idol is nothing, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth; yet to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we through Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him. For he has made a distinction, and separated those which are indeed called gods, but which are none, from the one God the Father, from whom are all things, and, he has confessed in the most decided manner in his own person, one Lord Jesus Christ. But in this [clause], whether in heaven or in earth, he does not speak of the formers of the world, as these [teachers] expound it; but his meaning is similar to that of Moses, when it is said, You shall not make to yourself any image for God, of whatsoever things are in heaven above, whatsoever in the earth beneath, and whatsoever in the waters under the earth. And he does thus explain what are meant by the things in heaven: Lest when, he says, looking towards heaven, and observing the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and all the ornament of heaven, falling into error, you should adore and serve them. And Moses himself, being a man of God, was indeed given as a god before Pharaoh; but he is not properly termed Lord, nor is called God by the prophets, but is spoken of by the Spirit as Moses, the faithful minister and servant of God, which also he was.

WHAT IS 'TRANSFORMATION THEOLOGY'?

Paul D. Janz[1]

The christening of any theological outlook with a name or label, as the recent publication of the book *Transformation Theology*[2] may appear to do, runs the risk of being viewed as rather impertinent, if not as exuding a kind of self-importance. After all, what we today generally speak of or acknowledge in our past intellectual heritage as various theological and philosophical "movements" or "schools" or paradigms or trends: these are born or emerge over decades and are recognized as such only later, and very few indeed have had the temerity of endowing their own outlook from the outset with a name of their own choosing. But what we are calling transformation theology is not, nor does it have any intention of putting itself forward as the attempted establishment of any new theological "movement" or school or paradigm or trend. Just as little does it presumptuously claim to have come across some new "big idea" with the goal of effecting yet another theological "turn". Far from any of these, transformation theology is best described simply as a certain kind of "orientation", or a reorientation, of theological attentiveness and questioning to the revealed reality of God in the world—or to what theology calls "revelation"—and to questions about the truth of this reality in the world.

With this proviso in mind, what I wish to do in this essay is mainly to set out some of the basic dispositional commitments of transformation theology, along with the rationale for holding to them. And in order to articulate with greater clarity what distinguishes them, we will also need to set them in a kind of relief against the backdrop of a contemporary milieu in which the theological orientation to its "subject matter" is often decidedly different. Due to space limitations, however, I emphasize that we will need to confine our attention here mainly to dispositions and orientations; and it will not be possible beyond this, except in general terms, to discuss in any great depth the more constructive elements of transformation theology as it builds from these dispositions. For an epistemological and ethical account of these constructive expansions, I refer the reader to my recent monograph, *The Command of Grace*,[3] much of what appears in this essay being adapted from the first chapter of that book, although considerably condensed at some points and expanded at others.

1. Transformation theology begins, then, from one very basic orientational commitment, which is as follows. For Christian theology, everything depends on the present and living reality of God, as does everything in the Christian hope and everything in the Christian life. The affirmation which according to the scriptural witness itself[4]stands indispensably at the

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[2] Oliver Davies, Paul D. Janz, Clemens Sedmak, *Transformation Theology* (London, New York: T&T Clark, 2007).

[3] London, New York: T&T Clark, 2009.

[4] E.g., Matt. 18:20; 2 Cor. 13:4; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:6; Heb. 12:8; 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 4:20; Rom. 6:13; 12:1.

center of the Christian message, is that the incarnate and crucified Jesus, through the power of God's Spirit exerted in his resurrection from the dead and at Pentecost, is really alive today—not at some infinite distance, as if resurrection and ascension meant a departure again from the world into which God really entered bodily in Jesus of Nazareth—but presently and dynamically alive for human beings today at the center of their own embodied life. The origin and generating source of Christian hope is therefore not only the linguistic assurance of a written promise, indispensable as this is. It is much more the *presently living* hope of the Spirit of God himself—the one who through Jesus Christ is alive and active at the center of our own corruptible life—who has been given as a "deposit guaranteeing" the promise of an incorruptible life to come (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5). If God in his revelation is not truly present and presently real in the causally transforming power of divine righteousness and lovingkindness at the center of our own lives in the world—even and especially at points of greatest human despair and loss (Job 23:8-12)—then the living hope of an eternal life in God beyond human death reduces to the psychology of a mere wish projection; then what Christians call "faith" is a merely illusory and subjectively emotive human assurance which atheistic critiques would be right in labeling a false comfort for the "weak-minded"; and then theology at best inevitably collapses into either a study of what is most sublime and noble in human beings themselves, or into cultural studies, or into esthetic exercises in literary theory or storytelling. Everything in Christian theology therefore depends on the present reality God, as does everything in the Christian life.

Now there is one seemingly innocuous and unassuming term that I want to single out in the otherwise rather declamatory preceding paragraph as carrying a particularly vital import for theology, whether doctrinal or apologetical—important especially today where it is often forgotten—and this is the term "dependence". For to say that theology itself *depends* on the revealed reality of God which grounds and precedes it implies that theology is both a fundamentally *contingent* discipline with respect to this ground (because it is dependent on it) and a fundamentally *limited* one with respect to this ground (because it cannot contain it).

This immediately means two things, one negative and one positive. Negatively, it means that theology may never—as it can often tend to do—simply "presuppose" within itself, as a set of concepts or as any phenomenological "given", the living truth of the revealed reality on which it depends. This is disallowed firstly for the obvious reason that a presupposition or any theoretical "given" is by definition never anything other than a concept, whereas the truth of the self-revealing God is not merely the truth of a concept but the truth of a reality in life. But it is disallowed also for theology's own methodological integrity. For in converting the truth of the reality of God in life into the truth of something merely conceptually presupposed or cognitively "given", theology would essentially subsume its own ground to within itself, thereby becoming something conceptually or doctrinally self-guaranteeing. And it would thus cease to be the dependent and limited discipline that it indispensably is.

But this disallowed negative now also has a positive corollary in the other direction, which is as follows. If we want to take with full seriousness (i.e., not in any "demythologized" or "ideal" sense) the scriptural declaration that God has really revealed himself in temporal history in a mortal body in Jesus Christ; and if the resurrection-reality of

God is indeed a reality that through Pentecost is disclosed in dynamic livingness even today to the same world of embodied life into which God became incarnate in Jesus, then this means something vital and indispensable for theology. It means that in searching out or attending to the truth of the grounding reality of God on which it depends, theology must even today always look nowhere else but *to* the world of sensible-rational human embodiment, in and for which the reality of God is disclosed, and never away from this world.

It is true of course that Christian theology always looks first to the Bible, and therefore first to the narratives of an inspired written text. Yet precisely as it does so, it finds that the Bible itself, by its own inspired testimony, is not a self-referentially enclosed text, but that in all of its most central declarations it always points beyond itself to the present revealed reality of God in the real created world in which humans actually live. By the Bible's own witness therefore, theology's dependence is not only on the scriptural texts, indispensable and inviolable as this is, but also, through the text, always back to the dynamically creative and causally transforming reality of God in the living embodied present. In taking this requirement seriously transformation theology implicitly agrees with Bonhoeffer's important statement, echoing Luther (and paraphrasing): that because in the reality of Jesus Christ the reality of God has entered into the reality of the world fully, therefore theology may not look away from the world but nowhere else than to the world of real embodied life to engage with the revealed reality of God.[5] Transformation theology develops the basic disposition voiced in such a statement in quite different ways than Bonhoeffer did, and with an apologetical rigor that he himself did not, or became unable to do. But its basic orienting disposition is the same.

Or again, transformation theology seeks to develop, in a new and quite different way than Rahner did, what he calls an "axiom" for understanding "every relationship between God and creatures". This axiom, as he puts it, is that creaturely relational closeness and distance, respectively, to God and to the world, "do not vary for creatures in inverse [proportion] but in direct proportion".[6] In plain language this means that it is only as I draw closer to the real world of my own creaturehood, or to the real world of sensible-rational human embodiment in space and time, that I may also draw closer to God. And with every retreat from this world into conceptual abstraction, God also must inevitably become more distant. Or likewise, in the other direction, the closer God draws us to himself, the more deeply we will find ourselves drawn into the real world of embodied sensible-rational life in space and time. Or yet again, it seeks to pursue along new lines and with full rational rigor a basic disposition voiced by Rowan Williams who suggests that even the "foundational events" of Christianity themselves—the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—receive their true and definitive "authentication" and theologically accountable "defense" in the way that, *as* real historical foundational events, they are still *generative today* as presently real.[7]

[5] *Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005) DBW vol. 6, 55, 59.

[6] Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Crossroad, 1978), 226.

[7] See especially "Trinity and Revelation" and "The Finality of Christ" in *On Christian Theology*, 131-147 and 93-106.

This is not, however, a diminishment of the real empirical historicity of the incarnation or the "foundational events" of Christianity. Or it is not, in other words, a reversion to a "Bultmannian" kind of error which sought to render an "outdated" and "mythical" theological language relevant again by "demythologizing" it—including the "mythical" language of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ—thus in effect diminishing the commitment to the indispensable reality and authority of the incarnation as an event in empirical history, by transposing its authority entirely onto the level of what is "existentially" present in the experience of human beings today. Far from such a diminishment or a compromise on the real empirical historicity of the "foundational events" of the Christian faith and Christian theology, it is in fact exactly the opposite. For it is precisely to say that neither the cross nor the incarnation can be "oriented to" properly theologically, with regard to the truth or reality they initiate and effect in the world—and thereby with regard to their fundamental meaning in life—except *through* the present actuality of the resurrection- and Pentecost-reality of God in the living embodied present.

2. It is under impetus of these basic motivations that transformation theology seeks to set forth a new critical initiative in theological thinking, one that advocates a fundamental reassessment of theological self-understanding and method today, especially in its attentiveness to the present reality of the transcendent God in revelation. The initiative as such, however, needs to express itself not only along its own affirmative lines, but also, as a contextual backdrop to that, through an array of critiques of recent trends under the impact of which theology's ability to be properly attentive to the revealed reality of God as present and living has become diminished. In this more negatively critical mode, transformation theology is concerned to identify especially an array of powerful idealistic, analytical, phenomenological, foundationally textual, and cultural-linguistic developments over the past two centuries under the influence of which theology has in many of its most predominant and influential trends today effectively ceased to be a discipline which is genuinely *dependent* on the reality which grounds it and has instead become essentially something self-sustaining within itself. Or in other words, theology has under these influences come to exercise itself predominantly within what we might call a "conceptually cognitive mono-vision", whereby it has not only become self-guaranteeing within itself (what I will call "tauto-theological"), thus forfeiting its rationally rigorous edge, but has also inadvertently violated its indispensable incarnational (embodied) ground.

Against this, transformation theology seeks to refocus fundamental theological questioning also through other basic modes of human awareness, beyond the conceptually cognitive, which under the aforementioned influences have become largely lost to theology over the past two centuries, even though they continue to thrive in the life of faith in the church itself, and even though they can be shown to have informed much of our theological and philosophical history fundamentally. If God in his very "Godness" meets us in revelation at the very center of created life, and reveals himself only *here* as the hope of the life to come, then theology must again seek to be attentive to God in the full contingency of embodied-rational life in the fully multi-faceted way that constitutes our consciousness of this life, which is to say in the engagement of all of its constitutive faculties of awareness (which we will address briefly in a moment) and not just the conceptually cognitive.

I engage critically and more fully with the specific elements of this task elsewhere.[8] But for our purposes of an introductory orientation, let me just explain briefly what this "multi-faceted attentiveness" is supposed to mean before then going on through a brief historical survey to consider introductorily different ways in which the relation of God to the world has been viewed in the past. This will be done with a view to crystallizing what can only be described as a broadly-cast current "predicament" of theology in this regard, which transformation theology seeks to address.

3. Normally, or at least very widely today, theology understands itself and accounts for its activity most essentially as a kind of "grammar". Indeed, theology is understood almost axiomatically today most basically as "talk about God";[9] as "discourse about God";[10] as concerned essentially with the question of "how to speak rightly of God";[11] or again, as most essentially a kind of "depth grammar" which builds on "faithfulness in intratextuality" and so on.[12] This occurs even where one might not expect it. The recent self-described "revisionist" or "revolutionary" "theologies of the cross", as espoused by Eberhard Jüngel or Jürgen Moltmann, for example, quite explicitly define the essential difference of what they are presenting as most essentially a "revolution" *within* the semantics of thought. I have discussed this in detail elsewhere, but consider here in just one brief sentence the explicitness with which Jüngel himself is willing to express this view. In his words, what is required of theology today in light of the cross is most basically "to query again the *linguistic meaning* and function of the word 'God'"[13] or to "learn to *think* God in a new way".[14]

Now the point here of course is not in any way to question the indispensable and utterly central place of grammar, discourse, and cognition for theology. For indeed theology is predominantly just this, given that in all of its written, spoken, and thinking exercises, it is intrinsically a form of talk, speech, narrative, reading, thinking, language, grammar, discourse, description, and interpretation. It is only to say that in the full and complete sense of what the term "theo-logy" denotes, theology cannot be solely or *exclusively* a noetic (mentally discursive) exercise in grammar and linguistics. For this would make theology essentially into a kind of philology, which is to say a science of language and literature, which finds its defining and authoritative points of reference entirely within the confines of discursive, lexicological, or textually grammatical domains, and no longer with reference to the corporeal life where revelation actually occurs.

But if the God of the Bible with whom theology is concerned is indeed, in his resurrection-reality and Pentecost-reality, present today as a *living* actuality at the center of

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[8] *The Command of Grace*, London, New York: T&T Clark, 2009.

[9] Eberhard Jüngel, *God as Mystery of the World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) p. vii; Barth, CD I.1, 4.

[10] Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 7.

[11] Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is* (New York: Crossroad. 1997), 1-16; Johnson herself, however, by no means limits theological activity and attentiveness to linguistic discourse but is also concerned with many of the directions we will be pursuing in this book.

[12] George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (London: SPCK, 1984), 113-124, 130.

[13] *God as the Mystery of the World*, 9.

[14] Ibid, original emphasis.

life and not only as an "ideal actuality"[15] in grammatical or linguistic domains, then this means that theology in its fullness cannot be something fundamentally or exclusively philological, indeed not even something fundamentally doctrinal. To the contrary, it means further, and now positively, that in its very elemental nature theology must also be constituted by another, quite different kind of activity. And this other elemental activity, in addition to "talk about God", can in the most basic of terms be identified simply as "attentiveness" to God in embodied life. And by "attentiveness" I do not mean only a kind of "hearing" as this is more frequently meant in theology, for example when we speak of what it means to be "hearers of the Word". I do of course, and very importantly, also mean attentiveness in this sense, only not exclusively so. For there are quite different modes of attentiveness which are also constitutive of human life, modes of attentiveness which do not reduce to conceptually-cognitive and grammatically discursive domains, and which are in fact both temporally and logically antecedent to them. Let me take this opportunity to introduce preliminarily a brief overview of what these other modes of attentiveness are.

4. There is a long history of agreement in both theological and philosophical anthropology[16] that the multifactedness of human life-consciousness manifests itself from within two most basic orientational faculties. Or one might also speak of two most fundamental ways that human beings *relate* to the reality in which they find themselves alive. The one basic relational orientation or consciousness-faculty has been called the *cognitive* faculty, or the *faculty of cognition*. This refers to that faculty of consciousness by which humans relate to themselves and the world through perceiving and thinking, or through percepts and concepts. (Sensible perceptions are no less "cognitions" than rational concepts are.) The other has been called the *appetitive* faculty, or the *faculty of appetition* ("appetition" stemming from "appetites"). And this is meant to refer to that faculty of consciousness by which humans relate to themselves and the world not through percepts and concepts but through desires and motivations. We cannot here speak to the exact derivations of these and related terms as they are used differently throughout the literature. But for convenience sake, I simply confine myself here to the English derivatives of the Latin distinctions between *cognitiva* and *appetitiva* as they appear thematically in Aquinas.

Now both the "cognitive" and "appetitive" modes of awareness are comprised in turn of both sensible and rational components. We are sensibly aware in our cognitive consciousness most obviously and straightforwardly through our five external senses. As intrinsically receptive capacities, these "external" senses are perceptively responsive to the

[15] Donald MacKinnon, *Explorations in Theology 5* (London: SCM, 1979), 68.

[16] The history of agreement I refer to comes to full expression in *The Command of Grace*. Speaking generally, however, it is one which begins already in some of the pre-Socratics, but which comes to its first fully structural formulation in Aristotle, follows through in Aquinas and other scholastics, and is repeated in new ways in Kant under the additional influence of Locke, Hutcheson and Hume, and is carried through also in the 19th century by writers such as Schleiermacher and Kierkegaard. It is acknowledged at the same time, however, that there have also been extended periods in our intellectual history—most notably in early neo-Platonism, in 17th century rationalism, and in 19th century German idealism (e.g., Hegel, Fichte) and its aftermath—in which the human relation to the reality in which they find themselves alive has been viewed differently, and these differences are also addressed in the aforementioned book.

causally dynamic physical realities which we encounter as bodies in space and time. By the rational component of our cognitive consciousness we mean of course that consciousness in which we are conceptually or thinkingly aware. This is an awareness or capacity which, beginning from Aristotle's first explicit characterization of it as such, has been called the "discriminating" or calculating" or "classifying" power of human beings. And as a discriminating or calculating power, it is not intrinsically "receptive" as the senses are, but rather something intrinsically spontaneous and active in its discriminating and calculating functions.

But now the faculty of appetition or desire will be shown likewise to have both rational and sensible components. The sensible aspects of this faculty are located in the bodily passions, and the rational component is located in the will, or in what Aquinas calls the "intellectual appetite". Moreover, what vitally distinguishes appetites or desires from concepts or percepts (cognitions) is that they provide the fundamental *motivating* influences for reasoned action in life, with the bodily or sensible passions motivating from physical desire or need, and the will being able to motivate to embodied action apart from sensible sources.

Nothing in this brief introductory taxonomy is to suggest of course that these faculties and capacities operate entirely separately or dissociatively from each other in real life. It is only to say that even though I find them often to be inextricably interwoven and intermingled in what I experience and know to be the singleness of my embodied-rational constitution, nevertheless they will be found at bottom to be irreducible to each other. And what "irreducible" means most essentially is simply that when we observe them critically and reflectively, each of these different modes of awareness will be recognized as being in certain basic ways originary to itself, such that it is not possible to understand it as a product or function of the others.

We can now bring this to bear in a preliminary way on a certain rationale underlying the more negatively critical aspects of transformation theology. For it can be demonstrated that under the impact of the forementioned idealistic, analytical, phenomenological, and linguistic influences, the sensible and appetitive modes of awareness have in both theology and philosophy today often come to be subsumed under what is predominantly seen as the higher authority of conceptually cognitive consciousness or discursive intellection (i.e., thinking consciousness). Or they have come to be subsumed under what Hegel called the "lordship" of the discursive or thinking intellect over the other modes of awareness. And what will be shown to have occurred as a result is that both theology and the human sciences including philosophy have come to exercise themselves very broadly today within what we have described earlier as a kind of "conceptually cognitive mono-vision". This is not to say of course that sensibility and desire are not indeed popular themes in many current discussions. It is only to say that it is precisely in their treatment *as* "themes"—or in their treatment as always subservient to the conceptually "determining" and thus "meaning-giving" structures of conceptual cognition—that genuine attentiveness to their originary authority as sensible and appetitive modes of awareness at the center of life has been lost.

An important double aspect of what transformation theology in its epistemological and ethical expressions seeks to do as such is to explore the uniqueness of each of these modes

of attentiveness as they together constitute the unity of human life-awareness, in order from there also to say something vital about what this means for theological attentiveness to the reality of God at the center of life. More specifically, it will seek to show that just as human awareness of the reality within which they find themselves alive is constituted by all of these modes of awareness together, so also the living and present reality of God in God's self-revelation to the world is disclosed to *whole* embodied-rational human beings and not only to the discursively cognitive aspects of human life. And this means that theology must also be attentive to the present revealed reality of God in the wholeness of human life and not just in the conceptual-linguistic aspect.

5. We have until this point spoken only cursorily of certain "powerful intellectual developments" over the past two centuries under the impact of which theology has found it possible to shift its attentiveness away from the real world of sensible human embodiment as the indispensable site of the revealed reality of God even today, and to isolate itself rather within the self-sustaining securities of linguistic and conceptually cognitive domains. In defending and qualifying this observation, especially in order to set out transformation theology's own constructive alternatives, we have said that it will need in different ways to engage in a focused critique of those aspects of the theological and philosophical tradition and history by which this shift has occurred. But it will be helpful for introductory purposes of orientation and backdrop to present briefly a very basic overview of how this question of the reality of God has been addressed and attended to in the past, and how the current widespread confinement or isolation of theology within a conceptually cognitive mono-vision has transpired.

Let me caution before proceeding, however, that the introductory overview offered here will at this juncture have to be stated in quite inadequately over-general terms, although many aspects have been supported in more rigorous depth elsewhere. It also unavoidably reflects a particular perspective on this history. But I would only want to assure the reader that even if there are aspects of this introductory overview that meet with disagreement or are found wanting, this will not mean that there will have to be disagreement with the more constructive positions put forward in general terms later. In other words, the affirmative positions developed in transformation theology do not themselves depend on any particular reading of intellectual history.

Prior to what is often called the "enlightenment"[17] period of the 16th to the 18th centuries, questions about the reality of God in relation to the reality of the world were

[17] By enlightenment is meant roughly that period from Copernicus, Galileo, and Descartes through to Newton and Kant during which, both scientifically (cosmologically) and epistemologically, human understanding of themselves and the world they inhabit became dislodged from what had hitherto been virtually unquestioningly held as theological underpinnings. As modern science advanced, and as philosophy changed along with it, basic aspects of the cosmic order and the human constitution were found to be explainable by natural means, or by the natural "light" of reason and empirical discovery, and hence "autonomously" from God. This met with stern reaction by the then regnant authorities. Galileo, as is well known, was imprisoned for espousing views of the cosmos which we today find unproblematic and take for granted, but which at that time were deemed to be dangerous and heretical,

usually addressed in philosophy and theology through various kinds of appeals to what has come to be referred to as "metaphysics". (It will be clear from the way this sentence is formulated that we are speaking here of a somewhat different question than the more strictly epistemological one of how it is possible to speak of a transcendent God, e.g., through analogy, symbolism etc.) While the origins and meaning of this term are disputed—especially as it was editorially attributed originally to Aristotle (who himself does not actually use the term)—what has come to be understood by it roughly in the "pre-modern" and early modern (pre-Kantian) usage, is the postulation of a supposed objectively real "supra-sensible realm" surpassing or lying beyond the physical (hence "meta-physical") or material world of space and time we live in. This was viewed as a realm or sphere "out there", a "realm" of unchanging and constant realities which are not susceptible to the transience and passingness of embodied existence. The scholarly postulation of objective metaphysical realities in pre-modern times was thus in a sense a mirroring, in more critically reflected and less superstitious ways, of what in the popular understanding was broadly seen as an "enchanted" world.

Now while the appeal to a real metaphysical realm in this "pre-modern" sense was engaged philosophically in an array of different ways, it is nonetheless roughly accurate to say that this was generally pursued either along broadly Platonic lines or somewhat differently along broadly Aristotelian lines, even in theology. Augustine, for example, followed neo-Platonic thought in approaching the question of transcendent reality by appealing to what were seen to be the eternal and thus meta-physically real Platonic "Forms" or "Ideas", Forms which have an ultimate reality in themselves and in supra-sensible purity and perfection. (This, however, is not to say that Augustine by any means saw God as a Platonic Form which we will address further in a moment.) The Ideas of "the good", "the true", "the beautiful", of justice and love,[18] and also other, more subordinate Ideas were seen as eternal Forms in the "participation" of which the particular empirical things constituting or encountered in sensibly embodied life were deemed to have their character and identity, or to be what they are and the way they are. Or more exactly, it is in virtue of these supra-sensible Forms that sensible phenomena and bodies are deemed to possess the qualities or "perfections" that they do, to the greater or lesser degree that they "participate" in these Forms or "instantiate" them.

The appeal to metaphysical realities was undertaken somewhat differently by Aquinas who followed more strongly Aristotelian influences. Put simplistically, the direction in Aristotle did not proceed from the reality and perfection of the Forms down to their imperfect instantiations in empirical particulars. It proceeded rather from empirical particulars to underlying "substance" or "essences" (and hence also in a way to supra-sensible "forms", albeit now in a somewhat more moderated way than in Plato). And because of their empirical orientation these Aristotelian outlooks came thereby to assume also a more metaphysically cosmological character than Plato. In all cases, however, what was sought in the *meta*-physically real—as opposed to the *physically* real, or more broadly the

because they began to explain by natural means aspects of physical reality which up until that time has been understood as inherently mysterious, and explainable only through theology.

[18] See e.g., *On the Trinity*, Bk 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5-22.

empirically or spatio-temporally real—was something essentially unchanging, reliable, and constant, something which is not susceptible to the contingencies, vicissitudes, and transience of passing and corruptible spatio-temporal existence.

It must importantly be acknowledged, however, that for any of the Christian figures who used these Greek outlooks for theological purposes, the reality or "being" of God was not simply numbered as another "Form" among what were seen as the ideally perfecting higher Platonic "realities", or as a "substance" among what were seen as the cosmologically underlying and grounding "realities". Thomas's thought, for example, is much too rigorous in its "negative" directions to allow for any such obvious error. But they served nonetheless in certain ways as fundamental courts of appeal or as points of leverage which enabled theology to bring the uncreated reality of God to bear on the created reality of the world, or to account for the reality of God in relation to the reality of the world.[19]

However, when we come especially to the later stages of what is today broadly called the "modern" or "enlightenment" period, this view of an objectively substantialist metaphysics, or of a real metaphysical "realm" populated by supra-sensible "essences", changes decisively. The subject of "metaphysics" did indeed even in these later stages continue to be pursued as a philosophical discipline, but now in a fundamentally different kind of way, one which showed the older views of objective metaphysical substances, essences, and substrates to be rationally unsustainable and thus effectively irrational. We cannot discuss this in detail here, except to say that it is important even in this general orientational overview to understand that the stances taken toward the question of a meta-physical or supra-sensible reality were quite fundamentally different at the beginning of this period—i.e., in what we today refer to as the "early modern" views in 16th and 17th century "rationalism"—than they were nearer the end of this period in Hume and Kant. In fact, the views on substantialist or essentialist metaphysics at the earlier and later ends of this period were quite radically opposed to each other. For in the earlier "continental rationalism" of the 16th and 17th centuries, the "pre-modern" commitment to the primacy of substantialist metaphysics in accounting for the "fundamentals" of human, cosmic, and divine reality, was in fact reinforced with a new and sharpened intensity, whereas in Hume and Kant, the new rationalist intensification of metaphysics was entirely dismantled.

But let us look just briefly at the intensification of substantialist metaphysics in rationalism. Descartes, for example, located the elementary and foundational basis of human reality not physically in sensible embodiment, but rather meta-physically in the "*thinking* substance".[20] Leibniz likewise, although now with greater cosmological import, located (at least in one vital aspect of his philosophy) the elementary and underlying components of nature in windowless "monads". Monads are described by Leibniz as "simple substances", which is to say foundationally real or ultimately real metaphysical "things in themselves" which, as both simple (indivisible) and meta-physical, have neither parts nor spatial

[19] See e.g., *On the Trinity*, Bk 8, preface and ch 3, pp. 4,7.

[20] See e.g., *Meditations on First Philosophy* in *The Philosophical Works of Descartes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 152-153.

extension.[21] Accordingly, they lack any spatial dynamism, which is to say they are dynamically inert. As "supra-sensible" realities they are seen as entirely inaccessible to the sensible faculties and are apprehensible instead solely through the light and activity of "pure reason". And pure reason itself is only able to operate with full clarity and distinctness in these regions when it is purged of any sensible input, by which it becomes "confused". Spinoza too, under similar rationalistically metaphysical orientations, spoke of the elementary authority and reality of "thoughts which themselves think".

Others, such as Christian Wolffe or Nicolas Malebranche, could be added to this group, but there are in sum two characteristics above all by which we today set this in many other ways disparate set of thinkers together under the designation of "17th century rationalism". The first is the shared supposition that "pure reason" by itself, unaided by any sensible input or experience, which always introduces misapprehension, confusion, and error, is able to give us the clearest and most certain insight into the true "nature of things", or into the fundamental and ultimate reality of the world or the nature of this reality. The second is a new reinforcement, in more speculatively intricate ways, of the earlier "pre-modern" metaphysics which postulated the real existence or real "subsistence" of another "realm", beyond the one in which we are sensibly aware and embodied. This is an "ultimately real" meta-physical realm constituted by "things in themselves" which are changeless, constant, simple, and incorruptible. And it was deemed further that the "metaphysical reality" arrived at on this supra-sensible level then also permitted us to address questions about the reality of God, since divinity likewise transcends the corruption and decay of sensible or empirical reality in the extensive magnitudes of space and time.

6. At this juncture, however, we must pause to acknowledge that in the midst of all of this, and even prior to the rejection of the old substantialist metaphysics through Hume, Newton, and Kant, there was one immensely powerful theological voice—that of Martin Luther—who even in the "pre-modern" period, prior to the 17th century, had been rejecting not only the Platonic, but also even any of the more moderated Aristotelian appeals to substantialist metaphysics for a proper attentiveness either to the reality of the world or to the reality of God in the world. Luther's own primary motivation here of course was not a philosophical one but a thoroughly theological and indeed an incarnational one. His preeminent concern was that of preserving the unquestioned primacy of the scriptural declaration that God is truly and fully present in the embodied history of Jesus Christ and not more truly and fully in some "meta-physical" reality underlying this which would lead to Christological error.

Luther himself read the then dominatingly influential Aristotelian texts avidly. But in light of what he saw to be theology's indispensable incarnational commitments to real embodiment, he rejected the residual substantialist and essentialist elements in them. And indeed it was arguably largely on this basis that he was able to find a compatriot of sorts in William of Ockham. Ockham had a century or so earlier, and from what are today seen as unsustainable "nominalist" philosophical perspectives, held that only individually existing things and their individual sensible properties are real. And he had therefore also rejected the

[21] See e.g., *G. W. Leibniz, Philosophical Essays* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1989), 213-214; 333-334.

metaphysically essentialist or substantialist elements remaining in Aristotle. However, Ockham's position as such, because of what came to be regarded as other quite basic epistemological failures, proved unable to sustain itself philosophically with any longevity. And it is perhaps partly because of his perceived association with Ockham that Luther's own important "incarnational" insights and contributions in this particular area against the old substantialist metaphysics were also forgotten by the subsequent theological tradition (especially in the 19th and 20th centuries), an oversight which Bonhoeffer for example strongly laments. But the Lutheran exception notwithstanding, the subsequent theological tradition after him continued by and large to trace its orientations in its questions about the reality of God in relation to the world through the more predominating meta-physicalist theological trends.

7. It was in Immanuel Kant, however—under the strong influence, it must be added, of Hume and Newton—that the definitive, and what for subsequent thought proved to be the insurmountable defeat of the old substantialist and cosmological metaphysics, for which Luther was seeking assistance in Ockham, finally occurred. And it is primarily in light of this particular philosophical achievement by Kant that Bonhoeffer, who was always more basically attentive to Luther even on these epistemological issues than he was to Kant, pondered whether Kant should not be given the title of "epistemologist of Protestantism [i.e., of the *original* Lutheran positions] par excellence".[22]

But of course it was hardly only in "Protestantism" that the defeat of the old substantialist or essentialist metaphysics was felt. Virtually all of continental philosophy changed dramatically in these respects within a matter of three decades following the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). This remained true even when his own insights were used subsequently in ways fundamentally opposed to what he himself intended, as for example in the resurgence in new ways of the primacy of the supra-sensible in the idealisms of Fichte and Hegel.[23] And Roman Catholic theology too, while for its own specific reasons[24] somewhat slower to respond to the Kantian challenge than 19th century Protestant theology, has in many of its most influential directions in the 20th century—e.g., Karl Rahner, Hans Küng, Joseph Maréchal, Elizabeth Johnson, or Bernard Lonergan—come to orient itself methodologically away from the old substantialist metaphysics. It is true that there remain in Roman Catholic theology powerful vestiges—even at the very highest levels—of either the Platonist metaphysics of effusion and emanation, or also of the more moderate Aristotelian metaphysics of substance through neo-scholasticism. But again, in its most widely influential expressions, Roman Catholic theology too has found that it has had no choice, in the wake of modern science and the Kantian critique of metaphysics, but to abandon the old metaphysics of supra-sensible essences, substances or substrates in asking the question of the reality of God in relation to the world.

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[22] *Act and Being,* DBW 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 34.

[23] The details of the difference between Kantian philosophy and subsequent "German idealism" will be discussed more fully below in chapter two.

[24] …largely because of its stronger rootedness especially in Aristotelian but also in Platonic metaphysical presuppositions through Thomism and scholasticism

Whatever the subsequent disagreements with Kant and departures from him—and there were many such disagreements and departures—what is unquestioned today is that continental philosophy changed fundamentally after him. And the basic summary point here then is that Kant's critique of traditional metaphysics proved so forceful that theology, just as much as subsequent philosophy, found itself unable any longer to sustain its questioning about God and the world through substantialist and often cosmological appeals to an "objectively real" supra-sensible meta-physical "realm" underlying physical reality.

8. But it is here that we reach finally what was to become the really decisive crossroads for present day theology, especially in regard to what I have suggested has become its current conspicuous silence with respect to its fundamental ground and source in the present reality of God. For as a consequence of the loss of externalist and objectivist metaphysical appeals, theology in the 19th century now began to turn its attention in the opposite direction: to mental domains of "inwardness", or to the "non-objective" domain of human "subjectivity", in order to account for the intelligibility of its foundational claims about the relation of God to the world. In doing so it followed in the footsteps of the powerful "idealisms", which is to say the foundational philosophies of mind or phenomenologies of mind, which arose after Kant.[25] (Kierkegaard's "inwardness" was quite fundamentally different.) The impact of this "spirit of idealism" has proved so far-reaching—especially as it came to be reinforced in new and more subtle ways in 20th century Husserlian phenomenology—that even the great Karl Barth could not escape its gravitational pull, and he remained quite fundamentally in its orbit.

This turn away from the objectively substantialist supra-sensible metaphysics toward a new kind of supra-sensibility in the "inwardness" of subjectivity, was then subsequently fortified even further with the advent of what is sometimes called the "linguistic turn" in the 20th century. What made the "linguistic turn" to the primacy of language, grammar, and interpretive structures all the more powerful was that it occurred almost simultaneously on several fronts and therefore with massive impact. It occurred in structuralism and post-structuralism in the human sciences; in the emergence of literary theory as a growing force in philosophical discussions; in the linguistic implications of the mental "internalisms" exemplified in both post-Husserlian phenomenology, and in similarly oriented "antirealist" discussions in America and Britain; and finally as well, in the centrality of the philosophy of language for Anglo-American analytical philosophy. It is under the overwhelming impact of these influences together in the human and literary sciences, that theology also has been unable to resist the increasingly intensified movement in orientation away from the real world of sensible human embodiment, and into cognitively abstract regions, as it looks now to fundamental forms of phenomenology, textualism, narrative, and grammar in accounting for the intelligibility of its claims. One of the most definitive theological expressions of this is consummately articulated in George Lindbeck's often quoted and influential view that in

[25] Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Fichte: Science of Knowledge (Wissenschaftslehre)*, ed. Peter Heath and John Lachs (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970; 2nd ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1931).

"a Christ-centered world" it is "the text…which absorbs the world rather than the world the text".[26]

The point in sum is that under the influence of both of these "turns"—the "turn to the subject" after Kant and the "linguistic turn" in the early 20th century—theology has come to account for its own intelligibility and validity vis-à-vis divine revelation entirely internally to itself, i.e., in self-guaranteeing ways or "tauto-theological" ways. But while theology has thereby indeed been able to assure a kind "analytical" success within itself theoretically and linguistically, it has also lost touch not only with what the Christian scriptures themselves indispensably affirm, but with what practicing Christian communities across the world also affirm indispensably, namely, that the reality and power of God is through the resurrection and Pentecost dynamically present and alive in the real world of space and time at the center of embodied human life today.

9. It is against these trends that transformation theology seeks, in the spirit of Luther and others like him, to return to a genuinely "incarnational" account of the resurrection-reality of God through Pentecost even today, a reality on which everything in theology depends. Or, stated differently, it seeks in new ways to return theological attention to the real world of corporeal human life in space and time as the indispensable "site" of the revealed reality of God in our own living embodied present, no less than it was exactly this same real created world that was the "site" of the revelation of Jesus Christ in the days of his mortal flesh. In other words, it takes with full seriousness the scriptural declaration, as witnessed also in the experienced encounter with God in the enacted decision of faith, that divine revelation is not merely a "communication" restricted to the fully self-guaranteeing securities of conceptually cognitive domains. Revelation is rather nothing less than *the communication of divine life to embodied human life through embodied human life*. It is not, in other words—as it appears in various ways today—merely or primarily the address of a "concrete concept" implanted directly in discursive ratio;[27] not merely or primarily the address of a "superabundance" of phenomenality, or an "excess" of a phenomenal "being given";[28] it is not originally an address that overflows our own speculatively ontological limitations as an "ontological plus";[29] not originally the address of an "epiphany" encountered immediately in phenomenal consciousness;[30] not merely or originally an address that can be understood in philological terms as a "passage of gift" from Donor to donee expressed in various discursive configurations of "asymmetrical reciprocity and non-identical repetition".[31] It is rather again nothing less than the communication of divine life to embodied human life through embodied human life, in the whole rational-embodied fullness and the full free contingency of this life. Such an orientation finds its warrant on several fronts, both theological and epistemological.

[26] George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 118.
[27] Barth, CD I.1, 290, 291.
[28] Jean-Luc Marion, *Being Given* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 221-247; 236.
[29] Eberhard Jüngel, *God as Mystery of the World*, 214.
[30] Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings*, 47.
[31] John Milbank, *Being Reconciled* (London: Routledge, 2003), xi.

