



AMERICAN
THEOLOGICAL
INQUIRY

A BIENNIAL JOURNAL

OF

Theology, Culture & History

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Quicunque, Chalcedonense*

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AMERICAN THEOLOGICAL INQUIRY

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General Editor
Gannon Murphy, PhD
1280 Grand Avenue, Ste. 304
St. Paul, Minnesota 55105
gmurphy@atijournal.org

Associate Editor
Stephen Patrick, PhD
1280 Grand Avenue, Ste. 304
St. Paul, Minnesota 55105
spatrick@atijournal.org

PURPOSE STATEMENT

To provide an inter-tradition forum for scholars who affirm the historic Ecumenical Creeds of Christendom (Apostles', Athanasian, Nicæno-Constantinopolitan, and Chalcedonian) to constructively communicate contemporary theologies, developments, ideas, commentaries, insights, and affirmations pertaining to theology, culture, and history, toward reforming and elevating American Christianity. ATI seeks a *critical* function as much or more so as a quasi-ecumenical one. The purpose is not, per se, to erase or weaken the distinctions or 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 American Christianity with special reference to Her historic roots.

ABOUT

American Theological Inquiry (ATI) was formed in 2007 by Drs. S. Gannon Murphy (PhD, St. David's College, Univ. Wales, Theology; Presbyterian/Reformed) and Stephen Patrick (PhD, Univ. Illinois, Philosophy; Eastern Orthodox) to open up space for diverse Christian academicians, who affirm the Ecumenical Creeds, to share research throughout the broader Christian scholarly community in America.

ATI reaches thousands of Christian scholars throughout the United States, particularly specialists in theology. Though ATI is a new journal, scholars who publish with ATI benefit from exposure to a vast, non-insular network of one of the broadest Christian academic communities possible.

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Manuscript submissions and communications should be addressed to the Editor. Emailed submissions are acceptable. ATI is open to diverse submissions concerning theology, church, philosophy, culture, and history from the perspective of historic Creedal Christianity. Particular topics of interest, however, generally include:

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- Theological, philosophical, ecclesial trends in the Western world.
- Cultural/philosophical apologetics.
- Ecumenism and/or criticism of other traditions [ostensively] *within* the scope of ancient orthodoxy (Creedal Christianity).
- Systematic theology.
- Perspectives on history/historical events from an orthodox viewpoint.
- Engaging contemporary culture with the gospel.
- Engagement with the Patristical literature.

Book reviews should be sent to:

Peter Burton, MDiv
Editor, Book Reviews
1280 Grand Avenue, Ste. 304
St. Paul, Minnesota 55105
bookreviews@atijournal.org

ALL submissions MUST conform to the following standards:

1. The writer affirms the tenets of the historic Ecumenical Creeds of Christendom, (Apostles', Athanasian, Nicæno-Constantinopolitan, and Chalcedonian). The ONLY exceptions to these required affirmations are the filioque clauses in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds.
2. The submitted material, both MSS and book reviews, must pertain to theology, philosophy, culture, or history from a historic (creedal) Christian viewpoint.

3. The writer holds a doctorate, is a doctoral student, or is a distinguished member of the clergy.
4. 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 or RTF format. Please include your full name, title and/or affiliation, and a brief (i.e., one sentence) statement affirming the tenets of the four Ecumenical Creeds as outlined in Item 1 above.

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[An Aged Hilaire Belloc]

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from the truth; a large learning
confirms the truth.”*

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FROM THE EDITOR¹

I am very pleased to introduce to you, the reader, this first issue of American Theological Inquiry (ATI). When plans for ATI were first hatched in late 2006, the incipient aim was, and remains, to provide an inter-tradition forum for scholars who affirm the historic Ecumenical Creeds to constructively communicate contemporary theologies, developments, ideas, commentaries, and insights pertaining to theology, culture, and history, toward reforming and elevating American Christianity. I am delighted by the favorable response we have received from the Christian scholarly community toward making this aim a—now present—reality.

The lineup of articles in this current volume reflect some of the finest Christian thinking from leading lights in Christian scholarship, spanning multiple traditions. Following a patristical reading (which we intend to make a staple part of each issue of ATI), we begin with Thomas Weinandy's wonderful essay, "Why Ask The Fathers? The Dynamics of a Living Tradition." Dr. Weinandy is currently Executive Director of the Secretariat for Doctrine and Pastoral Practices of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). The essay is the print version of a recent address he delivered to the USCCB. I am confident you will find, as we have, what a fine piece it is concerning the richness of the early church Fathers, and the inestimable benefit they *still* impart on thoughtful Christians if only we avail ourselves of this vital inheritance.

Next, we move to Reformed scholar, John Cooper's, excellent piece concerning panentheism. Cooper's recent book concerning this oft-overlooked philosophical substrata, and the manner in which it appears to have crept into numerous theologies, is easily the best work on the topic to date. Indeed, it is probably the *only* scholarly text devoted to panentheism and its impact on Christian systematics. I trust that ATI's readers will be as interested and as stimulated as we were after reading Cooper's piece.

Evangelical scholar, Sam Lamerson, then offers us an article concerning the "openness of God" (aka "open theism") movement, with a critique of the movement in the context of historical-Jesus research. Having done extensive work myself concerning open theism, I was delighted to receive this article and its calculated approach in addressing this movement which has increasingly spread its tentacles in both American and British churches.

Well known Reformed scholar, D. G. Hart, next offers us an analysis of Protestant ecclesiology and praxis (especially along liturgical and/or *al*iturgical lines). In keeping with most of what I have seen by Dr. Hart, the article is both insightful, demanding, and often humorous. ATI's Protestant readers are likely to be challenged by this piece, while our Catholic and Orthodox readers will appreciate an insider's view into some of the history and dynamics that have been affecting Protestant worship in America for many decades.

Tom Holland of the Wales Evangelical School of Theology then offers us a timely exegesis of 1 Corinthians 5-6. I came to know Dr. Holland while doing research in Wales

¹ Gannon Murphy, PhD, is General Editor of American Theological Inquiry and author of *Voices of Reason in Christian History: The Great Apologists; Consuming Glory A Classical Defense of Divine-Human Relationality Against Open Theism*, and the forthcoming, *Seeking God in the 21st Century: Reasons for the Christian Hope*.

and am confident that ATP's readers will find this sample of his continued rigor in New Testament studies both edifying and incisive and, perhaps, will spur you on to explore Holland's broader corpus of NT scholarship and Pauline studies.

In keeping with ATP's axiomatic interest in history, Raymond W. Belair, an attorney and Roman Catholic doctoral student in theology, supplies us with a terrific recent history of the Ordinary Universal Magisterium, an often misunderstood strand of the Roman church's teaching authority. There is a great deal to be learned from Belair's piece and I am sure that ATP's readers, no matter what tradition they represent, will greatly benefit from it.

Lastly, but far from least, Dr. Joan Mueller, OSC, offers us an important cultural piece concerning the Project Welcome Sudanese Community (PWSC). This growing charitable and missional organization is expending prodigious energies in Omaha, Nebraska to minister—both physically and spiritually—to that area's significant influx of Sudanese refugees (often persecuted), many of whom are Christians, who are now struggling to overcome a new set of challenges here in the States. Mueller's article will both touch your heart and inform your understanding of practical theology as she relates her experiences as the founder and director of PWSC toward various praxis models.

Each of us on the editorial staff at ATI wish our readers a blessed New Year and hope you will keep in touch with us. We invite your feedback and suggestions, as well as your article submissions and book reviews for our July issue and beyond.

Soli Deo Gloria.

PATRISTIC READING

EXPOSITION OF THE PRESENT STATE OF THE CHURCHES

ST. BASIL¹

Chp. 30, *De Spiritu Sancto*

To what then shall I liken our present condition? It may be compared, I think, to some naval battle which has arisen out of time old quarrels, and is fought by men who cherish a deadly hate against one another, of long experience in naval warfare, and eager for the fight. Look, I beg you, at the picture thus raised before your eyes. See the rival fleets rushing in dread array to the attack. With a burst of uncontrollable fury they engage and fight it out. Fancy, if you like, the ships driven to and fro by a raging tempest, while thick darkness falls from the clouds and blackens all the scenes so that watchwords are indistinguishable in the confusion, and all distinction between friend and foe is lost. To fill up the details of the imaginary picture, suppose the sea swollen with billows and whirled up from the deep, while a vehement torrent of rain pours down from the clouds and the terrible waves rise high. From every quarter of heaven the winds beat upon one point, where both the fleets are dashed one against the other. Of the combatants some are turning traitors; some are deserting in the very thick of the fight; some have at one and the same moment to urge on their boats, all beaten by the gale, and to advance against their assailants. Jealousy of authority and the lust of individual mastery splits the sailors into parties which deal mutual death to one another. Think, besides all this, of the confused and unmeaning roar sounding over all the sea, from howling winds, from crashing vessels, from boiling surf, from the yells of the combatants as they express their varying emotions in every kind of noise, so that not a word from admiral or pilot can be heard. The disorder and confusion is tremendous, for the extremity of misfortune, when life is despaired of, gives men license for every kind of wickedness. Suppose, too, that the men are all smitten with the incurable plague of mad love of glory, so that they do not cease from their struggle each to get the better of the other, while their ship is actually settling down into the deep.