The first is the scriptural stipulation that the revelation of God in the mortal body of Jesus of Nazareth himself cannot be theologically extracted from *the actual bodily life he lived* in the perfect obedience of a fully human will to the will of the Father, an obedience by which *in his lived temporal life* he actually *achieves* the perfect fulfillment of the Mosaic law, and as such lives a life in perfect union with the Father. It is not right, in other words, as we can be apt to do in doctrinal theory, to treat "incarnation", "cross", and "resurrection" collectively as the three thematically or grammatically central Christological loci without equally acknowledging that the real power and efficacy of these events hangs inalienably on what the man Jesus accomplishes in the living of his mortal life "in the likeness of sinful flesh" between Bethlehem and Golgotha. It is not, in other words, as if alone by virtue of his conception by the Holy Spirit in Mary we could permit ourselves doctrinally to move directly from Bethlehem to Golgotha without equal attention to what on the scriptural testimony is achieved in his lived life and in the action of his lived life, between and from and toward these events. For it is through nothing less than what Donald MacKinnon calls "the historically achieved innocence of Jesus",[32] an innocence and righteousness or justice which he actually accomplishes in the temporal passage of his mortal life, that he is also able to carry this innocence with him into death, and so to conquer death.

None of this is by any means to suggest that Jesus "becomes" the God-man, or that he "achieves" divinity through what he accomplishes in his life. It is not, in other words, to jeopardize Christ's divinity from birth, for he alone, in the words of John the Baptist, is the one to whom from his very conception "God gives the Spirit without limit" (Jn 3:34). It is rather to take with full seriousness the clear scriptural stipulation that his genuine humanity, and all that goes with this, may not be compromised either. And what this means, as the epistle to the Hebrews makes clear, is that in his very divinity Jesus Christ participates in the natural limitations of the physical growth and temporal development of a single man, a man who is born in human infancy and who shares in the natural human maturing and learning process from boyhood to manhood. Or as the Hebrews passage states this explicitly, "although he was a son", nevertheless in his real earthly life as a human being "he learned obedience from what he suffered", and in *this* way "once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him" (Heb 5:8-9).

It is only in affirming with boldness and *theological* "risk"—i.e., at the risk of forfeiting abstract conceptual or metaphysical securities, or theoretically comprehensive doctrinal resolutions—that God "should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering", and that Jesus "had to become like his brothers in every way"; it is only in affirming this with boldness that we can also be assured that "because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted" (Heb 2:10, 17, 18). To reiterate, then, it is what is really accomplished in the actual life lived unto death and into resurrection, in the perfect union with the divine will of a fully human life lived "in the likeness of sinful flesh"; it is this *actual life lived* which is the historical vehicle of redemption, and not what can be doctrinally gleaned from the linguistic "meaning" of the terms "incarnation", "cross", and "resurrection" by attending fundamentally to the narratives of scripture as "end-stations" of theological enquiry, in abstraction from the lived life.

[32] *Explorations in Theology*, 97.

This in turn means something vital. For if the revelation of God in the *mortal life* of Jesus is indeed nothing less than the communication of divine life to human life through human life, then revelation is no less the communication of divine life to human life through human life also in the *resurrection life* of Christ through Pentecost, in our own living embodied present today. And this means further that just as the revealed reality of God in Jesus Christ in the days of his mortal flesh comes in the perfect unity of enacted obedience in the man Jesus to the command of God (Jn 6:38; 12:49-50; 14:31; 15:10), so also today the revealed resurrection-reality and Pentecost-reality of God is communicated and made real in embodied life through our own enacted obedience to the "new command" of the one who fulfills the whole law—"follow me".

10. This in turn yields a different way of understanding what the term "transcendence" means when speaking of the transcendence of God, which in the revelation of Jesus Christ must be understood as a presently real transcendence at the center of human life. It is an understanding of transcendence that in its fundamental orientations might be called Hebraic rather than Hellenistic in character, and the basic point of distinction here is as follows. On the Hellenistic orientation which, with a few important exceptions has in various formations since 1800 become the virtual default view in theology, revelation is seen as a disclosure of divine truth and thus transcendent truth to humans that occurs essentially by way of a special "illumination" of the cognitive or speculative intellect. On such a view, the moment of the reception and knowability of revelation assumes the character of what Karl Buehler has called an "*aha Erlebnis*", that is, a moment of sudden perceptual or conceptual insight in which a certain clarity is gained into discursive or referential truth. Such insight is here seen to occur by way of a supernatural "givenness" of a transcendent "denotatum" or "referent" to the specially illuminated intellect which enables a divinely assured cognitive "belief" in this "referent" as an "indicative".

The Hebraic view of revelation by contrast, as articulated, for example, by Franz Rosenzweig, knows nothing of such a merely cognitive "belief" in a transcendent denotatum given to our cognitive capacities of conception and perception through a special illumination of these. We can explain and amplify the reason for this "unknowing" by turning to Augustine. Theology has almost always held that when it uses terms like unspeakability, unthinkability and invisibility to address God's transcendence, that these terms do not mean exactly the same thing as what they denote in their normal usage. For God's invisibility is not merely an invisibility and unspeakability predicated on the *limitations* of human perceptual and conceptual capacities. To the contrary, as Augustine says, even if these capacities were able to be magnified to infinity, they would still be entirely unable to afford any glimpse of God in his transcendence. In other words, that God in his transcendence *is* invisible and unthinkable doesn't mean that God is perceptually "too distant" to see by eyesight or indeed conceptually "too difficult" to comprehend by thinking, such that if these representationally cognitive capacities were only greater, God might indeed become perceptually visible or conceptually apprehensible. It means rather that God is not a representable object *of any kind* for cognition. And if revelation is indeed the self-communication of God, then this will not be encountered *at its origin* as a perceptual or conceptual "givenness", for God does not give himself to be known as something he is not.

But the Hebraic orientation of which I am speaking is not left with the intractable problems that inevitably arise from such a false orientation to divine transcendence. For it sees the transcendent truth of God as disclosed in revelation not in the *indicative* form of an illumined ideatum or "denotatum" for conceptually cognitive consciousness, but rather as a summons to action in the *imperative* form of the *command* of the law addressed directly to the heart, which is to say to the appetitive and motive consciousness as described above. And this in turn means something vital for the human "reception" of revelation in embodied life. It means that because on the Jewish view revelation as command comes in the form of an imperative which elicits an obligation in the motive nature that, as Rosenzweig says, knows only the immediacy of obedience or disobedience. Therefore, the moment of the human "reception" of revelation, and thus the moment of the knowability of the unspeakable God, is not originally the moment of a illumined cognitive insight, not an *aha Erlebnis*. The moment of reception and knowability is rather nothing else than the moment at which the commandment is *actually obeyed* through embodied action in life. This is why we find in both Rosenzweig and Levinas an adherence to what at first glance seems the rather strange Talmudic doctrine that the revelation of God must be obeyed before it is understood, or that it must be obeyed *in order to* understand it. According to this Talmudic doctrine, it is the prior act of obedience to the revealed command which is said to bring subsequently the knowledge of the truth offered in the command. For as Levinas comments on this, "the recipient of the message cannot yet benefit from the discernment which this message brings to him",[33] and the "reception" of the command comes only in the obeying of it.

This same prioritization of the movement of action before the mediation of thinking is exactly also what Bonhoeffer again is suggesting for a Christian view of revelation and divine transcendence when he speaks of the immediately understood authority—which is to say an authority not recognized through the mediating reflections of the cognitive intellect but immediately in the conviction of motive intellect—in the disciple's immediate obedience to the revealed summons of Christ "follow me". In other words, the revelation attested to in the gospel message is disclosed no less in the form of a summons to action—expressed definitively in the command of Christ, "follow me"—than the revelation of the Mosaic law is disclosed in the form of a summons to action in the greatest commandment, "thou shalt love…".

The summary point here then is that God's unspeakable and unthinkable transcendent reality becomes intelligible in revelation, or passes-over into a genuine communication of God's transcendence *as* revelation, only in its reception as a transcendence that is *done* in order to be known or understood. In Christ's own words, "anyone who resolves to *do* the *will* of God will *know* whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own" (Jn 7:17).

11. All of this means that transformation theology is fundamentally a theology of action, or better, a theology that orients itself to the present and living reality of the transcendent God fundamentally through the embodied action of free creative agency in response to revelation as summons and command. This basic "Hebraic" orientation to transcendence

[33] "Temptation", 36.

through action is expressed also in the writings of the important Anglican philosopher and theologian Austin Farrer, whose trenchantly insightful work along these lines is often overlooked today, perhaps because the mid-twentieth century "analytic" philosophical contexts out of which it was expressed are now no longer fashionable. As Farrer states in his 1957 Gifford Lectures: "Will, action, the [free] creative moment in man, is the only object of consideration which opens a dimension of metaphysical depth, or promises to let through a single ray of uncreated light".[34]

In this light we might say finally that as a theology of action transformation theology is a *revelational anthropology*; and because human life is always social and political, it is also a revelational politics. This, however, is not a step down the path toward a "reduction" of theology to anthropology but rather the only feasible path to a proper articulation of a theological ontology. For it is to recognize, recalling Augustine, that if, firstly, the living reality of God in his transcendence is a transcendence that cannot be envisioned by our conceptual and perceptual faculties (our cognitive faculties); and if, secondly, God is not limited in his ability to communicate with human beings as humans are in imagining or apprehending the divine; and if, thirdly, the reality of God is disclosed in revelation as the communication of divine life to human life through human life, then theology must in both its method and operative content be a revelational anthropology. There is no danger of a "reduction" of theology to anthropology here because a revelational anthropology is essentially nothing else than an incarnational theology. This moreover is not unfamiliar territory for theology. For again and again in Books 9-15 of *De Trinitate*, for example, Augustine expresses essentially the same thing. Upon having recognized in Book 8 the inability of the human mind to conceive or imagine or deal with the divine, he "reverses the course" and turns instead to a consideration of God through humans as the image of God. He "dwel[ls] upon the creature which we are, in order that we might be able to perceive the invisible things of God which are understood through those that are made" (Bk 15.6.10). Or again, as bearers of the image of God, human beings can, for Augustine, act as a "mirror" for considering the divine "in order that through this image which we are we might see Him by whom we have been made in some manner or other, as through a mirror" (Bk 15.8.14).

But we wish to push these Augustinian insights into certain more critical limits or critically unavoidable conclusions, conclusions voiced also again in Farrer:

> As God himself is unimaginable [and unthinkable, inconceivable], so also must be the dependence of his creatures on his power. And if the relation appears imaginable, we have reason to fear that we are viewing it unrealistically, and, as it were, from a great distance. The nearer we come to it, and the more we are [really] involved in it, the less imaginable, the more paradoxical we shall find it to be. But what we lose in imaginative clarity is made up to us in actuality: just where we cease to *conceive* our dependence on God, *we begin to live it*.[35]

[34] Farrer, *The Freedom of the Will* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1957), 315.

[35] Ibid, emphasis added.

All of this means that while it is no less fundamentally concerned than Barth with the "Godness of God"—indeed, precisely *because* it is concerned with this—at its heart, transformation theology is a revelational anthropology; and the essential domains through which it is oriented as such, even and especially in its doctrinal considerations, are all the domains involving embodied human agency or free human action, whether social ethics, politics, art, ecology or history.

EVANGELIZATION AND THE NEW ATHEISM

Glenn B. Siniscalchi[1]

One of the main arguments in the recent explosion of best-selling books in defense of atheism is that Christianity is directly responsible for causing its adherents to become violent in the name of their faith. As Steven Pinker writes, the Judeo-Christian God once commanded his people to "massacre Midianites, stone prostitutes, execute homosexuals, slay heretics and infidels, throw Protestants out of windows, withhold medicine from dying children, and crash airplanes into skyscrapers."[2] Richard Dawkins, a vociferous critic of Christian theism, writes: "…the human psyche has two great sicknesses: the urge to carry vendetta across generations. And the tendency to fasten group labels on people rather than see them as individuals. Abrahamic religion gives strong sanction to both. Only the willfully blind could fail to implicate the divisive force of religion in most, if not all, of the violent enmities in the world today."[3] Now the "New Atheists" are not arguing that violence results when Christians engage in war because the right conditions are in place for a defensive strategy to justify political ends, but that the teachings of Jesus are responsible for steering what are otherwise well-meaning persons down the path of violence.[4] Steven Weinberg, another outspoken atheist, pulls no punches: "Good people will do good things, and bad people will do bad things. But for good people to do bad things—that takes religion."[5]

The recent atheist critique of Christian evangelization and enculturation makes it easy for ecumenists to lose their confidence when it comes to preaching, persuading, correcting, and sustaining others unto the Gospel. After all, history reveals that the Christian faith has often been accompanied by all sorts of unspeakable horrors. Whether it is the Crusades, the Inquisition, the burning of heretics, or the justification of slavery, history demonstrates that Christian evangelization has been linked to some of the most extreme forms of violence. Violence, it may be added, has not been limited to the Church's encounter with non-Christian religions. It has also occurred when Christians have tried to evangelize one another toward what each of them believed was the fullness of revealed truth.

In light of these challenges to the Christian faith, I submit that when Christians have become violent in the name of the Savior they have either knowingly or unknowingly allowed reductive ideologies about evangelization to control their thinking and choices. A faithful following of the Great Commission does not lead to violence *per se*, but like everything else that is human, it can be abused for the worse. But before we get down to the

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[2] Steven Pinker, *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*, (New York: Viking Books, 2002), 189.

[3] Richard Dawkins, http://ffrf.org/timely/dawkins.php (accessed on September 7, 2007).

[4] The term "New Atheism" was originally coined by Gary Wolf. See his article "The Church of Non-Believers" in *Wired* magazine: www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.11/atheism_pr.html (accessed on February 27, 2009).

[5] Steven Weinberg, "A Designer Universe?" in *The New York Review of Books*, vol. 46, no. 16. (October 21, 1999): 48.

details, I would like to outline some of the broader critiques of the Christian faith in this regard by the New Atheists and respond to them in kind.

What are the New Atheists Saying?

Some of the New Atheists claim that history reveals that Christians have committed many wicked crimes in the name of Jesus Christ. "Monotheism," in the words of Regina Schwartz, has inevitably brought a "violent legacy" to the West.[6] Undoubtedly many Christians have committed crimes in their attempts to enculturate the Christian worldview. But a few things must be kept in mind. First, critics must demonstrate that a healthy evangelism was responsible for causing violence, not just showing that there is a mere correlation between evangelism and violence. Indeed, the argument from historical observation does not show that Christianity causes violence, but has more of a descriptive character to it, *exposing the very problem that needs to be addressed.*

First, although atheists can furnish many examples where violence has accompanied Christian activity, it is difficult to deny on historical grounds that the Church has ushered in a tremendous amount of good as well.[7] As atheist Michael Shermer admits, "for every one of these grand tragedies there are ten thousand acts of personal kindness and social good that go unreported…Religion, like all social institutions of such historical depth and cultural impact, cannot be reduced to an unambiguous evil."[8] Hence, it is unfair to look at the exceptions to the rule and use these horrible occurrences to lend credibility to the idea that Christianity simply *causes* violence.

Second, these exceptions, it must be noted, are highly ambiguous scenarios and open to a variety of historical interpretations to begin with. Aside from the spiritual problem of being able to identify who is truly a Christian from who is not, it is difficult for anybody to identify and pinpoint the causes of violence in light of the multifaceted nature of the origins of warfare.[9] Certainly, war is usually explained in terms of social, political, and economic factors, not religious ones.

Similarly, who has the authority to determine what is good and evil within these circumstances? Many viewed Mother Theresa as someone who did a lot of good for the destitute on the streets of Calcutta, but others said she was having a bad social effect on India's political system. The latter thought that her resources could have been used for better reasons. Thus, the problem of definition and interpretation makes it very difficult, if not

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[6] Regina Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

[7] Rodney Stark, *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); idem, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism and Western Success*, (New York: Random House Publishing, 2005); Thomas E. Woods, *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization*, (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2005); Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing, 2004).

[8] Michael Shermer, *How We Believe*, (New York: Freeman Publishing, 2000), 71. Cf. Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon,* (New York: Penguin, 2006), 253.

[9] Cf. Thomas L. Friedman, *From Beirut to Jerusalem*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux Publishing, 1989).

impossible, for atheists to maintain that the Great Commission has been the unequivocal cause of violence across the ages of Church history.[10]

Third, the atheistic argument from history is no more effective than responding that *atheism* has been directly responsible for causing violence. Indeed, some atheists, such as Lenin, demanded that protracted forms of violence needed be to be used in the name of atheist philosophies to eliminate all religions off the face of the earth.[11] The same could be said about politics. In Latin America, millions of people supposedly "disappeared" in the words of extreme rightwing politicians. In Cambodia, Pol Pot was responsible for killing millions of innocent persons in the name of socialism. But no political atheist would argue that politics is intrinsically evil and ought to be done away with.[12] The same could be said about science. No scientifically informed atheist would claim that science is intrinsically evil just because a few scientists were responsible for creating weapons of mass destruction and other torture tactics—like napalm.[13] Through it all, the lesson to be learned is that *every single human institution, including Christianity, can be utilized for evil ends when it is abused.* As theologian Alister McGrath has observed, "All ideals—divine, transcendent, human or invented—are capable of being abused. That's just the way human nature is. And knowing this, we need to work out what to do about it rather than lashing out uncritically at religion."[14]

Fourth, any analysis of the cause(s) of violence must be contextualized within the social and cultural milieus in which these events are thought to have occurred. Several critical revisitations of certain historical events have now shown that many of the traditional stereotypes about Christian forms of violence are unjustifiable: the amount of people killed during the Spanish Inquisition, the witch hunts in Salem, and the relationship between Christianity and slaveholding, for instance.[15] As far as slavery goes, historians now know that the Christian faith originated in a time and place and later developed in a world that was already teeming with slavery. Indeed, the entire history of *humanity* is a history of slavery. There has always been an outrage at the practice of slavery in certain quarters of the Church (e.g. St. Justin Martyr and St. Patrick of Ireland abhorred the practice). As historian Paul Johnson rightly points out, Christianity was the only organized religion in the world that "declared the diminution, if not the final elimination, of slavery to be meritorious."[16]

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[10] Keith Ward, *Is Religion Dangerous?*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 27-31.

[11] Alister McGrath and Joanna Collicutt McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion?: Atheist Fundamentalism and the Denial of the Divine,* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 77.

[12] Keith Ward, *Is Religion Dangerous?*, 44-49.

[13] As Steven Weinberg, *Dreams of a Final Theory: The Scientist's Search for the Ultimate Laws of Nature*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 259, recognizes, scientific atheism "has made its own contribution to the world's sorrows," but "where the authority of science has been invoked to justify horrors, it has been in terms of *perversions* of science."

[14] McGrath and McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion?*, 81.

[15] Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 10, 17, 18, 30, 41, 59, 60, 305; Rodney Stark, *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 200-291.

[16] Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity*, (New York: Athenaeum Books, 1987), 437.

Christianity should be largely credited for overthrowing slavery in those parts of the world where it once thrived.

On another front, Richard Dawkins suggests that the Christian faith is a type of "mental illness,"[17] catapulting believers down the path of violence. The more people succumb to the illusion of belief in God, the more they will become inclined to do things that ordinary people would not do—including acts of violence.[18] Basically what Dawkins is saying is that belief is an irrational form of thinking, leading to both self-inflicting and external harm. In this view, belief in God can be completely explained in terms of biological and psychological categories of the human mind.[19] There are many problems with this view. First, the projection theorist merely begins with the atheistic presupposition. Ergo, they ask: Since God does not exist, why do people believe in God? Of course, if there is no God, then Christianity is make-believe. Second, it borders on committing the genetic fallacy. That is, it confuses how one comes to belief with whether the belief in question is true. How one comes to belief in God may not have anything to do with whether or not the belief is true. Third, the idea that God is a projection of our minds to keep us safe from the unrelenting forces of nature and society is somewhat idiosyncratic: For the God of Jesus is certainly merciful, *but he is also seen as retributive*.[20] It is difficult to see why anyone would want to make up a God like this. Dawkins accedes to this point in another place in his book.[21] Fourth, it is difficult to see why belief in God is a bad thing if it brings satisfaction and peace of mind to those who need it. All persons need to be comforted with a variety of things—food, shelter, friendship, etc. All of these are real human needs. Perhaps there is a real human need for God.[22] There is nothing necessarily wrong with coming to God for help in our time of need, but in the Christian view we also adore God *for who he is*. Fifth, all persons, including Christians, necessarily project some things about an infinite God that are simply not true. But some false projections about God do not entail that all of our beliefs about him are false.[23] Sixth, the atheist may be confusing the *simplicity* of a Christian lifestyle with *weakness*. Lastly, contemporary psychology strongly suggests that atheists across the ages have usually come from families in which the father figure was either absent, indifferent, or abusive. Theists, on the other hand, have usually come from families in which the father figure played a more positive role in their life.[24] The issue does not seem to be about projecting a cosmic comforter as much as it is about the atheist who refuses to accept God's presence in his or

[17] Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, 30th anniversary edition, 2nd edition, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 330; idem, *The God Delusion*, (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 186, 188.

[18] Cf. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 167.

[19] Gregory R. Peterson, *Minding God: Theology and the Cognitive Sciences*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2003), 18.

[20] Cf. Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957).

[21] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 168.

[22] For more on this, see Peter Kreeft, *Heaven: The Heart's Deepest Longing*, exp. ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989).

[23] Gregory Peterson, *Minding God*, 186, 187.

[24] Paul C. Vitz, *The Faith of the Fatherless: The Psychology of Atheism*, (Dallas: Spence Publishing Company, 2000).

her life. Further, the issue of projecting a "cosmic comforter" has very little to do with the accompanying evidence of electrochemical and neurobiological processes of the human brain. Rather, it has everything to do with how the empirical evidence is interpreted.[25] Some will interpret the relevant evidence and argue that belief in God can be merely reduced to complex neurobiological mechanisms. But others will argue that *all* human experience has a physiological component to it. Seen in this way, brain processes are the proximate cause of how people experience God, but the ultimate cause is due to the extramental reality of God himself. Until a single layered explanation of the evidence should be preferred, a more holistic interpretation remains valid.[26]

Victor Stenger, another well known atheist, has recently argued that God once commanded his people to exterminate other persons and nations.[27] According to Stenger, the God of the Old Testament is a God of war (e.g., Deut. 20:16, 17; Josh 6:21; 1 Sam. 15: 2,3). Since biblical revelation developed as the process of canonization continued, the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament is performed through the prism of the life, death, and glorification of Jesus (cf. Matt. 5:17, 18). With this interpretive framework in focus, the Magisterium urges her exegetes to use a variety of methods of interpretation when viewing the Bible.[28] As John Paul II declares, the Magisterium of the Catholic Church "rejects a split between the human and divine, between scientific research and respect for the faith, between the literal sense and the spiritual sense."[29] Further, "exegetes have to make use of the historical-critical method. They cannot, however, accord to it a sole validity…Exegetes should also explain the Christological, canonical, and ecclesial meanings of the biblical texts."[30] This is very important and is often forgotten in Catholic biblical scholarship. For when the historical-critical method becomes the sole method of interpretation at the expense of the spiritual sense, it is easy for exegetes to view the God of the Old Testament as a violent God who has timelessly commanded his people to fight and kill anyone who would oppose him.[31]

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[25] Cf. Dean Hamer, *The God Gene: How Faith is Hardwired into Our Genes*, (New York: Doubleday Books, 2004), 16. "This is a book about why people believe, not whether those beliefs are true. Nonbelievers will probably argue that that finding a God gene proves there is no God—that religion is nothing more than a genetic program for self deception. Religious believers, on the other hand, can point to the existence of God as one more sign of the creator's ingenuity—a clever way to help us humans acknowledge and embrace his presence."

[26] John F. Haught, *Is Nature Enough? Meaning and Truth in the Age of Science*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[27] Victor Stenger, *God: The Failed Hypothesis: How Science Shows that God Does Not Exist*, (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2007), 203-205.

[28] Cf. Paul Hanson, "War and Peace in the Hebrew Bible," *Interpretation*, vol. 38, no. 4, (1984): 344, 345.

[29] Pope John Paul II, "Address on the Interpretation of the Bible in the Church," (April 23, 1993), no. 6., in Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1993), 16.

[30] Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church*, 106.

[31] See Paul N. Anderson, "Genocide or Jesus?: A God of Conquest or Pacifism?" from J. Harold Ellens, ed. *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Contemporary Views on Spirituality and Violence,* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 31-52.

One of the hallmarks of proper biblical interpretation is to take weightier passages of Scripture as an interpretive framework to understand the less important passages in the Old Testament. Similarly, an analysis of the Old Testament is shaped by the historical and social contexts through which believers engage, internalize, and act on their sacred texts.[32] As a general rule of thumb, these contentious passages should be understood within the original community that gave rise to them, including those believers that continue to pass them down today. These passages were written down from the standpoint of a nation that was in search of its identity, being surrounded by nations that opposed them.

Catholics hold that all Scripture is inspired by God. But inspiration does not mean that everything in the text should be taken at literal face value. Scholars recognize that the Old Testament books are not merely historical reports, but books that are highly colored by theological motifs.[33] In and of itself, the theology of these books ought to make us pause about the way in which they are read. There is usually more meaning to the text than what meets the modern eye at first glance.

Dawkins once said that Christianity fosters the potential for believers to be violent because Christianity as a religion endorses absolute truth: "Certainly [belief in God] can be positively harmful in many ways…obviously in causing wars, which it has often enough in history…causing people to do ill to one another because they are so convinced that they know what is right. Because they feel it from inside—they've been told from within what is right—anything goes—you can kill people because you know that they're wrong."[34]

Here, absolute truths are thought to be rationally undeniable. And yet, Dawkins argues that Christian faith is, to paraphrase him, *wrong*.[35] Conversely, atheism is *true*. But these are absolute claims. So if Dawkins is right about Christianity, then he is wrong about absolutes; and if he is wrong about Christianity, then he is wrong about absolutes again! To make matters worse, if inner-religious disagreements cause violence because of their differences, then wouldn't Dawkins' atheism dispose him to become violent toward Christian believers?

So the issue is not whether Christians are setting themselves up to become violent in the name of preaching and persuading unbelievers unto the Gospel, but in how rigid they view the truth. Charles Kimball has the right idea: "when particular interpretations of these claims become propositions requiring uniform assent and are treated as rigid doctrines, the likelihood of corruption in that tradition rises exponentially. Such tendencies are the first harbingers of the evil that may follow."[36] Because truth is one, unity arises between those individuals who agree to it. Unity, however, does not entail uniformity. A rigid view of

[32] D. Andrew Kille, "The Bible Made Me Do It: Text, Interpretation, and Violence," from J. Harold Ellens, ed. *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Sacred Scriptures, Ideology, and Violence*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 56.

[33] John J. Collins, "The Zeal of Phineas: The Bible and the Legitimation of Violence," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 122, no. 1 (2003): 10, 11.

[34] Source unknown. Taken from David Martin, *Does Christianity Cause War?*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 24.

[35] Cf. Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 250, 253, 258, 307, 313, 318.

[36] Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), 41.

absolutes leads to intolerance and violence. But this is not how the Catholic Church would understand the truth about the Gospel and the Church. There is a legitimate pluralism within the bounds of orthodox faith.[37]

For those Christians who have fallen prey to a uniform conception of the Church, I urge them to learn how to think and articulate their faith in different ways and learn how to tolerate other viewpoints. Convictions like these must be upheld, especially in light of the fundamental Christian conviction that all people are created in God's likeness. The fact that we can agree to disagree about fundamental beliefs within our traditions can actually become an excellent opportunity to deepen our understanding of and interaction with the Gospel, as well as our interaction with other religious viewpoints.[38]

Sam Harris argues that inter-religious warfare was much more prevalent in premodern world than it is today. Considering that Christianity thrived during the premodern era, this would lend credibility to the idea that Christianity is responsible for causing so much violence today.[39]

A few things can be said in response to this. First, it is extremely difficult to determine whether or not war was more of a "premodern" phenomenon than a modern one. How, exactly, does Harris determine this? Does he compare the frequency of battles in these time periods? Does he calculate the intensity of the fighting? Does he count the number of dead bodies? Or the way in which people were killed? Harris's problems are only increased when other historians of warfare have argued differently. As James Turner Johnson of Rutgers University states, "the ongoing civil strife in Northern Ireland aside, the last time wars were fought for religion in the West was during the century after the protestant Reformation."[40] What is more, Harris seems to argue in a circle, assuming that "premoderns" were superstitious to begin with; critics who are negative about the Christian faith today will inevitably be negative about it in the past.

It is also questionable whether moderns are truly more "enlightened" than premoderns. As Huston Smith has suggested, hardly anyone ascribes to either the modern or the premodern worldview and value system at the exclusion of the other; they will inevitably hold on to elements from both.[41] Modernists may be more enlightened about some things than premoderns (in terms of science and technology, for instance), but moderns are clearly *less* perceptive than premoderns in other ways. If anything, it is surprising in light of Harris's

[37] Aidan Nichols, *The Shape of Catholic Theology: An Introduction to its Sources, Principles, and History*, (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 263-355.

[38] Keith Ward, *Is Religion Dangerous?*, 196.

[39] Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason,* 2nd ed. (New York: Norton Publishing, 2005), 236, 237.

[40] James Turner Johnson, *The Holy War Idea in Western and Islamic Traditions*, (University Park: Penn State University Press, 1997), 112.

[41] Huston Smith, *Why Religion Matters: The Fate of the Human Spirit in an Age of Disbelief*, (San Francisco: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001), 33.

claims that religions like Christianity have lasted well into modernity and are still thriving into the postmodern age.[42]

Belief in the afterlife, according to Christopher Hitchens, can predispose believers to be unconcerned about what happens to them and other persons during their earthly lives. The more that believers project their cares onto the next lifetime, they less they will care about improving humanity in the here and now, leading to violence.[43]

Christians have always believed that the ultimate fate of every person is determined by the way in which they live out their earthly lives. Christians insist that every moral decision that is made in this lifetime can be invested with eternal significance because there is something to hope for in the end. Eternity literally hangs in the balance by the way in which we relate to God and love our neighbors.

The very meaning of the incarnation denotes that the physical is to be affirmed by believers, not shunned. To not care about one's embodied life is diametrically opposed to the very meaning of belief in the incarnation. At the very most, then, Hitchens has depicted a strawman: Christians are really Gnostics in disguise. But the Church has always taught a one-to-one correspondence between the life that is lived and the life that is to come. As a case in point, N. T. Wright has argued that the earliest Christians began to care more about creation and earthly living because of their belief in the resurrection of Jesus.[44] While complete discontinuity between this lifetime and the next could lead persons to not care about improving earthly life, belief in heaven and human continuity between this life and the next enables believers to care *more* about their lives.[45] Hitchens also forgets that the Christian worldview includes hell. If there is no hell awaiting the unrepentant, then of course it wouldn't make a difference how persons behave today. But this is yet another strawman.

Having addressed some of the New Atheists' most popular arguments, let us now turn to some of the more specific reasons why believers would become violent in the name of their faith. It is important for us to furnish these explanations because it is impossible to justify every violent occurrence in the Church in detail in one article (or in any one book!). Even if the specific responses I have given in the above section are shortsighted in some respects, the following thought patterns will be able to comprehensively alert Christian apologists of the seeds that can sprout into violence in any of the various forms that it has taken without having to mention all of the details on the historical level to form an apologetic response.

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[42] Alister McGrath, *The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World*, (New York: Doubleday Publishing Company, 2006).

[43] Christopher Hitchens' debate with Alister McGrath on religious violence and Christianity is found online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=GM18VXNgvDo (Accessed online on November 5, 2007).

[44] N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2003), 582, 583. Cf. 603, 610.

[45] Keith Ward, *Is Religion Dangerous?*, 102, 103.

Guidelines for Evangelization

One of the opportunities that Christians have in light of the challenges posed by the New Atheists is to rethink their beliefs and attitudes toward non-Christians who do not share the same beliefs.[46] All Christians have a responsibility to identify and then root out those ideas and attitudes that can potentially sprout into religiously related violence before it happens. The major point of emphasis in this section is that the missionary mandate and enculturation do not cause believers to become violent, but that a reductive understanding of faith does. The problem is not whether Christians should be evangelical, but whether their philosophical views of persuasion are reductive.

Uniform Christianity

Well meaning Christians who believe that everything should be conceived in terms of black and white may unknowingly harbor bad attitudes to justify violence that is opposed to healthy forms of evangelism to begin with. I am not saying that we should renounce hard truth claims, but that certain interpretations of them need to be jettisoned. In a rigid view of truth it becomes easy for Christians to view outsiders as enemies who deserve to be punished because they think differently than believers. Says Kimball: "When particular understandings become rigidly fixed, and uncritically appropriated as absolute truths, well-meaning people can and often do paint themselves into a corner from which they must assume a defensive or even offensive posture."[47] Catholic thinking does not do away with absolutes, but allows for a variety of interpretations within an orthodox spectrum. Truth leads to a symphony of voices in unity, not stagnant uniformity.

Cultural Norms

Many times, reductive cultural norms have distorted the teachings of the Christian faith for the worse. Sexism, racism, classism, and chauvinism are perfect examples. I already mentioned that Christianity was born in world that was infected by the belief that slavery was perfectly acceptable. The same could be said about Christian patriarchy, chauvinism, and many other types of discrimination. However, none of these are commanded by the spiritual core of Christian teaching. Be that as it may, Christians have imbibed these ideologies as part of the Church's official stance at times and dimmed the Church's holiness in the face of an unbelieving world.

Faith Without Reason

When Christians limit the intellectual engagement of faith, it can make them prone to becoming violent when they try to evangelize and enculturate the Gospel. Healthy Catholic faith affects all of a person's nature, including the mind. It begins by having adequate evidence, continuing in the proper disciplining of the emotions and eventually culminating in holy conduct that cooperates with the will of God. Despite what Richard Dawkins says

[46] Merold Westphal, *Suspicion and Faith: The Religious Uses of Modern Atheism*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998).

[47] Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil*, 46. Cf. Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell*, 51, 251, 295.

when he labels faith as "blind trust, in the absence of evidence, even in the teeth of evidence,"[48] Christian faith is all about responsible thinking, personal freedom, and common sense. Faith is a rational step into the light, demanding responsible thinking; it is not a credulous leap into the dark. Reasons can be given for faith; no truth of reason will contradict the truths of faith.

Claiming to Know With Certainty What God Wants

It is a continuous goal of Christians to identify between short and long term goals in the spiritual life. The difficult thing is to identify what the ideal is and how to reach and act on it. Indeed, the life of discernment is an ongoing struggle in the life of the believer. Problems arise when certain Christians claim to know with certainty what the desired ideal is, always claiming to know what God wants, and implementing their vision for everybody. This vision can lead to manipulation. This can become dangerous because it is possible that Christians will do anything to follow the ideals, thinking that it is coming from God, even if it demands persons to become violent in order to uphold it.

Lopsided Readings of Scripture

Misinterpretation of the Bible can lead individuals to take certain passages at face value, making them believe that they should be violent toward others. As I mentioned above, when the literalist method of interpretation is used at the expense of the spiritual sense, it becomes easy for Christians to think that God wants his people to fight and kill others for the sake of ushering in his Reign.[49] In the words of Charles Kimball:

> Sacred texts provide a rich source of wisdom and guidance in the vicissitudes of life. Like all things powerful, sacred texts can be misused through a kind of sanctification of the whole and through selective reading and interpretation. Sacred texts are the most easily abused component of religion. Daily newspapers and broadcasts are filled with examples of religious and political leaders citing selected verses or phrases from the Bible…in support of policies that affect the lives of millions. Sacred texts provide an accessible and authoritative tool for promoting an agenda or cause. Shakespeare's poignant observation is apropos: 'Even the devil can cite Scripture for his purpose.' Regrettably, substantial numbers of people are susceptible to simplistic theological rhetoric based on prooftexts. Manipulative exploitation of revered texts can lead to violent zealotry.[50]

It is well known that many Christians fall prey to this Bible-based fallacy. What is needed is a balanced and multifaceted approach to the Bible that takes the genre and literary form of each text into consideration, not just the historico-literalist method alone.

[48] Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, 198. Cf. 330.
[49] Keith Ward, *Is Religion Dangerous?*, 36-38.
[50] Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil*, 53. Cf. 135.

Political Power and Holy War

Christians have often used religious rhetoric to cover up their secular and/or political purposes to engage in violence and even war. As Keith Ward rightly points out: "It is when religious institutions are blended with political institutions that religion can be enlisted in the use of force—and even then it is just one identifying marker among others."[51] The concern for wealth and power advanced the notorious Crusades in the High Middle Ages, stoking them with evangelistic overtones; thus the fundamental motivating factor in the enforcement of these battles was the hunger to increase the Church's power and wealth, not winning souls for Christ.[52] Many politicians use religious symbols to depict the battles that they are in as a holy cause. In doing so, they distort the very heart of the faith they might otherwise esteem.

Justifying Any Means to Reach an End

When certain ends are heightened at the exclusion of other ends, this can lead Christians to become violent toward those who get in the way of them from fulfilling what they perceive as special obligations. Kimball elaborates:

> In authentic, healthy religion the end and the means to that end are always connected. But it is often easy for religious people to lose sight of the ultimate goal and focus instead on one component of religion. When a key feature of religion is elevated and in effect becomes an end, some people within the religion become consumed with protecting or achieving that end. In such cases, that component of religion functions like an absolute truth claim, and zealous believers become blind in their single minded defense of it. As we will see, this corruption takes many forms, but the pattern is unmistakable. The end goal of protecting or defending a key component of religion is often used to justify any means necessary.[53]

Sometimes this reductionist mentality manifests itself in trying to defend sacred spaces, or in maintaining religious life, or a particular group identity. One example is when some of the bishops in the Catholic Church hid and shifted those priests who committed the crime of pedophilia from one parish to another. Of course, the end of trying to maintain the Church's reputation in the face of an unbelieving world trumped the other moral end of being honest.

Psychological Reductionism

Psychological debilitations make it easy to perceive one's situation as bleak. A Christian who suffers from depression, for instance, can become prone to engage in destructive behavior in the name of their faith. Instead of feeling worthwhile about themselves, their unstable feelings can make them prone to convert non-believers in ways that are clearly unacceptable.

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[51] Keith Ward, *Is Religion Dangerous?*, 79.

[52] Ibid, 68, 69.

[53] Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil*, 129.

Now at this point the New Atheists might argue that the Christian faith is precisely the reason why someone would become psychologically depressed or anxious. But there is overwhelming scientific evidence indicating a causal link between religious commitment and overall well-being.[54] Daniel Dennett, an avid atheist who works in the sciences, not only acknowledges this, but convincingly argues that one of the advantages of developing organized religion throughout the long process of human evolution was that it helped persons to live in communities without fighting and killing one another![55]

Nominal Christianity

Sometimes reductive thinking and acting is so extreme it can only be equated with unbelief. Nominal believers—those who are in the Church in body but not heart—are much more likely to become violent than those who have been truly changed by the grace of God (cf. 1 John 1:5-7).[56] Nevertheless, some critics will argue that Christians have been just as vicious as the worst unbeliever. All things being equal, these horrible actions would have been much worse if they were not truly changed to begin with. The holy alteration that takes place from unbelief to belief will undoubtedly effect changes in moral habits and passions. But the change is somewhat relative, depending on the temperament, personality, and willingness of the person.

I believe that all of these reductive ideologies can equip believers to provide a sufficient response to anyone who would trip up the missionary mandate as we near the goal of global missionary outreach. Not only do we hear these arguments from ivory tower atheists such as Dawkins, Harris, Stenger, and Hitchens, we also hear them from within the Church itself. What a shame that we would buy into the idea that we should not proselytize an unbelieving world for the sake of Christ's cause![57] Yet, as I hope to have shown, violence is not an inevitable outcome because of following the Great Commission, but an illogical outworking what it means to be an evangelist. The reductive thought patterns take on many forms: holding to a uniform conception of the Church, having a faith that bypasses the voice of conscience, using religion for political purposes or war, being hampered by psychological illness, justifying whatever means to reach a desired end, and having lopsided interpretations of the Bible.

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[54] Eugene D'Aquili and Andrew Newberg, *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 2002), 108.

[55] Daniel C. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell*, 55, 172, 179, 272-277. Cf. 179, 190.

[56] Idea taken from Keith Ward, *Is Religion Dangerous?*, 80.

[57] Listen to the words of John Paul II, *Redemptoris Missio*, N. 46: "Nowadays the call to conversion which missionaries address to non-Christians is put into question or passed over in silence. It is seen as an act of "proselytizing"; it is claimed that it is enough to help people to become more human or more faithful to their own religion, that it is enough to build communities capable of working for justice, freedom, peace and solidarity. What is overlooked is that every person has the right to hear the "Good News" of the God who reveals and gives himself in Christ, so that each one can live out in its fullness his or her proper calling. This lofty reality is expressed in the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman: "If you knew the gift of God," and in the unconscious but ardent desire of the woman: "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst" (Jn 4:10, 15)."

Conclusion

Nowhere do the New Atheists attack the Christian faith more virulently than when they insist that Christian evangelization and enculturation lead to violence. In this essay I have argued directly against their thesis by addressing some of the particular examples they typically present to their audience, but I have also refined invalid forms of evangelization and enculturation by outlining and explaining the various thought patterns and/or ideologies that can attach themselves to a particular religious mindset and lead persons down the path of violence. None of these ideologies are intrinsic to the historic Christian faith. When believers take these reductive patterns of thought into serious consideration, it can make them aware of the seeds that can later flower into acts of violence in the name of Christ and his Church. Ecumenists, who have no option but to endorse the missionary mandate in our day, must learn how to endure the self-stultifying denouncement of evangelization by the New Atheists—"Do not evangelize others because it leads to violence!" (cf. John 18:23, Acts 23:1-3). These atheists are free to gainsay that Jesus is Lord, but to say that Christian evangelism sparks violence in the world is manifestly erroneous. The issue has nothing to do with mission work; it has everything to do with *what* we should be evangelical about.

ALEXANDER CARSON (1776-1844): 'JONATHAN EDWARDS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY'

Ian Hugh Clary[1]

Horatius Bonar (1808-1889), the great minister in the Free Church of Scotland, requested that a biography not be written of him after his death. It was Bonar's conviction that a man as lowly himself should not be remembered only the Christ he served. Robert Murray M'Cheyne (1813-1843), a close friend of Bonar, shared similar sentiments when he prayed that God would make him content to minister in obscurity. While these are noble concerns, the legacies of such men have had a considerable impact on the church since their day. Their lives are models set before us to imitate and the riches of their writings are great sources of spiritual encouragement. Praise God that the memories of men like Bonar and M'Cheyne have not been clouded in the mists of time. It is incumbent upon Christian historians to continue to research the lives of great men and women who have gone before us in order to continue to mine the depths of Christian witnesses for the encouragement of the church.

One great man that seems to have drifted into obscurity, not necessarily because it was his express hope, is the Irish Baptist pastor Alexander Carson (1776-1844) of Tubbermore. Although he is unknown to many in the church today, he exerted great influence not only in his native Ireland, but also in the Christian church worldwide. He was a man who, at his death, was described by the *Orthodox Presbyterian* thusly:

> On matters of Church order, it is well known we differ from him: but, as a scholar, we honour him—as a Christian brother we embrace. In the knowledge of the philosophy of language, he is far in advance of the present age; and with respect to metaphysical acuteness and powers of reasoning, he has been called 'the Jonathan Edwards of the nineteenth century.' His character as a philosophic theologian, and a profound, original, independent thinker, stands in the very highest rank; and he is only justly designated when called one of the most philosophic reasoners of the present age.[2]

A similar statement is found in the *Christian Freeman*: "Mr. Carson's worth is not known. His pen has furnished some of the finest specimens of *critical acumen*, well applied, that are to be found in our own or in any other language."[3] And, the *Banner of Ulster* wrote: "His fame, as a divine, will chiefly rest upon the distinguished service which he rendered to the cause of Christianity, by his triumphant vindication of the plenary inspiration of Scriptures." It continues by saying that not only Ireland, but England, Scotland, America and all of Christendom has rendered "due homage" to the "genius and success with which he demonstrated."[4]

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[1] Ian Hugh Clary is a ThM candidate at Toronto Baptist Seminary.

[2] Quoted at the end of Alexander Carson, *Works* (Dublin/London/Edinburgh: William Carson/Houlston & Stoneman/Wm. Whyte, 1850), II, n.p.

[3] Quoted at the end of Carson, *Works*, II, n.p.

[4] Quoted Ibid.

The list of such publications offering their accolades to the memory of the famed Carson is long. Yet if he wielded such influence among the greater Christian community of his day, why is his name relatively unknown in our own? Were one to peruse the indices of any standard contemporary work of Baptist history, scant mention is made of him. A.C. Underwood offers half a page to Carson in his well-known, *A History of the English Baptists*.[5] R. G. Torbet's, *A History of the Baptists*, also relegates Carson to half a page, even though the historian recognizes Carson as a great scholar.[6] R. W. Oliver's magisterial work, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1771-1892*, fails to mention Carson at all.[7]

The studies of Carson that do exist are small and offer an incomplete look at his life. R. A. Boggs has a helpful booklet entitled, *Alexander Carson of Tobermore*, but because of its brevity it does not deal with Carson in any depth. For example, Boggs offers only passing mention of the Arian controversy that contributed to Carson leaving the Presbyterian Church. Robert Briggs offers more information, but writes with such admiration for his subject that virtually no criticism is to be found. Briggs also tends to highlight certain areas of Carson's theology while minimizing other, arguably more important, ones.[8]

David Kingdon, in his study of Carson's theology, offers three possible reasons for such obscurity. The first has to do with Carson being a controversial theologian. Much of what Carson wrote was occasional, seeking to address theological concerns as they arose. Some of the debates that Carson engaged in, says Kingdon, are not the same as those of today and therefore are not as relevant. The second reason also has to do with the controversial nature of Carson's writings. He often wrote in response to the works of others. Therefore, to understand Carson, a certain familiarity with what he wrote against is necessary. The third possible reason for Carson's obscurity is due to the fact that he never wrote a systematic theology. Were his thought synthesized in a logical and accessible fashion Baptists might have had a better text than the sometimes problematic work of A. H. Strong.[9]

In light of Carson's obvious weight as a theologian and the anonymity to which he has been relegated, even in Baptist histories, this article is written as a plea for greater Carson studies. It will provide a biographical sketch of Carson that incorporates references to a number of his works, however brief. Carson engaged in very important issues in his day such

[5] A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1947), 194.

[6] Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists* 3rd Edition, (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1978), 96.

[7] Robert W. Oliver, *History of the English Calvinistic Baptists 1771-1892* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2006.

[8] Robert Briggs, "Alexander Carson (1776-1844)" in *The British Particular Baptists 1638-1910* ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Springfield, Missouri: Particular Baptist Press, 2003), 151-169. Although it was interesting to read of the style of worship in Carson's church, Briggs makes no mention of Carson's debates with the Unitarians on the doctrine of the Trinity or the German Higher Critics on the inspiration of Scripture. Even in the issues discussed, not much detail is given. Who were Carson's opponents in the Ulster Synod? Who were the Roman Catholics he wrote his treatise on Transubstantiation against? Who was the Mr. Brown that Carson replied to on the issue of church government? These and many more questions remain having read Briggs.

[9] David P. Kingdon, "The Theology of Alexander Carson" *Irish Baptist Historical Society* 2 (1969-1970): 51-61.

as Unitarianism, Roman Catholicism, and Higher Criticism. His responses are as timely now as they were then and could be of much use to our contemporary theological climate.

Thankfully, *The Baptist Standard Bearer* has reprinted a number of Carson's writings and with them it is hoped that greater recognition will be given to this "Jonathan Edwards of the Baptists."[10] The question posed by G. C. Moore, Carson's early biographer is significant: "Shall bloody conquerors have their annalists, while the soldiers of Immanuel are forgotten? No! never. The names and memorials of God's people must live, when earth's empires have perished, and oblivion shall cover all their glories."[11] Alexander Carson was born in 1776 in the town of Annahone, County Tyrone. Carson's family were committed Christians with strong theological convictions. His father, William Carson, has been described as a Scottish Calvinistic Presbyterian. The young Carson's upbringing was therefore in the tradition of the Westminster Standards, a collection of Puritan faith statements that would have nourished his precocious soul from a very early age. He was taught to memorize Scripture and as a boy was able to repeat all of the Psalms from memory as well as other large sections from the Bible. Boggs comments, "In later years he considered himself a successor to Timothy and paid tribute to the influence of a saintly mother and grandmother."[12]

Not only was Carson taught to memorize the Westminster Catechisms and the Scriptures in the home, his family saw to it that their son would receive a proper education by sending him to school. Carson first attended a classical school in Tullyhogue, a place not too far from his home. While there he studied under a certain Mr. Peebles and began preparations for a future vocation in Presbyterian ministry.[13]

After graduating, Carson went to the University of Glasgow, where he studied Greek under a Professor Young. He became a master of the language, exhausting himself with long hours of study. Often when he was too tired to continue studying, the young linguist would enlist the help of his fellow students to ask him questions while he lay in bed. His knowledge of Greek served him well in the ministry, especially when he wrote a massive defense of believer's baptism that leaned heavily on the definition of the Greek verb *baptizo* and its cognates.[14]

Carson received first honours at Glasgow and was awarded both a BA and MA. The university thought so highly of him that later in life they asked him to return to teach Greek.[15] The great Free Church theologian, Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), used Carson's work on the doctrine of inspiration in classes on systematic theology at New College, Edinburgh. Carson's renown as a scholar was significant in his homeland as well. G. C.

[10] Thomas Witherow, *Three Prophets of Our Own* (Coleraine: Moyola Books, 1990) cited in Briggs, "Alexander Carson," 152. Rev. Thomas Witherow was from Magee College and delivered this work originally as lectures to a group of young men in Maghera in 1855 (Boggs, *Alexander Carson*, 11).

[11] G. C. Moore, "Memoir of Alexander Carson, LL.D." in Alexander Carson, *Baptism in its Mode and Subjects* 5th Edition (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1850), xxiii-xlvii.

[12] Robert A. Boggs, *Alexander Carson of Tobermore* (Belfast: Baptist Union of Ireland, 1969), 6.

[13] Boggs, *Alexander Carson*, 6.

[14] Alexander Carson, *Baptism In Its Mode and Subjects* (London: Houlton and Stoneman, 1844).

[15] Boggs, *Alexander Carson*, 24. Underwood, *History*, 195.

Moore makes the claim that had Carson stayed in the Irish Presbyterian Church he would have taught moral philosophy at the Royal College of Belfast.[16] Across the Atlantic many benefited from Carson's writings. So much so that Bacon College in Kentucky conferred an LL.D. on him in 1840.

After returning to Ulster from Glasgow, Carson was called to preach at the Presbyterian Church in Tubbermore (or Tobermore), a Gaelic word meaning "big well." It was December 11, 1798 and Carson was twenty-two when he accepted this charge.[17] Here at the Presbyterian Church in Tubbermore he would remain until 1804 when his ecclesiological views changed.

Around this time a young woman named Margaret Ledlie came into Carson's life. She was from Ballygoneymore in County Tyrone. Her father, George Ledlie, was a wealthy linen bleacher.[18] Alexander and Margaret married and enjoyed a long and enduring relationship. She was a perfect match for Carson and "is said to have had an education 'befitting the companion of a great scholar' and was in the fields of literature, an assisting handmaid."[19] Margaret was also a woman of strong conviction; exemplified even in the toughest of times. When George Ledlie sought to have his daughter dissuade Carson from becoming a Baptist, reminding them of the lack of financial stability that would ensue, she was not deterred. Margaret remained true to her husband's convictions not hesitating to show her strong faith in God. "Father," she replied, "God feeds the young ravens when they cry unto him; and I cannot believe, that, while we are striving to do his will, he will let the young Carsons starve."[20] Together they had thirteen children, although two sadly died in infancy. Their one son, Robert Haldane Carson, succeeded his father in the ministry and gained for himself some notoriety in Ireland.

As Carson entered the pastorate in Tubbermore, the larger denomination had begun to decline spiritually due to the influence of unorthodox ministers. In particular, many held to a form of Arianism, the early church heresy that denied the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ.[21] Witherow describes the situation:

> The Westminster Confession had fallen into disrepute; for ministers were either ordained without subscription, or permitted to append their signatures with such explanations as made subscription only a form…Vague moral essays destitute of the warm glow of gospel truth were preached for sermons! and people wore the Christian name while they were indifferent to the creed and character and spirit which

[16] Moore, "Memoir," xxv.

[17] Boggs, *Alexander Carson*, 8; Torbet, *History*, 96.

[18] Boggs, *Alexander Carson*, 9.

[19] Ibid, 10.

[20] Moore, "Memoir," xxx.

[21] For more on Arianism and other Christological controversies in the early church see Richard A. Norris, Jr., *The Christological Controversy* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Fortress Press, 1980).

> Christianity enjoins. There was ice in the pulpit—there was snow in the pew.[22]

The church in Tubbermore was itself in spiritual decline due to moral laxity in the life of the congregation. A number were involved in practices not in accord with Christian confession and had been thus enabled because the church did not regularly practice discipline. The new minister, however, seeing the low state of his church, decided to take action in the form of church discipline. But when he appealed to the Presbytery and Synod, he received no help.

The heresy in the denomination, coupled with the lack of support he received for his church, were determining factors in Carson's departure from Presbyterianism. He lists three main causes for secession in *Reasons for Leaving the Synod of Ulster*. First, Carson maintained that within Presbyterianism it was impossible to create or preserve "pure communion" in the church; second, the prevalence of Arianism with the other ministers was something Carson could not tolerate; and third, his discovery that Congregationalism was the proper ecclesiastical government.[23] Of the second reason Carson could say, "A Calvanist [*sic*] and a Socinian or Arian can with no propriety worship together. They do not address the same God."[24]

In 1804, Carson tendered his resignation with the Presbyterian Church of Ireland. This he did because he believed he had "positive and express command to separate from a corrupt church. 2 Cor. vi. 14-18."[25] When he preached his final sermon as a Presbyterian minister, he made his way outside of the church accompanied by a large contingent of his congregation who had followed after one of the deacons who, with pulpit Bible in hand, declared, "Let all who wish to follow the Bible come this way."[26]

Carson's absence from the Presbyterian Church in 1804 did not mean that he had become a Baptist yet. Still holding to paedobaptistic beliefs, Carson's major change in theology had only to do with church government. He had now become a convinced Independent. Interestingly, the Presbyterian Church did not install another minister in Tubbermore until 1810 when William Brown was ordained as pastor to a newly formed congregation.[27] This is the same Brown whom Carson would debate three years later on the issue of church government.[28]

The Presbyterian Church in Ireland had supplied the various needs of their ministers and families. The denomination owned the church building and accompanying manse that the

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[22] Witherow, "Three Prophets of Our Own" cited in Boggs, *Alexander Carson*, 11.

[23] Boggs, *Alexander Carson*, 14.

[24] Alexander Carson, "Reasons for Leaving the Synod of Ulster" in *Works* (Dublin/ London/ Edinburgh: William Carson/Houlston & Stoneman/Wm. Whyte, 1856),IV, 109.

[25] Carson, "Reasons," 115.

[26] Boggs, *Alexander Carson*, 15.

[27] Ibid, 16.

[28] Alexander Carson, "A Reply to Mr. Brown's Vindication of the Presbyterian Form of Church Government, in which the order of the Apostolical Churches is defined" in *Works* (Dublin/London/Edinburgh: William Carson/Houlston & Stoneman/Wm. Whyte, 1856), I, 127-565.

Carson's lived in; it also provided the wage he earned. Therefore, Carson's strength of conviction rendered them without church or home. The Carson family left their previous home and started a new one on the road between Tubbermore and Desertmartin. The home was aptly named "Solitude." This name was appropriate for two reasons: first, because it was remotely located among a stand of trees at the end of a long path; second, because Carson's life was marked by anything but solitude.

It is hard to know if Carson and his congregation were allowed use of their old church building.[29] Because Brown did not arrive for another six years, there is a possibility that they continued to worship there, though it is just as possible that the Ulster Synod would not have allowed it. What is known is that ten years spanned the time from Carson's resignation of Presbyterianism to the building of the Independent meetinghouse in 1814. Here he pastored for thirty years seeing the congregation grow to around five hundred members. At times, Carson preached to crowds exceeding one thousand.[30] As the ministry grew, Carson planted other churches in Draperstown and Carndaisy where many came to hear the gospel.

Surely with the desire for peace in his new home and ministry, Carson did not conceive of another massive theological upheaval.[31] Not long after becoming an Independent, Carson went through another ecclesiological change, this time over the proper mode and subject of baptism. This change occurred through the influence of two brothers in Scotland who would afterward prove to become good friends of Carson.

The Arianism that had infected the Irish churches spread like cancer to the churches in Scotland. Robert Haldane (1764-1842) and his brother James (1768-1851) returned from a distinguished career in the Royal Navy to find the Scottish church in rough waters.[32] Taking up positions of ministry, the brothers soon became convinced of believer's baptism and had a tremendous career as Baptist ministers. Their influence spread not only in their Scottish homeland but England, America and Canada. In Ireland their presence was felt through missionaries who came to spread the gospel.

One such group of missionaries attended Alexander Carson's church. Being Baptists in a paedobaptist church, it was not long before debates over their different views arose. A number in Carson's congregation were dismayed by their Scotch brethren and sought the help of their pastor in refuting them. Moore explains it in colorful terms: "The shepherd was immediately aroused! With eager grasp he clutched the shepherd's crook, determined to slay the invader."[33] Carson then began to draft an argument against the Baptists addressing them point by point. Using his skill in Greek and Hebrew as well as logic he attempted to bring

[29] There is a discrepancy between the accounts of Moore and Boggs. The former claims that they did stay within the church building while the latter says they met in fields and barns (Moore, "Memoir,"xxx; Boggs, *Alexander Carson*, 16.

[30] Boggs, *Alexander Carson*, 21.

[31] Moore, "Memoir," xxxii.

[32] For more on the Haldanes see George McGuinness, "Robert (1764-1842) and James Haldane (1768-1851)" in Michael A. G. Haykin ed., *The British Particular Baptists 1638-1910* (Springfield, Missouri: Particular Baptist Press, 2000), 218-235.

[33] Cited in Boggs, *Alexander Carson*, 18.

the full weight of both Testaments to bear on the issue. Carson believed that "I could demolish the arguments of that Baptist (Haldane) as easily as you could a fly." When the manuscript was completed he began to reread it in order to fill in any gaps in his argument. Yet, as he did so, Carson began to feel that his arguments were built on a house of sand. Going through it on a Saturday night he realized that his paedobaptistic view was unbiblical so he cast the script into the fireplace.[34] As a result, Carson became a Baptist.

Carson and the Haldane brothers, Robert in particular, maintained a long friendship. Many of Carson's works were put into print as a result of their help in Edinburgh. In fact, Boggs believes that the famous commentary on Romans written by Robert Haldane "came mainly from the pen of Haldane's Irish friend."[35] Whether this is true or not remains unknown.

Carson's ministry continued through controversy, although now not due to any significant change in his theology. He engaged with many issues of the day, in particular Roman Catholicism, Higher Criticism, and Unitarianism. At times Carson's debates against Roman Catholicism brought him close to physical harm. Briggs notes, "He lived through turbulent and dangerous times in Ireland when there was much civil unrest among the people."[36] Although Carson was a gracious opponent, his arguments against Roman Catholicism were not appreciated, in particular his treatise, *The Doctrine of Transubstantiation*.[37] Opposition became so strong that Carson would need police protection at his home. One evening the officers were late in their arrival. Having expected them sooner, Carson went out to meet voices he heard in the lane. As he approached, it dawned on him that what he heard was a group of Roman Catholics seeking his life. Dropping to the ground Carson waited for them to pass. The crowd was eventually dispersed by a gunshot, likely by the long-awaited policemen.

Not all was bad, however, as Carson's work did have its desired effect. A Roman Catholic primate in the south of Ireland, named Doyle, was converted as a result of reading Carson.[38] "It is said that, on the occasion of his (Doyle) death, few peasants went to his funeral because he had made it clear that his hope rested in Christ alone and not the Church of Rome."[39]

Carson's debates with the Unitarians thankfully did not involve violence. One of his chief protagonists was Dr. Drummond, whom Carson wrote a reply to on the doctrine of the

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[34] This is a sad point in his story; as such a document would provide precious insight into the reasons behind his change of conviction.

[35] Boggs, *Alexander Carson*, 19. For a recent reprint of this commentary see Robert Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* (Evansville, Indiana: The Sovereign Grace Book Club, 1958).

[36] Briggs, "Alexander Carson," 166.

[37] Alexander Carson, "The Doctrine of Transubstantiation," in *Works* (Dublin/London/Edinburgh: William Carson/Houlston & Stoneman/Wm. Whyte, 1850), II, 47-128.

[38] For more on Doyle see "Remarks on the late Miracle, in a letter addressed to the Rev. Dr. Doyle, Titular Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin" in *Works* (Dublin/London/Edinburgh: William Carson/Houlston & Stoneman/Wm. Whyte, 1850), II, 129-150.

[39] Briggs, "Alexander Carson," 167.

Trinity.[40] He also reviewed a debate about Unitarianism between J. S. Porter and D. Bagot that was held in Belfast on April 14, 1834.[41] In the interchange with Drummond, we see something of Carson's character. Although he was a ferocious defender of Christian orthodoxy, he refrained from resorting to *ad hominem* arguments and maintained great respect for his opponents. Take, for example, his words to Drummond at the beginning of the essay:

> Though I lament to have Dr. Drummond opposed to me, on such a subject as the Deity of Jesus Christ, I have great satisfaction in the assurance, that in discussing the arguments of your late Essay on the Doctrine of the Trinity, I shall not be teased with perverseness or stupidity. You need no assurances on this occasion, that I entertain for your character and talents the highest respect; and that I think of you with the most kindly recollections….My wish is to lay open the insufficiency of your arguments, in a way consistent with great personal respect. My object is to refute your reasonings, not to wound yourself; to expose false doctrine, not to cast reproach on the character of a friend.[42]

Would that all Christians treat their theological opponents with such an air of respect and civility while not compromising Biblical truth.

The theological atmosphere in Britain at this time, with the coming of Higher Criticism, had begun to question the nature of Biblical inspiration. Within the sphere of Carson's community a theologian named Dr. Pye Smith wrote against this foundational doctrine, to which Carson twice responded.[43] Carson wrote four other pieces on inspiration that comprise the entirety of volume three of his *Works*. Speaking of the Scriptures he could say, "I have no doubt that the most unlearned of the people, by comparing any life of Christ written by a human author with that which has been drawn by the finer of God in the Scriptures, would have the most satisfactory evidences from the style that the Bible is the Book of God."[44]

Theologically, Carson was a Calvinist who believed that God, not the sinner, was the primary mover in salvation. Addressing the role of God in salvation he wrote, "The sovereignty of God is so offensive to the proud heart of man that every expedient of artifice has been employed to banish it from the Bible. But no expedient has ever succeeded—no

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[40] Alexander Carson, "Reply to the Rev. Dr. Drummond's Essay on the Doctrine of the Trinity, in a letter to the Author" in *Works* (Dublin/London/Edinburgh: William Carson/Houlston & Stoneman/Wm. Whyte, 1850), II, 189-396.

[41] Alexander Carson, "Review of the Discussion on the Unitarian Controversy" in *Works* (Dublin/London/Edinburgh: William Carson/Houlston & Stoneman/Wm. Whyte, 1850), II, 397-456.

[42] Carson, "Reply," 190.

[43] Alexander Carson, "Theories of Inspiration by Dr. Pye Smith, Dr. Dick, and Bishop Wilson, examined and refuted, and the verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures proved" in *Works* (Dublin/ London/ Edinburgh: William Carson/Houlston & Stoneman/Wm. Whyte, 1854), III, 91-260; and Review of Dr. Pye Smith's Defence of Dr. Haffner's Preface to the Bible" in *Works*, III, 419-469.

[44] Alexander Carson, "The Style of Scripture as evidential of its Inspiration" in *Works* (Dublin/ London/ Edinburgh: William Carson/Houlston & Stoneman/Wm. Whyte, 1854), III, 29.

expedient ever will succeed. The sovereignty of Jehovah meets us in every page."[45] He also believed in the limited extent of the atonement, which placed him firmly in the Particular Baptist camp. Of the atonement he wrote, "The sacrifice of Christ was made for those only who shall eventually be saved by it."[46]

Although Carson was a Calvinist, he did not buy into the hyper-Calvinist notion that the gospel was not to be offered freely. This "evangelical Calvinism," as Kingdon calls it, was evident in his preaching and writing.[47] His great desire to see the gospel preached is apparent on a trip to London on October 12, 1842, where he gave a sermon on evangelism at Surrey Chapel. His message, later reprinted, was entitled "The Propagation of the Gospel, with Encouragement to the Vigorous Prosecution of the Work."[48] His chosen text was Luke 19:13, "Occupy till I come." In it he would say, "The duty of exertion to propagate the gospel extends to all Christians without exception."[49]

Coupled with this conviction to preach the gospel was Carson's support of missions. One of the great institutions that arose in the Particular Baptist community at this time was the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS). Founded by men like Andrew Fuller (1754-1815), John Ryland Jr. (1752-1825), and John Sutcliff (1752-1814), the BMS succeeded in sending William Carey (1761-1834) to bring the gospel to India.[50] Carson preached regularly in support of the mission, often travelling to England to do so. In fact, preaching for the mission was the last work of ministry Carson performed before his untimely death.

In August of 1844, at the request of the BMS, Carson travelled to England and Wales to preach on their behalf. His return to Ireland involved crossing the Irish Sea from Liverpool to Belfast. While at the docks in Liverpool waiting for his boat, Carson took a glance at a clock to check it against his own watch. It was late at night and not paying attention, he tripped off a ledge and plunged into the icy water. Through God's providence, a passer by witnessed the fall and helped Carson out with a ladder. Immediately seeing a doctor, it was determined that he had dislocated his shoulder. Wanting to get home to family and church, Carson stubbornly decided to cross the sea without recuperation. The sail over was bumpy, wet, and cold and as a result he arrived in Belfast with a fever and was taken to the home of Rev. Robert Wilson. It was hoped that he would recover, but on early Saturday, August 24, 1844 he passed on to glory. Carson was sixty-eight years old when he died.

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[45] Alexander Carson, "The Knowledge of Jesus the Most Excellent of the Sciences" in *Works* (Dublin/London/Edinburgh: William Carson/Houlston & Stoneman/Wm. Whyte, 1863), V, 146.

[46] Alexander Carson, "The Doctrine of the Atonement, set forth in an Address to the Public, on the Nature and Importance of the Gospel" in *Works* (London/Edinburgh: Hamilton, Adams/Wm. White, 1847), I, 125.

[47] Kingdon, "Theology of Alexander Carson," 54.

[48] Alexander Carson, "The Propagation of the Gospel, with Encouragement to the Vigorous Prosecution of the Work" in *Works* (London/Edinburgh: Hamilton, Adams/Wm. White, 1847), I, 425-454.

[49] Carson, "Propagation of the Gospel," 431.

[50] For more on these men see Michael A. G. Haykin, *One Heart and One Soul: John Sutcliff of Olney, his friends and his times* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1994).

Alexander Carson is buried in the Anglican Church yard in Dromore, near Desertmartin. The path winding to his tabletop tomb is covered with grass, and only after an effort of searching will one find his place of rest. It may be strange that a Dissenting pastor is buried in an Established grave, but the fact that the path to Carson's life and writings is concealed with the grass of age is stranger still. By the grace of God may the writings of Alexander Carson again be of benefit and encouragement to the church today as it was some two hundred years ago.

ROBERT COLES: SEEING THE SECULAR IN LIGHT OF THE SACRED

Sr. J. Sheila Galligan, IHM[1]

By any standards Robert Coles is a remarkable man. Professor of psychiatry and medical humanities at Harvard University, especially noted for his social anthropological work with children (*Children of Crisis* series, *The Spiritual Life of Children, The Moral Life of Children*), Coles' literary legacy includes numerous biographies and reviews, as well as social commentary and literary criticism. Collections of his essays appear in *Harvard Diary: Reflections on the Sacred and the Secular* and *A Robert Coles Omnibus.* His reflections have been published in the noted periodicals *America, New Oxford Review,* and the *Chronicle of Higher Education.* Manifesting an integrated eclecticism and an engaging narrative flexibility, his works provide a timely, as well as illuminating, exploration of many and various issues. In light of the contemporary call to reclaim the role of religious discourse in the public square he brings a compelling voice to the fore.

Conscious of the specific contemporary need to grapple seriously with questions of truth, Coles aims "to figure out what this life means and what matters in it"[2] There is, he notes, "much to be seen, documented, contemplated, handed over to others for their notice and reflection."[3] His essays resonate with a compelling intensity, inviting us to encounter and engage the culture, to ponder life's complexity, life's mysteries. In his reflections on the sacred and the secular, Coles brings the fruit of a sharply trained, questioning mind; a reverent sense of human potential, and the ability to pinpoint the paradoxes and perplexities of modern life.

Two specific themes provide the context for this exploration. First, I will highlight Coles' constructive criticism of the current tendency to indulge in a pseudo-psychology—or as he writes: "a popularized psychology that has become a secular obsession, if not a religion of sorts."[4] Secondly, I will explore Coles' attempts to reaffirm the centrality of reclaiming a more comprehensive appreciation of moral (character) development. Thus he consistently contends: "But the moral texture of a life is, one suspects, not going to be fully explained by an analysis of how the ego negotiates with the id and the superego. Nor is the ego or the superego, important though they be to an understanding of moral development, quite all we need to know in the face of certain dilemmas …."[5] The discipline and practice of psychology has apparently replaced the divine (religious) with a secular humanism, the moral with the therapeutic . I will, therefore, explore Coles' perception of a specific "way of seeing" in light of a Christian theological anthropology.

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[2] Robert Coles, *Harvard Diary: Reflections on the Sacred and the Secular* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 113.

[3] Coles, *A Robert Coles Omnibus* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993), xi.

[4] Coles, "Talk Shows" *New Oxford Review*, Dec 1994, 24.

[5] Coles, *The Minds Fate* (Boston: Little, brown and Company, 1995), 394.

The Theological Perspective

Contemporary theologian Walter Kasper maintains that the challenge of modern secularization lies "…in the anthropological turn. God is no longer the reference point; it is rather man who defines and determines the whole of reality." [6] Reason (working itself out in and through the sociological and psychological sciences) provides us with "reasonable" formulas, ever so logical and convenient, that permit an evasion of the divine. Yet the foundational theological appreciation of the dignity and destiny of the human is couched precisely in terms of relationship with the divine. Recall the deceptively simple question: Why did God make me? This question is crucial since the truth of the human and his or her relationship to the divine is crystallized in the answer: God made me to know Him, to love Him and to serve Him in this world and to be happy with Him in heaven forever. Reaffirming the truth that the nature and purpose of authentic humanity is revealed in Christ, Vatican II stated: "Only in the mystery of the incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light."[7] The blurring of this particular understanding in recent decades has produced a loss of context and consequent loss of clarity about the nature and purpose of the human person—an inability to understand the self in its proper autonomy. This has spawned an ethos that is saturated with false humanisms that deny a person's nature and his or her transcendent glory. God is not necessarily eliminated, but religious (theological) discourse and religion itself are put in parentheses and emphatically denied any vital role in the public square. Clouding the horizon of contemporary culture is a deliberate effort to ignore the inherent ordering of humankind to God.

Ideas, though, have concrete, tangible consequences. The jettisoning of a theological anthropology has far-reaching ramifications. A culture which has severed connections with the transcendent, with its origins in God and its end in God will not, indeed cannot, be neutral. Another "principle" will certainly fill the void. Coles' friend Walker Percy states: "I am not telling you anything new when I suggest that the Christian notion of man as a wayfarer in search of his salvation no longer informs Western culture. In its place, what most of us seem to be seeking are such familiar goals as maturity, creativity, autonomy, rewarding interpersonal relations, and so forth."[8] The human person is consequently left without purpose, without meaning, severed from the primal source of goodness, truth, and beauty—severed from the source of life, God.

A Way of Seeing

So what of Coles and his reflective essays in the midst of this cultural context? Aware that a series of factors have converged to undermine Christianity's theological anthropology and its underlying premises, Coles offers a penetrating social commentary. He sees that behind modern society's ubiquitous and seemingly benevolent focus on human dignity and freedom lies a deep-seated hostility toward the "religious"—the spiritual axis of human life. This is evident, he notes, in "the decline of religion and literature and philosophy as our

[6] Walter Kasper, "Nature, Grace and Culture: On the Meaning of Secularization" in D. Schindler, *Catholicism and Secularization in America* (Huntington, Indiana: OSV, 1990), 37.

[7] *Gaudium et Spes*, #22

[8] Walker Percy, *Signposts in a Strange Land* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1991), 208.

guiding spirits."[9] Religious convictions and a sense of the sacred have been drastically eroded by skepticism.

As a respected psychiatrist, Coles readily acknowledges and appreciates the insights of psychology and the behavioral sciences, yet cautions us. Writing for *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1961 he candidly challenged traditional psychiatry. " When the heart dies," he reflected, "we [psychiatrists] slip into wordy and doctrinaire caricatures of life. Our journals, our habits of talk become cluttered with jargon…We embrace icy reasoning." As a student many decades ago, Coles questioned Paul Tillich on the meaning of "the secular mind." He discovered that psychology in and of itself is unable to render an exhaustive account of the nature of the human person. His interest in the perceived opposition between secular and sacred continued over the years. Thus, more recently he asserted that "the issue is not the legitimacy of psychology or psychiatry; rather, the issue is the moral and cultural vacuum in our society that those disciplines have been allowed to fill."[10] The point is not to diminish the marvelous significance of contemporary efforts to explain human behavior without the help of social and psychological theory, "but rather what we in the secular world do with all that abstract thinking, all those theoretical constraints. Again and again many of us venture beyond the bounds, say, of reasonable psychological analysis and become almost absurdly reductionist, not only as clinicians but as everyday citizens."[11] Coles laments the truth of Tillich's blunt statement: "Psychiatry, today, is a faith for the faithless."[12] Coles often observes that psychoanalysis has subtly been smuggled into the thinking of many religious denominations or become a contemporary type of religion in itself. No surprise, then, to find Coles entitle an essay: "Psychology as Faith"[13]. As a seeker of enduring spiritual values he invites us to appreciate the presence of the religious arena; the presence of mystery, the power of grace.

Annoyed that discussion of current issues (ethical, political, sociological, economic) are increasingly "rendered in the slick language of a popularized psychology,"[14] Coles bemoans the "weight of psychological banality"[15] and "the secular idolatry which it has been the fate of psychology and psychiatry to become for so many of us."[16] The psychological invades our language and our discussions, creating soundbites and effectively blurring the reality of mystery, of God. Thus Coles wryly wonders about the contemporary fascination with "our prized virtue, psychological 'relevance.'"[17] The issue, of course, is not merely semantic or rhetorical. Elements of culture have a distinctive, determining effect on people's thought and behavior. The ramifications are tangible and concrete. As Christopher Lasch (an admired friend of Coles) observed: "It is a commonplace that twentieth-century psychiatry serves as a substitute for religion, promising the traditional consolations of personal mastery, spiritual

[9] Coles, "Talk Shows," 25.
[10] Ibid., 24.
[11] Coles, "The Secular Mind III: Reductionism" in *New Oxford Review*, Dec 1987, 18
[12] Coles, *Harvard Diary*, 164.
[13] Ibid., 92.
[14] Coles, "Talk Shows," 24.
[15] Coles, *A Robert Coles Omnibus*, 12.
[16] Coles, *Harvard Diary*, 92.
[17] Coles, *A Robert Coles Omnibus*, 31.

peace, and emotional security."[18] No wonder Coles is disturbed! He deplores "a general culture obsessed by psychology and all too willing to heed, if not fall in prayer before its tenets…We can 'repress' not only our sexuality and our aggressive inclinations, but our hunger for faith, for membership in a community of believers."[19] Psychology and sociology can't "cope" (isn't that how it would be phrased?) with the mystery of what theology calls grace—the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Coles is straightforward:

> As for the 'mind,' where these days so much is supposed to take place, I have seen little in what we call 'psychology' or 'psychiatry' to be of much help when it comes to figuring out who will do what, and when…We haven't even begun to understand the mystery of goodness; of loving kindness become the dominant attribute of a life; of bravery exerted on behalf of decent persons, of life itself yielded, not in despair or out of 'masochism' or 'narcissistic grandiosity,' but in simple, humble acquiescence to virtuous conviction.[20]

Coles' position centers around his assumption that there are important areas of human need and experience which are not amenable to the purely psychosomatic. His insights, and consequent concern, spring from an appreciation of the factor of transcendence: "These days so many of us look to the social sciences for a definitive truth—and any assertion about this life that doesn't pass their muster (doesn't fit into some sociologist's or psychiatrist's scheme of things) is rather quickly viewed with skepticism if not suspicion, or indeed, outright contempt. Words such as 'grace' are a relic (aren't they?) of another (pre-scientific) age, when men and women didn't understand the way the mind works, the way society comes to bear on the individual."[21] Here, Coles confronts the muddled, but nonetheless pervasive scorn for acknowledging any possible links with God and the power of his transforming grace.