Turn now I beg you from this figurative description to the unhappy reality. Did it not at one time appear that the Arian schism, after its separation into a sect opposed to the Church of God, stood itself alone in hostile array? But when the attitude of our foes against us was changed from one of long standing and bitter strife to one of open warfare, then, as is well known, the war was split up in more ways than I can tell into many subdivisions, so that all men were stirred to a state of inveterate hatred alike by common party spirit and individual suspicion. But what storm at sea was ever so fierce and wild as this tempest of the Churches? In it every landmark of the Fathers has been moved; every foundation, every bulwark of opinion has been shaken: everything buoyed up on the unsound is dashed about and shaken down. We attack one another. We are overthrown by one another. If our enemy is not the first to strike us, we are wounded by the comrade at our side. If a foeman is stricken and falls, his fellow soldier tramples him down. There is at least this bond of union between us that we hate our common foes, but no sooner have the enemy gone by than we find enemies

¹ St. Basil (c. 329-379), one of the great Cappadocian Fathers, founded several monasteries before becoming Bishop of Caesarea in 370. Among his varied works and writings are his *De Spiritu Sancto* and *On the Hexameron*.

in one another. And who could make a complete list of all the wrecks? Some have gone to the bottom on the attack of the enemy, some through the unsuspected treachery of their allies, some from the blundering of their own officers. We see, as it were, whole churches, crews and all, dashed and shattered upon the sunken reefs of disingenuous heresy, while others of the enemies of the Spirit of Salvation have seized the helm and made shipwreck of the faith. And then the disturbances wrought by the princes of the world have caused the downfall of the people with a violence unmatched by that of hurricane or whirlwind. The luminaries of the world, which God set to give light to the souls of the people, have been driven from their homes, and a darkness verily gloomy and disheartening has settled on the Churches. The terror of universal ruin is already imminent, and yet their mutual rivalry is so unbounded as to blunt all sense of danger. Individual hatred is of more importance than the general and common warfare, for men by whom the immediate gratification of ambition is esteemed more highly than the rewards that await us in a time to come, prefer the glory of getting the better of their opponents to securing the common welfare of mankind. So all men alike, each as best he can, lift the hand of murder against one another. Harsh rises the cry of the combatants encountering one another in dispute; already all the Church is almost full of the inarticulate screams, the unintelligible noises, rising from the ceaseless agitations that divert the right rule of the doctrine of true religion, now in the direction of excess, now in that of defect. On the one hand are they who confound the Persons and are carried away into Judaism; on the other hand are they that, through the opposition of the natures, pass into heathenism. Between these opposite parties inspired Scripture is powerless to mediate; the traditions of the apostles cannot suggest terms of arbitration. Plain speaking is fatal to friendship, and disagreement in opinion all the ground that is wanted for a quarrel. No oaths of confederacy are so efficacious in keeping men true to sedition as their likeness in error. Every one is a theologian though he have his soul branded with more spots than can be counted. The result is that innovators find a plentiful supply of men ripe for faction, while self-appointed scions of the house of place-hunters reject the government of the Holy Spirit and divide the chief dignities of the Churches. The institutions of the Gospel have now everywhere been thrown into confusion by want of discipline; there is an indescribable pushing for the chief places while every self-advertiser tries to force himself into high office. The result of this lust for ordering is that our people are in a state of wild confusion for lack of being ordered; the exhortations of those in authority are rendered wholly purposeless and void, because there is not a man but, out of his ignorant impudence, thinks that it is just as much his duty to give orders to other people, as it is to obey any one else.

So, since no human voice is strong enough to be heard in such a disturbance, I reckon silence more profitable than speech, for if there is any truth in the words of the Preacher, "The words of wise men are heard in quiet," in the present condition of things any discussion of them must be anything but becoming. I am moreover restrained by the Prophet's saying, "Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time, for it is an evil time," a time when some trip up their neighbour's heels, some stamp on a man when he is down, and others clap their hands with joy, but there is not one to feel for the fallen and hold out a helping hand, although according to the ancient law he is not uncondemned, who passes by even his enemy's beast of burden fallen under his load. This is not the state of things now. Why not? The love of many has waxed cold; brotherly concord is destroyed, the very name of unity is ignored, brotherly admonitions are heard no more, nowhere is there Christian pity, nowhere falls the tear of sympathy. Now there is no one to receive "the weak

in faith,” but mutual hatred has blazed so high among fellow clansmen that they are more delighted at a neighbour’s fall than at their own success. Just as in a plague, men of the most regular lives suffer from the same sickness as the rest, because they catch the disease by communication with the infected, so nowadays by the evil rivalry which possesses our souls we are carried away to an emulation in wickedness, and are all of us each as bad as the others. Hence merciless and sour sit the judges of the erring; unfeeling and hostile are the critics of the well disposed. And to such a depth is this evil rooted among us that we have become more brutish than the brutes; they do at least herd with their fellows, but our most savage warfare is with our own people.

For all these reasons I ought to have kept silence, but I was drawn in the other direction by love, which “seeketh not her own,” and desires to overcome every difficulty put in her way by time and circumstance. I was taught too by the children at Babylon, that, when there is no one to support the cause of true religion, we ought alone and all unaided to do our duty. They from out of the midst of the flame lifted up their voices in hymns and praise to God, reeking not of the host that set the truth at naught, but sufficient, three only that they were, with one another. Wherefore we too are undismayed at the cloud of our enemies, and, resting our hope on the aid of the Spirit, have, with all boldness, proclaimed the truth. Had I not so done, it would truly have been terrible that the blasphemers of the Spirit should so easily be emboldened in their attack upon true religion, and that we, with so mighty an ally and supporter at our side, should shrink from the service of that doctrine, which by the tradition of the Fathers has been preserved by an unbroken sequence of memory to our own day. A further powerful incentive to my undertaking was the warm fervour of your “love unfeigned,” and the seriousness and taciturnity of your disposition; a guarantee that you would not publish what I was about to say to all the world,—not because it would not be worth making known, but to avoid casting pearls before swine. My task is now done. If you find what I have said satisfactory, let this make an end to our discussion of these matters. If you think any point requires further elucidation, pray do not hesitate to pursue the investigation with all diligence, and to add to your information by putting any uncontroversial question. Either through me or through others the Lord will grant full explanation on matters which have yet to be made clear, according to the knowledge supplied to the worthy by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

WHY ASK THE FATHERS? THE DYNAMICS OF A LIVING TRADITION

Thomas Weinandy, O.F.M. Cap¹

I have been asked to address the question of why we should study the Fathers of the Church. It might seem to some that they are somewhat irrelevant since they lived so long ago and thus their culture and intellectual milieu would appear to be much different from our own. Our interest in them might be purely an historical, antiquarian curiosity. Moreover, they are often not easy to read. It is not merely that their theological and philosophical concepts are at times difficult to grasp and comprehend, but maybe even more so their theological approach is often unsystematic. They are notorious for being repetitious ramblers, taking forever to make a point. Further, while their *ad hominem* arguments may at times amuse, they often appear to lack objectivity if not Christian charity.

Nonetheless, I believe that if one wants to take theology seriously, it is absolutely essential to possess a good grasp of the Fathers of the Church, particularly the manner in which they undertook the theological enterprise, the issues that they confronted and clarified, and the answers they provided. Only with such a patristic background can one undertake, in an intelligible and fecund manner, the study of contemporary theology. Indeed, it is only if one has some sense of the patristic tradition that one can truly and fully appreciate the truth of the Gospel and the wealth of wisdom and life it contains. To be ignorant of the Fathers is to be ignorant of one's own Christian and Catholic patrimony. What I would like to do in this short essay is offer what I consider to be some of the internal and external ingredients, both positive and negative, that cultivated the patristic manner of doing theology. These ingredients and forces, I believe, are still very relevant for contemporary theology and church life.

The Economy of Salvation

In the aftermath of the Enlightenment that still lingers to the present under contemporary postmodernism, Christian theology continues to labor under the intellectual and cultural prejudice of a closed universe. That is, God does not (cannot) intervene by word and action in time and history in a manner that is singularly his own and so in a manner that cannot be accounted for by the "laws of nature." What has been traditionally referred to as "the supernatural" has been completely ruled out.

In contrast to this contemporary anti-supernatural predisposition, the Fathers of the Church took as philosophically and theologically axiomatic the premise that God does act within time and history. For the Fathers, the whole history of the Old Testament was the grand history of God's action and this history found its awesome completion in the person and work of Jesus Christ. This revelation, was not merely God speaking His word and so informing us about something to which we had no previous knowledge. Rather, the actions of God are revelatory in that, through these divine actions in time and history, He reveals

¹ Thomas Weinandy, PhD, O.F.M. Cap, is Executive Director of the Secretariat for Doctrine and Pastoral Practices of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. He is the author of *Jesus the Christ* and *Does God Suffer?*

who He is and simultaneously alters man's relation to him. Therefore, the subsequent meaning of time and history are equally altered. For the Fathers, the words of the Old and New Testaments are inspired and holy words, precisely because they interpret the actions of God and so explain their divine significance for us.

For example, the Fathers knew that Jesus did not reveal the Trinity by merely telling his disciples that there are three persons in one God. Rather, the whole revelatory process was much more dynamic and exciting. The Fathers instinctively grasped that the distinct persons of the Trinity were revealed primarily through their own distinctive actions and that these same actions contributed to our salvation. Thus the Father revealed that He is the Father in the sending of His Son. The Son revealed that He is the Son in becoming man and as man obediently doing the will of His Father. In performing these works, the Son as man brought about our salvation. The Holy Spirit revealed that He is the Holy Spirit in that, by being sent by the Father through the Son, He performs all the actions which sanctify believers and so gives rise to the body of Christ, the Church. Thus, these actions of the persons of the Trinity not only reveal who they are, but these same actions are also the distinct contributions of the persons of the Trinity through which a whole new salvific order is established within time and history. The actions by which the persons of the Trinity are revealed are the very same actions by which we are saved.