Recalling the person of Ruby Bridges, the marvelous six-year-old black child whose courage in the attempts to initiate integration in New Orleans so intrigued him, Coles admits, "I fear that it was hard for me to 'see'—even as my kind, trained in psychoanalytic psychiatry, has a far easier time probing psycho-pathology than appreciating the sources of strength and vitality and resiliency in the ordinary lives of people, never mind the lives of our various heroes."[22] Indeed, God's grace works in and through us, perfects our nature, and—as St. Thomas Aquinas stated—surprises us. Grace enables one, in the Biblical perspective, to "do the truth in love" (Eph 4:15). Coles too acknowledges the "grace which suddenly befalls us, enabling us to be more than we had any right to expect, more than any psychological or sociological theorist can ever explain on the basis of traits, influences, background."[23] His comment that, "at certain times some of us experience a kind of transcendence which may well defy the reductionist, deterministic mentality of contemporary

[18] Christopher Lasch, *The Minimal Self* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1984), 208.
[19] Coles, *A Robert Coles Omnibus*, 276.
[20] Coles, *Harvard Diary*, 33-34.
[21] Ibid., 102.
[22] Ibid., 115.
[23] Ibid., 104.

social sciences"[24] suggests that the realm of "mystery" and the "religious" is worthy of attention in psychological discourse.

In an essay intriguingly titled, "Psychiatric Stations of the Cross," Coles describes a clergyman's visit with a seriously ill man. The clergyman, apparently well meaning, pursued a "relentless kind of psychological inquiry. How was the patient 'feeling'? How was he 'managing' in view of the 'stress' he had to 'confront'? Did he want to 'talk about' what was happening?"[25] The patient, recounts Coles, had a deeper desire, a deeper need. The patient desired the comfort and challenge of "God and His ways." Coles is blunt: "The priest was mesmerized by the mind and its commonplace workings—when he was supposed to be a man of The Book, alert to matters *sub specie aeternitatis*." [26] Finally, with a dash of daring Coles writes: "I wonder whether the deepest mire, the deepest waters, for many of America's clergy, not to mention us laymen, may be found in the dreary solipsistic world so many of us have learned to find so interesting: the mind's moods, the various 'stages' and 'phases' of 'human development' or of 'dying,' all dwelt upon (God save us!) as if Stations of the Cross."[27] Sadly, but significantly, this account reflects Coles' perception that the Church itself seems to have suffered pastoral bankruptcy in dealing with a specifically religious challenge. He lodges an observation of the minister, rabbi, or priest "who seems far more interested in psychology or 'pastoral counseling' than in reading the Bible and taking seriously its various messages."[28] Scholars of other disciplines, too, Coles points out, "give us 'deconstruction' and 'situation ethics' and agnostic skepticism dressed up as theology, or as an impenetrably abstract philosophy that shudders at the thought of taking a firm stand, saying no or yes to anything."[29]

Far from peripheral in its effects, this topsy-turvy thinking is a poison. It has a potentially pervasive influence. What is deceptive is ultimately destructive, or as Coles suggests: "Surely we are in danger of losing our religious faith when the chief satisfaction of our lives consists in an endless attribution of psychological nomenclature to all who happen to come our way."[30]

The effects of this ethos filter into the zigs and zags of ordinary life. Coles notes: "No one these days makes a simple mistake, or for that matter, does a simple good deed. No one can demonstrate a wonderfully spontaneous moment, or just have a bad day. No one can even get away with feeling especially pleased with life, or moody and grim about life. Around any corner someone arrives, carrying a satchel of psychological and sociological jargon…"[31] Our everyday language, he observes, is "saturated with psychological expressions."[32] In short, we have become entangled in a net of popular ideas about the self. Yet Coles boldly

[24] Ibid., 116.
[25] Ibid., 10.
[26] Ibid., 11.
[27] Ibid., 11.
[28] Ibid., 165.
[29] Coles, "Talk Shows," 24.
[30] Coles *Harvard Diary*, 165.
[31] Coles, "The Secular Mind III: Reductionism," 18.
[32] Coles, *Harvard Diary*, 93 (cf 100).

asserts: "The Christ who brought us 'not peace but a sword' had scant interest, one suspects, in our 'peace of mind' or our 'mental equilibrium.' He lived a life provocative in the extreme."[33] Christ's stunning assertions demand more than feeling good. The Good News of Jesus cannot be reduced to "nice" news.

Basically, Coles' observations are linked with the crucial question: Is relation to God "fundamental" or merely extrinsic and "accidental" to human existence? When knowledge has become disconnected from the root of Truth, it can neither inspire nor correct.

The Moral Matters

One of the more chilling aspects Coles finds in the misunderstood, inflated place of psychology as a quasi-religion is its direct link with moral relativism and a consequent inability to call forth integrity, to develop character. He is aware of the current tendency to analyze moral arguments, but to avoid evaluation of moral stances. He notices a vision, a way of seeing the world that has lost its spiritual nerve. In this climate people have little sense of the moral life, no way to claim objective right and wrong, sinfulness and sanctity, and therefore little chance of comprehending what Christianity is all about. The "resort to psychology as the arbiter of one's behavior" identifies a problem, never a sin. One can never, Coles continues, "judge (in the sense of find fault); [but only] try to understand, to make things clear."[34] He believes that this evasion is particularly pernicious and widespread. Thus, modern thought ultimately separates the exercise of human freedom from the essential and constructive relationship with the truth.

Indeed there is a place for a healthy sense of contrition, which presupposes an acknowledgement of responsibility for wrong-doing (different from an excuse!). Linguistic blindness is fashionable. Yet Coles persistently reminds us that conscience-numbing jargon produces a spiritually devastating impact. In an essay titled "On Sin" he writes of a woman who struggled with guilt and yet throughout counseling remained adamant in her belief that a moral reckoning was required. She said to Coles: "You keep trying to find the cause of my difficulty within me, but I believe there's someone else who has to be mentioned."[35] Coles waited for an explanation and admits he wondered whom she had in mind—perhaps her mother, her father, her boyfriend. Realizing that he might have difficulty with the response, "God," she expressed a need to understand her "transgression." She further clarified this very simply: "It is sin I am talking about."[36] Later Coles had to report this session to his supervisor. He was alert to the negativity his narration provoked and so offered more information on the woman's childhood—a more plausible, truly psychological approach! Coles admits, "I felt sinful afterward—not guilty; sinful because I didn't have the courage and integrity to tell my supervisor, tell myself, how helpful it had been for that patient, for me as well, to have the discussion we'd had, to think about (assisted by another person) what is right and wrong in the largest moral perspective possible."[37] The constraints of our culture

[33] Ibid., 21.
[34] Coles, "Covetousness" New Oxford Review, June 1995, 17.
[35] Coles, *Harvard Diary*, 100.
[36] Ibid., 100.
[37] Ibid., 101.

are such that the words that name sin hold precisely such a tenuous position. Coles seems to contend that there are indeed men and women who search for truth in the very midst of life's complexities, not by avoiding or denying reality, but by embracing it!

He cautions us that "we do not owe each other ultimate condescension which takes the form of a refusal to acknowledge our obligation to make moral distinctions."[38] He laments our vexing willingness, actively encouraged by agnostic intellectuals and propagated and celebrated by the incessant images of mass media, to believe that nothing is true and everything is permitted.

Again Coles provides a concrete example of encounter and engagement with the current culture. He narrates the response of students and faculty when a "morally outraged" student courageously alerted them to the pervasively present "unethical" situations in his high school chemistry class. The administration implied that something was wrong with him—for shouting out his sense that wrongdoing was taking place, day after day, in that school. He was warned about the danger of "moral bullying" for daring to demonstrate a conviction about goodness, integrity, faithfulness or certain standards of behavior. He was subjected to the tyranny of a truncated and withering secularism.

Convinced of the prevailing notion that values are neutral, merely chosen preferences, we strive neither for virtue or love, but for that empty, vacuous illusion: self-fulfillment! "God forbid," writes Coles, "that anyone should be appalled at such an attitude (the notion of value free, value neutral)—saddened and even angered at this relativistic emphasis. Perhaps such a person needs 'help'—that cool, slippery word we sometimes summon to put people in their place."[39] Pseudo-sensibility and sensitivity have replaced moral sense. Conscience is conceived as the place in which the norm is created, invented, and a wimpy tolerance prevails. Pope John Paul II recognized the crucial fault line: "The most dangerous crisis which can afflict man [is] the confusion between good and evil, which makes it impossible to build up and to preserve the moral order of individuals and communities."[40] Such are the consequences of the poison of subjectivism.

Further, Coles reminds us, there is a subtle contagion at work in the form of (mistaken) endeavors to squelch an uneasy conscience by ignoring, belittling, and denying higher values. The mistaken idea that values can change combined with the conviction that "good" depends on people's preferences is not just believed, but also lived. The psychological and pragmatic penchant tends to translate properly religious issues into mere opinions. Even when people do not, in fact, feel good about themselves; they believe they ought to feel good! Even when they feel guilty, they are convinced that it is only neurotic guilt, not a matter for *expiation*, but for *explanation*. Coles' own question is pertinent: "When ought psychological analysis give way to moral judgment?"[41] The apparently new conviction is that people can get along without God. Coles sees the radical implications. That proposal, he argues, is intellectually unconvincing, spiritually incoherent, and morally disastrous. This is

[38] Ibid., 82.
[39] Coles, "On Sin" in *New Oxford Review*, Jan-Feb 1988, 17.
[40] *Veritatis Splendor*, #93
[41] Coles, *A Robert Coles Omnibus*, 12

precisely why we need so urgently to engage in asserting the truth that undergirds human dignity.

Coles, I think, would appreciate Peter Kreeft's marvelous observation that we are "sinaholics in denial."[42] What not too long ago was deeply abhorred (promiscuity, hedonism, blurring the distinction between right and wrong) is now acceptable in light of "self-fulfillment," the supreme value that must trump all others. "How convincingly, alas," writes Coles, "psychiatric concepts lend themselves to our use and abuse—become the rationalizations and excuses we happen to find congenial."[43]

Into this emptiness the process of "character formation" (rather than "values clarification") must reassert itself. A renewed appreciation for conversion must replace accommodation. Cutting through the rhetorical smudge and blur, Coles counsels: "Children need to know what is right, what is decent and responsible—and also, what is wrong, what is harmful to themselves and others, what is not to be encouraged or allowed. Serious problems, both personal and social in nature, are not solved by repeated acts of moral surrender."[44] Note the vocabulary: *moral surrender!* This is not pious sentimentality. Virtues do not exist in some vague realm of abstraction. They exist in individual human persons and therefore in communities that protect, promote, and sustain them. Virtues require definition and development as well as reasoning.

Certainly Coles manifests an unflinching quest for truth, matched with an ability to proclaim it with conviction. Throughout his essays he aligns himself with Niebuhr who, Coles writes, "constantly asked us to step back from the influential assertions of this century—to shun the secular certainties so many of us find appealing."[45] He proposes a dialogic relationship between theology and the social and behavioral sciences. He insists: "We are seekers, pilgrims, travelers in search of a moral destination."[46] Engaged in a careful, rigorous and sustained critique of a "God free" psychology, Coles is a courageous voice in the quagmire of social commentary, asserting with the prophet Isaiah that "truth stumbles in the public square" (Is 59:14). Human life has meaning and purpose and is ultimately fulfilled in following the one who said: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." Let us welcome Coles' reflections as a bracing call to reclaim the primacy of our dignity and destiny as created by and for God and therefore the need to bring religious discourse into the public square of the psychological disciplines.

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[42] Peter Kreeft, *C S. Lewis for the Third Millennium* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), 28.
[43] *Harvard Diary*, 154.
[44] Coles, "The Legalization of Drugs" in *New Oxford Review*, Dec 1997, 18.
[45] Coles, Harvard Diary, 154.
[46] Coles, *A Robert Coles Omnibus*, xiv.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THEOSIS AND POSTMODERN THEOLOGY[1]

Stephen M. Clinton[2]

Recent discussions regarding spiritual formation have focused on the past work of Christ as the ground of our spiritual identity and power.[3] Other contributions have focused on the present work of Christ and the Holy Spirit as sources of strength and direction. This brief article adds to these foundations a specific reference to the hope of our future as a source of motivation and direction both for Christian living and ministry. Here, we go beyond the "Realized Eschatology" movement of the 1960s and 1970s,[4] and the theological truths of scripture concerning our position in Christ and our future in heaven. What does our future hope suggest for our walk now which will help equip the present two billion Christians to reach the 10 billion non-Christians in the next 50 years?[5]

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[1] This paper was originally delivered to the Evangelical Theological Society, Southeast Region.

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[3] For example: Jerry Bridges. *Transforming Grace* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991); Bill Bright. *Living Supernaturally in Christ* (Orlando: New Life, 2000); Simon Chan. *Spiritual Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998); Stephen M. Clinton and Alan Scholes. "Levels of Belief," *Journal of the Evangelical Philosophical Society* (14:2, 1991); Stephen M. Clinton. Twenty-First Century Population Factors and Leadership of Spiritual Movements. EMQ (April 2004); Craig Blaising. "Deification: An Athanasian View of Spirituality." Evangelical Theological Society Papers. Portland: Theological Research Exchange Network, 1988; Brent Curtis & John Eldridge. *The Sacred Romance* (Nashville: Nelson, 1997); James D. Greear, *Theosis and Muslim Evangelism* (Atlanta: ETS presentation, November 2002); Mel Lawrenz. *The Dynamics of Spiritual Formation* (Grand Rapids: 2000); Vladimir Lossky. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*. London: James Clark & Co., 1957; Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition from Plato to Denys* (1981, reprinted 1983); Georgios Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984); John Meyendorff and Robert Tobias. *Salvation in Christ: a Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1992); Paul Molnar. "Can We Know God Directly? Rahner's Solution from Experience," *Theological Studies* 46 (1985); Jürgen Moltmann. *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (NY: Harper, 1977); Henri Nouwen. *Reaching Out* (NY: Doubleday, 1986); Henri Nouwen. *The Life of the Beloved* (NY: Crossroad, 1992); Thomas Oden. *The Transforming Power of Grace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993); John O'Donnell. "The Mystery of Faith in the Theology of Karl Rahner," *Heythrop Journal* 25 (1984); Leo O'Donovan, ed. *A World of Grace* (Georgetown: GWU Press, 1995); Paul O'Leary. "The Holy Spirit in the Church in Orthodox Theology," *Irish Theological Quarterly* (1981); David Parker. "Evangelical Spirituality Reviewed," *Evangelical Quarterly* 63:2 (1991); Karl Rahner. *Spirit in the World* (NY: Herder and Herder, 1968); Karl Rahner. *The Practice of Faith: A Handbook of Contemporary Spirituality* (1983); Robert Rakestraw. "Becoming Like God: An Evangelical Doctrine of *Theosis*." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 40:2 (June 1997): 257–69; William Rusch, "How the Eastern Fathers Understood What the Western Church Meant by Justification," In *Justification by Faith* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985); Tim Stafford. *Knowing the Face of God* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1996); Kalistos Ware. *The Orthodox Church* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1964).

[4] As found in the realized eschatology of Cullmann, Grounds, Gruenler, Ladd, Moltmann.

[5] Stephen M. Clinton, "21st Century Population Factors and Leadership of Spiritual Movements" in *EMQ* (April, 2004).

All humans share in the quest for spirituality, truth, meaning.[6] Many people settle for what their culture or society offer them—the status quo of religiosity. Some people seek for a different or deeper interpretation of life. They may not be seeking conversion or change, but they are seeking something more satisfying and fulfilling than what they have. Some seek for more social or more personal forms of understanding human purpose. These real life quests for meaning surpass the more philosophical or speculative quests.

The speculative quests usually have more intellectual vigor; but often result in less actual conversion or growth. In the West, Modernism was interested in grounding all thought in a sure, or *certain*, foundation. Many writers focused on rationalism; some on idealism, and others on existential personal encounters with truth. The early 20th century saw process theology (Whitehead, Hartshorne); personalism (Brown, Bowen), phenomenalism (Husserl, Heidegger), and epiphenomenalism (Ayer, Russell). Other philosophies gave up the search for truth and simply sought coherent meaning as generally seen in analytic philosophy and pragmatism. By 1980, Richard Rorty and others gave up the search for meaning and simply sought interesting dialogue about certain questions. This is in keeping with the postmodern spirit which rejects any truth or meaning other than personal ascriptions of value.

For those who already have contact with true spiritual reality, that is, a life of faith and grace through Jesus Christ, the life journey is to walk deeper with Christ and to experience more of God in daily life. It is not that God is hidden, at least most of the time. It is that we need to find ways to see Him in life, to touch Him in prayer or contemplation, to experience Him in our spirit or through life experiences (e.g., Richard Foster's *Celebration of Discipline*). Dallas Willard[7] has made the point that most of us simply need to understand what the presence of God is like and how to observe what is already around us. But the heart is rarely satisfied for long with the observation of the hand of God in nature or the providential actions on our behalf. We want to know God more personally. Perhaps this is an outcome of our preoccupation with personal application in the postmodern West.

Beyond our personal external experience are the social facts that we may well experience more of God in social settings, such as worship services or group retreats, and the reality that we may minister effectively in the lives of others to help them grow closer to Christ and in the process see our own growth stimulated. Christianity finds its highest expression in this life when believers, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit, minister directly to the spirits of other people, via conviction, evangelism, communicating truth, and by worshipping together. There have been a number of efforts to quantify the steps of spiritual growth. The Engle Scale[8] proposed twelve steps or levels in coming into a relationship with Christ and is perhaps helpful. More useful in terms of growth has been the pioneering work of Eric Erickson on stages of life growth.[9]

[6] Karl Rahner, *Spirit in the World* (NY: Herder and Herder, 1968).
[7] Dallas Willard, *Hearing God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1999).
[8] James Engle, *How Can I Get Them to Listen*? (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977).
[9] E. H. Erickson, *Dimensions of a New Identity* (New York: Norton, 1978).

Most religious growth hierarchies[10] approach only the psychological aspects of faith, that is, the steps in developing a deeper psychological faith. These hierarchies do not examine the role of the Holy Spirit in helping us grow. Other authors[11] list from four to eight levels of spiritual growth for those who are already Christians. St. Paul uses two levels (milk, meat) and St. John uses three (children, men, fathers). I see no simple answer to how many levels or steps of spiritual growth one can use.

More to the point is the nature of the process of growth. The development of values, leading to spiritual formation, was begun by Krathwold[12] and Kohlberg. Krathwold's work on the affective domain is a foundation which many educators use when planning educational curricula. Counselors and disciplers use the same model to help people reach more mature character formation. Kohlberg identified six stages of moral growth and gave examples of each stage. He postulated the idea of a seventh stage of moral development in which one reaches a "unitive" stage of growth which assimilates moral and religious experience.[13] The research in this tradition of moral development continues today.[14] Again, however, no consensus is apparent.

Theosis, becoming one with God, goes beyond all these experiences. It implies that a human can somehow become one with the God of the universe, thereby incorporating and transcending reality, a kind of reverse incarnation.[15] Some people teach that this has been our human destiny, to be joint heirs with Christ has been God's plan all along.[16] Implied in this process of theosis is both a conception of reality and an investment of meaning in that conception far beyond what philosophers, who are not theologians, have ever brought under study. Other writers believe that *theosis* in 2 Peter is the same as our fellowship with God described in Matthew 5, Romans 8, the Gospel of John, and 1 John.[17]

The remainder of this paper will examine the conceptual foundations and philosophical implications of *theosis* and describe ways in which these can be held and presented in a postmodern context.

Biblical Teaching Regarding Theosis

Direct biblical teaching is minimal. The passage which actually uses this word and teaches the idea is 2 Peter 1:4 "For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent

[10] Especially J. Fowler, *Life Maps* (Waco, TX: Word, 1978); and Lawrence Kohlberg. *The Philosophy of Moral Development* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981).

[11] Leroy Eims, *The Lost Art of Disciplemaking* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1970); Stephen M. Clinton and Alan Scholes. "Levels of Belief," *Journal of the Evangelical Philosophical Society* (14:2, 1991).

[12] David Krathwold. "Taxonomy of the Affective Domain," in *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*, edited by Benjamin Bloom and David Krathwold (NY: David McKay, 1964).

[13] Lawrence Kohlberg and Clark Powers. "The Question of a Seventh Level," in *Lawrence Kohlberg's approach to moral education* (NY: Columbia Univ. Press 1989).

[14] J. Jovonen, & K. Wentzel. *Affective Motivation* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1996).

[15] Georgios Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984).

[16] Barnhouse 1965, Clinton 1987, Nouwen 1992, Pinnock 1996, Curtis. & Eldredge 1997, Mascetti 1998, Lawrenz 2000, Larsen 2001.

[17] Reicke 1964, Rahner 1968, Moltmann 1977, Richards 1987, Smith 1995, Dupre 1998.

promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust." The key phrase "partakers of the divine nature" is γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως. This is literally "becoming in fellowship with God's nature." The subjunctive aorist verb is deponent, implying something like, "so that you will become." The middle-passive sense of the deponent is that something (in Orthodox thought, the Holy Spirit) is at work to lead to this end. The word *nature* is used in Galatians (2:15; 4:8) and Ephesians (2:3) to refer to an old or new nature. The phrase "sharers in the divine nature" sounds philosophically different than the usual English translation which is "become partakers." "Become partakers" sounds like a direct participation in the divine, that is, we become incorporated into God. Sharing in (koinonia) gives us more of a sense of active participation—personal and intimate fellowship—which implies the same closeness and experience of divinity, but does not have the same metaphysical issues. The passage means that the work which has begun in us will continue until we are sharers in God's nature. This sounds parallel to Colossians 1:16-17, which says that the world was created *by* Christ and *for* Christ. If the world is created for Christ, then the whole universe is the place for the second person to be who he is and act in keeping with his nature. And we are created to be his brothers and sisters, forever. The final phrase in the 2 Peter passage says that in the process of growing spiritually we will escape the corruption of the world. These seems to be two sides of the same coin. We grow in godliness and move away from corruption. This, too, has been part of the plan since the beginning.

This reminds us of 1 John 1:3 "and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." The Greek shows the parallel use of koinonia: καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. John's point is that we already have this fellowship and we are encouraged to walk in and rejoice in it. Peter's use talks about the outcome of the process: god-like-ness in unity and fellowship, perhaps also in nature.

This point of understanding *theosis* as culminative was developed by the church Fathers. The Fathers employed a number of descriptions for final salvation, including "illumination;" "regeneration" and "purification." These all indicate a move toward a goal. One image took the preeminent place in Eastern theology—the description of *theosis*. It is commonly described as "deification" or "divinization."[18] Though *theosis* appeared as early as Ignatius of Antioch and Justin Martyr, it was more developed theologically by Irenaeus, Athanasius, and the Cappadocian fathers, especially Gregory, in the second and third centuries.[19]

Other topics and verses regarding seeing our life now from the perspective of our future are given here in list form:

- Sharing in the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).
- Transformation (Rom 12:2; 2 Cor 3:18; 5:17).
- Perfection (Mt 5:48; 2 Cor. 7:1; Eph. 4:13; Col 1:28; 2:10; 1 Jn 2:5, 4:17).

[18] See Justin Martyr *Apology* 2.13 (ANF 1:193); Irenaeus *Against Heresies* 5.17.3 (ANF 1:545) and 5.17.3 (ANF 1:545); Justin Martyr *Apology* 1.12-19 (ANF 1:166–69); 1.66 (ANF 1:185).

[19] K. E. Kirk, *The Vision of God.* Longmans, Green & Co., 1931, p. 129ff.

- Perfected in love (Jn. 17:23; Phil 3:12; Col. 3:14; Heb. 10:14; 1 Jn. 4:12, 17-18).
- God-like (Rom 8:29; 1 Cor 15:49; Eph 3:19; 1 Jn 3:2).
- All riches (Eph. 2:4-7).
- Judge angels (1 Cor. 6:3).
- United with all believers of all ages (Heb. 12:1; Rev. 21:3, 7).

Modern Commentators and Theologians

Patristic and Orthodox theologians believed *theosis* to be the primary work of salvation. In this way, much like Realized Eschatology, the end of our walk is in view from the beginning. Five considerations about *theosis* that pertain to soteriology are as follows: *theosis* explains man's soteriological need as the restoration of eternal life which began in the garden, and is our human destiny; *theosis* teaches that salvation happens through reunion with uncreated grace, that is, as a supernatural act of change in us; *theosis* explains salvation in terms of resurrection and glorification, sanctification and its doctrines are a means to the end; *theosis* makes a clear distinction between the essence and energies of God; and, *theosis* forms a basis for Christology, including incarnation, atonement, and ascended being.

In the past, many exhortations to "live life differently because of our future in heaven" have been made by preachers and writers based on general information, such as, we *will* be holy, so be holy *now*. A foundation for newer, more specific direction was initiated by Barth, expanded in the Realized Eschatology movement, and specific theological truths of scripture were developed concerning our position in Christ and our future in heaven.

One of the ways spirituality is developed is through human interaction. This aspect is the process of the mutual discipleship of the community, or the practice of body life, with or without a spiritual director. In the U.S. most recent research has been on small group interactions as part of a personal discipleship process.[20] In the Eastern context, Russian educators, especially Vygotsky (1985), have worked more than anyone on the stages of the process of social development of humans (Williams, 1989).

The most complete development is in the work of Moltmann.[21] I will simply outline his nine major points. He divides these into two groups: the church in the presence of the Spirit, and the church in the power of the Spirit. The presence of God, the Spirit, is seen in the preaching of the gospel in transforming power, in the power of baptism in the renewing process, the Lord's Supper as a show of the presence of the coming Lord, in worship as a feast and ritual in the midst of life, and in the meaningful history of each individual life, as the person lives in the power of the Spirit. The power of God is seen in the nature of the community of the church as individuals are transformed through interaction of gifts and calling and in charismatic fellowship, in the charge to the community to be the people of God in the midst of time and in the fulfillment of the Great Commission to plant churches

[20] E.g., Dieter, 1987; Richards, 1987; Clinton, 1994; George, 1997.
[21] Jürgen Moltmann. *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (NY: Harper, 1977).

and make disciples everywhere, and in the organizational fellowship and cooperation of ministries (church and parachurch) around the world.

Conclusion

In our postmodern context we need to show our disciples and the world at large both that the lived experience of a relationship with God is actual and that there is a point from which a genuine life perspective is possible, namely, *from the future*. We live in the present with the expectation of future participation in God. We have an eager anticipation and hope in the midst of pain, degradation, angst, and spiritual warfare, because we know that our future and the world's future is assured of victory. We can directly address people's hearts, their spirits, and spiritual issues in their lives because we know of the reality of the spiritual world through Christ and the resurrection. We seek total personal transformation as an ongoing process (and death to self) because that is our promised future. Every personal encounter is a divine appointment for kingdom action because God has put us here in the interim with a specific purpose. We look at all relationships from the perspective of the future judgment, called the Judgment Seat of Christ. We love people because it is our nature, because it is our duty, because we will be held accountable. Every day, nature and life tell us about God and our relationship with Him, and we can look at all life from the perspective of the resurrection and the future glory with Christ.

ALL IS NOW READY: AN EXEGESIS OF 'THE GREAT BANQUET' (Luke 14:15-24) AND 'THE MARRIAGE FEAST' (Matthew 22:1-14)

J. Lyle Story[1]

The Evangelists report how Jesus often shared meals with persons of all ranks (religious, social, economic) in society. Accordingly, he told parables relating to wedding feasts, banquets, and home gatherings, all within the context of a Middle Eastern culture where meals were meaningful ways of expressing community, hospitality, and friendship. It is not strange, therefore, to detect how a blatant disregard of a banquet invitation breeds shame causing disruption of human community. The theme of the banquet is used consistently within Judaism to express the Messianic Feast to be celebrated at the end of the age. In Jesus' actions and parables, the meal is used as a proleptic celebration of the Messianic Age. The parables need to be understood within their respective historical and literary contexts.

Luke's parable affirms that the Messianic Meal has already begun in the ministry of Jesus, as a proleptic celebration of the coming Kingdom, and is fulfilled especially in the extension of the Kingdom of God to the outcasts. Matthew's parable offers a broad salvation history of God's dealings with Israel and the Gentile world and expresses the telling issue of the transfer of the Kingdom of God from non-responsive Jews to a people producing fruit (21:43).

The Larger and Immediate Context

The historical setting for the parable that is common to Matthew and Luke differs.

Matthew. Matthew positions the parable in the highly charged context of the Passion narrative, wherein Jesus offers his people one last opportunity to repent. His authority has been challenged (21:23-27) and his Parable of the Two Sons (21:28-32) and the Wicked Tenants of the Vineyard (21:33-43) warn the religious hierarchy that a new and different people will replace them in the Kingdom of God (21:31-32, 43). It is an appalling and tragic assessment, made even more shocking by the Parable of the Wedding Feast that follows. Context and parable alike announce Jewish rejection and Gentile acceptance of the Kingdom, "The Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it" (21:43). Ironically, when the religious hierarchy perceives that the Parable of the Wicked Tenants is spoken against them in a polemical fashion (v. 45), they wish to enact the death of the beloved son (v. 46), but are unable to do so because of the crowd's reaction. The issue in Matthew is *ethnic*—one people replacing another, or at least, preceding another in the Kingdom of God (21:31, 43). Bonnard summarizes the polemical emphasis of the Matthean trilogy of parables in the context of Passion Week:

> In the Matthean corpus, our text (Parable of Wicked Tenants—writer's addition) forms an important part of the trilogy of parables...all of which we suggest revolve around the idea of the rejection of Christ by those

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> who ought to have received him, the leaders of the people. In the following narrative, the Pharisees and Sadducees align themselves against Jesus (22:15-46) and this section of the narrative results in the terrible maledictions against the Pharisees (23:1-36). The construction of the narrative appears to us to be very coherent and consciously ordered.[2]

Luke. The position of Luke's parable is very different, for his issue is *social*, the proud versus the lowly, the rich versus the poor, the important versus the marginalized (14:7-14). Overall, the context shows a compassionate Jesus at table on the Sabbath, confronting the hardness and legalism of Pharisees as he heals one afflicted with dropsy (14:1-6). The entire setting of banquets and meals (14:1-14) is quite appropriate for the parable, indeed to the general message of Luke's Gospel that directs its appeal to society's poor and oppressed (cf. 4:17-21). Luke's parable is positioned within the broader context of the "Travel Narrative" and is situated in a chapter which is linked by several paragraphs that are concerned with "eating" and proper responses at a meal.[3]

In spite of the given differences in context, along with variations in details and occasions in which the parable appears in Matthew and Luke, a clear and firm unity exists between the two versions revealing that the parable is actually one. Five features accentuate the thrust of the parable(s):

First, a subtle undercurrent of joy courses its way through the story. A dinner or supper (ἄριστον—noon meal in Mat 22:4; δεῖπνον—evening meal in Luk 14:16) that provides ample food for many guests, is normally a time of leisure and enjoyment. The host in Luke's story desires that his house be filled with guests (14:23), "the more the merrier." Moreover, the joyful occasion in Matthew has its own special feature since it marks the marriage of the king's son (22:2).

Second, the invitation is open-ended, urgent, which respects the freedom of the invitees. It was a sumptuous banquet which the king prepared, followed by the generous order to his servants, "invite as many as you find" (Mat 22:9, cf. Luk 14:16). The Kingdom of God has room for all—bad and good alike (Mat 22:10). All are invited to the celebration. But, unfortunately an invitation can be turned down. From the Sermon on the Mount we learn that the gate into the Kingdom of God is narrow and the way hard with but a few finding it (Mat 7:13-14). But, whether the kingdom is depicted as a narrow pathway or a costly banquet, the invitation is genuine and urgent—"Enter" (Mat 7:16), "Come" (Luk 14:17; Mat 22:4).

Third, the parable indicates that the supper is a present feast of celebration with the Messiah as the honored host. Matthew's introduction signals such a celebration, "The Kingdom of Heaven may be compared to a king who gave a marriage feast for his son" (Mat 22:2). Regardless of the details in the story, one cannot miss Matthew's Messianic allusion.

As for Luke, the host of the banquet is known simply as "the man", "the master", or "the householder" (14:16, 21). However, the context in Luke makes it very clear that the

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[2] Pierre Bonnard, *L' Evangile selon Saint-Matthieu*, (Neuchâtel: 'Editions Delachaux & Niestlé, 1963), 311-12.

[3] 14:1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 21, 23, 24.

feast described is far from ordinary. From an elated guest who was sitting at the table with Jesus comes the joyous outcry, "Blessed is the one who *shall eat bread in the kingdom of God*" (14:15). The enthusiast has his sights set on the promised eschatological banquet, which is to be attended by guests coming from the four points of the compass (13:29).[4] It is a banquet where those who are invited shall sit at the table with the Messiah himself, the holy prophets, and all the renowned persons of faith in Israel's history (13:28). It is indeed a future banquet the wonder of which almost defies description.

But what Jesus proceeds to share with the ecstatic guest at his side (Luk 14:16) is the incredible news that *the Messianic feast is present, here and now*, thus correcting the guest's mistaken oversight. The future tense *shall eat* (φάγεται ἄρτον)[5] is significant in that the guest is thinking about the eschatological banquet as a symbol for salvation.[6] The Pharisees and other dinner guests fail to grasp the truth, especially since they have witnessed Jesus' table fellowship with tax collectors and sinners (Luke 15:1-2). From their vantage point, there is no connection whatsoever between Jesus' shameful activity and the future feast. Of course, the parable in no way negates the concrete promise of the future Messianic banquet (Luke 13:28-29; 22:28-30). Accordingly, we are reminded again that there is an eschatological dualism—an "already" and "not yet" to the kingdom of God. The "already" is here now. Salvation and the offer of the kingdom are present realities; thus, the parable confronts the people with the need to respond to the urgent invitation: "come".

To lay stress on the urgency of the summons, both versions of the parable use the adjective "ready" (ἕτοιμος—Mat 22:4, 8; Luk 14:17—"Come all is *ready*"). Matthew underscores the truth even more by using the perfect tense, "I have prepared [my dinner]" (ἡτοίμακα), that is, "the dinner is even now on the table."[7] Every person must take seriously the *Now of Salvation*. Linnemann says, "There is a tension between the evaluation of the situation by Jesus' audience and Jesus' own understanding of it, as it is expressed in the parable…It is to come to have faith in the Gospel which invites to God's feast now and to act accordingly. The whole future depends for each man on his taking seriously this 'now' the parable shows."[8]

Fourth, the invitation meets with a mixed response. It has always been so whenever the gospel goes forth. More than any other aspect, this issue indicates that the two versions relate the same parable. The prospective guests who are invited to the dinner are persons who decline the invitation. In Luke, their response has an affected air of decorum, "please, consider me excused."[9] The translation "excused" represents a perfect passive participle, indicative of the manner in which the invited one desires the host to view him, that is, "Please remove my name from your guest list. My own affairs are absorbing all of my spare time." Other prior

[4] Also Luke 22:30.

[5] The expression "to eat bread" means to take part in the entire meal, i.e., one part signifies the whole.

[6] Luke 13:28, 29; Isa. 25:6-9. See also Isa. 18:7; 60:4-7; Psa. 96:8. The idea of the banquet theme was related to the coming of the Messiah in the intertestamental period: I Enoch 62:1-16; IQSa 2:11-22.

[7] From the verb ἑτοιμάζω, as the perfect of existing results.

[8] Eta Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus: Introduction and Exposition* (London: SPCK, 1966), 91.

[9] cf. BAGD, 161.

commitments are more important than the hunger for God's feast of grace. According to Matthew, the first persons who are invited are either indifferent or hostile. In both versions, a second invitation is issued and accepted. In Matthew, those who come are briefly described as "both bad and good" (22:10); Luke, true to his emphasis throughout his Gospel, characterizes the new guests who are summoned as "poor and maimed and blind and lame" (14:21).[10] The mixed response is expressed succinctly in the Gospel of John, "He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave the privilege of becoming children of God" (1:11-12).

Fifth, one other issue appears in Matthew's account: the man without a wedding-garment. As the king enters the banqueting hall, his eye falls on one individual who is sitting at table but not wearing a wedding garment. Did the host supply a special tunic for each guest upon arrival (cf. Gen 45:22; JDG 13:12-13)? Or, pure and simple, were guests expected to come clothed in a manner fit for the occasion? That is to say, either this one individual singled out by the king came dressed as he was, with no thought of proper attire, or he disregarded the tunic offered by the king. At any rate, he had no answer to the king's question, "How did you enter here without a wedding garment?" (22:12). The brief vignette informs us that the open-ended invitation calls for a serious response; no arrogant attitude will suffice. There can be no nonchalant response that says, "I might as well attend the dinner and see what is going on and get a free meal to boot." The speechlessness of this one guest and the serious nature of his punishment reveal in no uncertain terms that a careless superficial response to the invitation to the Kingdom of God is bound to result in tragic consequences.

One piece of the invitation demands consideration: "Compel them to come in" (Luk 14:23); the man is compelled to have his table full of guests. It is an invitation to the "low-lifes" of society. What is this imperative "compel" other than a clear indication of the all-powerful grace of God, grace that pursues the cast-offs, the "low-lifes", the hopeless and the unloved, the prostitute and the murderer. Their response to the invitation is not expressed. We are left, it seems, with the unmistakable evidence of the magnanimous grace of the king which leaves the guests at his table with awe and wonder. The imperative, "Compel them," does not include the indifferent but those who can hardly believe the invitation is genuine from their own hopeless condition.

In terms of the literary context in Matthew, the Parable of the Wedding-Feast is the third of three parables that reveal a similar three-fold *structure.*[11]

1. *An offer or agreement is made with an attendant responsibility.*

Parable of the Two Sons (21:28-32)	Command to go and work in the the vineyard.

[10] The "poor, crippled, lame and blind" ought to be the objects of dinner-invitations (14:13); they cannot pay back the favor.

[11] Crossan, 117, suggests a structure of the Servant parables as parables of reckoning, in which "they unfold along various sets of binary opposites." Lohr has written an excellent article in which the block of material (19:1-26:1) follows a Semitic chiastic style. Charles Lohr, "Oral Techniques in the Gospel of Matthew", *CBQ*, 23 (1961), 431. cf. also Louis Marin, *The Semiotics of the Passion Narrative Topics and Figures* (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1980), 52-61 for a similar treatment.

Parable of Wicked Tenants (21:33-46)	An agreement between owner and tenants to render fruit.
Parable of Wedding Feast (22:1-14)	Invitation to those who had been invited.

2. *The offer is refused or the agreement is broken by rebellion.*

Parable of the Two Sons	The first son's positive verbal response is negated by his refusal to work.
Parable of the Wicked Tenants	Refusal to honor agreement, rejection, killing of messengers and Beloved Son, stumbling over stone.
Parable of Wedding Feast	Rejection and murder of messengers, lack of wedding garment.

3. *There is judgment for the rebellious and hope for the obedient.*

Parable of the Two Sons	First son (chief priests and elders) is excluded, while the second son (prostitutes and tax-collectors) enters the kingdom.
Parable of the Wicked Tenants	The rebellious tenants are destroyed by the householder and are crushed by the stone, while the vineyard is given to new tenants who marvel at the stone.
Parable of the Wedding Feast	Destruction of the murderers, burning of their city, and destruction of the man without a wedding garment. Those who responded to the invitation are accepted into the wedding hall.

This literary structure of the trilogy of parables can be considered as a theological unit which elucidates the rejection/acceptance motif, while portraying the consequences of both responses. Moreover, these three parables must be seen within the larger framework of the crisis event of Passion Week.

Structural Analysis and Translation

Mat 22:1-14—The Wedding Feast	Luk 14:15-24—The Great Banquet
Introduction to Parable (v.1) 1 And again Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying,	*Introduction to Parable (v. 15)* 15 When one of those who sat at table with him heard this, he said to him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"
Parable: Making of Feast and Issuing of Invitations (v. 2) 2 "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son.	*Parable: Making of Feast and Issuing of Invitations (v. 16)* 16 But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet, and invited many;

Mat 22:1-14—The Wedding Feast	Luk 14:15-24—The Great Banquet
Feast Readied and Summons Through Servants (vss. 3-4) 3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the marriage feast 4 Again he sent other servants, saying, `Tell those who are invited, Behold, I have made ready my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves are killed, and everything is ready; come to the marriage feast.'	*Feast Readied and Summons Through Servants (v. 17)* 17 and at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, `Come; for all is now ready.'
Invitations are Declined (vss. 3, 5-6) 3...but they would not come. 5 But they made light of it and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them.	*Invitations are Declined (vss.18-20)* 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, `I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it; I pray you, have me excused.' 19 And another said, `I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them; I pray you, have me excused.' 20 And another said, `I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'
	Servant's Report (v. 21a) 21 So the servant came and reported this to his master. 22 And the servant said, `Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.'
Host's Angry Response (v.7) 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.	*Host's Angry Response (v. 21b)* 21b...Then the householder in anger said to his servant,
Further Summons to Others (vss. 9-10) 9 Go therefore to the thoroughfares, and invite to the marriage feast as many as you find.' 10a And those servants went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both bad and good;	*Further Summons to Others (vss 21c-23)* 21c `Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and maimed and blind and lame.' 22 And the servant said, `Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' 23a And the master said to the servant, `Go out to the highways and hedges, and compel people to come in,
Filling of House (v. 10b) 10b so the wedding hall was filled with guests.	*Filling of House (v. 23b)* 23b that my house may be filled.

Mat 22:1-14—The Wedding Feast	Luk 14:15-24—The Great Banquet
Explanation of Judgment (vss. 8, 14) 8...those invited were not worthy. 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."	*Explanation of Judgment (v. 24)* 24 For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet."'
Appended Parable (vss. 11-14) 11 "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment; 12 and he said to him, `Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. 13 Then the king said to the attendants, `Bind him hand foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.' 14 For many are called, but few are chosen."	

Interpretation

Similarities between Matthew's and Luke's parable. There are several points of similarity between the two parables. A central figure makes a grand feast and issues invitations. When the feast is ready, the host sends a servant (Mat = servants) to summon the already invited guests to the prepared dinner. Both stories contain a threefold sending (whether a servant or group of servants). The invited guests, having business elsewhere (whether an excuse or legitimate reason), decline to come. When the host learns of their refusals, he angrily sends a servant(s) to summon anyone willing to respond. In short, the refusers are replaced. The house is filled and there follows an explanation for the judgment pronounced upon the refusers.

Matthean distinctives. Matthew's host is a king who puts on a wedding feast for his son. While some of the invited guests go about their own affairs, *the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully and killed them* (v. 6). Matthew's language expresses severe violence, both by *the rest* (of the guests?) and the king. The king retaliates with anger by sending his armies to destroy the murderers and burn their city. When the wedding hall was filled with *both bad and good,* a man without a wedding garment appears who is then thrown outside into outer darkness in judgment.

A broad salvation history of God's dealings with Israel and the Gentile world meets the reader of Matthew's parable. It deals with history and the telling issue of the transfer of the Kingdom of God from *you* (the unbelieving Jews) to *a people producing fruit* (21:43). Linnemann says, "the parable in this form answers the question, 'Why has the Gospel, the invitation to the kingdom of God, passed from the Jews, the chosen people, to the Gentiles?' The answer is, 'They were not worthy of it, they have proved this by their rejection of the Gospel of salvation. It is not God's fault. Like the kind and courtly host, he has done everything that

was possible.'"[12] The parable discloses a clear polemical purpose in that the exclusion from the Kingdom of God—the destruction and the burning of the city of Jerusalem—are not the result of casual neglect, but gross violence. Just as the king's messengers have been rejected and killed, so with the prophets, John the Baptist, and the beloved son; they have been rejected and murdered. Since the old people of God have displayed nothing but rebellion, their rejection is well-deserved. Judgment has been pronounced and enacted because the invitation was refused and because the messengers were maltreated and murdered. Therefore, God turns to a new people assured of their fruitfulness (21:43).

Difficulties in Matthew's Parable. Matthew's parable contains some unusual and perplexing details. The messengers are killed for delivering an invitation. It is hard to imagine a "mailman" would be murdered for delivering a wedding invitation to a "mailbox." But this is exactly what transpires with Jesus' coming. A glaring difficulty is found in v. 7 when the king commissions a military expedition, executes vengeance, kills *the rest* and burns their cities with fire—all of which occur while *dinner is on the table.* In v. 8 we read that he said to his servants, *"The wedding is ready"*—as if nothing had happened (murdered servants, army mobilized, military operations, burning of cities). We are also unsure from the text as to the identity of *the rest* (οἱ λοιποί) who appear from nowhere.

Finally, the problem of vss. 11-14 remains, with the severe judgment for the man without a wedding garment just "pulled-off" the streets. How could he be expected to have in hand wedding attire when he has been on the streets? The section does not fit cleanly or logically with the full Parable of the Wedding Feast.

Several scholars have suggested that there was another parable, dealing with preparedness, which was affixed to the Parable of the Wedding Feast because of a wedding-feast link, as well as the problem posed by v. 10, when the banquet hall was thrown open to all guests, good and bad alike.

Mat 22:10: "And those servants went out into the streets and gathered *all* whom they found, both *bad and good*; so the wedding hall was filled with guests."

The suggested meaning of the appended parable is, "If you are invited to God's banquet, mind that you are prepared."[13] If not, the consequences will be disastrous.[14]

The all-inclusive invitation and summons of the Gospel occasions a mixed community which is expressed elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel (false charismatics [7:21-23]; Parable of

[12] Linnemann, 95.

[13] Linnemann, 97. Jeremias suggests that the garment is "a newly washed garment", i.e., "clean." Jeremias, 187.

[14] The expressions *outer darkness* and *weeping and gnashing of teeth* are used elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel: 8:12 while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth." 13:42 and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth. 13:50 and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth. 24:51 and will punish him, and put him with the hypocrites; there men will weep and gnash their teeth. Matthew 25:30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.'

the Wheat and Tares [13:24-30; 36-43], Parable of the Dragnet [13:47-50], Parable of the Sheep and Goats [25:31-46]).

While the Parable of the Wedding Feast provides a clear rationale for the judgment upon the unbelieving Jews for their rejection of the invitation and Gentile inclusion, the appended story also suggests that separation and judgment will also fall upon the new people of God. The Church itself will experience deep division, resulting in eternal consequences.

The last verse of Matthew's parable(s) is difficult: 22:14: "For many are called, but few are chosen."[15]

In vss. 11-14, many people are present in the wedding hall but only one is not chosen, that is, the man without the proper wedding garment. It is difficult to relate v. 14 with vss. 1-10 in which many guests are invited, others summoned, with some refusing and others coming—but none are chosen *per se*. In a general way the saying may fit with the whole of vss. 1-14 in that a smaller proportion of the whole actually sit down to enjoy the banquet at the end. Some excuse themselves, others mistreat then kill the messengers and finally, one man comes in without proper attire.

Matthew's parable suggests the following allegorical features: The *marriage feast for the king's son* is a Jewish figure for the Messianic age with all its blessings and joys.[16] No doubt, *the king's son is Jesus*. In the light of the trilogy of parables (21:28-22:14), the *two-fold sending* may correspond to the mission of the former and latter prophets.[17] In the *fate* of the servants, a picture of the martyrdom of God's messengers (23:29-32) can be seen; in the *military campaign* and *conflagration by* fire, the fearful *inferno* of Jerusalem in C.E. 70 can be recognized.

In his Gospel, Matthew underscores the broad sweep of salvation history, beginning with the genealogy (ch. 1) that encompasses Israel's origins and development through the kings, prophets, and leaders. That saving history continues in the Gospel in the ministries of John the Baptist, the earthly Jesus, and the heavenly Jesus who will come again (28:18-20). The parable develops an allegorical narrative of Israel's prophets and Messiah, the Fall of Jerusalem, and also looks ahead to the final judgment. At that time, God will separate the mixed community found in the inclusion of *the good and the bad*, reflected elsewhere in Matthew (the wheat and tares and the good and bad fish in Mat 13; the false charismatics in Mat 7, the sheep and the goats in Mat 25). This new people of God (21:43) comprises good and bad people, who are all on their way to judgment. A sorting will take place at the end of the age.

Lukan distinctives. Luke's host is *a certain man* who entertains with a great dinner and with compulsion fills the entire feasting room with guests. Luke's account also develops and

[15] Another such paradox is expressed in 8:12 in that the rebellious Jews are called "the sons of the Kingdom" and yet, are in a position of utter torment. K. L. Schmidt, "κλητός", TDNT, vol III, 495.

[16] See 4 Ezra 2:38-41; Rev. 19:9; Moore, *Judaism*, ii, 363ff.

[17] 21:34 When the season of fruit drew near, he sent *his servants* to the tenants, to get his fruit; 21:36 Again he sent *other servants, more than the first*; and they did the same to them.

specifies the refusals (land, oxen, recent marriage) in a polite manner.[18] For the man, there is something not right about a banquet that is not filled to the maximum. That compulsion is expressed in the movement of the servant from the town to the outskirts to the town dump and the type of guests living in these places.

Town—land, oxen, recent marriage (vss. 18-20).

⇓

Outskirts—streets and lanes of the city—poor, maimed, blind, and lame (v. 21).

⇓

Town dump—highways and hedges—[those eking out an existence] (v. 23).

Congruent with Luke's emphasis, the poor and dispossessed now are able to participate in the joy of the feast. Further, the compulsion is expressed in the imperative, *compel* (ἀνάγκασον), "*compel, force* of inner and outer compulsion with infinitive following."[19] Capon says, "The two frenzied searches...establish that the reason for dragging the refuse of humanity into the party is not pity for its plight or admiration for its lowliness but simply the fact that this idiot of a host has decided he has to have a full house. Grace, accordingly, is not depicted here as a response. Above all, it is not depicted as a fair response, or an equitable response, or a proportionate response. Rather it is shown as a crazy initiative, a radical discontinuity because God has decided, apparently, that history cannot be salvaged even by its best."[20] The compulsion to celebrate the joyous feast is well expressed in the trilogy of parables in Luke 15. While a judgment is pronounced upon the refusers, it is only expressed as a response of anger with the declaration that none who refused the invitation will taste his supper.

Luke's parable, positioned within its context, affirms that the Messianic Meal has already begun as a proleptic celebration of the coming Kingdom and is fulfilled in the extension of the Kingdom of God to the outcasts. This infusion of the outcasts is due to God's compulsive and driving purpose to have his Kingdom offered to all—reflective of the Church's missionary situation to extend the invitation beyond its comfort zone of the local town. The Eschatological Banquet[21] is not simply a future apocalyptic event, but has begun

[18] Ostensibly the invited guests have no time for the dinner since they want to inspect their purchases. "'I have bought'. But to get the sense, and to suit our own usage, we should do better to put it, 'I am in the act of buying'; for the field must in fact first be valued, and the team tested by a sample of its work, before the deal is complete." Linnemann, 89.

[19] BAGD, p. 51.

[20] Robert Farrar Capon, *The Parables of Grace*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), p. 133.

[21] Early Christianity saw in its meals an anticipation of the eschatological banquet: "You are those who have continued with me in my trials; and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luk 22:28-30). "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Cor 11:26).

in the ministry of Jesus which shatters barriers of social status and ritual law.[22] The invitation to God's Kingdom is a gracious gift which ought to be honored.

Luke's parable appears to suggest the following allegorical features. The *certain man* is God who invites people to the *banquet,* an end-time celebration of God's people. The different *excuses,* offered with various degrees of politeness, amount to the same response: "We have other and more pressing things to attend to." The rejection by the *invited guests,* and their *replacement by others*, are coupled with the purpose *that my house may be filled,* suggesting the movement of God from the narrow boundaries of some to the all-embracing call of God which reaches beyond the confines of Israel to the Gentiles and those who are dispossessed. The chain of events corresponds to Paul's affirmation, *To the Jew first, and also to the Greek* (Rom 1:16; 2:9f.). As Manson says, "The whole parable might be regarded as a *midrash* on Is. 49:6."[23] Isaiah 49 says: "It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth."

In Luke's account, the servant goes out to the poor, lame, maimed, and blind—all living on the outskirts of town. The parable emphasizes the need to fill the banquet hall, according well with Luke's emphasis on the advance of the Christian faith to the Gentiles—to the poor and dispossessed. It may well be that Luke wishes to remind the wealthy members of his audience to make benevolent use of their wealth in this life; we may glimpse ahead to the Parable of the Dishonest Manager (16:9) and the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31). The banquet parable provides a defense of the poor and dispossessed in its suggestion that the outcasts (among whom are the poor, maimed, blind, and lame) participate in the present life of the age to come. The parable reflects Luke's primary concern with practical charity and inclusion of the outcasts, with a related warning against worldly concerns that lead one to miss that which is most important. Jesus' healing ministry and table fellowship with the sick, maimed, and poor were clear and graphic ways of expressing the celebrated presence of the kingdom, anticipating the final eschatological banquet.

Implications

The Kingdom of God is not some state or civil government, condition of the world, or an ideal order, but it announces the news of a fascinating King who issues an invitation and prepares a feast for us. He urges people to respond as friendly guests to this unhoped-for invitation. Thielicke says, "In the first place we must see that it is a real 'invitation' and by no means an order to report for service. The message does not come as a 'thou shalt,' a categorical imperative. It does not come to us as a duty and a law. Rather, God addresses us

[22] Ch. 14 begins with Jesus' violation of ritual law by healing a man with dropsy on the Sabbath (14:1), and continues with His critique of positions of honor which reinforce social barriers and the need for inviting the unclean to table fellowship (vss. 7-14).

[23] H.D.A. Major, T.W. Manson, C.J. Wright, *The Mission and Message of Jesus* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1956), 422.

as a friend and host."[24] It is an invitation to a joyous celebration of life, which makes its blatant and abusive rejection all the more egregious.

There is an invitation that is refused. It is not simply a question of a "cold shoulder" but a deliberate refusal and an implicit message, communicating that other things are more important. The people go about their own business, they make fun of the invitation, and put all their everyday concerns before the wonderful call to joy. They think they have more important things to do and thus refuse the invitation to joy. God does not give us eternal life by throwing his life at us. He does not coerce anyone or manipulate us like objects but deals with us as persons. He wants to give us his love, which he cannot give unless we respond to him in like manner.

In Matthew's parable, the invited guests were not content to merely refuse the invitation, but they seized the King's messengers, treated them shamefully and killed them. This underscores the radical nature of Jesus and the Christian life where people cannot be neutral to Jesus' message. A nondecision is a negative refusal. "Here is the root of all of Israel's hostility to the prophets and here too is the root of all the fanaticism and radicalism of modern anti-Christians. One must simply get Christ and his followers out of sight because they are a permanent reproach and because they make it so obvious to us that we want our *own* life."[25]

In Luke 14, Jesus highlights the overwhelming compulsion of the host to fill his house. The parable affirms that God works on the untouchables—the losers of human society. It is not enough to simply interpret the parable as a critique of the Jewish rejection and affirmation of the Gentile inclusion. Capon says,

> Jesus proceeds straight to the losers and dead ducks who form the heart of the parable of the Great Banquet. Here are people who are having the time of their lives—free food, free drinks, free costumes, a Peter Duchin orchestrate to dance to--and all on a day when they woke up expecting nothing, if not worse. There was no way they could even imagine themselves as they are now, the social equals of the winners the host first invited. They don't drive a BMW…these people walk (some of them); they drive, if anything, shopping carts; and they don't get invited anywhere for one simple reason: they are a disgrace to polite, successful society…he is telling the parable to stand all known values on their heads: hence this bizarre story in which a well known socialite throws a party for people he found sitting in doorways drinking muscatel out of brown paper bags.[26]

The Lukan parable directs the Christian community to focus upon the outcasts. Indeed, the lesson (14:12-14), previous to the parable (14:15-24), concerning the "guest-list", directs the community to "the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind" (v. 14)—all of whom have no

[24] Helmut Thielicke, *The Waiting Father*, (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1975), 185.
[25] Ibid, 189.
[26] Capon, 133.

means of repaying the host. These very people are included in the parable (v. 21) as grateful recipients of divine grace. Thus, the community of Jesus (then and now) is to realize that the future feast has already begun, especially in the benevolent offer to society's outcasts and their acceptance of the gracious invitation.

ON CONFIRMATION

Richard H. Fitzgerald[1]

What do Christians believe about Confirmation? Who gets Confirmed? How often? By whom? Where? When? Why do such a thing? Why continue the practice? Do we confirm as an empowered minister of God or as a congregation? Do we confirm as a church body or do we recognize Confirmation to be a statement of an individual profession of faith? What discussions are happening among persons looking ahead regarding church membership and youth ministries? Does a reflection on these questions threaten denominational loyalty?

Answers to the questions raised are indicative of the diversity of understanding among congregations and denominations. Varying between different traditions are understandings of church history, tradition, sacraments, doctrine, scripture, ecclesiology (governing polity), hierarchy, grace, faith, church membership, individual conscience, and ongoing conversion (*metanoia*). Initially, I will present these differences for the benefit of confirmands, those charged with youth ministry, and all hoping to keep the church alive and meaningful. This is done trusting that an informed comparison will help foster an enlightened profession of faith. l draw freely on readily available denominational texts, manuals, and contemporary reflections. I hope to introduce the complexities of Confirmational thought and conclusions, all well meaning and rational within the tenets of denominational theology, optimistic that this will instill a curiosity for dialogue and reflection. In the second part of this essay, I offer a reflection building on scriptural and other sources with the goal of a unifying ecumenical vision for Confirmation.

We can begin a discussion of Confirmation from the perspective of historical theology from the time of Christ, moving then to the early apostolic era, parsing large statements and small nuance and drawing on the writings of the Church fathers. Such an approach sets the stage, as it were, for later diversity. A historical review relates the evolution and branching of Christian thought as a part of historical change in Protestant considerations of dogmatic theology. There are other works that have put forth such an approach. This present reflection, however, is a statement of comparative practical theology. Of necessity, it catalogues various sacramental theologies.

Modes of Confirmation

Let's first look at what happens here and now in churches in our neighborhoods. The days traditionally sought for Confirmation in the early Church calendar were all symbolically Spirit filled: the Sunday after Epiphany (the day attributed to the baptism of Christ by John), the Saturday before Easter (Easter vigil) in Eastern and Western churches, Pentecost, and All Saints' Day and its following Sunday.

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Roman Catholicism

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Confirmation is one of seven sacraments instituted by Christ which confer grace and strengthen the union between the individual soul and God. Three of the seven sacraments are said to imprint a permanent character or mark on the soul and thus may be done, or received, once in a person's life—Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders or ordination to the priesthood. Christ is believed to have instituted the sacraments to confer grace by the power of the Holy Spirit and hence they are Christ's actions using human ministry. In the Roman Catholic tradition the bishop of the area is the ordinary minister who confirms in direct succession to the Apostles, thereby ensuring an unbroken line of thought and doctrine from the beginning of Christianity. The Confirmation recipient receives and is marked permanently by the Holy Spirit to be better able to resist sin and defend the tenets of the Faith. The metaphorical term "soldier of Christ" is used. A specially blessed and compounded oil called "chrism," the laying on of the bishop's hands, and a light tap or slap signifying the trials of life are essentials of the ceremony. In some Roman Catholic traditions, mindful of the good Christian example of the life of a saint, it is custom to adopt the name of a saint in the anticipation that reflecting on the saint's life throughout one's own life will be a source of inspiration. The "taking of a saint's name" has no legal status and comes from a time when persons with regional, tribal, or what would have been considered pagan names were becoming Christian (an example of a Church-given name is General Tecumseh Sherman who was given the Christian name William.) Together, Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist constitute the sacraments of initiation in the Roman Catholic tradition. Baptism is the beginning of new life. Confirmation is its strengthening. The Eucharist nourishes the individual for his transformation in Christ.

The Roman Catholic understanding is that Confirmation is necessary for the more abundant effusion of grace and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Much has been said about this, and it can be confusing. Baptism is necessary for salvation; Confirmation is necessary not for salvation, but for grace to abide in a complex adult world as a Christian. Baptismal grace is a grace of free, unmerited election and does not need ratification to become effective in a person's salvation. Confirmation is a renewal of baptismal promises and a profession of faith at which time a separate spiritual, indelible grace, a character or mark, an infusion of virtues is imparted. Prior to Confirmation in the contemporary American Catholic Church, is a period of instruction (catechesis). It is intended that there be a maturation and a growing ability to reason about what is contrary to a Christian life or God's law. Penance and sponsorship by an adult church member are also required. Nowadays, the sacraments of reconciliation (Penance) and Eucharist are conferred at the so-called "age of discretion," typically age seven. The sacrament of Confirmation more often occurs at a time when a beginning of wisdom and discernment of subtlety is hoped for, typically age 12. It is done once during a person's life. In keeping with the sacramental theology of the Roman Catholic Church, there are those liturgists who would introduce Confirmation earlier, that is, prior to first reception of the Eucharist. There are some educators convinced that mid-adolescence begins the time to consider Confirmation. If one converts to Catholicism and has been Confirmed in a tradition that does not hold the sacramental nature of Confirmation, the person may be Confirmed using the Roman liturgy to ensure the validity of the sacrament.

When it happens that an adult is baptized into the Roman Catholic tradition, they may immediately receive Confirmation by a priest and participate in the Eucharist. In some jurisdictions, the priest must receive permission from the bishop. In some, he must inform the bishop. And in others, it is the discretion of the baptizing priest. Any Roman Catholic priest charged with the care of souls can have the faculty or authority to perform Confirmation conferred by the bishop.

Eastern Orthodoxy

The Eastern Orthodox traditions consider Confirmation, called "Chrismation," a necessary part of full Church membership and necessary for salvation. Adhering to a strict interpretation of John 3:5, "Except man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God," Confirmation and Baptism are administered in infancy or at conversion and entrance as a Church member. If one converts and has been baptized in the Trinitarian formula, Chrismation is done for admittance to the church. Chrismation is not repeated. Chrism (called "myron," pronounced meh-ron), that is, to blessed by the bishop is a necessary element. Confirmation is considered to be a sacrament and ordinarily is administered by a priest not requiring the involvement of the bishop other than by the use of blessed Myron. In some traditions a tonsure hair cutting is done to signify the confirmand's subservience to God's power. A saint's name is not customarily adopted.

Anglicanism

The Anglican tradition articulates in article 25 of the 39 Articles that Confirmation is not to be counted for as a sacrament of the gospel. The Book of Common Prayer states that, "Confirmation is not a sacrament begun by Christ but a sacramental rite which evolved in the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and is not necessary for all persons in the same way the great sacraments of Baptism and Holy Eucharist are." (Sacramentals are objects or actions which the Church uses, in imitation of the sacraments, to obtain favors, especially ones through intercession.) Confirmation is the rite in which we express a mature commitment to Christ, and receive strength from the Holy Spirit through prayer by the laying on of hands by a bishop. To be confirmed one must be baptized, be sufficiently instructed in the Christian faith, be penitent for one's sins, and be ready to affirm a confession of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It is to have no visible sign or ceremony ordained by God. There is, however, a minority tradition among Anglo-Catholics who declare in the Anglican Service Book that, "Confirmation is a necessary sacrament wherein the bishop, a direct descendant of Christ's apostles, bestows the empowering gifts of the Holy Spirit for a life of ministry, as Christ's servant." In the Episcopal Church, Confirmation is done once in a person's life. When a convert to Anglicanism has been Confirmed in a tradition that does not hold the necessity of a bishop and apostolic succession, Confirmation may be done using the Anglican liturgy to ensure its validity. Chrism is not an element of the ceremony. Laying on of the bishop's hand is essential. Adult sponsorship of the confirmand before the bishop is normative. The adoption of a saint's name is not done.

The Anglican Service Book says, "Perhaps the most fruitful way to understand …Confirmation is to see it in connection with our appreciation of the ministry of the laity. Confirmation confers the particular gifts of the Holy Spirit to the lay person; to enable and

equip him for the fullness of his particular ministry as an adult lay member of Christ's…church….In confirmation the layman receives that which he needs to fulfill his ministry. This does not, of course, imply that baptism is in any way incomplete in the incorporation of the Christian into Christ. Rather, it takes seriously, in a spiritual and sacramental way, the ministry to which all are called." The candidate for Confirmation is presented to the Bishop who asks the confirmand if she reaffirms her renunciation of evil and if she renews her commitment to Jesus Christ. The congregation and confirmands then renew their baptismal covenant by responding affirmatively to the articles of the Apostles' Creed. Then the bishop asks, "Wilt though continue in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers? Wilt thou persevere in resisting evil, and whenever thou dost fall into sin, repent and return unto the Lord? Wilt thou proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ? Wilt thou seek and serve Christ in all men, loving thy neighbor as thyself? Wilt thou strive for justice and peace among all men, and respect the dignity of every person?" To these questions the confirmand responds, "I will with God's help." The ceremony continues. The bishop and sponsors lay hands of the confirmand and the bishop invokes, "Almighty God, we thank thee that by the death and resurrection of thy Son Jesus Christ thou hast overcome sin and brought us to thyself, and that by the sealing of the Holy Spirit thou hast bound us to thy service. Renew in this thy servant the covenant thou didst make with her at her Baptism. Send her forth in the power of the Spirit to perform the service thou hast settest before her…Strengthen, O Lord, your servant with your Holy Spirit; empower her for your service; and sustain her all the days of her life. Amen."

Lutheranism

The Lutheran tradition is based on a theology of salvation by faith alone. Based on that starting point and a sense of clear scriptural inauguration, Confirmation is concluded to have developed as an historical aside in the Church and not instituted by Christ. The Episcopal and sacramental aspects of Confirmation are rejected. No bishop is involved. No anointing occurs and no special gift of grace is thought to be instilled. Luther concluded it was a time for learning the catechism. The Confession of Augsburg stated that Confirmation was instituted by the church and "has not the promise of the grace of God." Melanchthon taught Confirmation to be a vain ceremony of adolescence which could be overseen by any pastor, in which the confirmand gives an account of their faith before the church. Luther's theology in the Lutheran confessions began with the law, moved to the gospel, then to prayer, sacraments, and the creed. That is to say, he taught a concept of the Gospel as a promise of forgiveness of sins for the sake of Christ, by grace, through faith. All of that is based on God's mercy in the death and resurrection of Christ. This, he felt was in tension with a penitential theology of rebuke and condemnation earned by our own sins before the commandments and God's law. For Lutherans Confirmation has become not an occasion, but a process, a "ministry." It is considered an honest effort by the congregation to give the confirmand a chance to understand the faith most were baptized into as infants. It is an attempt at individualization and identity formation by means of a personal faith statement. The components of catechism, creedal analysis in the form of questions and congregational ministry, result in a personal faith statement before the congregation. As such, it draws on the Lutheran theme of lifelong return to baptism. This has resulted in a Lutheran definition:

"Confirmation ministry is a pastoral and educational ministry of the church which helps the baptized child through word and sacrament to identify more deeply with the Christian community and participate more fully in its mission." The confirmand renews their profession of faith made by his godparents at baptism. It is done once in a person's life. A recent Lutheran review found in the United States that 50% are confirmed in the eighth grade, 31% in the ninth. There is a trend and emphasis on process and making that process longer such that the commitment would be made later, perhaps in college age years. It is God's grace that calls and the congregation that prepares the confirmand. The minister lays on hands and asks God to stir up the gift of the Spirit, already received in baptism, and confirm the confirmand's faith.

Reformed/Presbyterianism

The Reformed, Presbyterian Church tradition as reflected in the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) Book of Confessions holds confirmation to be "a human invention which the Church can dispense with without loss." The Second Helvetic Confessions states, "we do not have [Confirmation] in our churches. For [it] contains some things of which we can by no means approve." However, the Presbyterian Book of Common Worship does provide for Confirmation and many churches and presbyteries include it as an important part of childhood to adolescent growth in the faith. The liturgy for Confirmation first acknowledges that the infant baptized does not make a commitment of faith; rather, the parents and congregation do. Then, as stated in the Presbyterian tradition, "in Baptism a person is sealed by the Holy Spirit and given identity as a member of the church and is welcomed to the lord's table, and set apart for Christian service. These aspects of Baptism are given further expression in worship through welcoming the baptized to the Lord's table [and] …Confirming…ordinarily observed in the service for the Lord's day in responding to the Word." The preparatory process of Confirmation provides for the session of elders to interrogate the confirmand, usually in the eighth or ninth grade, on matters of church governance, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the Apostles Creed. Later, during a Sunday service, the elders, minister, and those in the congregation involved in a preceding period of instruction and mentoring lay on hands and recognize or Confirm the confirmand's affirmation of faith. It is done once only in a person's life.

Methodism

The United Methodist Church considers Confirmation a rite of passage into adulthood. In keeping with John Wesley's main doctrines of repentance, faith, holiness, belief that Christians are made, not born, and the thought that we don't teach all that is truth, rather, we teach the Creed of the church and invite youth to affirm it, the goal of the Methodist process of Confirmation is to allow the confirmand to claim the name *Christian*. It is part of a process that begins with Baptism and is lived out in the nurture of the family and congregation. It is, then, both a preparation and a rite which hopefully will help name the powers from which the confirmand will turn and the evil they will oppose. After a period of instruction and personal affirmation, the minister lays on hands and invokes the Holy Spirit, but as an agent or facilitator. The Holy Spirit actually confirms what had already been done in baptism. Parents and mentors, likewise, lay on hands during the service conducted publicly in the church in a stated hour of worship. All who will be Confirmed as members of

Christ's Holy Church shall have been Baptized and instructed in the doctrines and duties of the Christian faith. In the Methodist tradition, Confirmation is an affirmation of where an individual is at that time in her life. As such, recognizing that maturity in faith is an ongoing process influenced by life events, Confirmation may happen more than once in a lifetime. It occurs for the first time at an "age of accountability," usually the eighth grade. The order for Confirmation begins with the minister saying, "Dearly beloved, the Church is of God, and will be preserved to the end of time, for the conduct of worship and due administration of his Word and Sacraments, the maintenance of Christian fellowship and discipline, the edification of believers, and the conversion of the world. All, of every age and station, stand in need of the means of grace which it alone supplies. These persons who are to be Confirmed have received the sacrament of Baptism, have also been instructed in the teachings of the Church, and are now ready to profess publicly the Faith into which they were Baptized." Then, addressing the confirmands, four questions are asked: "Do you here, in the presence of God, and of this congregation, renew the solemn promise and vow that you made, or that was made in your name, at your Baptism? Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and savior and pledge your allegiance to his kingdom? Do you receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments? Do you promise according to the grace given to you to live a Christian life and always remain a faithful member of Christ's holy Church?" All four questions are answered by the confirmands who then kneel and the minister continues while laying on hands: "May the Lord defend you with his heavenly grace and by his Spirit Confirm you in the faith and fellowship of all true disciples of Jesus Christ. Amen."

United Church of Christ

The United Church of Christ considers Confirmation an active process, at the same time catechetical and a time of faith exploration, wherein the confirmand is expected to attempt to understand their faith and affirm their Baptism. The core of the catechesis consists of the Ten Commandments, Psalms, beatitudes, Lord's Prayer, Apostles Creed, parables, and church symbols.

Baptist/Nondenominational/Evangelicalism

The Evangelical nondenominational, Holiness, Pentecostal, and Baptist Churches and those with similar theology of the Anabaptist tradition hold that adult Baptism, by immersion, after reflection and acceptance of Jesus as the Christ is necessary and absolute for salvation and Church membership. No one speaks for the baptized individual and it is the prevenient, freely given grace of God that moves the individual to come forward to be baptized. (Prevenient grace is divine grace said to operate on the human will antecedent to one's turning to God.) The congregation through the minister calls forward the believer and welcomes all thus moved by grace. The Baptism is adult, a profession of faith and all that is necessary to be received and to receive salvation.

There, then, is a brief description of the current major denominational practices of Confirmation. The question, of course, remains: Can we find a commonality regarding Confirmation in a postmodern, post-Christian society? It is of note that all denominations continue in some form the practice the laying on of hands.

Reflection

There is a sentiment which considers Confirmation a "rite of passage," a statement of entering adolescence, rather than something integral to spiritual growth and development. One of the most recognized "rites of passage" among adolescents in American society is the Jewish Bar Mitzvah. Is it akin to Confirmation? The term "bar mitzvah" means "son of the commandment." Under Jewish tradition, a boy at age 13 becomes responsible for his actions under the commandments and capable of entering into binding contracts. He can function as an adult in the synagogue as regards the number of persons required to undertake parts of certain services. It is the age when personal responsibility is expected. It is the age for fulfillment of the commandments. Such a statement of maturity seems out of proportion to the concept of Confirmation as practiced and, therefore, whatever similarities exist are superficial and age related only.

There is an alternative regard for Confirmation based on the idea that the role of the contemporary Church should be to concentrate on efforts to teach children decency and pluralism and avoid an analysis of doctrine. Associated with this is the conviction that adults will seek out what they need regarding doctrine and history. At first blush that sounds reasonable and even admirable if one considers the age and maturity of most confirmands. The slippery slope, however, is a "Golden Rule" and contrived utopian Christian value system offered as surrogates for catechesis and discussion of virtue, church history, and doctrine. This is important because recent analyses conclude Confirmation for the majority of children to be the last serious contact with religious study for many years.

Relative to pluralism, there is an expectation that children will welcome concepts of non-Christian faiths. But pluralism seems to end with political correctness. Unscientific polling preparatory to this article revealed surprisingly few to be familiar with Christian denominational differences as elementary as numbering of the Ten Commandments. Roman Catholic and Lutheran traditions use one system while others use a different system of enumeration. Both are identical in their sources and wording but differ in numbering. The Roman Catholic and Lutheran systems attribute three commandments as referencing one's relationship to God, seven to others. The Protestant system attributes four to God, six to interpersonal activities.

The embarrassment felt while worshipping beside or with other denominations at the time of the Lord's Prayer can be softened by an awareness of no less than three widely prayed versions. The number of books in the Canon, the use or disuse of the Apocrypha, and the many scriptural translations can be a source of intimidation when unexpected in worship. If one goal of pluralism—here call it ecumenism—is respect for different liturgies, unless one is aware of differences in substance, cadence, and style, it is easy to become a spectator rather than a participant. Should these differences be presented? An appreciation for the universal Church should acknowledge that scripture and creeds still hold Christians in a common faith but also recognize great and small matters divide denominations and churches. I don't think that hearing these differences will drive a confirmand from their denomination. Rather, I conclude it would arouse a deeper respect. Recent surveys underscore that the overwhelming majority (more than 90%) of Americans who claim to be "religious" in one way or another, are "undogmatic," "flexible," or "non-exclusive" in their

beliefs. How, then, does that development influence Confirmation instruction? As adult congregants move from one denomination to another and bring their own childhood theology to bear, what happens?

Christian instruction for many distills down to the "Golden Rule" of "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The concepts of vice or virtue or sin are avoided. I am leary of such a theological reduction as the sole emphasis for youth just beginning to weigh the complexity of adult dynamics. Acknowledging the contributions of "natural law," Christianity is a religion of mystery—of non-empirical aspects of faith. Can a mature appreciation of God, so much a goal of the Reformation, be attained without a deeper reflection than "God loves me, therefore, I am saved"? While that may be a proper mindset to reach as a conclusion after adult reflection, it should not be the entirety of one's theological depth. A Golden Rule theology is not sufficient, not enough for catechesis. A posture of tolerance towards others' behavior as long as no one is harmed presents no defense of virtue and the actualization of human potential. No condemnation of vice—no definition of vice—is allowed or expected. Morality as a concept is irrelevant. The post-Christian sentiment that one religion is as good or as bad as another—that one is the same as another—is religious indifference not religious generosity. Allowing the criticism that a totally penitential approach to God's grace led to Church abuses which encouraged and fostered the Reformation, should we then embrace a theology that avoids personal remorse, wherein any and all sin is forgiven without contrition because of Easter and Good Friday? I have spoken with youngsters and elders alike who do in fact believe that *universal* salvation is and must be God's only plan. The Calvinist theology of total depravity has evolved to a single predestination of universal salvation. With that assured, each person has the responsibility, it follows, to seize the day and follow one's own path to happiness. Doctrine becomes an accessory. Church participation becomes optional. With no right dogma, can one expect a right confession and subsequent right behavior? Shared beliefs allow for shared burdens of responsibility and shared obligations in society. We as humans bestow "sacredness" to the cherished and familiar, to things central to our sense of purpose. Sound dogma and a sense of the sacred instill a sense of belonging and welcome participation in a Church. The "Golden Rule" enjoining an individual perspective of appropriate behavior can only lead to the conclusion that faith is by no means a set of beliefs, but rather is a way of life marked by trust in a (possible) Supreme Being and affirmation of the goodness of all being. This is both a thoroughly existential statement and lacks consideration of Christian concern for salvation and redemption.