The Fathers, as early as Ignatius of Antioch (d. 107), came to refer to these Divine salvific interventions as God's "economy," that is, His providential care and beneficent governing of human life and history. Moreover, because God intervenes in time and history, the Fathers recognized that the content of their faith was not merely philosophical insight into the eternal nature or order of things. The Gospel was not of human making. The economy of salvation narrates the history of God's actions within time and history by which man's relationship has been altered. It is through faith that one seizes the new and eternal benefits that are now possible due to God's salvific actions.

Furthermore, God's economy of salvation—what the Father brought to completion through the work of his Son and their mutual sending of the Spirit—was "the given." The content of this revelation is where one begins. The content of faith was not something that the Fathers speculated on as if it needed to be found and established. They knew from the onset what they were to believe for they had received it from the Apostles. It was embodied in what came to be known as the New Testament, and these sacred writings must be understood and interpreted, as Irenaeus knew very well, from within the light of the apostolic tradition and from within the life of the apostolic church.

I believe this is one of the foremost reasons for reading and studying the Fathers today. One enters a faith world that is so unlike our own and yet a faith world that we need to make our own. We too must be nurtured on the truth that God does act in time and history and so has changed time and history. We too must be confident that we truly know in faith the content of our faith. The Fathers held with tenacity their knowledge of the divine mysteries which they understood resided within their apostolic understanding of scripture, an understanding that they inherited and kept alive in all of its purity and power. These same mysteries can be known today through that same apostolic tradition from which scripture is read and interpreted. We need to ask now what were the causes that compelled the Fathers, being grounded in the faith, to develop their apostolic theology?

Faith and the Holy Spirit

The first and foremost ingredient that compelled the Fathers to do theology was faith itself. The Fathers realized that faith contained an inherent impetus compelling believers to a deeper understanding and a clearer expression of what is believed. The Holy Spirit resided within the content of faith and He also dwelt within each believer, and it was this mingling of the faith and the Spirit within the believer that ignited and kept alight patristic theology. The Fathers knew well from the start the principle later articulated by St. Anselm: *Fides quaerens intellectum*—Faith seeking understanding. While the Fathers knew well that they were seeking to understand their faith and not some human philosophy, yet they equally knew that if they did not intellectually seek to understand their faith, it would be a sign that they did not truly believe. Theological “seeking” is the mark of a faith spiritually alive and healthy. To know in faith the Gospel mysteries, for example, that God is a Trinity of persons or that the Son of God came to exist as a man, compels the believer both to contemplate them in awe and to desire to know them more deeply.

In contrast today, the theological enterprise is often done apart from faith. It at times appears that the goal of theology is to find and so establish what it is that is to be believed. Within the contemporary situation, the Fathers can teach us anew that the Gospel mysteries are *already known and proclaimed* from within the apostolic understanding of scripture and it is from this apostolic faith that theology begins. However, it must be admitted as well that the Fathers equally held that theology is not something static or lifeless, as if all is known perfectly. Rather, to believe truly is to possess an intellectual inquisitiveness that can only be satisfied with the beatific vision, but even then it does not come to an end but lasts an eternity.

For the Fathers, then, theology is more than an abstract intellectual business. True theology can only be done properly by a mind and heart steeped in prayer. It is only as the believer becomes more conformed to the likeness of Christ, the Truth of the Father, through the Spirit of Truth that he or she is able to penetrate the truth of the divine mysteries. The Fathers often made reference to the principle that like is known only by like. Thus, for the Fathers, a true theologian must be a saint, for only a saint is truly in communion with the mysteries he is seeking to understand. Again, this patristic manner of doing theology, a manner that is nurtured on faith and the interior working of the Holy Spirit, is often absent within today’s theological academy. I would argue that only as one reads and studies the Fathers within the context of one’s own prayer and liturgical practice does one imbibe their sense of holy awe and wonder in the face of the Gospel mysteries.

Evangelism and Teaching

Patristic theology developed not only from within the faith life of the Fathers, but also from within their own ministries. The Fathers were pastoral men. Almost all of them were bishops. They were often evangelists and teachers. If one has ever attempted to bring someone to faith or has ever stood in a classroom and attempted to explain to a group of students the meaning of the Incarnation or the Eucharist, one realizes that such activity elicits many questions, questions to which one often does not have immediate answers. Patristic theology originated from within an evangelistic and catechetical milieu. It is not surprising that some of the first great theologians were teachers. Clement of Alexandria and Origen, for example, were both teachers in the great catechetical school at Alexandria.

Moreover, as teachers, the Fathers became great apologists. Their theology not only attempted to explain the Gospel to fledgling believers, but also to clarify and defend the faith in the midst of a social and cultural environment that was often politically, religiously, and philosophically hostile and antagonistic towards the Gospel.

Christian theology was born within the climate of many competing intellectual and religious options: Gnosticism, Manicheism, Platonism, Stoicism, the Mystery Religions, and so on. Often the Fathers needed to sort out, especially within the competing philosophies of their day, which bits and pieces were valid and could actually be employed to the Gospel's advantage. Justin Martyr argued that anything that is true, no matter what its source, actually belongs to Christians, for all truth comes ultimately from the Logos, the Word of God, who became man in the person of Jesus Christ.

It is to our advantage to read and study the Fathers because the questions that confronted them are not so different from the questions that confront us—questions from catechumens, from parishioners, from people of other faiths, from intellectuals, from politicians, and from atheists. How can Christianity claim to be the only true religion? Is not Buddha just as good as Jesus? Why do Christians think they have the right to legislate their morality? How can Jesus be *God*? What evidence is there that miracles actually happen? Is it not irrational and even disgusting to think one is eating and drinking someone's body and blood? How can Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit all be one and the same God? Individual Fathers did not always have full and complete answers to all of these questions. Sometimes fully satisfactory answers fermented for years and even centuries within body of Christ. However, as we watch the Fathers struggling to find the answers for the questions of their day, our minds become one with their minds and we too struggle to ferret out the answers for our day. In so doing, with the aid of the Fathers, our thoughts become more clear and our answers more precise.

Heresy

One of the greatest impetuses for developing Patristic theology was also the issue of heresy. There is nothing like a good heresy to get everyone thinking. The first thing to note about heresy is that while it always denies something that the Church holds to be true, such a denial never causes the Church to doubt what it has believed. For example, Arius' denial of the Divinity of the Son did not undermine the early Church's belief that the Son was fully God. The Fathers knew that this was always proclaimed and believed. The majority of the Fathers went to the Council of Nicaea with no doubt as to what the Church believed and so with confident assurance upheld the full Divinity of the Christ.

This is important for us to grasp today when so many Christian doctrines are questioned or denied. Because of such questioning or denial, one can get the impression that the Church no longer really knows what to teach or believe. This is a false impression. The Church knows what is to be believed and the present pope and those bishops and theologians in union with him have made it clear.

However, heresy does raise other difficulties. For example, Arius' denial of the Divinity of the Son did raise two interrelated problems for the early Church. The first was that the Church had to state clearly, in the face of Arius' denial, what is to be believed so as to leave no doubt as to what is to be believed. The second concern that Nicaea confronted was how

to proclaim the full divinity of the Son without falling into one of the heresies that Arius said could not be avoided if one did believe that the Son is truly God. Arius argued that it was impossible for God to be one and for the Father and the Son to be both equally God. Thus, the Council of Nicaea (and subsequently Athanasius) had to express the nature of the Son's divinity in such a manner as to leave no doubt that the Church does believe the Son to be truly God and equally to express this belief without undermining the oneness of God.

The Council Fathers, by the light of the Holy Spirit, employed the term *homoousion* to ensure the proper understanding of the Son's divinity as well as to ensure the oneness of God. Firstly, the Son is one in being with the Father and so He is God as the Father is God. Secondly, since the Son is one in being with the Father, the Father and the Son are the one God. What the one nature of God is, is the Father begetting the Son. Unlike Arius who, in his denial, dissolved the mystery of the Trinity, the Council of Nicaea and the subsequent Nicene Fathers, especially Athanasius, conceived the mystery of the Trinity in such a manner as to make the mystery itself more clear. Heresy, then, always forces the Church to conceive and express more clearly what it has always believed. Moreover, by conceiving and expressing the mysteries of the faith more clearly, these mysteries become more luminous and awe inspiring.

If one reads the Fathers as they confront various heresies, one will always find this same pattern. They possessed an assurance of faith and it was that assurance of faith that allowed them to conceive and articulate more clearly the truths of the faith in the face of various heretical denials. One finds this, for example, with Cyril of Alexandria in regard to the Incarnation, or Augustine in regard to the relationship between grace and free will. In the midst of controversy, their faith sought understanding. After the example of the Fathers, today it is our assurance of faith that allows us to newly conceive and so more clearly articulate the mysteries of faith in the midst of contemporary questioning and denials.

Conclusion

I hope I have presented some vital and important reasons for why we should study the Fathers of the Church. They illustrate the Spirit in which Christian theology should be done, and in so doing they deepen our own understanding of the great Christian mysteries. They treated the Gospel with reverence and awe and because of this Spirit-filled veneration they were compelled to ponder it ever more deeply in order to proclaim it ever more clearly. In so doing the Fathers allowed the Gospel to become ever more brilliant and glorious. Today, each of us is called, by our Christian vocation, to undertake this same noble task. We do so humbly because of the grandeur of the Gospel, but equally we do it with pride to the glory of Jesus Christ.

PANENTHEISM: THE OTHER “GOD OF THE PHILOSOPHERS”: AN OVERVIEW¹

John W. Cooper²

Classical Theism, Relational Theology, and “the God of the Philosophers”

When Pascal penned his famous warning against substituting the God of the philosophers for the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,³ he was addressing the enlightened intellectuals of his time who rejected biblical revelation and the supernatural God of the Judeo-Christian tradition. The early deists and Spinoza are prime examples. They constructed theologies based on reason alone, not on supernatural revelation. They either ignored Holy Scripture or reinterpreted it so that it makes no claims about God and salvation that an intelligent human could not discover merely by thinking clearly. The gods of these philosophers are at odds with the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Jesus Christ. They conflict with core Judeo-Christian beliefs about the particularity and supernatural character of God’s redemptive dealings with humanity through Israel and Jesus Christ. Pascal was not criticizing traditional Christian theology so long as it is an expression of genuine devotion to God.