An alternative to a "Golden Rule" theology is a concentration on the mission of the universal Church. Often referred to as "Missional theology," if it becomes the core of Confirmation instruction, is counterproductive. Some respect for the biblical mission of the Church is a part of every denomination's core beliefs. Certainly, every generation has had people who rose up proclaiming that the church lost its way just after Jesus' death. The forgotten and unadulterated good news they proclaim await a return to a missional Church. This is by no means a new concern. The first century letter of James admonishes, "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace" (3:17-18). This is quoted in contemporary sermons

as: "You can develop a healthy robust community that lives right with God and enjoys its results only if you do the hard work of getting along with each other, treating each other with dignity and honor." Granted, the lack of outreach to the less fortunate, church facility expansion as an end in itself, or coddling those already comfortable and established in a church can be provincial and stifling. Had there been no Reformation and fragmenting of the Christian church into many parts, a concentration on the work of mission would still be at the core of distilled doctrine and no less a part of what must be transmitted to future generations. Return to a more basic relationship with the Divine was the goal of Catholic and Protestant reformers. Is it probable a return to a primitive "missional" church would obviate dissention or denominations?

The question is asked whether the Church can be reunited without divine intervention. One solution suggested is a groundswell of Christian living from within the rank and file. That is an interdenominational affirmation of what is truly important. Can we assert the pre-Nicene Church to be less contentious than our present state of Christian concerns of theology and policy? A revisionist longing for a pre-Constantinian utopian Christian ethic without consideration of two millennia of dissent, discussion, and denominational dogma is a restatement of an earlier hubris of "enlightenment" and requires neither Christ nor any religion. Rather, it is a religion of its very own, a new Gnosticism of sorts. Christianity is more than a philosophy; it is the revealed expression of what we believe to be a pattern of life—a pathway to eternal life. Unlike a non-doctrinal "Golden Rule" lifestyle approach, however, a "missional church" philosophy does allow for consideration of not one, but two great commandments. In addition to doing unto others as you would have them do unto you, the Missional Church would also include loving the Lord God with all you possess.

Where has the fear of God gone? Should each and every one of us "work out our salvation in fear and trembling"? (Phil 2:12). Or, is it a done deal? Is the fear of God the beginning of wisdom and humility? (Prov 1:7). Or is it an outmoded method of control? Should confirmands hear that doubt is a part of faith that can and should lead to reflection and growth? Should they digest and begin to understand that a statement of penance without contrition or remorse is vain, that unconditional love does not mean unconditional approval of every whim and activity by either their parents or God?

I do remember we are talking about Confirmation and what a person at the usual age of Confirmation is capable of processing. We are also reflecting on what the Church wants for its confirmands. Of course, the younger the child, the more simple need be the theology. "Quid quid recipitur ad modem recipientis recipitur." But, the time should come when pap no longer suffices and solid theological discussion is embraced (1 Cor 3:2).

When all is said and done, does anything unite the efforts of so many individuals, youth ministers, parents, churches, and denominations? After untold hours of preparation and car pooling, other than checking off the calendar that Confirmation has occurred, on what can and should a young person hope to look back and say was accomplished? What has really happened? For what did Christ promise the coming of the Spirit? (Jn 14:16-17). For what did the apostles Peter and James go to Samaria? (Acts 8:14-17). For what reason did the early Church insist on Confirmation as different from Baptism? However it has morphed, whether instituted by Christ in fact or in a promise, begun by the Apostles under the

guidance and inspiration of the Spirit, or a rite begun by the early Church to honor a tradition; whether considered a sacrament, sacramental rite, profession or affirmation; whether administered, bestowed, or chosen; whether involving a single indelible mark upon the soul or a lifelong process of learning and reflecting; whether by bishop, minister, session, or self proclamation; whether as an infant, age seven, 12, 15, 18 or older; whether catechetical or professional; whether possible once only or more than once, Confirmation is a part of our Christian tradition.

Childhood temptations are still wrapped in innocence. The commandments against murder and adultery, against coveting something so much that any consequence or duplicity is all right are really beyond the grasp of the young. Truly devious behavior, behavior that most would consider evil, is unimaginable to most children. Add to that the concept of being held accountable for one's actions and we begin to set the arena in which the grace of Confirmation acts. We ask to be led from temptation beyond our capability to resist with each recitation of the Lord's Prayer. We acknowledge that "evil" in whatever fashion exists, be it an "Evil One" or societal influences of indifference or amoral pluralism. As humans we move toward that which we perceive as having value. We gravitate to what is perceived as a "good." That motivation mandates that "value" be defined. The higher the value assigned the greater the human desire. We strive for justice, constructive acceptance, and pluralism grounded in the gospel of tolerance without compromise of our own core values. To begin to grapple with suffering and loss, with sacrifice and commitment, with other-centered love, these are adult challenges. For all of us, the strength to live proclaiming Christian values is difficult. Moral challenge is an unmistakable part of contemporary life. When challenged, we are instructed by Christ, "Do not worry about what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" (Mt10:19-20). If we allow that temptation exists and we are moved by God's prevenient or efficacious grace, it is only as one begins to develop wisdom that the words of the Psalmist begin to make sense: "Who can ascend the mountain of the Lord? Or who can stand in his holy place? One who is sinless, whose heart is clean, who desires not what is vain" (Ps 24:34). "Happy indeed is the man who follows not the advice of the wicked nor lingers in the way of sinners, nor sits in the company of the insolent, but whose delight is the law of the Lord and who ponders His law day and night" (Ps 1:1-2). "Lord who shall be admitted to Your holy tent and dwell on Your holy mountain? He who walks without fault. He who acts with justice and speaks the truth from his heart. He who does not slander with his tongue. He who does no wrong to his brother, who casts no slur on his neighbor, who holds the Godless in disdain, but knows those who fear the Lord. He who keeps his pledge come what may, which takes no interest on a loan and accepts no bribes against the innocent. Such a man will stand firm forever" (Ps 15:1-5).

Denominational liturgies proclaim the coming of the Spirit at Confirmation. The 1966 Methodist hymnal has one hymn of Confirmation and commissioning. "Come, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost" was written by Charles Wesley. It is a petition that "sacred discipline" manifest as a mixing of knowledge and vital piety, and that learning and holiness be upon those to be Confirmed. It is a prayer that ignorant error be replaced by wisdom of divine truth. The Presbyterian (PCUSA) hymnal of 1990 has one Confirmation hymn. "Holy Spirit, Lord of Love" reminds us of the Spirit's descent and presence since baptism and petitions

the Spirit to bestow the light to see truth and daily power to conquer sin. The Episcopal Church hymnal of 1982 has two hymns of Confirmation. In 348 is sung, "May we increasingly glory in learning all that it means to accept you as Lord…So in the world where each day assigned us gives us the chance to create or destroy, help us to make those decisions that bind us, Lord, to yourself in obedience and joy." Hymn 349 reminds us, "when the sacred vow is made, when the hands are on them laid, come in this most solemn hour with your strengthening gift of power. Give them light, your truth to see, give them life, your own to be; daily power to conquer sin; patient faith the crown to win."

Paul instructed Timothy (and us), "I remind you to stir into flames the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self control. So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord…but bear your share of hardship for the Gospel with strength that comes from God" (2 Tim 1:6-8). It is this "standing firm," this commitment to do what is right by the love, grace, and protection of the Holy Spirit, that ties concepts of Confirmation together. It is the understanding that small daily choices result from a deeper sense of direction. It is the grace to be resilient and not maladaptive in coping with temptation and adverse life events. It is in coping with troubles that true spiritual growth occurs. Out of the pain and loss in life can change, transformation, and maturity occur. Spiritual maturity is the goal of the virtuous. It is the basis of the Golden Rule. It is the core mission of the Church. And, it is the reason for the special consideration given to Confirmation. The grace of God, howsoever it is considered, is with and on and in the Church and her confirmands during and after Confirmation. The grace to be principled, to resist temptations, and to live out to the best of one's ability the Christian mission is the gift of Confirmation. It is the grace to cope with adversity always mindful of transcendent principles. It is a life passage, preparation for adult lay ministry, and, by God's grace, the beginning of wisdom.

THE 'RUINOUS' WORK OF THE SPIRIT[1]

Jack Van Marion[2]

> *They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out,* "*What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!*" "*Be quiet!*" *said Jesus sternly.* "*Come out of him!*" *The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. The people were all so amazed that they asked each other,* "*What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him.*" *News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee. As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her. So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them. That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed:* "*Everyone is looking for you!*" *Jesus replied,* "*Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.*" *So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons* (Mk 1:21-39).

When the Word of God with Jesus at its center enters our hearts, we must get ready for the Spirit of God to do a ruinous work in our lives. For example, when the Son of God stopped Saul, the raging persecutor of the early Christian Church in his tracks, Jesus brought him to his knees. The Son of God deconstructed or broke down Saul's resistant heart to the gospel and Jesus transformed or reconstructed Saul's heart into love and obedience. Ruined by the Spirit of Christ, the old man called "Saul" became the new man called "Paul." Could it be that God's Spirit is doing a ruinous work in our lives?

As a nation, we are going through a severe economic crisis. Layoffs are knocking on our doors, company downsizings and bankruptcies are on the rise, home values are crashing; foreclosures are smashing, and unemployment figures are dashing old records. And we are all holding our breath: "*When will this stop*?" people ask.

I think that God's Spirit and Word are doing a ruinous work in the lives of many people today. Economic circumstances are forcing us to ask some very basic questions such as:

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[1] Adapted from a sermon originally delivered on February 8, 2009 at Calvary Christian Reformed Church, Edina, Minnesota.

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What is the purpose of my life? What role does money play in my life? Where, really, is my security in life—and in death? And what future does God have in store for me?

I believe that God's Spirit and Word can bring new life, new perspectives, new opportunities, and a new path to follow as we go through hardships in life. The ruinous work of God's Word and Spirit gets us on our knees, brings us to our senses, and creates within us new hope, new vision, and new direction. I believe that the same thing can happen and is happening in the community of faith. Many churches are looking at diminishing resources that lead to tough decision-making and belt-tightening measures such as downsizing of staff and the merging of ministries.

In the church I pastor, I observe, for example, that we have come a long way these last five or seven years. We have moved from a period of instability, stress, and pain, to a period of healing, wholeness, harmony, and stability. By the grace of God, and by the good will and spiritual maturity the congregation, the gospel is preached, taught, and modeled in Word and deed. And by the power of God's Word and Spirit we have experienced grace, fellowship, and wellness. We also have moved from one pastor to three, providing leadership in ministry. To be sure, we are not a perfect community, but we are (and have become more so) a gracious and grateful community, where we are learning the meaning of Christian love, care, and service. This is the work of God's Word and Spirit in our midst.

But now we are entering a stretch in our journey where fundamental questions must be asked, including the question about downsizing of the pastoral staff. How will we conduct ourselves as we struggle with such questions? And will we dare to open ourselves to the ruinous work of God's life-changing Word and Spirit? What is God saying to us today?

I want to encourage all Christians to yield daily to God's powerful, life-changing Word and Spirit, so that the spirits of darkness will have no sway over us. In fact, we can face the future with confidence and deep trust, for by yielding to the power of God's Word, we encounter Jesus' daily presence, wholeness and guidance. So listen to God's Word as found in the Gospel of Mark today!

Let's begin by paying attention to the details in the story of Jesus' encounter with a demon-possessed man. Mark mentions the day: It's the Sabbath. On the day of rest, when all God's people are called to rest from their labors and to reflect upon God's saving acts in the life of Israel, Jesus does something remarkable: he brings rest to the demon-possessed man.

On this particular Sabbath day in Capernaum, we note that Jesus reveals himself as the Giver of Rest. The shadow and promise of God that is hidden in the Sabbath commandment is now becoming a reality. True rest, offered by the Rest-giver, is coming to the world.

Also note the place. The Rest-giver comes to the gathering place of God's people—to the synagogue. In the synagogue God's people read the Torah—the Holy Scriptures, and Scribes or teachers explain these Scriptures to God's people, so that they are shaped with the mind and will of God. Over the centuries, these interpreters of Scripture have come with many tedious explanations and laws by which they tried to regulate and control the religious life of Israel.

But today is different. This Jesus speaks with authority. He is not relying upon interpretations and wise sayings and teachings from rabbis or scribes who have gone before him. No, Jesus' teaching is new, unlike the teachings of the rabbis. Jesus speaks with authority. The Word of God read and the Word of God explained are truly authoritative—from one and the same source. Jesus embodies the divine, authoritative Word of God.

In that synagogue, there is a man who recognizes the divine authority of Jesus. Actually, it is a demon that possesses the man. The evil spirit panics and openly confronts Jesus, crying out: "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" Note what this evil spirit does. The people are amazed at Jesus' authority, reading and explaining the Word of God. They are wondering: *Who is this Jesus*? The evil spirit tells them. This Jesus is a real human being—he is from Nazareth, from an insignificant town. But he is also truly divine; he is the *Holy One of God!* You must take this Jesus seriously, for though truly human, Jesus is the Son of God as well.

The evil spirit recognizes Jesus as an enemy. He fears Jesus' authority or power, because that power will be unleashed against the powers of darkness in due time. "*What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us?*" This evil spirit represents all the spirits of darkness. He knows the rule of God has come to earth. And he knows that Jesus embodies that rule and is about to destroy the rule of the devil and all his angels.

One final detail: Jesus shows his divine authority and his true identity as the Son of God by speaking two words: He silences the evil spirit saying, "*Be quiet!*" And he brings healing to the demon-possessed man by commanding the evil spirit to "*Come out of him!*" Jesus is doing a ruinous work—not only in regard to the evil spirit, but also with regard to the people in the synagogue: he shakes them up, he confronts them with his divine authority, and he forces them to make up their minds about him: "*Do we pay attention to him and his Word? Or shall we ignore him as a religious cook or imposter?*"

Now as we observe the details in Mark's gospel story, let's go deeper and draw insights from the story—these insights are relevant to our daily living as Christians:

(1) Jesus shows up wherever the Word of God is proclaimed in truth. Here's why: The Word of God centers on Jesus; the Word of God reveals Jesus; the Word of God—in all its fullness—is enfleshed, embodied in Jesus. For Jesus is the Word of God in the flesh. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning…The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1:1,2,14).

We should not be surprised, then, that when we come to church and hear the Word of God proclaimed in truth, we will encounter Jesus in our life. And we should not be surprised that Jesus might do a ruinous work in our lives and community. He is prone to deconstruct us, to drive us to our knees, and in the process to reconstruct us more and more in his image. Clearly, when we yield to the life-changing power of God's Word, we encounter Jesus' daily presence, wholeness, and guidance in our lives. For Jesus shows up wherever the Word of God is proclaimed and embraced in truth.

(2) Jesus' exorcism of the evil spirit points forward to his victory over sin, Satan, and death. When Jesus began his ministry at the time of his baptism near the River Jordan, he had a power encounter with Satan in the desert for 40 days. Tempted by Satan, Jesus stood firm on the Word of God. Satan lost the battle. That was the beginning of the end of Satan's dark domain here on earth. The prince of darkness knew that his time was running out.

Jesus showed his power over evil and evil spirits all throughout his earthly ministry. And when he entered the realm of death on Good Friday, Jesus broke the back of Satan. He conquered the power of death so that, on Easter Sunday, the Rest-giver rose unto eternal life and opened the door of forgiveness and eternal life to all who turn to Him. This is why the Scripture says that Jesus shared in our humanity "…so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death" (Heb 2:14-15). Jesus' exorcism of the evil spirit points forward to his victory over sin, Satan and death.

(3) Even though the devil's back is broken (he lost the battle), he still is engaged in opposing God's rule and God's people. Christians are involved in mop-up battles, called to daily spiritual warfare. When Jesus comes again in glory, then Satan's dominion will be annihilated altogether. So, we should not be surprised that the devil does show up—and sometimes in the least expected places, such as in the church and in our homes and in our hearts.

Think about it: Did not Jesus rebuke Peter at one time, saying: "Get behind me, Satan! You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men" (Mk 8:33). And did not Jesus say to Peter, in response to Peter's acclamation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah…I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it" (Mt 16:17,18). Jesus reminds us here that the powers of hell unleash their fury in particular against the church. That's why we do well to yield to the life-changing power of God's Word so that we encounter Jesus' daily presence, wholeness, and guidance.

I began by touching upon our present circumstances. We are going through rough economic times. This is happening on a national and individual basis; it's also happening on a church or communal basis. In such a difficult context, we should not be surprised that anti-Christian forces are tempting us and knocking on the doors of our hearts. These anti-Christian forces are spirits that dwell among all people. There are the spirits of fear, of doubt, of negativism. These spirits can paralyze us and drive us to do things that are irrational, painful, and harmful to the name of Christ. Beware of those spirits. Do not yield to them. Rather, be led by the Spirit of Christ. There are the spirits of anger, of distrust, of discontent. These spirits can wreck our relationships at home and also in the church. Beware of those spirits. Do not yield to them. Yield to the life-changing power of God as found in Jesus Christ and his Word. There are the spirits of divisiveness and greed and self-interest. They drink from the waters of narcissism and they have nothing else in view but the self—the "I", "Me" and "Myself." Beware of those spirits. Yield to Jesus and his Word; let him cast out these spirits within us and around us. Let us be, and become more so, image bearers of Christ, ambassadors of his rule; instruments of his love and care.

What is at stake is the name and work and presence of Christ in our community. Along with Christ's honor and presence in our midst, there is also the stake of the spiritual health and ministry direction of the Church. In the midst of difficult circumstances and choices, will we do what is wholesome and uplifting and edifying and honorable to Christ and to one another?

Oh yes, there are other "stakes" as well: the future of our pastors; their sense of calling; their family's need for stability and security. And no doubt you can identify some more stakes. As a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, I would ask all of us to yield to the life-changing power of God's Word so that we may encounter Jesus' daily presence, wholeness, and guidance.

So then, let God do a ruinous work in our midst. And may that work be to his glory and honor, and to our individual and collective well-being as followers of Christ and children of our heavenly Father.

BOOK REVIEWS

***The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities*. Edited by Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart. Foreword by Timothy George. Nashville: B&H Academic, 2008; 432 pp., $24.99.**

A scholar can rightly take pleasure when others invest the time and energy to read and write a review of one of his/her books (at least if the review is favorable). David Bebbington can rightly take special pleasure in the fact that eighteen scholars have contributed essays prompted by his book, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989; currently, Oxford: Routledge, 2002), to the book under review here.

The Advent of Evangelicalism, edited by Michael A. G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart, is a collection of sixteen essays responding to various elements of Bebbington's book, with an introductory chapter by Timothy Larsen on "the reception" of the book in the almost-two-decades since its publication, and a concluding response to the essays by Bebbington himself. The editors give him the last word. However, while each essay includes engagement specifically with *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, the vast majority of them take the book as a starting point or conversation partner for addressing specific issues of historical description and interpretation related to the origins of evangelicalism. In particular, they focus on the degree to which early-to-mid 18th-century evangelicalism was "new"—that is, the degree to which it stood in discontinuity or continuity with one or more streams of Protestantism from the 16th and 17th centuries.

In *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, Bebbington argues that 18th-century British evangelicalism arose in significant *dis*continuity from the Protestantisms which came before, and it is this thesis which provides the primary catalyst for the essays collected in *The Advent of Evangelicalism*. The majority of these essays include some challenge to this thesis—as reflected in the book's subtitle, *Exploring Historical Continuities* [emphasis mine].

When I first looked at the book I was skeptical, concerned that it would be too "narrow" or even idiosyncratic, given that the essays respond to a single book and focus on the discontinuity thesis in particular. However, in general I did not find this to be the case. While each essay, to varying degrees, directly engages *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, the burden of most of the essays is not this book but a particular historical figure or movement or time-period, such that they are informative and of interest apart from particular attention to Bebbington's book. A sampling of these topics includes "Evangelicalism in Scotland from Knox to Cunningham" (Ch. 3, by A. T. B. McGowan), "Calvinistic Methodism and the Origins of Evangelicalism in England" (Ch. 5, by David Ceri Jones), "'Prayer for the Saving Issue': Evangelical Development in New England Before the Great Awakening" (Ch. 6, by Thomas S. Kidd), "Puritanism, Evangelicalism, and the Evangelical Protestant Tradition" (Ch. 11, by John Coffey), "Jonathan Edwards: Continuator of Pioneer of Evangelical History?" (Ch. 12, Douglas A. Sweeney and Brandon G. Winthrow), and "Enlightenment Epistemology and Eighteenth-century Evangelical Doctrines of Assurance" (Ch. 15, by Garry J. Williams).

This said, there are some components of Bebbington's thesis which emerge as recurring themes or topics, with multiple contributors addressing them. Among the more prominent ones are the following: the definition of "activism" and the degree to which it was (Bebbington's assertion) or was not (e.g., essays by Coffey, and Williams) a new development in the eighteenth century; the degree of certainty that Christian believers can expect to have regarding the assurance of salvation, which degree of certainty Bebbington describes as dramatically increasing in the eighteenth century (among the essays challenging this, see Null, and McGowan); and the degree to which eighteenth-century evangelicalism was (Bebbington) or was not (e.g., essay by Williams) highly congruent with, if not reflective of, Enlightenment thought. Other subjects include the doctrine of Scripture, preaching, evangelism, revivalism, eschatology, Puritanism, Calvinism, and Methodism.

Some may wonder why, until this paragraph, no reference has yet been made here to the contribution for which Bebbington's book is best known, including many citations of the book by people who (probably) have never read it: his fourfold description of evangelicalism in terms of conversionism, activism, biblicism, and crucicentrism (see *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 5-17). The deferment of mentioning this until now is reflective of the book under review. While this descriptive definition is engaged by a number of the authors, it is by no means the preoccupation of the book. That said, for those who are interested in "the Bebbington quadrilateral" (as Timothy Larsen refers to it in his essay on the reception of the book [p. 25]), the essay by Larsen combined with the other essays in the book does provide an opportunity to reassess Bebbington's descriptive proposal.

In Bebbington's concluding essay in the volume under review, he summarizes his response by saying, ". . . notwithstanding the sometimes legitimate criticism of the book [*Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*], the rise of the [evangelical] movement did represent much that was new but that the chronology of change needs adjustment" (p. 418). The two major "adjustments" which he identifies are the need for "a higher degree of continuity with the Puritans" than his book depicted (p. 427), and the need for "[t]he chronology of the early stages of evangelicalism . . . to be extended in both directions" (p. 428). With respect to specifically to evangelicalism's continuity/discontinuity with the preceding eras, while acknowledging that a number of the essays draw attention to continuities that were not adequately acknowledged in his book, Bebbington suggests that the failure of the essays to give any sustained attention to Methodism, "the sector of evangelicalism that displayed most theological and practical innovation . . . unduly skews the evidence of this volume in favor of continuity between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (p. 424).

At 432 pages, the editors may have already been up against page-length publishing limitations. However, two elements which would have enhanced the value of the book are missing. Given that, on the one hand, there are contributions from eighteen authors, and, on the other hand, each of the essays takes its prompt from a single book, an index would greatly assist a reader who would like to trace the multiple perspectives offered on the themes identified above, as well as others, across all the essays. Second, the only comments on the implications of the discussion come briefly in the conclusions to the essays by Beeke and Williams. While the editors are to be commended for giving Bebbington "the last word,"

a synthetic analysis combined with a few words on the implications of Bebbington's thesis, and the critiques of it, would be welcome.

In part a by-product of it "success," evangelicalism is often viewed in rather simplistic terms by both evangelicals and non-evangelicals alike. Taken as a whole, *The Advent of Evangelicalism* provides some nuance and (appropriate) complexity to our understanding of the movement. Furthermore, the volume serves, as does Bebbington's book, to keep in view the important matter of the relationship between evangelicalism and its cultural contexts.

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***Holding On to the Faith: Confessional Traditions in American Christianity*. Edited by Douglas A. Sweeney and Charles Hambrick-Stowe. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2008; vii + 194 pp., $29.95.**

The phrase "the scandal of particularity" is a descriptor which has been applied to Christianity with a variety of meanings. One of the more prominent subjects of application is the Christian claim that God's salvation came to humankind through a lone first-century Jewish male. A related application of this descriptor is the accompanying claim that Christianity, and Christianity alone, is the only true embodiment of right relationship to God and, therein, that it also constitutes the only true path of salvation for human beings.

Issuing from the mouths and pens of critics this phrase is set forth quite literally; that is, these audacious Christian claims are nothing less than scandalous. Coming from fervent Christian believers, however, this reference to "scandal" takes on a more ironic tone, analogous to the apostle Paul's acknowledgment of Christianity as "foolishness."

When thinking about the story of Christianity as this has unfolded specifically in America ("America" here referring to the United States of America), "the scandal of particularity" is also an apt descriptor, albeit an ironic one, of distinctively American views of religion in general, not the least views of Christianity. Charles Hambrick-Stowe, one of the editors of this volume, says in the introduction, "Holding to a historic confession as a normative expression of eternal Truth seems un-American for its violation of the right of private conscience and abdication of the responsibility to think for oneself" (p. 5).

Increasingly in recent decades, in addition to its seeming "violation" of cherished American individualism as observed by Hambrick-Stowe, holding on to the Christian faith via a specific tradition (Lutheranism, Presbyterianism, Anglicanism, etc.) has been viewed as a scandal for—according to some, a literal sin against—the unity of the Church and its faith. While not as profound as a scandal pertaining to the Christ Himself, the scandal of confession-specific embodiments of following this Christ in the American context is, as the editors and contributors to this volume suggest, a matter worthy of scholarly attention.

With one exception the chapters in this book emerge from a conference on confessional traditions in American religious history, sponsored by Wheaton College's Institute for the Study of American Evangelicals. The purposes of the book are to draw attention to the relative neglect, both scholarly and ecclesiastical, of "[c]onfessional forms of church life and practice" (p. 4; also p. 187) and, at least ostensibly, to give these confessional traditions due

respect as "a remarkable and enduring feature of American culture" (p. 4), demonstrating the foolishness of thinking that they "have had their day" (p. 12).

I qualify this latter purpose with the term "ostensibly" because as the other editor, Douglas Sweeney, acknowledges at the beginning of his concluding chapter, "None of the authors in this book belongs to the churches best known for strict confessional adherence . . . . In fact, several emphasize their churches' unease and even repulsion regarding confessions and the people who promote them" (p. 187). Indeed, a third purpose of the book, in some tension with the second purpose identified above, is to illustrate that "confessionalism has always been more complicated than standard definitions allowed." This "more complicated" reality includes the facts that "even the *most* confessional groups have disagreed among themselves as to the best way to confess the faith within their national context" and that "many denominations commonly viewed as non-confessional have proven more confessional than most people assume" (p. 189, emphasis original). As a result, the roster of presenters, their ecclesiastical affiliations, the topics addressed and the perspectives brought to bear on these topics reflect the editors' belief that "we need a broader view of what it means to be 'confessional'" (p. 191).

This "broader view" of confessionalism in conjunction with the historical orientation of most of the chapters results in essays which are predominantly contextual and ecclesiological, rather than theological. Thus, taken collectively, one of the primary contributions of these essays is to describe and analyze the ways in which specific traditions were shaped by and, to a lesser extent, the ways in which they shaped the American landscape, both secular and religious. The traditions represented include the Lutheran (two essays), Presbyterian, Reformed, Episcopalian (two essays), Mennonite, Roman Catholic (two essays), and Eastern Orthodox.

A number of the essays draw attention to two topics of fairly widespread contemporary interest. While not providing programmatic or theological guidance regarding these matters (this is not a criticism, for the essays were not intended to do this), the essays do provide instructive case-studies and historical insights. One topic is the matter of ecclesiological identity (for e.g., see pp. 19, 26, 35, 51, 53-55, 58, 63, 82, 175-76, 178, 182). Many denominations and traditions have undergone "identity crises" in recent decades. In the present era, which some refer to as "post-denominational" or "post-confessional," some of the beliefs and behaviors which were once considered fundamental and essential to identification with particular denominations or traditions are no longer assumed, no longer "required." From members of Pentecostal churches who do not believe that speaking in tongues is always a sign of baptism in the Spirit to Baptist churches which have a category of membership for people who have not been baptized by immersion to Mennonites who are BMW-driving stockbrokers, the landscape of ecclesiological identities has changed and the dust has not yet settled.

The second topic is the tension between a so-called "inward" vs. "outward" focus (for e.g., see pp. 29, 35, 42, 53, 55-56, 59-60, 62, 65, 72, 78, 81, 83-84). A number of the essays recount what amount to case-studies of the kind of "inward" focus which has been one of the catalysts for the rise of so-called "missional" approaches to local church ministry. The cherished beliefs and practices in question were often grounded in ethnic or linguistic or

other culturally-defined heritages, and, according to most of the authors who describe such case-studies, were clung-to in ways which proved detrimental to the vitality and even the viability of the ecclesiastical tradition in a new or changing cultural context. Based on the lessons of history as recounted here, most of the authors of the essays here want to see their respective traditions give due attention "outward."

Finally, I offer two laments with accompanying suggestions. Neither lament is about the book, but both have been prompted by my reading of it. I wish that matters of an explicitly and deeply theological and doctrinal character weighed more heavily upon the life and work of the Church today. This is not simply some naïve longing for better days (though, some measure of such longing is not without historical and contemporary foundation). After all, as the essays in this book illustrate, "the faith," particularly when observed in attempts to "hold on" to it across generations (cf. titles of the book and of Sweeney's concluding chapter), is complex and consists in more than the articulation of theological beliefs. Nonetheless, having observed the kind of theological conviction and fervor which guided so many of these traditions at so many points and looking across the American church landscape today, it is understandable that those who believe in the importance of theology and doctrine might lament the marginalization of such theological conviction and fervor and long to see church cultures and strategies, both "internal" and "external," which are richly and profoundly informed by doctrine. Yes, many of the essays in the book are offered specifically as cautionary tales about how theological conviction and fervor can unwittingly become a tradition's (and Christianity's) own worst enemy. But, cautionary tales can be just that—cautionary, not utterly exclusionary. And, in keeping with Hambrick-Stowe's suggestion, noted above, that it would be "foolish to believe that confessional forms of Christianity rooted in the early Church and Reformation era have had their day" (p. 12), the Church and churches would serve better and be well served by more profoundly engaging their doctrinal resources in ways that truly shape their life and work. As the contributions to this volume also illustrate, even a broader definition of confessionalism does not mean a non-theological confessionalism.

My second lament pertains to one element of the theoretical framework within which churches, specifically Protestant churches, engage their theological and doctrinal resources. Protestant theologians have given woefully little attention to the very complex but very important matter of a theory of the development of doctrine. The book under review here, as noted above, provides informative descriptions of some of the historical and contextual variables and dynamics involved in the perseverance of ecclesial traditions across time and across cultures. Work by Protestant scholars would be well invested in theoretical and theological reflection on the way historical, contextual and theological variables do and should shape the theological confessions of the churches over time. The kind of tradition-specific studies presented in this volume can provide valuable insight and perspective for such an undertaking.

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***The Unwavering Resolve of Jonathan Edwards*. By Steven J. Lawson. Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2008. 168 pp., $16.00.**

In 2006, Reformation Trust published Steven Lawson's *Foundations of Grace*, the first volume in a promising series titled "A Long Line of Godly Men." Though the original publication schedule called for a new book every year or two, the second volume, *Pillars of Grace* has been repeatedly pushed back and is now listed as a November 2009 release. However, while we've been awaiting that title, we've been treated to two volumes in a companion series called "A Long Line of Godly Men Profiles." The first of these told of *The Expository Genius of John Calvin* while future releases promise to focus a spotlight on an aspect of the ministries of Martin Luther, George Whitefield, Charles Spurgeon, and other notable pastors and theologians. The most recent volume, the second in the series, looks to the "Unwavering Resolve of Jonathan Edwards." These short biographical sketches look to only one aspect of what made the subject so great in his time and so mightily used by God.

"Considered *the* towering figure in American Colonial church history—arguably the greatest pastor, preacher, philosopher, theologian and author America has ever produced—Edwards lived with an enlarged desire to experience personal godliness. In this pursuit, he became a model of discipline worth of our emulation." As a young man and a recent convert to the faith, Edwards drafted a list of seventy resolution, purpose statements that he carried with him throughout his life. These statements and his stubborn desire to keep them, shaped his life. "Here is the key," says Lawson, "to his spiritual growth—Edwards disciplined himself for the purpose of godliness. He understood that growth in holiness is not a one-time act, but a lifelong pursuit, one that requires a daily determination to live according to the truths taught in Scripture. In accordance with his 'Resolutions,' Edwards consecrated himself in all things in order to glorify God and gain the incorruptible crown."

Because those Resolutions so shaped Edwards' life, Lawson uses them to structure this book. After a brief biographical sketch of Edwards, he introduces the Resolutions, grouping them under six main headings: Pursuing the Glory of God, Forsaking Sin, Making Proper Use of God-Allotted Time, Living with All His Being for the World, Pursuing Humility and Love and Making Frequent Self-Examination. As the book progresses, each of these headings becomes a chapter and in each chapter, Lawson discusses a few of the associated Resolutions. As he looks to Edwards' life and legacy, he shows that Edwards is one of those men who belongs not just to his age, but to all time. "Edwards possessed a rare combination of Reformed theology, extraordinary giftedness, and fervent piety. However, it was this latter virtue—his true spirituality, marked by a fixed resolve—that positioned him to be used so mightily by God. Few have equaled his relentless pursuit of personal holiness. Edwards' godliness fitted him to be the mighty instrument in the hand of God that he was."

In the opening pages of *The Unwavering Resolve of Jonathan Edwards*, Lawson writes "The ultimate goal of this book is to challenge a new generation of believers to pursue holiness in their daily lives. My aim is to fix our sights on how we must be disciplined in this pursuit." He achieves that goal well. Though short, this book offers a valuable survey of Edwards' thought. The reader learns that what set Edwards apart was not necessarily an enlarged intellect or an abnormal family heritage, but rather an enlarged desire to submit his life to his Savior. This was his motivation and this was his joy: to bring glory to God.

Though we hardly suffer from a shortcoming of biographies of Edwards, this one finds a niche and fills it well. It would not be out-of-place in any collection.

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Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered: Growing in Christ Through Community. **By James Wilhoit. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008. 233 pp., $17.99.**

The church was formed as a community to be God's means for spiritual formation. James Wilhoit, a highly respected author, teacher, and mentor in Christian spiritual formation, suggests that the curriculum of Christ-likeness cultivated in the church for that means is based, from start to finish, on the gospel such that Christians, individually and as a community, first love and obey God by *receiving* the cross recognizing their sin, and *remembering* what God has done. Second, Christians are to love people by *responding* to the gospel with joy and *relating* to others in community. Wilhoit proposes that spiritual formation has been woefully marginalized as a priority in North American churches, and calls for a deep evaluation within that sector of Christendom and hopefully beyond.

Wilhoit's purpose is to form a curriculum for Christ-likeness as well as to report patterns of formation that he has found in healthy, spiritually-formed churches. This curriculum, grounded in lifelong gospel awareness, is based on Jesus' two great invitations (love and obey God; love others) and sixteen invitations that flow from these which fall into four patterns of formation or the four "R's" (receiving, remembering, responding, relating). By cultivating these "R's," Christians (individually and corporately) will better obey what Jesus commanded (Matt 28:20).

Chapters 1 and 2 are bedrock. In chapter one, Wilhoit gets to the heart of the matter immediately: spiritual formation is the "task of the church. Period!" God ordained the church, as a community, for formation: "it was formed to form" (15). This spiritual formation is "an intentional communal process of growing in our relationship with God and becoming conformed to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit" (23). It requires persistent "rediscovery of the gospel," the power of God for the "beginning, middle, and end of salvation" (32), that is, a gospel that is lifelong, permeating our entire experience (27). In chapter two, Wilhoit builds on this theme of Christian spiritual formation as a daily lifelong commitment in order to imitate Christ both as the means and end of formation (39). Significant to Wilhoit is that "Jesus grew through means that are available to us and which he has given to us as the ordinary way of growing up into the fullness of his love and grace" (42). Spiritual formation is apprenticeship with Christ where the curriculum is centered on loving and obeying God (Matt 22:37-40), loving people (Matt 7:12), and the sixteen invitations (46-49).

The remainder of the book is presented in dyads: one chapter discusses the foundations of an "R" and the subsequent chapter expands on application of that "R" in individual and corporate spiritual formation. Chapters 3 and 4 are foundational chapters for Wilhoit, based on *receiving* from God the truth about ourselves and His grace—the gospel. By *receiving*, Wilhoit means that individuals and the church collectively must know their depravity or own

pervasive brokenness. We are to be aware of the deep sense of our sin and what the cross says about it, our yearnings after God and His help, and a deep conviction that all growth is based on grace (58). In receiving, the community is essential to create a culture of openness and cultivate a desire to hear God both individually and corporately.

In chapters 5 and 6, *remembering* is the focus. We are to remember who we are (God's beloved children), how we came to this place (the gap between God's holiness and our sin), and God's intention for us, where wisdom for life is found (104). This "God-human gap", as Wilhoit calls it, always exists because of the disparity between the reality of an infinite gap (moral, spiritual, relational) between God and humans, though we live as if the gap were smaller (106). Accordingly, a major foci for spiritual formation is increasing our awareness of our need for grace and increasing the size of the cross in our view. To foster this awareness the corporate body of Christ is needed to cultivate confession, testimony, and the like.

In chapters 7 and 8, having received the gospel and remembering it rightly, the individual and community in their spiritual formation will *respond* in service. Wilhoit emphasizes that the doctrine of the priesthood mandates service, a personal spiritual responsibility where we cultivate the instinct to act out of joy and excitement to share (156). Yet because teaching in the church has been incomplete without nurturing a tendency to act, and has a tendency to incorrectly express denial of self, this instinct has effectively eviscerated service minded Christians, doubting they have significant contributions to make. Remembering should "foster a climate that makes an others-oriented response to the gospel seem natural and reasonable" (175).