When theologians of the last two centuries warn against the God of the philosophers, however, they are targeting something else. For them the God of the philosophers is the God of *classical theism*, the standard mainstream doctrine of God in the Christian tradition from earliest times until the twentieth century. In brief, classical theism asserts that God is transcendent, self-sufficient, eternal, and immutable in relation to the world; thus he does not change through time and is not affected by his relation to his creatures.⁴ A large majority of recent theologians—non-Christians, modernist Christians, and even traditional Christians—agree that the classical doctrine of God is neither biblical nor philosophically coherent. So they warn theology students and thoughtful believers away from “the God of the philosophers.” It is important for us to consider classical theism and these criticisms more fully.

Classical theism is a complex doctrine of God with variations and nuances on specific issues. It has been worked out over centuries in the Western Church by such preeminent Christian teachers as Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, and Scotus, and carried on after the Reformation by Roman Catholic and Protestant theologians alike. Eastern Christianity

¹ This article is largely an adapted version of the first chapter my book, *Panentheism—The Other God of the Philosophers: From Plato to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006). I am grateful to Baker Publishing Company for permission to present it in this form.

² John W. Cooper, PhD, is Professor of Philosophical Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary and an ordained minister in the Christian Reformed Church. In addition to his recent book, *Panentheism: The Other God of the Philosophers*, he is the author of *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* and *Our Father in Heaven: Christian Faith and Inclusive Language for God*.

³ Blaise Pascal, “The Memorial,” *Pensees and Other Writings*, trans. Honor Levi (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 178.

⁴ Thomas Morris, “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Anselm,” *Anselmian Explorations: Essays in Philosophical Theology* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987), 10-25, defines classical theism and its modifications in response to contemporary criticisms.

embraces a slightly different version shaped by John Chrysostom, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus. Christian classical theism intends to represent God as supernaturally revealed, not merely as known by reason. But it has borrowed philosophical and theological ideas from Greek philosophers, especially Plato and the Neoplatonists, to state clearly what it understands Scripture to teach about God. Many modern theologians believe that this use of Greek philosophy has distorted the biblical presentation of God. That is why they label classical theism negatively as “the God of the philosophers.”

Western classical theism asserts that God in himself is the Greatest Being—absolutely self-sufficient, eternal, immutable, omnipotent, omniscient, completely active, and most excellent in every way.⁵ Although he does not need the world, God eternally and freely chooses to create it from nothing and sustain it through time. He is immanent in the sense that he is supernaturally present to all beings and events at all times and places throughout the history of the world, empowering creatures and effectuating his eternal knowledge and will by sustaining their natural existence and free actions and occasionally by supernatural miracles. But God in himself is utterly transcendent, all-determining, and changeless. The world is no part of his nature or existence. He does not exist in time or as part of the cause and effect networks in terms of which creatures exist and relate within the world order. Nothing temporal affects his existence, knowledge, or will. In other words, classical theism affirms that God is eternal and immutable even in his perpetual and active relationship with his creation.

Classical theism is not the exclusive property of historic Christianity. Traditional Jewish and Islamic theologians endorsed it as well.⁶ Most deists at the time of Pascal still professed it even though they did not accept the distinctive doctrines of Christianity. Spinoza actually used it to argue for his kind of pantheism: because God is eternal, immutable, perfect, and all-determining, he necessarily generates the world precisely as it is. Schleiermacher still held a fairly classical view of God in the first third of the nineteenth century.

Since then, however, an increasing number of thinkers have challenged the God of the philosophers—classical theism’s eternal, immutable God—and presented dynamic alternatives.⁷ The philosophers Hegel, Schelling, James, Bergson, and Whitehead developed theologies of divine development in nature and history. So did the Roman Catholic priest Teilhard de Chardin and the Jewish rabbi Martin Buber in first half of the twentieth century. During the second half it has become commonplace for Christians and non-Christians alike to affirm a “relational God,” a God who is involved in time, interacts with creatures, and is affected by them. Traditional Christians, such as Richard Swinburne, Nicholas Wolterstorff,

⁵ Eastern theology, following Neoplatonism, affirms that God in himself is eternal, immutable, and wholly transcendent of creation because he is *beyond* Being. We will note the differences between Eastern and Western classical theism and pantheism when relevant.

⁶ Philo, a contemporary of Jesus, used Platonic philosophy to articulate Jewish theology. The Jewish rabbi, Moses Maimonides, and the Islamic theologians, Avicenna and Averroes, were medieval classical theists addressed in the writings of Thomas Aquinas.

⁷ The atheist Ludwig Feuerbach in *The Essence of Christianity* (1841) drives the wedge between the God of the philosophers and the God of popular religion in order to reject both. Adolf von Harnack’s seminal *History of Dogma*, (3 vols., 1886-89) is a prolonged attack on classical Christian theism as Greek philosophy disguised in biblical language.

and William Craig affirm that God is involved in time.⁸ The recent debate among Evangelicals about “open” or “free-will theism” is whether God knows what people will choose to do in the future, taking for granted that he interacts with creatures in time.⁹ In the twenty-first century, relational views of God are endorsed by a large majority of theologians along a broad spectrum from religious pluralism on one end to Evangelical Christianity on the other.

These challenges to classical theism have been made for biblical, theological, and philosophical reasons. Let’s note the key criticisms in each category.

Critics of classical theism point out that the Bible portrays God as a Great Person (or persons) who acts, interacts, and responds to the creatures he has made. The God of the Bible is dynamic and involved. Scripture does not present what classical theism seems to infer—a mysterious parallelism between God’s eternal actuality and the temporal sequence of events that count as his acts in the world. Contemporary theologians claim to preserve the personal-relational character of the biblical God. If God is relational as Scripture presents him, they argue, then he is to some extent involved in time and change. A final point is that biblical Christianity emphasizes God’s saving activity in this world as well as his future Kingdom. Many contemporary theologians charge that traditional theology, following Greek philosophy, is too supernaturalistic, spiritualized, and otherworldly in its view of salvation and the Christian life.

An important theological issue is the relation of God, freedom, and evil. If God knows and wills everything in the world from all eternity, critics argue, then creatures do not have genuine freedom. Whatever they choose is known and determined from all eternity, including all the evil they do. Thus God is the cause of evil. Most contemporary theologians assign humans more freedom and God less determination, thereby shifting responsibility for evil away from God. This is a major motivation of theologians as diverse as Whitehead and free-will theists.

A second theological issue for Christians is the incarnation. In traditional orthodoxy, Jesus Christ is truly God and truly human, which implies that the eternal God has entered time. This is a conundrum for classical theism. Many defenders of historic orthodoxy believe that a relational view of God does a better job of accounting for the temporality of the incarnation.

Philosophical coherence is a third reason for criticizing classical theism. One issue, already raised, is the logic of eternity and time. If God is wholly eternal, critics charge, it is

⁸ See Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* and *The Christian God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993 and 1994), affirms temporal involvement of God; also *God and Time: Four Views*, ed. Gregory Ganssle (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), in which Alan Padgett, Craig, and Wolterstorff affirm God’s involvement in time. Paul Helm defends the classical view of eternity.

⁹ See, for example, Richard Rice, *The Openness of God: The Relationship between Divine Foreknowledge and Human Free Will* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980; revised edition, Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1985); William Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell, 1989); Clark Pinnock et al., *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994); David Basinger, *The Case for Freewill Theism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996); John Sanders, *The God Who Risks* (Downer’s Grove: InterVarsity, 1998); and Gregory Boyd, *God of the Possible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

incoherent to claim that he performs individual acts that begin, end, and are in sequence, which are characteristics of temporality. Another alleged incoherence is the claim that although God eternally knows human actions, humans are free to choose among alternative possible actions. If God eternally knows that I choose eggs for breakfast tomorrow, then inevitably I do choose eggs, however freely I make the choice. Freedom and omniscience do not seem to be compatible.

In sum, contemporary theologians of many religious and philosophical perspectives are critical of “the God of the philosophers,” that is, the God of classical theism, for biblical, theological, and philosophical reasons. They offer a variety of relational alternatives, from minor modifications of classical theism, to major revisions of classical theism, to varieties of pantheism, to new versions of naturalistic pantheism.¹⁰

The Other God of the Philosophers: The Pantheistic Tradition

Many of these theologians take rhetorical advantage of identifying classical theism with “the God of the philosophers.” Dismissing classical theism in this way allows them to claim the high ground with “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” Now that the God of the philosophers has been exposed and dismissed, they suggest, we can get on with theology that is fresh, biblical, and intellectually adequate. But notice that the force of this rhetoric depends on an unstated premise, an exclusive disjunction: Theology is either philosophical-classical or biblical-relational. To reject the former is to endorse the latter.

But any suggestion that the modern alternatives to classical theism are free of philosophy is entirely false and misleading. Every contemporary theology has parallels and philosophical sources deep in history. Consider free-will theism, for example, which argues that God does not know the future actions of free creatures because his knowledge of them is temporal and those actions are not yet determined. This position was articulated in detail already by Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) just a generation after Luther and Calvin, and it adopts Aristotle’s debatable view about future propositions.¹¹ Contemporary relational theologies all have deep historical roots that go back to the Greeks. In this sense they all represent “Gods of the philosophers.”

¹⁰ Richard Swinburne, Nicholas Wolterstorff, William Craig, and many other conservative Christians are modified classical theists. Open or free-will theism is a major revision of classical theism. A variety of contemporary pantheists is surveyed in this article. Naturalistic pantheism is behind Einstein’s quip, “God does not roll dice,” and Carl Sagan’s quasi-religious view of the Life-giving Cosmos.

¹¹ See Charles Hartshorne and William Reese, *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), Ch. VI: “Temporalistic Theism,” which presents Socinus as a forerunner of process theology.

Free-will theism asserts that propositions about contingent future events have no present truth-value. “John goes home at 6 PM” is neither true nor false until John acts at 6 PM. Correct or incorrect, this position was argued by Aristotle. But Aristotle’s purely rational God knows only itself, not temporal things, whereas the classical Christian God eternally knows all temporal things completely. Socinus and free-will theists think that God knows temporal things only as they happen. In other words, whether one thinks that future propositions have truth value may depend on one’s view of God’s knowledge. In any case, the point is that all contemporary theology has philosophical roots and assumptions.

These roots are not numerous, diverse, or hard to locate. Most contemporary alternatives to classical theism are branches of a single family tree with roots in Plato and Neoplatonism. Broadly speaking, this is the ancient tradition of *panentheism*, the topic of this article. Those theologies, such as neo-orthodoxy and naturalistic pantheism, which are not in this family have been its neighbors and conversation partners. In brief, panentheism affirms that although God and the world are ontologically distinct, and God transcends the world, the world is “in” God ontologically. In contrast, classical theism posits an unqualified distinction between God and the world: although intimately related, God and creatures are always and entirely other than one another. Ironically, panentheism shares important roots with classical theism, which also borrowed from Plato and Neoplatonism. That is why they make some common affirmations about God.

The crucial difference is how God relates to the world, and that reflects different aspects of Plato’s theology. In his dialogue *Timaeus*, Plato presents a complex, somewhat ambiguous view of the Divine. God is the eternal transcendent Father, Mind, and Craftsman who makes the universe from matter. More precisely, God makes the universe as a World-Soul, which he calls “a god,” with the material world as its body. For Plato, the world is “in” the World-Soul just as the human body is “in” the soul. This is the seed of the notion that the world is “in” the Divine.

Broadly speaking, the difference between classical theism and panentheism is what they appropriated from Plato and Neoplatonism. To articulate the biblical doctrine of creation, the Christian church fathers adapted Plato’s eternal transcendent God, the Father, Mind, and Craftsman, who is wholly other than the world he makes. They modified it to fit the doctrine of the Trinity: the entirely transcendent Father, the Son as the Word who includes the Ideas, and the Holy Spirit as Creator but not as World-Soul.

The pantheist tradition found two options in Plato. Most followed Plotinus, the Neoplatonist who reframed Plato’s theological cosmology as a divine hierarchy, a “Great Chain of Being.”¹² The One God generates the Mind, which generates the World-Soul, which generates the world, which exists in the World-Soul, which exists in the Mind, which exists in the One. Neoplatonism is pantheistic because everything exists within God in a series of concentric emanations. In Neoplatonism God is both the wholly transcendent One, the Mind, and the World-Soul immanent in the world. Thus the Divine is both transcendent and immanent, eternal and temporal, changeless and changing, and so forth. This notion of Deity becomes the pantheist tradition that is still expressed by the process theologians Whitehead and Hartshorne in their concept of *dipolarity*, that God has two natures. This tradition has an unbroken history from Plato to Whitehead, who once observed that Western philosophy is “a series of footnotes to Plato.”¹³ He could have made the same comment about theology. Much panentheism carries on the transcendent-immanent theology of Neoplatonism.

The other branch of panentheism with roots in Plato identifies God primarily as the World-Soul. It assimilates the transcendent aspects of the Neoplatonic Divinity—the One

¹² The term is from Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: The History of an Idea* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936, 1964).

¹³ Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (New York: Macmillan, 1929; Free Press, 1978), 39.

and the Mind— into the World-Soul. Thus it views God as the Life-Force, the dynamic Spirit that generates life, intelligent order, and unity/community in the universe. This version of panentheism is found, for example, in Romanticism, Schleiermacher's Living God, New England Transcendentalism's Over-Soul, Bergson's *Élan Vital* ("Spark of Life"), in the ecological feminism of Ruether and McFague, and in Wiccan neopaganism.

The development and proliferation of the different branches of panentheism in the twenty-first century can be traced from their roots in Plato and Neoplatonism. Almost all the modern alternatives to classical theism are part of this family history or influenced by it.

There are three reasons why it is not possible simply to equate Neoplatonism and panentheism, however. First, both the Western and Eastern Christian traditions appropriated aspects of Neoplatonism without panentheism. Augustine in the West and Basil in the East are examples. Second, a few philosophical influences on panentheism are not Neoplatonic. The ancient Stoics, Giordano Bruno, and Spinoza, for instance, are naturalistic pantheists who influenced the German Romantic pantheists. Jacob Boehme's triadic deity reflects Gnosticism. Third, panentheism is also found in religions beyond the range of Neoplatonism. For example, some Hindus, Buddhists, and animists who are familiar with Western thought identify their traditions as pantheistic.

With these qualifications, however, it is accurate to say that the history of panentheism is largely the history of Neoplatonism. Virtually all contemporary alternatives to classical theism stem from this tradition or have been shaped by it. If classical theism represents "the God of the philosophers," then panentheism counters with "the *other* God of the philosophers."

Historical Overview¹⁴

The first phase of classical panentheism extends from Plato through Christian Neoplatonism. (Modern panentheism begins with the developing God of Hegel and Schelling.) During its pre-Christian period, Plotinus recasts Plato's God-world dualism into the Neoplatonic Great Chain of Being: the One emanates Mind, which emanates the World-Soul, which contains the world. Plotinus' student, Proclus, works out in detail the dialectical process by which the world emanates and returns to God. Dialectic remains important in most kinds of panentheism, most famously in Hegel's.

Pseudo-Dionysius blends Neoplatonism with Christian theology and is the original source of Christian panentheism. John Scotus Eriugena, Meister Eckhart, and Nicholas Cusanus are medieval Christian pantheists who work directly from Dionysius. Eriugena stands close to pantheism when he claims that *Natura*—ultimate reality—consists of God and what emanates and returns to God. God creates and knows himself in creating and knowing the world. Eckhart, a mystical preacher, regards the individual human soul as generated and participating in the depths of the divine nature. Cusanus elaborates a system of theology which concludes that God is the infinite unity of all dialectical opposition. But he also asserts that humans cannot explain this unity in God. The post-Reformation mystic Jacob Boehme boldly explains what Cusanus cannot. He posits that God is the eternal

¹⁴ This overview is elaborated in Chapters 2-13 of Cooper, *Panentheism*. Some chapters survey entire periods; others are devoted to specific movements or single figures.

dialectical unity of oppositional potencies—Groundlessness and Ground, Negative and Positive, Nothingness and Being, Chaos and Order, Wrath and Love, etc.—and that the world is the temporal outflow of this eternal dialectic. Boehme is the original source for those theologians, such as Hegel, Tillich, and Moltmann, who understand the Trinity dialectically and view history as the dialectical unification of the Trinity and the world.

The modern phase of classical pantheism develops from the Renaissance to Romanticism. The Cambridge Platonism of English Deism is actually Neoplatonic in its view of the God-world relation and its adaptation to the 17th-century science of Kepler and Newton. The famous American preacher, Jonathan Edwards, is Calvinist in his theology, but his philosophy is pantheistic. Like Spinoza, he affirms that God is the only Substance, and his view of the God-world relation reflects English Neoplatonism, including the notion that the world is essential to the greatness of God. Although they are pantheists, Giordano Bruno and Baruch Spinoza are significant because of their influence on subsequent pantheists. In Germany, early Romantics such as Lessing and Herder transform Spinoza's doctrine of God as Absolute Substance into the Living Spirit or Vital Force, much like Plato's World-Soul. This dynamic, all-inclusive concept of the Living God is definitive in Schleiermacher's romantic philosophy and in his theology, *The Christian Faith*.

Schelling and Hegel are the two most important figures in pantheism between Plotinus and the present. They are the first modern pantheists because they hold that God himself develops in and through the world. Up to their time, Plotinus' Great Chain of Being remained vertical and hierarchical: the divine One is the highest reality and remains utterly transcendent while emanating a series of beings downward and drawing all things back toward itself. God is eternally dynamic and productive but does not change. Schelling and Hegel correlate the actual existence of the One God within nature and history, and they tip the hierarchy of being horizontally so that God's full actuality is future. God's essence is changeless but his existence develops in and through the world, progressively generating and encompassing the many within the One. The whole process is dialectical. Both Schelling and Hegel adapt Boehme's dialectical ontology of God and the world. This general idea of the Trinity actualizing itself within world-history until it completely includes the world is still promoted by Moltmann and Pannenberg.

There is a crucial difference between Schelling and Hegel, however. Hegel's dialectic is rational, deterministic, and closed. Schelling's is personal, free, and open to the future: God actualizes himself in and through the free self-actualization of the human race in nature and history; thus divine-human cooperation forges a common destiny as we strive to realize our true essences. Schelling's personalism is more appealing to many post-Enlightenment pantheists, among them Coleridge, Peirce, James, Heidegger, Tillich, Macquarrie, Moltmann, and Clayton.