Lastly, in chapters 9 and 10, spiritual formation ultimately takes place in and through *relating* in community: after all, Wilhoit notes, we are essentially relational beings. Others are God's method and means to help us form. Wilhoit exhorts leaders in the Church to encourage the building of spiritually supportive and challenging relationships characterized by a dependence upon God and interdependence upon one another. How rare, yet how precious a goal, to have individuals be "fully known" by each other and still not rejected.

In summary, Wilhoit's call is that not only does the Church matter in spiritual formation, but this community is essential in following Christ in loving and obeying God and loving others. Wilhoit is on target to suggest that the gospel is to be considered a lifelong endeavor and that loving and obeying God and others in the community of spiritual formation is central. Jesus' invitations to love and obey God, to love one another, and to do what naturally flows from those two invitations, is evidenced by our having received grace and the gospel, remembered those blessings, responded to them, and related to others in a manner directed by them (the four R's). While the book would be beneficial to individuals as well as communities, Wilhoit appears to be reaching the leaders—the change agents—in the Church that can communicate his message to the community and inviting leaders to answer Jesus' invitations in the Church by moving from a teaching mindset (albeit important) to a living, gospel directed life of shared community (202).

Throughout his book, Wilhoit exhibits several strong features. He integrates a variety of Scriptures, particularly the foundation of the writings of the Law and the Prophets in the Old Testament upon which Jesus lived his life (Matt 22:37-40; Mk 12:30; Matt 7:12), as well

as a wealth of wisdom from many of the spiritually formed saints of Christendom (Augustine, Willard, Bonhoeffer, Sande, et. al.). He also provides a useful organization between foundational discussion and practical application in community. For example, Wilhoit supplies corollaries throughout to keep major points in mind as well as helpful summative charts. His appendixed assessment for churches to gauge strengths and weakness in their receiving, remembering, responding, and relating, should also prove useful.

Other pieces that fortify the book are his insights into spiritual formation which, after decades of teaching and writing, are abundant. His claim that Jesus grew "through means that are available to us" is more significant than he develops (42). Echoing Wilhoit's sense, Klaus Issler suggests that Jesus, being our "*genuine model* for how to live beyond the limitations of an average human life," predominately depended upon the Holy Spirit and this can be normative for us (*Jesus in Trinitarian perspective: An introductory Christology*. Nashville, TN: B&H, 2008, 222). Willard concurs with Wilhoit's sentiment: "we must enter our study of it [of the New Testament and its persons, i.e. Jesus, the disciples, et. al.] on the assumption that the experiences recorded there are basically of the same type as ours would have been if we had been there" (*Hearing God: Developing a conversational relationship with God*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999, 35). And lastly, though not exhaustively, Wilhoit emphasizes the God-human gap problem; the heart of the gospel that should affect us for a lifetime. We must understand the vast gap as it is between God and us and not a prideful view of a small gap and small cross. Rather spiritual formation "involves increasing our awareness of our need for grace…letting the cross grow larger by…facing up to the reality of sin and growing in awe of…God" (106).

On the whole I agree with Wilhoit and enjoyed the book, yet several issues are not clear. Why does Wilhoit use the term "invitation", yet throughout the book use terms such as "must," "essential," "crucial," "always," etc. (76, 84, 93, 117), which come across as either normative or prescriptive in nature? The greatest invitations to love and obey God and love others are not invitations but commandments (Matt 22:37-40; Mk 12:28). More accurately, "obey" is not part of the Shema to which Jesus is referring although Jn 14:15 and Mk 12:28 naturally infer it. Moreover, it is not clear why Wilhoit picked sixteen invitations aside from his observations at some churches. Why not ten or twenty? More significantly, is Wilhoit claiming these invitations are normative or just suggestions? Though he does limit the discussion to North American churches (16), given that humankind is an essentially spiritual being, should not such a relational and gospel centered view of spiritual formation be universally true or prescriptive? The Scriptural references and wisdom of others provided in the book seem to point to prescriptive principles. Lastly, it was not until chapter three that I thought perhaps the sixteen invitations were broken down into the four R's and I made my own matrix to find out what invitations went where. Perhaps he could have provided that in a verse-by-verse grand organizer of sorts.

Spiritual Formation as if the Church Mattered is another great contribution to both personal and corporate formation. It is an enjoyable and encouraging piece worthy of consideration in any Christian community's practical application.

And, as with most good books on this topic (including this one), the principles are applicable not only to the community but to the individual or family.

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***Subverting Global Myths: Theology and the Public Issues Shaping Our World*. By Vinoth Ramachandra. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008; 296 pp. $23.00**[1]

The author of this fresh, well researched, and beautifully written book is a lay Sri Lankan theologian. Do we need to know that? Well, yes, we do, because the decisive difference it makes is in terms of perspective—for example on Islam, on Buddhism, on colonialism, and, even more decisively, on post-colonialism.

Rather than subverting global myths, Ramachandra challenges liberal pieties. He takes issue with Western critics of Christianity such as Richard Dawkins, and with Third World émigrés who sneer at Christianity from their Western university chairs. Formidably well read and well informed, Ramachandra looks at six key areas—terrorism, religious violence, human rights, multiculturalism, science and technology, and post-colonialism. In each, he reviews the case against Christianity, and shows, with a good deal of humor, that it simply does not stand up.

Towards the end of the book he notes that Christianity is now a "global hermeneutical community", in which the majority of Christians live in the South. Thank heavens for that. For years we have heard that voice only through liberation theology, or through theologians attempting local theologies of one kind or another. Ramachandra's take is different. He has read as much Western philosophy and social science as any Westerner, if not more; he takes for granted the universal nature of the Church; but his perspective is unmistakably different.

It is this that accounts for the freshness of voice. If you come from Sri Lanka, your view of Islam is not dictated by 9/11 and all that has followed, nor by Huntingdon and his cronies, nor by scurrilously badly misinformed ideas about the Crusades, but by a quite different history. His account of current Islamic militancy is—while based on scholarship with which many of us will be familiar—profoundly illuminating.

When discussing religious violence, he turns to Sri Lanka and to Indonesia, where we end up with a very different account of that issue from that which derives from the Enlightenment and its reaction to the European "wars of religion".

His discussion of multiculturalism is rich and nuanced, and among the most helpful I have come across—perhaps a reflection of a kind of plural culture different from that with which we are coming to terms in Europe. Post-colonial himself, he is immune to the guilt-tripping of much post-colonial theory, and deeply critical of the industry, as he is also of colonialism and its impact.

Throughout, he commends a Christianity that is radical precisely because it is "orthodox". No "poor little talkative Christianity" here, but a profound engagement with

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what furthers our humanity, which finds the most helpful responses in the story of cross and resurrection. If you are depressed by Lambeth, and by the constant sniping of the secular critics, this book is a tonic. An educative, stimulating, and faith-affirming read.

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The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America. **By Thomas S. Kidd. New Haven, CT: Yale, 2007, 416 pp., $35.00.**

In *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* Thomas S. Kidd puts forth a definitive work on the period that has become known as the "First Great Awakening." Writing mainly in response to the theses set out by Jon Butler and Nathan Hatch, Kidd argues that something like a Great Awakening did indeed occur and that while it may have provided a religio-ideological basis for a kind of burgeoning democracy, its adherents were not as wooden and monolithic of a group as Hatch contends. Instead, Kidd describes a pre-revolutionary America that experiences something of a revival, which accordingly produces three kinds of reactions; those who embrace it whole-heartedly, those who embrace it with reserve, and those who dismiss it outright. The group that Kidd comes to ultimately identify as *American Evangelicalism* is both the product and the motivation for this Great Awakening.

As opposed to focusing on New England Puritans and their lone influence of the revival movement, Kidd takes a macro-level look at the First Great Awakening (1GA) after 1743 by assessing its impact on the middle colonies as well as the southern backcountry. Instead of focusing only on the major players of Edwards, Whitefield, and the Tennents, Kidd also accounts for the perspectives of women, slaves, rich, poor, erudite, and uneducated, making mention of the awakening's liberating effects and radical social transformation for the differing people groups. By covering each of these perspectives, Kidd is able to effectively argue that the 1GA was an expansive movement that affected all areas of colonial life. Challenging those who limit the period of the revivals to the preaching of Whitefield, Kidd casts a narrative of the Great Awakening that begins prior to 1740 and extends well past 1743. In doing so, he can advance his basic argument—that 1GA, although generally believed to be placed within the 1740 to 1743 time frame, was part of a much larger and longer lasting effort on the part of Evangelicals to see the colonies come to repentance through covenant renewals, working of the Holy Spirit, conversion of ministers, and revival in congregations. Kidd uses the covenant renewals of Increase Mather and Solomon Stoddard as the beginning point of an extended awakening, observing the gradual build up to Whitefield's Great Awakening. Kidd then traces the effects of the 1GA as it took root in the various regions of colonial America.

In his narrative of the 1GA Jon Butler, one of the more famous interpreters of this period, seeks to highlight the testimonies of the anti-revivalists as the normative testimonies of the time period. Using Butler as a foil, Kidd looks to the radical and moderate revivalists who paint a different picture of the period. In doing so, Kidd strengthens his overarching argument. For example, the strongest argument against the 1GA is that Whitefield used theatrics to swindle people out of their money. Yet as Kidd argues, although Whitefield was

a galvanizing figure in the 1GA revivals, he was not the only figure. Furthermore, since Kidd argues for several smaller revivals building up to the 1GA as well as several smaller revivals lasting past the 1GA (via Butler's thesis), the Whitefield argument is rendered impotent. Once decimated, the only compelling argument against the 1GA is that the majority of converts and witnesses were uninformed and unintelligent enough to interpret the revivals correctly. However, Kidd demonstrates that a fair amount of individuals who journaled about the revivals and the awakening (such as Edwards and the Tennents) were highly educated men.

In addition to arguing for the reality of the 1GA, Kidd demonstrates that the 1GA highlighted the emergence of a kind of proto-Evangelical theology that was centered on the movement of the Holy Spirit, the necessity of conversion, the call to missions, and the liberty of conscience. The last doctrine was most important for the radical egalitarianism and trajectory of social reconciliation that the awakenings produced. Kidd notes this especially in looking at the southern territories where slaves became itinerant preachers and formed their own churches. Free conscience also helped shape denominations such as Congregationalists, Methodists, and Baptists in the southern backcountry especially, which as Kidd notes would become important shapers of the Second Great Awakening.

The best feature of Kidd's work, in my opinion, is the relatively short chapter lengths. By utilizing these short chapters (10-14 pages each) Kidd is able to sustain a focused and sharp sub-argument, which then allows for a greater impact of his overarching thesis. Within each chapter readers are able to easily see how the content helped strengthen his argument for the existence of one long awakening, the emergence of an Evangelical theology, and the reorientation of the colonial social structures. Only second to the simplicity is the breadth of sources covered. By looking at scores of personal Journals Kidd exposes his readers to new and interesting stories of the 1GA that do not always make it into comprehensive treatments of the movement. One example in particular is the story of the Mercy Wheeler who by the miraculous work of God was made able to walk from her wheelchair bound existence. Instances of stories like these serve to legitimate Kidd's argument for the reality of an awakening. Additionally, stories like these also serve to indicate something of Kidd's own faith conviction, which Kidd hints at in the last sentence of his work, "…in a broken world where the faithful are deeply flawed, fleeting hints of a coming egalitarian kingdom appear in the most surprising places, even in the church." What we have in *The Great Awakening* is a history of the North American church that is also written by a skilled historian who happens to love the church.

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***Aimee Semple McPherson and the Resurrection of Christian America*. By Matthew Avery Sutton. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007, 351 pp., $18.95.**

Pentecostal Studies has become a hotbed of publishing activity since the turn of the century. At least part of its popularity among social historians is due to the diverse areas of interest enmeshed with Pentecostalism's rich history. Pentecostals were generally quick to deal with issues of race, gender, and social injustice to name a few. As a relatively new

movement, Pentecostalism was also less-constrained by traditional denominational boundaries and was therefore better able to adapt to the fast-paced world of twentieth century American life. Its preachers utilized the mediums of film, radio, print-media, and music to promote its message and accordingly left behind a paper trail of sources. One particular luminary of twentieth century Pentecostalism is none other than Aimee Semple McPherson, the founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel (ICFG) and famous Los Angeles Pentecostal revivalist. In his new book, *Aimee Semple McPherson and The Resurrection of Christian America*, historian Matthew Avery Sutton capitalizes on the litany of sources to present us with a history of the cultural reception of this beloved Pentecostal celebrity.

Sutton's account of Sister Aimee Semple McPherson is a helpful contribution to the existing literature surrounding the Foursquare founder. McPherson herself wrote two insightful autobiographies during her life, *This Is That* (1921) and *The Story of My Life* (published most recently in 1973 by Word Press). In 1931 journalist Nancy Barr Mavity wrote a popular biography titled *Sister Aimee*, Robert Steele penned a journalistic expose into the public disintegration of the relationship between McPherson, her mother Amy Kennedy, and McPherson's daughter Roberta Semple in *Storming Heaven* (1970), and Robert Bahr took a similar approach to recasting the life of McPherson in *Least of All Saints: The Story of Aimee Semple McPherson* (1979).

The year 1993 witnessed the publishing of two monumental works on the Angelus Temple leader. The first, Daniel Mark Epsten's *Sister Aimee: The Life of Aimee Semple McPherson* (1993) and Edith L. Blumhofer's *Aimee Semple McPherson: Everybody's Sister*. It is with these works in the background that Sutton's contribution becomes more evident. Until Sutton, the majority of McPherson biographies had focused on painting an intellectual portrait of the Foursquare pioneer. Rather than add to an already overstocked field, Sutton instead approaches McPherson from a reception history angle. Writing a mainly cultural-reception history, Sutton asks a provocative new question about McPherson's perception of and reception by the city of Los Angeles. Since Sutton raises questions about the truthfulness of McPherson's claims regarding her supposed 1926 kidnapping, he would not have access to the ICFG archives and therefore is relegated to using the same sources as Blumhoef. However, this new cultural-reception approach allows Sutton to get the most out of the available sources and records. By taking this approach, Sutton is additionally able to raise larger questions about the tangential issues in American Pentecostalism—issues of race, gender, social injustice, and the emergence of Los Angeles as a prominent city in American culture.

Starting with defeat at the Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925, Sutton shows how Christian America was dead and buried and would not rise again until just after WWII. It is in this time period, roughly 1925-1944, that Aimee Semple McPherson makes her entrance onto the American stage and resurrects Christian America by "integrating old-time faith with a compelling sense of drama, the newest technologies, and a commitment to traditional Americanism" (277). Sutton traces the development of this Pentecostal dynamo beginning with her traditional upbringing in rural Ontario, her two marriages (once to her beloved late husband Robert Semple and again to East Coast Businessman Harold McPherson), to her

arrival in Los Angeles, with its racial diversity, economic promise, sexual leniency, and entertainment industry that provided the ideal context for a resurgence of Pentecostal ministry.

In Los Angeles, McPherson began to make her mark as a Pentecostal revivalist, eventually opening up Angelus Temple in 1923. Here McPherson developed her core theology of the Foursquare Gospel (Christ's ability to transform individuals through salvation, Holy Spirit Baptism, Divine healing, and a premillennial return of Christ), established the first megachurch in Echo Park, and gained a worldwide reputation. Yet, publicity proved to be a burden to McPherson as typified by the bizarre month-long kidnap attempt and alleged escape from captivity. As sides formed and public opinion varied along a spectrum of belief, the trial highlighted growing concerns over the place of women in society and the church, especially in conservative Christian circles. Nonetheless, Sutton's review of select literature and film of this decade demonstrates how McPherson created a new brand of Christianity that spliced gospel and entertainment together.

Having tackled the entertainment world, Sutton shows that McPherson next married the gospel with a new kind of conservative social activism. The Angelus Temple pastor started a Temple Commissary that fed the poor and needy well through the Depression years, started a battered and neglected women's program, and expanded the Foursquare church model to integrate minority leadership within the emerging denomination. McPherson spent the remainder of her life to influencing American policy on the issues of prohibition, evolution, and communism. While each these positions indicates the positive aspects of her nationalism, Sutton is careful to balance these with McPherson's complex relationship with the Ku Klux Klan. At times she seemed to embrace their agenda to keep America pure. At other times she seemed to chide them for using violence and intimidation to spread their agenda. In review of each of these associations, Sutton portrays a figure that captures the spirit of a later twentieth century Evangelicalism that fuses church and politics in creating a Christian National identity. It was this identity that McPherson held to her dying day in 1944 and one that would permeate the American landscape well into the twenty-first century.

My criticisms of Sutton are few. First, I would have preferred a more critical apparatus for notation. Although beautifully worded, Sutton at times fails to drive his points home with proper notation. For example, Sutton states, "Many scholars" hold that Christians disappeared after the Scopes Trial (150). The logic of his entire work hinges on this premise, and yet he provides no notation for this assumption. One would expect even a casual nod to George Marsden. Elsewhere, Sutton claims, "critics attributed her religious success to her sex appeal" (164). Which critics? Again, Sutton does not say.

Second, Sutton at times appears both preoccupied with McPherson's brand of theology as universally recognizable while also being unaware of other flavors of Southern California Protestant Christianity. Navigators leader, Dawson Trotman, for example, was journaling heavily during this time period and records almost nothing about her kidnapping, her ministry at Angelus Temple, or her death. Furthermore, key figures like Charles Fuller and Henrietta Mears had little to say, good or bad, about McPherson—likely indicating that the conservative evangelicals associated with the BIOLA crowd did not see McPherson's work as part of the overarching Christian movement. Sutton's selection of news media seems only

to capture a limited reception of McPherson that does not highlight the opinions of Christian Southern California or Christian America.

In spite of my criticism, Sutton's work is a welcome contribution to twentieth century American Protestant history. Exceedingly well-written, Sutton crafts something other than a history book. His is a work of entertainment, indicating that he learned a thing or two from McPherson along the way. Additionally, Sutton's work is well researched, taking account for all the major players in McPherson studies as well as providing some new and stimulating sources of information. Finally, Sutton sheds light on the complexity of Pentecostalism in particular and American Christianity in general. His cultural analysis raises new questions about the perception of Christian America and provides practical hope for confessing Christians that the gospel, although offensive to human sensibility, does not have to be offensive to human culture. As Nancy Bar Mavity stated, "Aimee believed in Hell – but not for advertising purposes" (47).

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***Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics*. By William Schweiker. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004, 272 pp., $39.95.**

Theological Ethics and Global Dynamics is an ambitious work, both in terms of scope but also in terms of aims. The author, William Schweiker, seeks to promote and develop the use of theological resources as the means to address contemporary problems, including environmental degradation, political illiberalism, religious intolerance and social violence. He argues that the root of these problems is the ambiguity of human power caused by the loss of any universal normative center within the pluralistic, globalized contemporary world.

The aim of his project, in particular, is to steer thinking about human power between two distinctive poles. On the one hand, human power can be used without any transcendental system of value that proscribes human limits. Here, human power alone is the only good, a worldview he equates with "overhumanization" and an attendant attitude in which humans subjugate nature. On the other hand, there is the worldview that views human existence as dependent entirely upon divine necessity. This view he associates with the denial of human responsibility and creativity.

In response, Schweiker suggests "Theological Humanism" as a middle position, one that answers the moral dilemmas of the pluralistic world. Arguing from the moral realism tradition, he provides a two-fangled definition of this idea. First, religious resources offer a deep tradition of transcendental norms, resources that can be used critically and constructively to counter overhumanization. Second, divine activity has inscribed an human ontology within nature. By nature, humans are limited, finite, social, thinking and imaginative beings, endowed with dignity and freedom through God's creative act. Because of this divine activity, humans must live humanistically and theologically: being responsible towards nature, others, the world and God.

The book examines the notion of conscience as the means to articulate responsibility. Though the contours of this idea of conscience are not always clear, this term is a conceptual

tool to think about moral practices, values and contexts. Since religious resources are primarily textually grounded, conscience, as the science of knowing oneself with others, is related to religious narratives. As such, he works through the conscience in relationship to the Christian Bible by arguing for a "mimetic hermeneutical" approach to the Bible. A post-critical hermeneutic, this method provides the means to critically think about the contemporary structure of the pluralistic world. The hope is that interpretation ends with imitative action, rather than analysis, allowing theological humanists to re-imagine moral action, and use narratives, symbols, metaphors and texts to enact responsibility within the wide variety of moral spaces that humans inhabit.

What is the transcendental system of norms grounding responsibility that this method of Christian ethical reflection develops? Through this post-critical reading, Schweiker argues that God, as creator and sustainer, imbued creation with the integrity of life before God. All of creation has an innate place within God's creation, meaning humans must protect this integrity in order to live responsibly. Though he does not provide more concrete examples of integrity, it is clear that this idea is the normative ground for moral action.

Consequently, the organization of the work engages three different levels of contextual moral inquiry, each with its own section. On the first level is "Creation and New Creation." Within this section, Schweiker describes the contemporary pluralistic, global situation as well as greed and commodification as a misuse of creation. Biblical passages such as the Sermon on the Mount and the first creation account from Genesis ground the view that moral action is based on both creation as an act of divine goodness and the call to live the new creation of Christ's love throughout all moral contexts.

"Time and Responsibility" structures the second section. Building off of the idea of creation and new creation, Schweiker compares moral cosmologies, and examines love and forgiveness. All three chapters fundamentally describe God as the creator of time, suggesting that human thinking about moral action within temporality must be grounded in Christ's call to love the neighbor as oneself. A further view, heavily based on Levinas, affirms a respect--rather than the destruction—for human difference. Interestingly, he understands the command to love God above all else (arising out of the Hebrew Bible and New Testament) as preventing the destruction of difference. Because God loves all of creation, even one's enemy has an innate integrity, meaning conversion can be a form of violence.

The third section is heavily theoretical. Entitled "Social Imaginary and Conscience," this level parses out the religious resources available to a theological humanist. Humans are inscribed and thus formed by texts; conscience is then constructed by texts. This view affirms the need for a wide variety of images, narratives and linguistic tools to form morally responsible humans, a formation which includes the imagination's envisioning of moral action. The main problem addressed in this section is "moral madness," a term that describes religious fanaticism and the misuse of the imagination. His answer is to return to the Christian idea of creation and new creation. He examines the Cain and Abel story, arguing that God never rejects Cain, even after his murder of Abel. This story helps embolden the Christian moral imagination to a deep recognition of integrity, even for those seemingly outside of creation.

The final chapter is a summation of Theological Humanism. I do think locating this chapter at the beginning—rather than the end—would have helped bolster the argument of the book as a whole. I also wanted more clarification on important terms. For instance, does "integrity" include elements within creation that are destructive of life, say cancer cells? Further, the push to move towards a theological humanist position assumes that all humans would recognize the validity of his affirmation that God created all. But what happens to those fanatics who refuse to accept this divinely grounded integrity? Is violence ever appropriate? The wide sweeping and ambitious project does not stop to address such details. Nonetheless, it offers a serious affirmation of religious resources within the contemporary pluralistic world.

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***Liturgy and the Beauty of the Unknown*. By David Torevell. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007, 212 pp., $99.95.**

This text is a thoughtful attempt to re-think liturgy for the Twenty-First Century by connecting liturgy to the idea of deification and the movement towards divine beauty and silent mystery. Through deification, largely based on the thought of Maximus the Confessor, Torevell argues that liturgy is the embodied presence of the resurrected Christ through which Christians imaginatively perform and embody the *imago dei* as their own being. Through liturgy Christians are transformed into seeing themselves as ascending towards "another place," in between the material and spiritual realms. This ascent is dependent upon an emanationist doctrine of creation that enables liturgy to use the materially beautiful as a means to move a self towards divine beauty and mystery.

Torevell approaches the issue from a Roman Catholic perspective, though states that his "position will have important ecumenical and indeed, interfaith implications for the practice of worship"(1). He also stresses the need for a theology in which both the apophatic and cataphatic, both affirmation and negation work together as the means to understand the Christian God. In his view, Pseudo-Dionysus' emanationist (or Deny as Torevell calls him), rather than Augustine's *ex nihilo* doctrine of creation must be the basis for an understanding of liturgy. Without the horizontializing of the material and spiritual through creation as emanating from God's being, there can be no movement towards God through material beauty.

He makes his argument through the use of six different ideas of movement, as in the type of movement liturgy enacts in a believer. The first is the movement of return, in which a Christian returns to a worldview grounded in the Word made flesh, with all of material creation connected to God's being. The divine being, though silent, infinite and mysterious, can then be understood through effects in the world, an idea he uses Denys' emanationist theology to develop. The second movement—of interiority—enables him to argue that because of this ontological connection between the material and spiritual, the human person, as created in the *imago dei*, has a beauty and a deep ontological connection within the soul to God. He clearly privileges, in this instance, a view of Christianity in which inward contemplation of God provides key experiences of the divine. It is no surprise, as a

consequence, that many of the central figures he uses for his argument, including Denys, John of Damascus, Aelred of Rievaulx, William of St. Theirry, Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, Teresa of Avila, among others, share a bias towards understanding the contemplative life as the truest form of Christianity. The third movement occurs through images. This movement describes how material beauty affects a viewer because it shows a Christian the mysterious "another place" of God's realm. This place is neither invisible nor inaccessible, but instead is merely distant, and Christians are dependent upon God's grace and human participation in order to make the move towards it. Images, especially icons and architecture, can help affect a self towards this movement.

Desire is the fourth movement, in which material beauty, emanating from God's beauty transforms human desire from the desire for things in this world to the Divine. Though the divine is a silent mystery, through the Christian sacraments, Christians move into this beautiful mystery, and begin to desire a self-understanding in which the ground of one's being is God, rather than any materialist worldview. The fifth movement is the movement towards silent mystery. Building off of the desire for God, it is liturgy that enacts the beauty of the mystery of God. Through the sacraments, explicitly baptism and the eucharist, humans can begin to recognize that God's grace is already within creation. Using Maximus the Confessor, God's loving act of the incarnation enables human deification: "the *kenosis* of God took place so that the *theosis* of humanity could be realized"(139). The final movement, of aesthetics, suggests how liturgy is a form of affective communication that enables a Christian to become deified through the transformative actions of the sacraments and the beautiful within liturgy. Liturgy creates "another place" that is in between the material and spiritual yet enacts the silent and beautiful mystery of God's incarnational love.

Overall, the text does a good job of summarizing a number of thinkers regarding the idea of beauty. Yet, this descriptiveness is also one of the books short-comings. The argument as a whole too often gets lost within the descriptions and it is not always clear why these thinkers matter for liturgy within the Twenty-First Century, nor how Torevell's understanding of liturgical beauty can enable an ecumenical focus on liturgy. For instance, does one have to accept an emanationist doctrine of creation in order for liturgy to "work" in the way that Torevell claims? The book largely assumes the legitimacy of this truth as the only true theological foundation for liturgical practices. Finally, he never provides a clear and concise definition of "liturgy." It seems to include baptism and the eucharist, aesthetic images and forms of beauty, and has some vague connection to Scripture, but beyond this minimal frame, an exact definition is unclear. Such a clearer understanding would be helpful in establishing any correlations between Protestant forms of worship, for example, that would better aid any interfaith dialogue on liturgy.

Nonetheless, he does raise good ideas regarding re-thinking a theology of liturgy. One idea I found especially helpful was that a "liturgist must become an artist"(161). Liturgy is an art, in that it uses things Christians hear, see and smell; in the process, it communicates affectively through aesthetic means.

In the end, this form of communication demands a great deal of thoughtfulness about both what and how liturgy enacts Christian truth. And though I wanted more from this work in regards to how liturgy can enact divine beauty, this text provides an intriguing window towards thinking about the importance of liturgy today.

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***The Holy Trinity: In Scripture, History, Theology, and Worship*. By Robert Letham. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004, 551 pp., $24.99.**[2]

As Robert Letham observes in [*The Holy Trinity*], "For the vast majority of Christians, including most ministers and theological students, the Trinity is still a mathematical conundrum, full of imposing philosophical jargon, relegated to an obscure alcove, remote from daily life" (p. 1). In 1967, the Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner made a now famous comment along similar lines, saying, "We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged" (cited in Letham, p. 291). This widespread lack of attention to the doctrine of the Trinity has led to serious problems in the church. As an example, most Western Christians today are, in effect, practical modalists (understanding the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit to be three modes or forms of one divine person) with little or no understanding of the orthodox biblical doctrine of the Trinity (p. 5-6). In *The Holy Trinity*, Letham seeks to address and correct these problems.

Robert Letham is a Lecturer in Systematic and Historical Theology at Wales Evangelical School of Theology. Prior to accepting this position, he was the senior minister of Emmanuel Orthodox Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, Delaware. He is an adjunct professor of systematic theology at Westminster Theological Seminary and is the author of several books, including *The Work of Christ*, *The Lord's Supper: Eternal Word in Broken Bread*, and *Through Western Eyes*. His recent volume, *The Holy Trinity*, is an attempt to recover the doctrine of the Trinity "at ground level, the level of the ordinary minister and believer." Letham believes that such a recovery will "revitalize the life of the church and, in turn, its witness in the world" (p. 7).

Letham divides his book into four main parts. Part One is entitled "Biblical Foundations" and includes three chapters on the relevant biblical texts. Part Two is entitled "Historical Development" and includes nine chapters tracing the development of the doctrine of the Trinity from the Apostolic Fathers to John Calvin. Part Three is entitled "Modern Discussion" and includes four chapters that discuss the Trinitarian theology of Karl Barth, Karl Rahner, Jürgen Moltmann, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Sergius Bulgakov, Vladimir Lossky, Dumitru Staniloae, and Thomas F. Torrance. Part Four is entitled "Critical Issues" and includes four chapters dealing with the Trinity in relation to such issues as the Incarnation, Worship, Prayer, Missions, and Union with Christ.

[2] Used by kind permission of Ligonier Ministries. http://www.ligonier.org/blog/2008/05/book-review-the-holy-trinity.html.

Part One is a careful look at the biblical evidence for the doctrine of the Trinity. The Old Testament, according to Letham, does not teach an explicit Trinitarianism, but the doctrine is implicit, and the Old Testament "does provide the essential foundation without which the full Christian doctrine of God could not exist (p. 32). In the New Testament, what was only implicit in the Old becomes explicit. "Jesus as Son claims a relation to the Father of great personal intimacy, exclusive and unique, which is marked by full and willing obedience to the Father" (p. 39). Jesus "is distinct from the Father, and yet one with him" (p. 39). Throughout the New Testament, the deity of Christ is explicitly affirmed (e.g. Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; 2 Pet. 1:1). Because of this biblical testimony, Christians "pray to Jesus, worship him, and sing praises to him as God" (p. 50). The church, however, "understood its worship of Jesus as within the boundaries of OT monotheism" (p. 52). The Holy Spirit is "active at every stage of redemption, especially in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, from conception to ascension" (p. 56). The New Testament, "while never explicitly calling the Holy Spirit 'God,' ascribes to him divine characteristics" (p. 56). Letham notes the numerous triadic patters in the New Testament. These include most obviously, the baptismal formula (Matt. 28:19), but the New Testament includes many others as well (e.g. 1 Cor. 12:4-6; Gal. 4:4-6; Eph. 4:4-6).

Once the biblical foundations for the doctrine of the Trinity have been established, Letham proceeds to examine the historical development of the doctrine in Part Two. After outlining the contributions of early Christian writers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen, he devotes several chapters to the Arian controversy, its aftermath, and the orthodox response at the Councils of Nicea and Constantinople and then turns to a detailed discussion of the Trinitarian theology of Augustine. He then examines the ongoing *filioque* controversy. The original text of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed declared that the Holy Spirit "proceeds from the Father." Due to a continuing Arian threat in Spain, local liturgies began to add the term *filioque* so that the Creed then read, "from the Father *and the Son*." The *filioque* was adopted by the local Council of Toledo in 589 and was eventually declared to be dogma by the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Lyons in 1274. The Eastern Church objected to the addition of this term on both procedural and theological grounds and continues to use the original version of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed to this day. Letham provides a helpful examination of the various arguments used on both sides of this debate.

Letham turns next to the contributions of several medieval Western and Eastern theologians. He chooses Anselm, Richard of St. Victor, and Thomas Aquinas from the West and John of Damascus, Photius, and Gregory Palamas from the East and offers helpful critical discussions of each. Of particular interest to Reformed readers will be Letham's discussion of the Trinitarian doctrine of John Calvin. He observes that some scholars have considered Calvin to be an innovator in terms of his Trinitarianism (p. 252). Letham, however, convincingly demonstrates that Calvin's doctrine of the Trinity is very conservative. His differences are with some of the speculations of late medieval theologians, not with orthodox Nicene Trinitarian doctrine.

In Part Three, Letham turns to the contributions of important modern theologians who have written extensively on the doctrine of the Trinity. He devotes an entire chapter to Karl Barth saying, "it is from him that the recent revival of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity

has its genesis" (p. 272). Letham notes that Barth has often been charged with modalism, but as Letham demonstrates, "Barth continues to oppose modalism at every opportunity" (p. 288). Yet the criticisms are not entirely unwarranted, because at the heart of Barth's doctrine is the constant refrain that "in God there is but one subject, not three" (p. 289)—a refrain that leaves him open to the charge of unipersonality.

Letham then proceeds to an examination of the teachings of Karl Rahner, Jürgen Moltmann, and Wolfhart Pannenberg. Karl Rahner was one of the most significant Roman Catholic theologians of the twentieth century, and his work on the doctrine of the Trinity has been very influential, not only among Roman Catholics, but also among many Protestants as well. While appreciative of Rahner's contributions, Letham observes serious weaknesses in his doctrine.

With Rahner, since human experience is the yardstick, situated in history, the immanent Trinity is collapsed into the economic Trinity, which in turn is founded on the human experience of limits and transcendence. History is absolutized and general human experience is the basis for an understanding of God. Either a monistic modalism or a social doctrine of the Trinity that veers into tritheism follows. In turn, this merges the Creator and the creature into one cosmic process. God is as dependent on the world as the world is on God. The result is pantheism or panentheism (p. 298).

Letham is also critical of Jürgen Moltmann's doctrine of the Trinity. As Letham demonstrates, Moltmann's doctrine is unmistakably panentheistic (p. 301). His doctrine also "drifts uncomfortably close to tritheism" (p. 308). According to Letham, Wolfhart Pannenberg's doctrine is similar to Moltmann's. "If he does not go quite as far as Moltmann, he heads in the same direction" (p. 312). Like Moltmann, Pannenberg "makes God dependent on history and thus on his creation" (p. 319). And like Moltmann, he also comes dangerously close to tritheism (p. 320).

Following his discussion of three modern Western theologians, Letham discusses the contributions of three modern Eastern theologians. The first, Sergius Bulgakov, was a professor at the University of Moscow. According to Letham, Bulgakov's doctrine, while brilliant in many respects, has numerous weaknesses including panentheistic tendencies (p. 338). Turning to Vladimir Lossky, Letham notes that the center of his theology is "the axiom that God is unknowable in his essence and transcends his revelation" (p. 339). Lossky, therefore, affirms an apophatic approach to theology—we are to know God primarily through mystical contemplation. Letham observes that Lossky so emphasizes this approach that his theology reduces to total agnosticism (p. 346). Letham is also critical of Lossky's distinction (following Palamas) between God's essence and his energies. As Letham observes, it introduces a problematic division in the being of God that is not found in classic Trinitarian dogma (p. 346). Letham next turns to Dumitru Staniloae who he considers to be "more moderate, nuanced, qualified, and balanced than Lossky" (p. 349). According to Staniloae, rational knowledge of God is not to be renounced, it is to be deepened by apophatic knowledge, and "apophatic knowledge must come to expression in rational terms" (p. 349). Letham concludes this chapter by observing that while certain emphases in the Eastern doctrine of the Trinity cause difficulties, the East also has criticisms of the West that need to be heard.

The final chapter of Part Three is devoted to a discussion of the Trinitarian theology of Thomas F. Torrance. Letham believes that Torrance is "arguably the most significant theologian in the English-speaking world of the past fifty years or more" (p. 356). Letham quotes Torrance as saying that the Trinity "is both the *ultimate ground* of our salvation and knowledge of God and the *basic grammar* of Christian theology" p. 359). There is thus an integral connection between theology and worship. Letham carefully examines Torrance's doctrine concluding that it is essentially orthodox despite having a slight tendency to stress the one being of God without equally stressing the irreducible distinctions of the persons. In spite of this, Letham believes that "Torrance's treatment of the Trinity is probably the best one to date" (p. 373).

In Part Four of his book, Letham turns to a discussion of several critical issues related to Trinitarian theology. The first of these issues is the Trinity and the Incarnation. Letham begins by summarizing the weaknesses of both the Eastern and Western doctrines of the Trinity:

> The East, from the fourth century, has held that the person of the Father is the center of divine unity. The main danger of this is a subordinationist tendency. If the Father is the guarantor of unity in the Godhead, it is only a short step to the Son and the Holy Spirit having a derivative status. On the other hand, the West since Augustine has begun with the divine essence. It has had difficulty accounting for the real eternal distinctions between the persons. With the essence prior to the persons, a less than fully personal view of God has resulted. The bias here is in a modalist direction. Seeing this, some in the West, like Moltmann, have argued that the Trinity is a community of three equal persons. However, since they lack a full doctrine of the immanent Trinity and correlate the Trinity with human history and experience, their conclusions veer toward tritheism and pantheism, often being explicitly panentheistic. On the other hand, T.F. Torrance, going back behind the Cappadocians and Augustine and following clues from Athanasius and Gregory Nazianzen, argues that the monarchy is to be seen as the whole Trinity, understood in a homoousial and perichoretic manner. However, he does not give equivalent emphasis to the distinctiveness of the three persons (p. 377).

As Letham observes, "we need to preserve both the unity and identity of the one indivisible being of God and, at the same time, the irreducible differences among the three persons" (p. 378). Letham then sets forth what he considers to be the vital parameters of an orthodox doctrine of the Trinity. First, "we need to recognize the equal ultimacy of the being of God and the three persons" (p. 381). Second, the three persons are *homoousios*—"The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are identical in being" (p. 382). Third, the three persons "mutually indwell one another in a dynamic communion" (p. 382). This is the doctrine of *perichoresis*. Fourth, the three persons "are irreducibly different from one another" (p. 382). Fifth, there is "an order among the persons" (p. 383). This does not mean that there is a difference in rank or that there is a hierarchy. It is a recognition that the Father sends the

Son, but the Son does not send the Father. The Holy Spirit, likewise, proceeds from the Father, but the Father does not proceed from the Holy Spirit or the Son.