Pantheism proliferates and diversifies during the later nineteenth century, adapting to the development of the natural and human sciences. In Germany it is first named by Karl Krause and is embraced by philosophers Rudolf Lotze and Gustav Fechner, as well as such eminent theologians as Isaac Dorner and Ernst Troeltsch. In Britain are Samuel Taylor Coleridge, philosophers Thomas Hill Green, John and Edward Caird, Andrew Pringle-Pattison, Samuel Alexander, and theologian William Inge, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral. Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Transcendentalists, as well as philosophers Charles Sanders

Peirce and William James are prominent American panentheists. The French philosopher Henri Bergson regards the Divine as the Vital Force (*Élan Vital*) that evolves the human race in the universe in order to have mystical communion with itself. These thinkers modify the theologies of Hegel, Schelling, and Enlightenment Neoplatonism to fit modern science, and they pass their syntheses on to twentieth century panentheists.

Teilhard de Chardin is an early 20th-century scientist and priest who adapts the evolutionary philosophy of Bergson to fit Roman Catholic theology. Teilhard explains the evolution of the universe toward human existence as the interplay of radial (physical, static) and tangential (spiritual, purposive) energy, which is guided by the Spirit of God and progressively incarnates the *Logos*, the cosmic Christ—God in the world. The incarnation is fully explicit in the divine-human, Jesus Christ. Cosmic evolution culminates in an eschatological Omega point, where God and the human race, which will evolve into a completely spiritual mode of existence, reach full communion in the cosmic Christ. Teilhard's vision remains world-famous and has influenced postmodern spirituality far beyond Vatican II and the Roman Catholic Church.

Process Theology is the main American brand of panentheism. It is based on the philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, who drew from 19th-century English panentheism, especially Samuel Alexander. According to Whitehead, reality is a process by which the entities that exist—molecules, physical objects, humans, the heavenly bodies—constitute themselves as complex societies of instantaneously occurring atomic bits of experience called “actual occasions”. Each actual occasion both appropriates its immediate past and actualizes a future possibility. Entities subsist over time because the actual occasions of which they consist continue to occur in structured patterns. Entities change because actual occasions can select novel possibilities. God is not an exception to this process but is the most comprehensive actual occasion. The universe could not exist unless God includes all other entities and all the ideal possibilities (cf. Plato's Ideas) they can exemplify. Thus God is *dipolar*—he has two natures: potential and actual, changeless and changing, transcendent and immanent, eternal and temporal, and so forth. Charles Hartshorne modifies Whitehead's theology by conceiving of God as necessarily existent in all possible worlds and as a complex being—a person whose body is the universe. John Cobb and David Griffin are two leading Christian process theologians who apply the process categories of Whitehead and Hartshorne to the doctrines of God, Jesus Christ, creation, salvation, and ethics. It is worth noting that, despite some similarities and common affirmations, evangelical open or free-will theism is not a form of process theology but a major revision of classical Christian theism.

Paul Tillich's theology is an existential panentheism that is largely Schelling's theology, modernized in terms of Heidegger's philosophy, and stated in the language of Christianity. Tillich argues that the tension between being and non-being at the core of human existence arises primordially within the divine nature itself. God is the Ground of Being that essentially involves and asserts itself against Non-being or Nothingness. Thus the human quest for authentic existence—“the courage to be” in Tillich's popular phrase—is actual participation in God. Authentic participation in God makes “new being”—Jesus Christ's ultimately affirmative mode of life—possible for humans, and this is Tillich's doctrine of salvation. Tillich's existential panentheism has deeply impressed a subsequent generation of theologians—John Robinson, John Macquarrie, James Cone, and Rosemary Ruether among them.

The breadth and diversity of pantheism in the twentieth century is suggested by noting a few representative philosophers, theologians, and religious thinkers from within and beyond the Christian tradition who imply or endorse it. Even if their names are well-known, the fact that they are pantheists is not. Among philosophers, Martin Heidegger works from the Roman Catholic tradition, Hans-Georg Gadamer from the Protestant tradition, and Nicholas Berdyaev from Russian Orthodoxy. Christian theologians William Temple, John Robinson, and John Macquarrie are Anglican; Karl Rahner and Hans Küng are Roman Catholic. Beyond the Christian tradition, Martin Buber is a Hasidic Jewish rabbi, Muhammed Iqbal a Sufi Muslim, Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan is Hindu, Alan Watts and Masao Abe are Zen Buddhists, and Miriam Starhawk is Wiccan. In spite of many differences on specific issues, all affirm that the world is ontologically within the Divine as they define it.

Various kinds of pantheism inform much liberation, feminist, and ecological theology. In different ways, these theologies emphasize the liberation of specific groups of people as part of the reconciliation and communion of the whole cosmos in God. James Cone's Black Theology applies key pantheistic themes from Tillich's doctrines of God and salvation. The Latin American liberation theologians Gustavo Gutierrez, Juan Luis Segundo, and Leonardo Boff draw significantly from Teilhard, and Boff from Moltmann as well. The ecological feminists Ruether and McFague combine aspects of Teilhard, Tillich, and process thought into theologies of the (maternal) Divine Life-Force reminiscent of the embodied World-Soul. Matthew Fox's Creation Spirituality is Teilhardian in flavor and explicitly endorses pantheism.

Jürgen Moltmann is a currently popular theologian who explicitly endorses "Christian pantheism." He continues to elaborate the broadly dialectical view of the Trinity and the world inherited from Boehme, Hegel, Schelling, and Berdyaev. In *The Crucified God* Moltmann begins from the interaction of Father, Son, and Spirit during the crucifixion of Jesus, the historical event which fully actualizes the Trinity and incorporates the suffering of the world into God. In *The Trinity and the Kingdom* he expands the work of the Trinity to encompass the whole history of the world from creation through reconciliation to consummation, when it is fully included in the triune life. Moltmann's subsequent works elaborate and refine this vision of Christianity. His pantheism is *perichoretic*. In traditional theology, *perichoresis* refers to the relationship of complete communion among the persons of the Trinity. Moltmann makes *perichoresis* his fundamental ontology, applying it not only to the Trinity but also to relations among creatures and to the relationship between the world and the triune God.

Wolfhart Pannenberg, possibly the most broadly erudite theologian of the late twentieth century, appears to be an implicit pantheist in spite of his denial. His philosophy reflects Hegel's system in structure and scope, although his method is hermeneutical and much more open-ended than Hegel's. Like Hegel, Schelling, and Moltmann, Pannenberg understands nature, humanity, history, and religion to embody God's progressive self-actualization and self-revelation aimed at the eschatological fulfillment of all things in God. God is truly and uniquely present in Jesus Christ, whose resurrection is a proleptic realization of the future of the universe. Pannenberg's theology is like Plotinus' Great Chain of Being tipped horizontally so that the full reality of the transcendent One is not above the world but in the future. The world is grounded in, emerges from, and is drawn toward the reality of the future. Unlike Plotinus, Pannenberg is explicitly biblical, Christian, and Trinitarian. He is a

panentheist because he models God as the infinite triune *force-field* within which the universe is created, develops, is reconciled, and consummated. The world is within God ontologically.

Among current panentheists are experts in scientific cosmology and theology, including Ian Barbour, Brian Davies, Arthur Peacocke, Philip Clayton, and John Polkinghorne. All affirm the contemporary scientific world-picture—that the universe is an evolving system of increasingly complex levels and modes of existence. They argue that this world-picture points to God as its source, and (all except Polkinghorne) that panentheism is the most reasonable synthesis of science and theology. There are interesting differences among them as well. Barbour favors process theology, whereas most others prefer the perspectives of Moltmann and Pannenberg. Clayton identifies with Schelling's later theology as well. Polkinghorne stands apart because he affirms panentheism for the world to come but prefers "dialectical theology" for the present world. It is possible to think of his dialectical theology as a kind of panentheism, however.

In sum, the most interesting and fruitful discussions of panentheism currently involve the theological cosmologies just mentioned and the theologies of Pannenberg, Moltmann, and process thought. Recent attempts by traditional Christian theologians to link panentheism with Western and Eastern strands of patristic theology are also illuminating.

Some Basic Issues and Distinctions in Panentheism

Like classical theism, panentheism is not a single, monolithic theological consensus but a group of related views with common basic affirmations as well as variations and internal debates on a number of issues. After surveying the history of panentheism, it is important to identify the common affirmations and introduce the issues on which there is variation and debate.

Panentheism literally means "all-in-God-ism." This is the Greek and English translation of the German term, *Allingottlehre*, "the doctrine that all is in God." It was coined by Karl Krause (1781-1832), a contemporary of Schleiermacher, Schelling, and Hegel, to distinguish his own theology both from classical theism and pantheism.¹⁵ However, the term *panentheism* did not come into common usage until it was popularized by Charles Hartshorne in the mid-twentieth century.¹⁶ Since then it has acquired a commonly-accepted generic definition: "the Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part exists in Him, but His Being is more than, and not exhausted by, the universe."¹⁷ In other words, God and

¹⁵ See the section on Krause in *Panentheism*, Chapter 5.

¹⁶ See Charles Hartshorne, "Preface," *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven: Yale, 1948), where he labels his view "surrelativism or panentheism." See also Hartshorne and Charles Reese, "Introduction: The Standpoint of Panentheism," *Philosophers Speak of God* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953, 1969). Also Hartshorne, "Pantheism and Panentheism," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 11, ed. Mircea Eliade (New York: Macmillan, 1987), 165-71; Michael Brierley, "Naming a Quiet Revolution: The Panentheistic Turn in Modern Theology," *In Whom We Live*, ed. Peacocke and Clayton, 1-18, details the history of the term.

¹⁷ F. L. Cross and E. A. Livingstone, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 3rd ed., (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1213; see also E. R. Naughton, "Panentheism," *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 943-45.

the world are ontologically distinct, and God transcends the world, but the world is in God ontologically.

Like all general terms, there are widely differing ways of understanding panentheism, in particular what “being in God” means and in what ways Divine Being transcends the universe.¹⁸ As a result, theologians who endorse panentheism do not agree on what it is or should be. Some virtually identify it with process theology. Some embrace versions much closer to classical theism than pantheism, while others hold views close to pantheism. Some, such as Moltmann, gladly embrace the term panentheism. Others, such as Pannenberg, reject the term even though their theologies seem to fit the definition.