A doctrine of the Trinity that is to be faithful to the Bible from which it emerges must give equivalent expression to each of the above parameters. These parameters are mutually defining. The three persons are irreducibly different, and they are one identical being. There is an order among them, and they mutually indwell each other, are equal in status, and are one in being. They mutually indwell one another, and they are irreducibly different. And so on and so forth (p. 383).

Letham continues by exploring a number of important questions related to the Trinity and the Incarnation of the Son such as eternal generation, the obedience of Christ, subordinationism, and the work of Christ. In chapter 18, Letham explores the way in which the Christian doctrine of the Trinity should impact our prayer and our worship. He accurately observes that Trinitarian theology has had a much greater impact on the worship of the Eastern church and argues that it must impact the Western church as well. He offers a number of practical suggestions to help accomplish this goal (pp. 421-24). Letham turns his attention next to the way in which the Christian doctrine of the Trinity should impact our understanding of creation and of missions. In particular, he notes how the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is especially needful in approaching the two major challenges to the Christian faith today: Islam and postmodernity. In his final chapter, Letham discusses how the doctrine of the Trinity informs our understanding of the nature of persons. The chapter includes an especially helpful discussion of the doctrine of union with Christ. The book concludes with two appendices in which Letham responds to the teaching of Gilbert Bilezikian and Kevin Giles respectively.

The Holy Trinity includes a glossary of theological terms with which some readers may be unfamiliar. The definitions given in the glossary are clear and concise. In addition, there is a good bibliography as well as an index of Scripture and a subject and name index. All of these add to the practical value and usefulness of this volume.

Letham has done the church of Christ an enormous service with this volume. My reservations about the book are few and are concerned primarily with Part Two. I am unsure, for example, why the historical overview stops with John Calvin and then moves directly to modern theologians of the twentieth century. I am also unsure why John Calvin is the only Reformer to be discussed. In my estimation, it would have been helpful had the book discussed the Trinitarian theology of all the major Reformers, or at least Luther and Calvin. A discussion of the Trinitarian theology of Reformed Orthodoxy in the Post-Reformation era would have also been beneficial (For those who are interested, volume 4 of Richard Muller's *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics* covers this topic in detail). A more systematic overview of the Trinitarian theology of major Reformed theologians and confessions between the Reformation and today may also have been of interest to readers. Of course these additions would have expanded an already lengthy book, but in my estimation, the additions would have improved that section of the work.

These minor criticisms aside, this is an outstanding volume that models theology the way theology should be written. With a topic such as this one, that has spawned so much deep

theological discussion, it would be easy to get caught up and lost in the fine philosophical abstractions. Yet, while Letham shows a definite grasp of these issues, he does not forget that he is writing about the God we worship. Many of the chapters and sections end with prayers. And the book itself ends with chapters on the impact the doctrine of the Trinity should have on personal and corporate piety. It is both intellectually thought provoking and spiritually edifying—a rare combination in theological works today. Robert Letham has made a significant contribution with this volume, a contribution I recommend enthusiastically.

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***John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*. By Carl R. Trueman. Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007, 132 pp., $29.95.**

John Owen was a loser. He stood ecclesiastically, politically and intellectually for ways that eventually lost traction; some were even outlawed. According to Carl Trueman, this explains why he remains an unknown figure outside the evangelical and Reformed circles in which he has been popularized and enshrined by leaders such as J. I. Packer, John Piper and Sinclair Ferguson. Yet, Trueman believes Owen deserves recognition as "the most significant theological intellect in England in the third quarter of the seventeenth century, and one of the two or three most impressive Protestant theologians in Europe at the time" (p. 1). In this volume we find out why.

The first chapter introduces Owen as a thinker and polemicist. Trueman first explains that Owen is not best categorized as a "Puritan." Although in his conclusion he returns to the term and admits its ecclesiastical and political import, he thinks it a bit impotent with respect to Owen, preferring instead to label him more generally as a Reformed theologian of the "High Orthodoxy" period (1640-1700, following Richard Muller's periodization). Owen is, furthermore, recounted by Trueman as a catholic thinker, one whose trinitarianism, christology and anti-Pelagian soteriology were rooted in orthodoxy, as well as a Renaissance scholar, one who conducted his thought according to humanist practices and interests as received by seventeenth century English scholarship. An overview of Owen's engagement with his primary theological opponents, Roman Catholics, Arminians and Socinians, rounds out the introduction.

The remaining three chapters turn to Owen's theology, chapter 2 on the doctrine of God, chapter 3 on soteriology and christology and chapter 4 on justification and sanctification. At every step, the sketch provided in the first chapter is filled out; Trueman excels at illuminating the interplay of the impulses in Owen's thought. We learn as much about Owen's thought-world and intellectual influences as about Owen himself. With precision, Trueman expounds how Owen harnessed the theologians and metaphysicians of the past. This forms something of an apologetic thrust of Trueman's work, to unveil an Owen unique only in his capacity to repristinate the theology of the Christian tradition, albeit according to Reformed distinctives.

Perhaps due to experiences at Westminster Theological Seminary (Philadelphia) where he is Professor Historical Theology and Church History, Trueman is quick to stress on a few occasions that simple biblicism was never the intent of the Reformation scripture principle,

nor was it the practice of Reformed theologians like Owen. The Reformed tradition has regularly engaged in metaphysical and philosophical reasoning about the Bible. For example, note Trueman commenting on Owen's account of the divine attribute of immensity where he seems to be admonishing his audience as much as making a point about Owen: "In other words, commitment to the unity and perspicuity of scripture requires a measure of philosophical synthesis; indeed, it rises out of this commitment, since unity and perspicuity demand that scripture offers a coherent view of the realities about which it speaks; and that requires consideration of broader questions about the nature of God and of the world he created; just hurling texts back at the Socinians will simply not achieve very much" (p. 40)

This exhortation is but a peak at Trueman's gifts as a teacher, very much on display here. Trueman can explain very tersely, yet very clearly quite a mass of material as well as the dense, arcane thought of Owen and his sources.

At times, however, Trueman regresses into Muller-like boorishness which strikes as little more than reactionary intimidation in response to some perceived threat, a threat which, ironically, must be lampooned as laughably ludicrous, even as its almost phantasmal state at present is admitted (see pp. 7-8). Note his rather derogatory remarks against "modern theology's" (anticipated) disparagement of Owen's scholasticism:

Modern theology, of course, with its equally philosophical and scholastic (according to the accepted canons of the academy) commitment to an anti-metaphysical approach, along with its close cousin, a radical narratival reading of scripture, is likely to dismiss Owen (and thus most of Western Christianity prior to Kant) as being hopelessly in thrall to Greek thought. Nothing could be further from the truth […] Attempts to argue that such approaches mark a break with the Reformation, or a fundamental perversion of the Reformation, a regression to pre-Reformation theology, or a dramatic move towards the rationalism of the Enlightenment are all overstated, unhistorical, methodologically dubious, and more often than not driven by the eisegetical concerns of modern theologians desperate to find justification for their particular hobby-horse in earlier texts (p. 46).

Well, who would be so deceitful and stupid? Apparently James Torrance, at least, who on a different issue is castigated for discussing covenantal theology on the basis of an "absurd" premise that "does not begin to take account of the complexity, linguistic and otherwise, of Orthodox discussion" (p. 73). What Trueman and Muller miss in their zeal to protect Reformed Orthodoxy from any and all caricatures is that they are likely repeating the error they loathe. Anachronism, oversimplification, hasty generalization, it's all right here. Muller and Trueman are quite right to protest "modern theology's" convenient mischaracterizations of the development of the Reformed tradition. But remarks like these don't evince a full hearing and digestion of "modern theology's" complaints either, the diversity of "modern theology" and the complexity of its roots too.

Nevertheless. Trueman is, generally, a lively writer, and that makes his account not merely informative, but enjoyable and compelling as well. This is a sure contribution to Ashgate's Great Theologians Series, not to mention contemporary conservative divinity. Indeed, Owen is drawing to himself some eager adherents from the popular pulpit and pew

these days, and we can be thankful that Trueman's informative volume will elevate Owen's reception from enthusiastic fanfare to more serious appropriation.

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***Ronald Knox As Apologist: Wit, Laughter and the Popish Creed*. By Milton Walsh. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007, 248 pp., $14.95.**

Fr. Walsh, a priest of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, has produced a good overview of the apologetic writings and methods of Ronald A. Knox, who was born in 1888 and died of cancer in 1957 at the age of sixty-nine. A convert from the Church of England, and a friend of G.K. Chesterton (who credited Knox as being very influential in his own conversion decision), Hilaire Belloc and Maurice Baring, Knox was one of the most important Catholic apologists of the 20th century. Walsh has done an admirable job of covering Knox' major apologetic writings in an organized and informative way. Walsh's task is not enviable, as Knox was a prolific writer, not only of apologetic works, but of novels, poems, newspaper and periodical articles, speeches, conferences, radio addresses and sermons.

The book is organized in three sections. In Part I, *Seeking the Treasure*, Walsh traces Knox' journey from promising childhood, to Eaton and to Oxford, to his ordination into the Anglican priesthood, to his conversion to Catholicism and ordination as a Catholic priest and to Knox' return to Oxford as Chaplain to Catholic students. In Part II, *Finding the Treasure*, Walsh explores Knox' writings on the gift and transmission of faith and the act of submission to it. Walsh describes various techniques Knox used to reach his audience. In Part III, *Sharing the Treasure,* Walsh addresses the five major areas which are the task of the apologist as outlined by Knox in his most popular apologetic book, *The Belief of Catholics*. Each of these topics is further illustrated by unpublished (by Knox) conferences given to his Oxford students. These five conferences are among the most interesting inclusions in Walsh's book.

Knox was born into a strongly evangelical Anglican family on February 17, 1888, the youngest of six children. His father became an Anglican bishop as were both of his grandfathers. His mother died when he was four years old. From an early age Knox was recognized as an exceptional intellect. He was a superb student with a vast command of the English language. It was assumed that Knox would follow in his father's footsteps as an Anglican priest and he took that track when, after Eaton, he attended Oxford and prepared for the ministry. He was ordained an Anglican priest in 1912. Given his already widespread reputation as an intellect, wit and debater, it was expected that he would go far in the Church of England.

Knox' great preoccupation at the time was his search for the authority upon which his belief structure could be based. He questioned the validity of the Church of England as a teaching authority and he became convinced that the Catholic Church was the true successor to the one founded by Christ and therefore the place to find the full truth of the Christian message. Ultimately it was that conviction that led to his reception into the Catholic Church on September 22, 1917. He was ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1919.

In a twist of fate, Knox was later appointed chaplain to the Catholic undergraduate students at Oxford and he remained in that post for thirteen years, from 1926 to 1938. In his 1941 book, *In Soft Garments*, Knox published some of his conferences with Oxford undergraduates. This book is a must read for those who are interested in classic apologetics taught to a sophisticated audience. In 1952 Knox also published *The Hidden Stream*, which contains additional Oxford conferences which he delivered after he had left the university and was invited back as a guest lecturer.

Preeminent among Knox' convictions were that human reason and the power of the human intellect would lead to moral truth. Again and again in Walsh's book the primacy of reason and intellect for Knox are stressed. Knox' own considerable powers of reason and intellect made him a powerful communicator of the truths of Christianity. But he also had the ability to make things understandable to his listeners; to speak to them in language that they could relate to. Knox wanted his audiences to be able to explain to others the reasons for their adherence to their faith. In 1927, *The Belief of Catholics* was published as Knox' first major apologetic writing on the truth of the Catholic faith. During his lifetime it was, and it remains today, his most popular book.

Another of Knox' most important books was published in 1932 when he co-authored *Difficulties* with Arnold Lunn, a well known English mountaineer, an agnostic, and a vocal critic of Catholicism. *Difficulties* is a series of letters written by Lunn to Knox laying out objections to Catholicism, followed by letters of response by Knox. The nature of the questions and responses is direct, even sharp-edged, and yet very natural, and it is perhaps that spontaneous dialog which made the book so influential. The exchange between Lunn and Knox was very important to Lunn's eventual decision to convert to Catholicism. *Difficulties* is out of print today, but is obtainable through rare book dealers. It was one of the books William F. Buckley considered most influential in his personal spiritual growth.

Knox' chaplaincy at Oxford ended in 1939 and, as it was the war years, he moved to Lord and Lady Acton's estate at Aldenham to work on a new English translation of the Latin Vulgate bible. While Knox was living and writing there, Aldenham was invaded by Catholic schoolgirls from London who were relocated to escape the London bombings. Knox now unwittingly became chaplain to the schoolgirls who constituted a very different audience from the Oxford students to whom he was accustomed. Preaching to the girls required that Knox speak on a simpler level for younger people. From his conferences with the schoolgirls came three highly regarded books, *The Creed in Slow Motion*, *The Mass in Slow Motion*, and *The Gospel in Slow Motion* all of which are models of simplicity of presentation while at the same time toeing the line of Catholic doctrine.

Knox was insistent that faith be founded on intellect and reason and he worked hard to show that the beliefs of the Catholic Church met the demands of both. While the evidence for the Roman Catholic faith would not produce mathematical certainty, it would lead to an intellectual position excluding reasonable doubt which position, enhanced by grace, would lead the will to opt for the faith. To connect with his audiences in making this case, Knox made expert use of the English language; of imagination and imagery, of references to time and place and history, and of recollections of childhood memories. Knox recognized various obstacles to faith among which the problem of evil poses the greatest challenge. He sees a

partial answer in man's free will. The full answer is known to God alone and remains a mystery to us.

Knox was an apologist, not a theologian. In Part III of his book Walsh explores the five basic proof tasks of the Catholic apologist laid out by Knox in *The Belief of Catholics*: The Existence of God; The Old Testament as Prophesy; The Person of Christ; The New Testament as a Reliable Record; and The Church as Authorized Teacher.

While others are explored, including the Scholastic Five Ways, Knox' strongest arguments for the existence of God are drawn from nature. To Knox, the alternative to God as creator is randomness which he regards as being too farfetched and involving too many coincidences. For Knox, randomness could not account for the creation of an entirely new, immaterial, order of nature, namely the human mind which has not only the capacity of sensation but also of introspection.

"The Messianic Hope", an unpublished (by Knox) Oxford conference, is a wonderful description of the role of the Jewish people in salvation history and is worth the price of the book alone. Revelation begins in Jewish history. Knox deems it reasonable that a personal God would attempt to communicate with His creation and in the Old Testament is to be found such communication. At the same time, he thought that the Old Testament was unintelligible if not viewed in the context of the New. Knox believed that Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament prophesies constituted one of the most impressive arguments in defense of Christianity.

That God would send his Son to communicate with his creation also makes perfect sense to Knox, and he argues that Christ's claims to be divine can be justified through the testimony of the Apostles. Christ's miracles point to his divinity. They show that the Creator of the laws of nature can also suspend them. The Resurrection being the greatest of Christ's miracles serves as proof of His claim to divinity.

Tradition is also of paramount importance to Knox. Early Christian religious conviction was based on a set of living memories, and these memories were perpetuated in the first instance by tradition. Knox asserts that even if the New Testament had never been written there would have been a living Christian tradition handed down from age to age. He considers the New Testament a trustworthy document showing evidence of the common tradition upon which it was written. That tradition can be traced to Christ's lifetime and to the disciples who accompanied him.

As previously noted, legitimate teaching authority was of paramount importance for Knox. Knox describes how certain beliefs, such as the existence of the Creator, can be arrived at through intellect alone. Others, for instance the doctrine of the Virgin Birth, are revealed and accepted as reasonable on the authority of the Church. That Christ intended to found a Church can be shown from the New Testament. Christ left behind His Apostles, authorized to teach and act in his name. It follows from this that successive leaders of the Church are also authorized to teach, with bishops recognized as legitimate channels of the apostolic tradition from the earliest days. It also follows that the Bishop of Rome, beginning with St. Peter, being the final arbiter of the Church, must possess some special charism to ensure the faithful handing down of the tradition. How do you find this Church? The four

"marks" (i.e. One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic) of the Church professed in the Nicene Creed offer the road map pointing the way.

The final unpublished (by Knox) conference included in Walsh's book, *The Brute Fact of Christianity* is also worth the price of the book itself. Again it is Knox speaking to Oxford students about the sheer reality of Christianity as a force on this earth and how it cannot be overlooked by reasonable men. In this speech Knox explores fifteen different reasons that invite the logical inquiry of thinking persons about the truth of Christianity. For Knox, the fullness of that truth was and is to be found in the Roman Catholic Church.

Fr. Walsh's book is a good review for those who are already familiar with the Knox corpus and a very good starting place for those who are new to Knox.

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***A Fine-Tuned Universe: The Quest for God in Science and Theology*. By Alister E. McGrath. Louisville: WJKP, 2009, 262 pp., $39.95.**

This book is the published version of Alister McGrath's 2009 Gifford Lectures. The material forms a sequel to McGrath's recent extended essay, *The Open Secret: A New vision for Natural Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), where he argued that a new "natural theology" could provide not a causal explanation for the cosmos but instead an "explanatory unification" which makes sense of various (otherwise very strange) observable phenomena. Nature can thus become a bearer of transcendence—not through any inherent capacity in nature itself (after all, there is no *mere* uninterpreted nature, but only different constructed "readings" of nature); but when nature is seen through the lens of a Christian trinitarian ontology. This whole approach to natural theology is best summed up in C. S. Lewis's famous remark: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

A Fine-Tuned Universe develops this approach through a particular case study: the so-called "anthropic principle", which describes the universe's peculiar and puzzling friendliness towards life. McGrath's argument is that the universe's fine-tuning is consonant with a Christian picture of the world. At the core of the book is a scientific-theological reading of Augustine. In a series of engagements with contemporary science (the constants of the universe; the origins of life; the chemistry of water; the constraints of evolution; the teleology of evolution; and emergence), McGrath argues that Augustine's creation theology provides resources for making theological sense of both the origins of the universe and the processes of Darwinian evolution.

There is no notion here of "proving" the existence of God or the truth of Christian teaching. Instead, McGrath's claim is that there is a coherent "fit" between the observable world and the imaginative resources of Christian tradition. "What is observed within the natural order resonates with the core themes of the Christian vision of God" (p. 95). More than that, he also argues that Darwin's theory of natural selection opens the way to a theological reevaluation of Augustine's creation theology: read retrospectively in the light of biological evolution, Augustine becomes an important resource for thinking of creation in

terms of "both primordial actuality and emergent possibility" (p. 216).

One of my own discomforts with "theologies of nature" concerns the romanticism with which the project is usually undertaken: a theologian reflects on an imaginary world of idealised peace and harmony and perfection, instead of taking seriously the apparent blindness and ugliness and brutality that is so easily perceived in the created order. Even a thinker as probing and acute as T. F. Torrance—with his immense ruminations on the order and structure and rationality of the natural world—seems far too little impressed by what Karl Barth called the "shadow side of creation," the fact that creation's "goodness" is a difficult and demanding article of *faith* rather than an observable phenomenon. So it's to his credit that McGrath—unlike most exponents of natural theology—underscores the fact that Christian theology must try somehow to account for these "two sides" of nature. Nature is, as Luther put it, *simul bona et mala*: it is marked by "beauty and ugliness, joy and pain, good and evil" (p. 80). McGrath suggests that nature should thus be interpreted within the context of the economy of salvation, so that we perceive the created world to be "decayed and ambivalent," a "morally and aesthetically variegated entity whose goodness and beauty are often opaque and hidden, yet [is] nevertheless irradiated with the hope of transformation" (p. 82).

I'm not sure McGrath's approach—which leans so heavily on notions of coherence, rationality and order—provides a full response to the forceful criticism (as developed, for example. by Hauerwas and Jüngel) that natural theology tends towards a *theologia gloria*, leaving no place for the cross of Christ. But his remarks about creation as both *bona et mala* are surely a step in the right direction, and, one hopes, a step away from any mere romantic "re-enchantment" of the world. Nothing could be less "enchanting" than the idea that Christ's bloody death on a cross discloses the true grain of the universe: but this is precisely the idea for which any properly Christian theology of nature must account.

In any case, this is a very fascinating book, and an important step in the contemporary dialogue between theology and science. McGrath has been working around the theme of "nature" for several years now—but his best and most theologically substantive work is found in these two latest volumes, *The Open Secret* and *A Fine-Tuned Universe*.

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No One Sees God: The Dark Night of Atheists and Believers. **By Michael Novak. New York: Doubleday, 2008, 310 pp., $23.95.**

Dawkins, Dennett, Harris, and Hitchens are doing what some atheists have always done—trying to convince the public that religious faith and belief make no intellectual or social sense for any educated person. Religion "poisons everything" [Hitchens], and its influence in the public sphere must be delimited if tolerance, science, liberated sex and clear-headed democracy are to survive. The "new atheists" are polemicists, evangelists and reductionists. Many defenders of religion(s) have risen up to pronounce atheism incorrect as an intellectual position and mistaken as a forecast for humanity.

Michael Novak, after thirty years, returns to the lists with *No One Sees God*. At the beginning of his career, before he joined the American Enterprise Institute in 1974, he authored *Belief and Unbelief* [1965] and *The Experience of Nothingness* [1970]. The current book, however, stands on its own, both complementing and extending the arguments earlier advanced. Here he takes on the current crop of atheists, treating them directly and respectfully as individuals, consistently making the humanist point that polemics do not facilitate conversation and that it is conversation we need.

Novak's key metaphor appears in his subtitle. Atheists and theists are together in a "Dark Night of the Soul," an image [perhaps the absence of an image] which underlies his title, "No One Sees God." Reiterating the documents of the Roman Catholic Second Vatican Council and the letters of Pope John Paul II, he invites the atheists to a conversation between equals. When he chides them it is not for their atheism but for the excesses of their rhetoric, the narrowness of their knowledge of religion and theology, their surreptitious reliance on Jewish and Christian morality to establish secular ethics, their failure to develop a critical theory of knowledge, their petulant dismissal of metaphysics as a discipline, and their lack of respect for religious people. The indictment stands on all points. For their atheism he has arguments, not condemnation. Taking Novak as an example, it is safe to say that religious thinkers have matured considerably in the past century, and it may well be that this crop of atheist authors has not.

Two features of the book deserve special notice. First, Jurgen Habermas is its hero and model because of his philosophy of communicative discourse and because he, as an atheist, has proved willing to engage constructively in a dialogue with Christian thinkers, most recently Joseph Ratzinger, now Pope Benedict XVI. Second, Novak relies crucially in his arguments for theism and the nature of religion on the work of Bernard Lonergan, S.J., a teacher and mentor of Novak and many leading Catholic theologians. Novak relies on the "generalized empirical method" argued brilliantly in Lonergan's *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* [1957] and his critical theory of religion and theology in *Method in Theology* [1972].

The book is a valuable, nicely organized, well-written, constructive and learned contribution to an old debate, a near-ideal text for undergraduate courses in atheism and theism. Novak is a self-conscious participant in traditions of philosophical criticism as old as the Greeks and of a theological perspective born of 1500 years of Catholic intellectual life. They will likely be around for the foreseeable future and deserve to be heard on the question of God. They are barely alluded to in the work of the militant atheists.

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***The Future of Atheism: Alister McGrath and Daniel Dennett in Dialogue*. Edited by Robert B. Stewart. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008, 212 pp., $19.00.**

Robert Stewart's recent compilation of essays from the 2007 Greer-Heard Point-Counterpoint Forum is dedicated to discussing the future status of atheism. The basic intention of this increasingly popular event is to create a venue in which Evangelical Christians can dialogue with non-Evangelicals or non-Christians about hotly contested issues

in religion or culture. The primary interlocutors were British theologian Alister McGrath and atheist philosopher Daniel Dennett. Along with Stewart's transcript of the original dialogue are new essays from some of America's most well-known Christian philosophers, theologians, and atheists: Paul Copan, William Lane Craig, Evan Fales, Hugh McCann, J.P. Moreland, Keith Parsons, Ted Peters, and Robert Stewart. Although the event is primarily designed for Evangelicals, all Catholic, Orthodox, and mainstream Protestants who can appreciate and endorse the philosophical heritage of the Christian tradition will benefit immensely from reading and absorbing the contents of this book. There is plenty of food for thought here, especially for believers who seek to give rational justification for Christian faith.

Setting the stage for the rest of the book is Robert Stewart's opening essay, "The Future of Atheism: An Introductory Appraisal" (1-16). Stewart argues that in order for Christians and atheists to make an informative judgment about the future of atheism—insofar as that is possible—they must have an understanding of the history of atheism as well as its influence in the present (5). Unfortunately, questions such as "Is atheism losing ground in the west?" and "Is atheism becoming increasingly fashionable?" are barely touched upon, let alone addressed, in the dialogue by McGrath and Dennett or in any of the other essays. The contents of this book will better serve the reader as an introduction to natural theology or apologetics instead of informing him or her of the future shape of atheism.

The primary articles that follow Stewart's original framing of the issue are found in the exchange by McGrath and Dennett, Keith Parsons' "Atheism: Twilight or Dawn?" (51-66), and Ted Peters' "The God Hypothesis in the Future of Atheism" (163-182). Dennett and McGrath primarily discuss the influence of religion and atheism in modernity. Of all the essays in the book, Parsons' article deserves the most careful attention by Christian apologists. Responding to the McGrath's interesting claims in *The Twilight of Atheism: The Rise and Fall of Disbelief in the Modern World*, Parsons attempts to show that while philosophical atheism may be declining in the modern world, practical atheism may be on the rise. "The real danger that science poses for theism," he argues, "is not that it can 'disprove' God's existence, but that, as science progresses, God seemingly becomes increasingly irrelevant and God's role in the universe is diminished" (60). Peters makes an illuminating contribution to the interdisciplinary field of science and theology by showing that both disciplines share some things in common. Affirming the eschatological nature of Christianity, Peters argues that Christian theology is similar to scientific methodology in the sense that Christians have a provisional knowledge of God now and will receive further confirmation of this fact in the future.

The essay that epitomizes the book's emphasis on natural theology is William Lane Craig's "In Defense of Theistic Arguments" (67-96). Craig provides up-to-date formulations of the classical arguments for the existence of God, using recent findings in astronomy and astrophysics to support his case. More specifically, Craig utilizes the science to help establish the truth of premises in what are philosophical arguments for God's existence. J.P. Moreland's essay, "The Twilight of Scientific Naturalism: Responding to Thomas Nagel's Last Stand" (127-140), is the second piece dedicated to natural theology. Here Moreland

continues to defend his argument from consciousness to the existence of God in response to a recent challenge posed by Thomas Nagel.

Although Paul Copan's "God, Naturalism, and the Foundations of Morality" (141-162) is probably his most rigorous and well-rounded moral argument for the existence of God to date, it is still unclear to me whether Copan is a divine command theorist or a natural lawyer. While the distinction between these two camps may seem moot and unimportant to some apologists, advocates of the natural moral law position are at a distinct advantage in reaching the atheist who merely appeals to human nature to determine what is objectively right and wrong. A perfect example of an appeal to human nature by an atheist is found in Evan Fales' "Despair, Optimism, and Rebellion" (97-112). Little does Fales seem to realize that a universal human nature would demand the existence of a Transcendent Person to account for it (cf. 104-106). For in natural law thinking, objective moral norms are determined by the human person's ability to choose moral actions that correspond with their nature that is not only the same as every other person's, but is a nature that is pointed toward an objective end. And a universal human nature presupposes design, thereby invoking a Designer. Sociobiology and evolutionary psychology are not opposed to natural law thinking but are hypothetically consonant with it (for more on these very fine distinctions, see Craig A. Boyd, *A Shared Morality: A Narrative Defense of Natural Law Ethics*, [Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2007], 79-120, 121-160).

All in all, this volume is most welcome given the increasing popularity of debates between Christian academics and secular humanists. In spite of its minor glitches, those who seek to give reasons for Christian faith should examine Stewart's newest book. Undoubtedly it will help believers and secularists to decide for themselves whether or not Christianity is indeed a reasonable faith.

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***Introducing Paul: The Man, His Mission, and His Message*. By Michael Bird. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009, 192 pp., $20.00.**

Pope Benedict XVI declared 2008 to be the "Year of The Apostle Paul" in celebration of the apostle's 2000th birthday. Coming to terms with the theology expressed in the letters of Paul has kept theologians and pastors busy for nearly two millennia now.

Michael Bird's new book, *Introducing Paul: The Man, His Mission and His Message*, is a wonderful introduction to the Apostle Paul that manages to be both brief and substantive. Some books on Paul focus on the theology of the apostle expressed in his letters. Others provide a biographical look at the apostle's life and missionary journeys.

Introducing Paul combines the best of these approaches. Bird delves into Pauline theology, the specific letters, the story of Paul's life. And he accomplishes these tasks in less than 200 pages.

Bird is careful to read Paul in his own historical context. Many times in the book, he insists that we first realize that Paul's letters are not written *to* us, even if God intends that

the letters be *for* us. If we are to understand Paul rightly, we must read him in his own context.

If the Paul we claim to know looks and sounds a lot like us, then that is probably a good indication that we do not know him as well as we think we do. There is always a temptation to recruit him to our cause, to make our enemies his enemies, our beliefs his beliefs… If we can be mature enough to let Paul be Paul and treat his letters as windows into his world rather than as deposits of theological dogma, then we stand a chance of meeting him anew, letting him speak for himself in his language, on his terms and for his purposes.

Bird starts off by talking about Paul the man. He focuses on five important aspects of the story of Paul's life: the persecutor of the church, the greatest missionary who ever lived, a world-class theologian, a pastor with a heart for the church, and the martyr who died for his faith. Bird describes as a "maverick."

Bird spends a good deal of time recounting Paul's conversion experience. He argues for continuity in Paul's thought *after* coming to faith in Christ. Against some scholars who argue for late-life shifts in Paul's theology, Bird believes that his theology remained generally stable from conversion until his martyrdom. The conversion experience is central for understanding Paul:

This encounter with the risen Jesus had an enormous impact on his continuing religious experience of God, on his missionary drive and upon his theological reflection about God, Israel, Torah and salvation. That grace-event killed Saul the Pharisee and birthed Paul the apostle.

From there, Bird spends considerable time familiarizing his readers with "the stories behind the Story." In order to properly understand Paul, we must know the stories about God and creation, Adam and Christ, Abraham and Israel, Jesus and the church. These worldview stories provide frameworks into which we can fit the letters of Paul.

After he sets up the historical framework, he then launches into a chapter that gives a brief overview of the historical circumstances, original audience, and basic theology of each of Paul's letters. In a single chapter, Bird successfully surveys all of the letters.

What makes Bird's contribution especially timely is the way in which he weaves together old and new perspectives on Paul. He has great appreciation for N. T. Wright and for other New Perspective authors; yet he affirms the traditional view of imputation of Christ's righteousness:

Although no text explicitly says that Christ's righteousness is imputed to believers, nonetheless, without some kind of theology of imputation a lot of what Paul says about justification does not make sense…imputation is the integrating point for a variety of ideas in Paul's letters.

Bird attempts to do what many believe is impossible: incorporate the best aspects of the New Perspective within a largely traditional Reformed framework.

Some of Bird's views are unconvincing. I disagree with his pre-Christian reading of Romans 7. Likewise, though Bird does not advocate egalitarianism or complementarianism, he clearly leaves the egalitarian option open in a way that I don't think the apostle Paul does.

I was also disappointed to not see any discussion at all about the inspiration of the Scriptures or at least the inspiration of Paul's letters (which is ultimately the reason we should pay attention to what Paul says). Theories of inspiration seem to be assumed in this book rather than stated. Perhaps treatment of this subject is missing due to the brevity of the book.

But overall, *Introducing Paul* serves as a wonderful introduction to Paul's theology. It covers the relevant material in a way that is easy for the reader to understand, and it provides a good overview of the main issues in Pauline studies.

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***Depression: A Stubborn Darkness*. By Edward T. Welch. Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2004. 280 pp., $14.99.**

Well-meaning Christians will try to explain how being a part of the Kingdom of God makes depression impossible for a believer. They may say, "Depression isn't part of the abundant life Jesus promised his disciples. Depression isn't mentioned as being a hallmark of God's Kingdom." While that may be true, the complete rule of God's Kingdom on earth is still future. We still live under the curse of sin and death, and being God's child does not make one impervious to it. As Dr. Ed Welch mentions in his book, *Depression: A Stubborn Darkness*, even the whole creation is groaning as it waits for full redemption and renewal. But we are not bereft of hope.

In his Introduction, Welch, a counselor, faculty member and director of the School of Biblical Counseling at the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation and Professor of Practical Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, shares the main premise, purpose, and suggestions for using his book. He is writing for both the depressed person and to the one who loves the depressed person. Welch explains, "If you are depressed, the chapters that follow are intended to be brief and, at times, provocative. If you want to help someone who is depressed, the chapters are intended to give you direction and to be used as actual readings you can share with the depressed person."

Welch paints an accurate picture of depression: how it feels, how it looks, what it thinks, how it speaks, and where it leads. He gains the reader's trust by demonstrating his understanding and compassion for the sufferer.

In a more technical chapter, Welch takes the reader through the many layers of depression. He provides the symptoms of depression, both major and dysthymic, as listed in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. He explains, "Think of depression as a continuum of severity. On one end it is bothersome, at the other end debilitating. The less severe depression is technically called Dysthymic Disorder, the more severe, Major Depression." He provides the characteristics of both types of depression so that the reader can determine with which one he or she suffers.

Welch offers one word of caution when it comes to diagnosing depression, particularly depression that may be caused by a chemical imbalance. He writes, "As you move toward the less severe end of the continuum, many assume that the causes are relationship

problems, difficult circumstances, or negative thinking. As you move toward the more severe end, the popular theory is that the cause is a chemical imbalance. Don't buy into these generalizations just yet." The tendency is to believe that the problem is merely a physical one and that a pill will fix it. While medication may alleviate the symptoms of depression, it cannot treat the root causes (sin, relationship problems, beliefs about God, etc.). Welch writes, "Don't let the technical, scientific diagnosis keep you from seeing these ordinary problems. Instead, when in doubt, expect to find ordinary humanness just below the surface, in the form of fear, anger, guilt, shame jealousy, wants, despair over loss, physical weaknesses and other problems that are present in every person. Depression is not always caused by these things, but it is always an occasion to consider them."

In Part One, "Depression Is Suffering," Dr. Welch challenges the depressed person regarding what he or she believes about God. Depression can come as a result of a buildup of unconfessed sin. It can come as a result of a rift in an important relationship. The way a person deals with sin and painful events indicates what he believes about God. Welch helps the reader answer some most important questions: Why am I depressed? What is causing this? Do I deserve this? What role does God play in my depression? What role does Satan play? Where do I turn? How can I use the scripture? Does depression have a purpose? This portion of his book culminates in a stirring admonition to remember Jesus and to persevere.

In Part Two, "Listening to Depression," Dr. Welch guides the reader to listen to depression's complex and emotional message, to dissect it. He explains, "Emotions have a history. To put a complex process as simply as possible, their history consists of two parts: (1) events outside of us, which include physical problems, and (2) beliefs, spiritual allegiances, and interpretations within us. The interaction of these two, over time, is what causes depression." He carefully evaluates the human heart and the many ways we interpret events in light of what we believe. Finally, Welch explains how fear, anger, failure and shame, dashed hopes, guilt and legalism, and death play into depression. All of the aforementioned emotions teach us something about ourselves and what we believe about God. Welch goes on to share how the depressed can learn to trust God. Loving Christ is the key to breaking free from fear, anger, guilt and legalism, and thoughts of suicide.

In Part Three, "Other Help and Advice," Dr. Welch addresses treatment for depression, medical treatment in particular. Depression has become so common that possible treatments have proliferated. When choosing a treatment, Dr. Welch says, "The question with these physical treatments is not, 'Is this treatment right or wrong?' The question is, 'Is this treatment wise?' The guidelines of wisdom apply." Welch suggests several strategies that have proven helpful for someone with depression, like following a realistic schedule, taking vitamins, regular exercise, and eating well. Part Three also includes a chapter of specific helps for family and friends of a depressed individual.

Part Four, "Hope and Joy: Thinking God's Thoughts," is a straightforward encouragement to fight depression with understanding one's place in God's story, hope in God, thankfulness and joy in the Lord.

Dr. Welch expounds on several important spiritual truths. One is that we should not be so eager to avoid suffering and pain. If you are sad or depressed, then it's important to find

out why, but not necessarily so that you can make it stop. God uses suffering and trials to enlarge our souls, to teach us obedience, to conform us to the image of his son. It makes sense to yield to his authority over our lives and seek Him, to try to understand the lessons in the pain, and to seek deeper fellowship with him while we suffer through depression.

The second truth springs from the resurrection. The fact that Jesus rose from the grave offers depressed believers great hope and promise for the future. He writes, "All hopelessness is ultimately a denial of the resurrection…the resurrection trumps death, sin, misery and everything touched by the curse." Welch explains that depressed people tend to cast off hope and rewrite their lives outside of God's story. Welch encourages the depressed person to stop being afraid of hope and to embrace his place within God's greater story.

The third truth challenges conventional wisdom that tells a depressed individual to look within to figure out what makes him or her happy and do it. Instead, Welch reminds the reader of Jesus' teaching that joy is found in serving and loving others, that those who find their lives end up losing them. While it may seem wise to insulate oneself from close relationships in order to eliminate pain, it will damage one's soul. It is important to be able to feel emotions. Investing in the lives of others in some way, no matter how small, is a key to lifting depression.

The end of each chapter includes a portion entitled "Response." It is a bit of a summary, but Dr. Welch also provides simple exercises and a question or two to answer. Most of these are very personal, designed to reveal the heart.

Depression: *A Stubborn Darkness* proved to be very informative and encouraging to me. In addition to my struggles with mild depression, three individuals close to me struggle with bipolar disorder. This book provides the tools for engaging in meaningful, helpful conversation with someone who is depressed. While his writing is not always a soul-stirring, pastoral encouragement, Welch does offer expert spiritual wisdom and guidance. Depression may have its physical manifestations, but it is best addressed as a spiritual issue. I am glad I read this book. I think it will be one that I go to as a reference. I highly recommend it for counselors, anyone who experiences depression and for those who love someone who suffers with depression.

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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 infinites, 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.