This diversity makes an introduction to panentheism more complicated. For the sake of clarity it is important to identify five distinctions on basic issues that recur throughout its history: explicit and implicit panentheism; personal and non-personal panentheism; part-whole and relational panentheism; voluntary and/or natural panentheism; and classical (divine determinist) or modern (cooperative) panentheism.

It is important to distinguish between *explicit* and *implicit panentheism*. There are many thinkers whose theologies *imply* panentheism, that is, they meet the definition of panentheism even though they do not explicitly use the term. Obviously this is true of all who wrote before the word was coined. Thus we call Plotinus, Cusanus, and Hegel panentheists because their theologies meet the qualifications, not because they owned the label. Strictly speaking, it is anachronistic to call them panentheists. But they are *implicit panentheists*. Recent refinement of the distinction between panentheism and pantheism enables us to discern *implicit panentheism* more precisely. Theologies that we now call panentheistic have traditionally been classified as species of pantheism.¹⁹ In fact, Schleiermacher, Schelling, and Teilhard de Chardin endorse positions that they label *pantheism*. Some contemporary panentheists, such as Hartshorne and Moltmann, explicitly identify themselves as such. But others, such as Whitehead and Tillich, do not. A few, such as Pannenberg and perhaps Polkinghorne, criticize panentheism despite the fact that their theologies meet the standard definition.

Clarity of definition and analysis is therefore crucial. All thinkers who meet the conditions of panentheism without adopting the term can be considered *implicit panentheists*. However, it is the responsibility of those who make this judgment to show precisely whether

¹⁸ Again I recommend *In Whom We Live*, ed. Peacocke and Clayton, because it includes essays by panentheists of different kinds and several essays attempting to identify the core beliefs common to all kinds of panentheism. There is no consensus on more refined technical issues.

¹⁹ C. A. Beckwith, “Pantheism,” *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, Vol. 8 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1953; reprint of Funk and Wagnalls 1910 edition) and Alasdair Macintyre, “Pantheism,” *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vols. 5-6 (New York: Macmillan, 1967) include panentheism and panentheists such as Hegel and Schelling within pantheism. Paul Feinberg, “Pantheism,” *Concise Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1991), 369, still identifies the notion of the World-Soul as “relativistic monistic pantheism.”

Similarly, the term *pantheism* is anachronistic when applied to Spinoza and the Stoics because it was not coined until John Toland’s *Socinianism Truly Stated* (1705) and *Pantheisticon* (1720). Pantheism holds that the world is divine, although God may also transcend the world in some way. It does not necessarily identify all of God with the world, but the world is an aspect or manifestation of God.

and to what extent a theologian meets the conditions. With respect to some, it may be possible to conclude no more than that they are *probable* or *virtual* panentheists because their positions are not detailed or explicit enough to allow definite identification.

A second important distinction throughout this history is between *personal* and *non-personal* or *ground-of-being panentheism*. For Plotinus, Fichte, Tillich, Ruether, Radhakrishnan, and Watts, the Divine is the Ground—the ultimate cause, source, and power—of personhood and interpersonal communion, but it is not itself personal in any straightforward sense. However, for Schelling, Teilhard, Buber, Hartshorne, and Moltmann, God is ultimately personal and creates for the sake of love and interpersonal relationship. Christians such as Berdyaev and Moltmann use (inter-)personal panentheism as a basis for affirming the Trinity.

A third major issue is the meaning of “being in God” or “participating in God.” Some panentheists view the world as *part of* the Divine Nature—an essential constituent of God’s Mind apart from creation and an explicit emanation of the divine Mind’s Idea of the world when creation is actual. Others view “being in God” more relationally or existentially, so that the mutual interaction and affect between God and creatures in history involves them so totally and intimately that they are or become one ontologically, analogous to mind and body or symbiotic organisms. The basic distinction between *part-whole* and *relational panentheism* underlies variations of both positions throughout the history of this tradition.²⁰

“Being in God” raises a fourth distinction: *voluntary* and/or *natural panentheism*. Is the world in God by his choice or by the necessity of his nature? Could God exist without a world? Could he have chosen to create another world or no world at all? Some panentheists unabashedly assert the necessity of the world for God. Neoplatonism readily asserts that God naturally “overflows” or emanates into lesser kinds of being. Hartshorne insists that God must have some world or other. It is the divine nature to include a world. However, most Christian panentheists affirm God’s freedom and deny the necessity of the world.

The issue is more complicated, however. Almost all panentheists, including Christians, ultimately imply that a world is inevitable for God in spite of affirming that he freely creates.²¹ The reason is this: These theologians affirm that God is love and that creation is the free expression of his love, not the necessity of his nature. But they also affirm that love cannot be actual without something other than oneself to love. The implication is that God cannot be God without creating something.

Those who state or imply this argument are adopting a *compatibilist* view of divine freedom. Compatibilism asserts the compatibility of freedom and necessity. An act is free if it is a self-determined expression of one’s nature that is neither coerced by anything other than oneself or involuntarily compelled by anything within oneself (for example, a muscle spasm or psychological compulsion). According to this definition, God is self-determining

²⁰ Philip Clayton, “Panentheism Today: A Constructive Systematic Evaluation,” in *In Whom We Live*, 252-54 identifies more precisely several meanings of “in God” held by panentheists. My distinction is a useful generalization for present purposes.

²¹ Some current theological cosmologists, such as Peacocke and Clayton, are exceptions, affirming that God could have refrained from creating anything.

and freely creates to express his loving nature. By implication, however, it is impossible for God not to create a world to love. Thus the world is both voluntary and natural for God. With rare exceptions, this is the standard position throughout the history of pantheism.

The fifth issue, the freedom of creatures to interact with and affect God, divides *classical* from *modern pantheism*. Pantheism from Plotinus through Schleiermacher, like classical theism, affirms divine omnipotence and impassibility. It does not allow that creatures affect God even though they exist in him. Schelling is the first to posit that human freedom is essential to and correlative with divine freedom, and thus that God's existence is affected by human action. Almost all modern pantheists affirm divine-human cooperation in shaping world history. In fact Hartshorne makes creaturely autonomy the test of true pantheism: If ultimately God is the only determiner, then pantheism is true.²² The libertarian freedom of creatures to act, shape history, and affect God is a basic principle of modern pantheism. Those pantheists, such as Pannenberg, who do not affirm it without qualification are roundly challenged by their fellows.

These five pairs of basic distinctions within pantheism—*implicit or explicit, personal or non-personal ground, part-whole or relational, voluntary and/or natural, and classical (divine determinist) or modern (cooperative) pantheism*—reflect issues that endure throughout the long, continuing history of this theological tradition. Thus they provide some framework for classifying branches of the family tree.

A Brief Response by a Classical Christian Theist

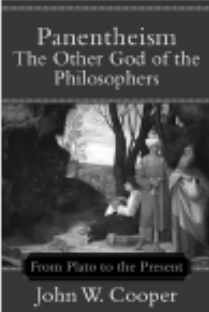
Understanding pantheism is necessary for anyone who is theologically literate. But to understand it is not necessarily to approve it. An important reason for my own interest is apologetic—to defend classical Christian theism from the challenges of pantheism and relational (divine-creature interaction) theology. I am persuaded that nuanced classical Christian theism is more biblically faithful, theologically adequate, and philosophically tenable than any kind of pantheism or relational theology. I am at home in classical orthodoxy as articulated in the theological tradition of the Reformed confessions of the 16th and 17th centuries. I am convinced that classical Christian theism can stand its ground in debate with its modern critics. It can deal with divine action and interaction in time, human freedom, and the problem of evil in ways that are consistent with Scripture, experience, and God's maximal greatness. The current unpopularity of traditional orthodoxy is due more to misunderstanding, changing fashion, and abandonment than religious or intellectual inadequacy. I remain a classical Christian theist.

Nevertheless, I acknowledge the significant biblical, theological, and philosophical challenges to classical theism that critics raise. I agree that Christian theology must provide a coherent account of Scripture's narration of God's interpersonal, interactive ways in the world and its assertion that we creatures are "in Him [God]." Positively, I respect relational and pantheistic theologies as authentically Christian provided that they are committed to and consistent with the teaching of Scripture and the historic ecumenical creeds regarding the identity and work of the Triune God in the creation, redemption, and consummation of God's people in his Kingdom. In my view, the most illuminating current discussions of pantheism are with theologians who embrace versions of it because of their commitment

²² Hartshorne, "Pantheism and Pantheism," *Encyclopedia of Religion*, Vol. 11, 165-71.

to the ancient Christian faith and not primarily to the philosophies of Hegel, Schelling, Whitehead, or emergent evolutionism. Dialogue of this sort within ecumenical Christianity has much potential for better understanding and mutual correction that will bear fruit with God's blessing.

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THE OPENNESS OF GOD AND THE HISTORICAL JESUS

Samuel Lamerson¹

Everyone wants to have Jesus on his side. The problem is that many begin to think “of Christ in their own image—as a martyr, or a theologian, or a mystic, or an ascetic, or an ecclesiastic. . .”² Every historical Jesus scholar must be careful that he does not look into the well at his own face instead of the face of Jesus. With that caveat in mind, one wonders what Jesus would have thought of the current controversy surrounding God’s openness?³ The purpose of this paper is to examine two sub-questions that may help clarify the answer to the question of Jesus’ own view of the openness of God: What did Jesus think of the nature and extent of his Father’s foreknowledge? What did Jesus think and teach about his own foreknowledge? Before endeavoring to find an answer to these two questions from the Gospels, let us make some preliminary observations.

Observations

First, I presuppose that the Gospels authentically portray Jesus. Were this paper to be delivered in a different arena, I would construct criteria which would support the authenticity of the sayings that I will be using. However, in this context, I believe we can proceed with the assumption that the sayings are authentic.

Second, this paper is self-consciously theological rather than philosophical. While I do not mean to draw a false distinction, neither do I intend to venture into the briar patch of philosophy for the tar-baby of free will. My argument is from the Gospel’s, not the philosopher’s, understanding of God (though I do not intend to convey that the two must always be different).⁴

¹ Sam Lamerson, PhD, is Associate Professor of New Testament at Knox Theological Seminary in Ft. Lauderdale, FL. He is the author of *English Grammar To Ace New Testament Greek*.

² H. J. Cadbury, *The Peril of Modernizing Jesus* (New York: MacMillan, 1937), 17. Cadbury offers several criteria to help avoid reading the Gospels in an anachronistic fashion.

³ The “openness of God” or “open theism” is the view that genuine human freedom cannot coexist with exhaustive Divine foreknowledge of future free human decisions. Therefore, God does not possess exhaustive foreknowledge. The view assumes contra-causal, libertarian human freedom to be the only acceptable understanding of the human will. The openness view was first made popular in Evangelical circles with the publication of *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God*, coauthored by Richard Rice, John Sanders, Clark H. Pinnock, and William Hasker (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994). Since then, several other works have appeared defending the view including Gregory Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2000) and Clark Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God’s Openness* (Grand Rapids, Baker, 2001).

⁴ For a philosophical examination of the issue from an incompatibilist prospective see W. Hasker, *God, Time, and Knowledge* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 64-74. For a philosophical treatment from the compatibilist position see R. Nash, *The Concept of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), chapters four and five. For a Biblical defense of compatibilism see J. Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2001), 119-141. It should be noted here that one of the fundamental difficulties in the debate is the problem of definition. If one defines “free will” as essentially having near total autonomy then one may be driven to incompatibilism, and perhaps the openness position. If, on the other hand, one draws a much smaller circle for the definition of free will

Third, I hope that this paper will not be perceived as unkind. It is necessary that the debate on this topic be sharp, though it need not be hostile. Ideas must be scrutinized and defended, though persons need not be.

Fourth, I must explain my decision to select Jesus for this analysis, lest I face the charge of being too narrow in focus. There are several reasons for choosing Jesus as a lens through which to view this controversy. First, Jesus is, in the words of John Sanders, “the ultimate anthropomorphism.”⁵ Thus an attempt to determine Jesus’ view of his own, and his Father’s, foreknowledge is very important for this debate. Second, historical Jesus research has exploded in the recent past, making this examination timely not just on the openness side, but from the perspective of historical Jesus studies as well. Third, some of the recent openness work in the area of New Testament research has focused on Jesus. For example, Sanders’s chapter on New Testament materials focuses on the person and work of Jesus.⁶ In addition, much of Sanders’s book stands on the shoulders of E. Frank Tupper’s work which examines a number of episodes in the life of Jesus.⁷ A final reason for examining the historical Jesus in this context is that some of the most troublesome prophecies (specific prophecies about the future actions of free and responsible moral agents) take place in the Gospels.

Fifth, this controversy largely centers on hermeneutics. Everyone in the debate would agree that there are passages that seem to present God as knowing the future infallibly, as well as passages that seem to present God as changing his mind, repenting, learning, and being surprised. The question, of course, is which set of passages will be used to interpret the other. As Sanders notes, “there is no simple way to establish one view or the other, since proponents of each view disagree as to how certain passages of Scripture should be interpreted.”⁸ While this impasse is difficult to overcome, I believe that the study of the historical Jesus can be of help here. If the exegete can determine the view of Jesus on divine foreknowledge, she may then have strong warrant for her hermeneutical conclusions.

Sixth, lest I be accused of constructing a straw man, I must point out that at least some openness proponents will agree that there are a limited number of future events which are certain. This is set forth by Greg Boyd, who writes that “[o]pen theists, by contrast, hold that the future consists partly of settled realities and partly of unsettled realities.”⁹ Thus,

(as, for example, Jonathan Edwards does in his *A Careful and Strict Inquiry Into The Modern Prevailing Notions of that Freedom of the Will*, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Carlisle: PA, 1974), 1.1-93) then one is driven toward compatibilism, and thus a more classic approach. For an analogy which helps to clearly set forth the difference between these two views of free will see M. Cohen, *101 Philosophy Problems* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 69.

⁵ J. Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP, 1998), 90.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 90-139.

⁷ E. Frank Tupper, *A Scandalous Providence: The Jesus Story of the Compassion of God* (Macon, GA: Macon University Press, 1995).

⁸ Sanders, *Risks*, 307, n. 150.

⁹ G. Boyd, *The God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 16. This seems to be the same sort of position held by Richard Rice, who says, “. . . it may be true that God occasionally acts by fiat and directly causes something to happen.” R. Rice, “Biblical Support for a New Perspective,” in *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding*

presumably, Boyd would respond that proving that certain events have been predicted or preordained does not defeat his position. One would have to prove that all events were preordained, or at least foreknown, to overthrow this theory. However, later in the book Boyd seems to nuance this position when he states that, “future free decisions do not exist (except as possibilities) for God to know until free agents make them.”¹⁰ Thus it seems that if one can show one event in which God or Jesus clearly and unambiguously had knowledge of a person’s future action or actions, then open theism’s position (at least as it is set forth by Boyd) is undermined. In this paper I hope to show not just one, but several instances in which this clear and unambiguous knowledge is demonstrated.

Seventh, it should be observed that the openness debate is about much more than foreknowledge and free will.¹¹ Pinnock states, “[l]ove and not freedom was our central concern because it was God’s desire for loving relationships which required freedom.”¹² Underlying this view of love and freedom is the belief that in order to have real relationships there must be real choices on the part of free agents. Because openness proponents define free will in such a way as to disallow compatibilism between foreknowledge and free will, God’s foreknowledge is a very important hinge in the debate. It should be noted, however, that there are other serious theological issues (i.e., in addition to the question of God’s foreknowledge) that arise out of the openness view.

With these opening observations circumspect, it is now important to set forth exactly what I hope to prove in this paper. The argument is relatively simple: If Jesus believed that either his Father knew the future or he himself knew the future about *any* particular issue that involves free human choices, then one is forced to either construct a theology that allows for error on the part of Jesus, or admit that God cannot be said to have been “open” on those issues. In defense of the idea that Jesus views both his Father and himself as knowing inerrantly certain future actions (actions that hinge upon the free choices of humans), I will unpack several specific passages from the Gospels.

I. Does Jesus Believe That His Father Knows The Future?

A. Matthew 6:8

Perhaps the most obvious passage with regard to Jesus’ view of the Father is found in Matthew 6:8b (pericope 62) in which Jesus proclaims that “your Father knows what you need before you ask him” (. . . οἶδεν γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ὑμῶν ὧν χρεῖαν ἔχετε πρὸ τοῦ ὑμᾶς αἰτῆσαι αὐτόν). Because this passage has been dealt with at length by another paper¹³, my comments will be brief. It is important to note at the outset that this chapter in Matthew’s

of God by C. Pinnock, R. Rice, J. Sanders, W. Hasker, and D. Basinger (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP, 1994), 56

¹⁰ Boyd, *Possible*, 120.

¹¹ Although there are other issues, I agree with Frame who states that the question of the compatibilism of God’s foreknowledge and man’s free will is “the central issue in the debate concerning open theism.” Frame, *No Other God*, 119.

¹² C. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God’s Openness* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 3. Pinnock does not explain how it might be possible to have loving relationships in heaven, yet have no sin.

¹³ See Stephen C. Roy, *How Much Does God Foreknow? A Comprehensive Biblical Study* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 88-92..

gospel “focuses now on Israel’s perception of her god as ‘father’.”¹⁴ Thus this passage is important because Matthew is endeavoring to give his readers a clear picture of both who the Father is and how he can be expected to act.

First, to see this text as stating that God knows perfectly the present but does not know the future seems to be a case of reading the text in an anachronistic fashion. I have found nothing in second-temple literature which would lead me to believe that a first-century Jew listening to this saying of Jesus would have thought anything but that God knows the future.¹⁵ This is not to say the evidence does not exist, but only that the burden of proof must rest upon the openness proponents to provide second-temple evidence that points to a belief in a limited knowledge of the future on the part of God.¹⁶

Second, the exegete should note that many of the requests in the model prayer that follows look toward the future (Kingdom come, keep us from the evil one) and involve, on some level, the actions of free human wills. Boyd argues that this passage indicates that we should “pray that our Father’s will *would be done* (Matt 6:10), not accept things as though his will was *already being done!*”¹⁷ The problem, of course, is that one does not negate the other. Simply praying that God’s will be done in the future does not imply that his will is not being done in the present.

Third, there is a possible parallel to the Matthean passage in the Gospel of Thomas. In saying six, in answer to the question of fasting, Jesus is reported as saying “Do not tell lies, and do not do what you hate, for all things are plain in the sight of heaven. . . .”¹⁸ Taking the phrase “all things” at face value, the words seem to refer to the past, the present, and the future.

¹⁴ N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 291. Note that Wright has chosen to deliberately use the small letter ‘g’ when referring to God. His justification for this is found in *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), xiv.

¹⁵ I am aware of the difficulties and dangers of speaking of “second-temple Judaism” as if it were some sort of homogenous group. On these dangers see G. Boccaccini, *Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought 300 B.C.E. To 200 C. E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) pp.7-25; G. W. E. Nickelsburg and R. A. Kraft, “The Modern Study of Early Judaism,” in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. G. W. E. Nickelsburg and R. A. Kraft (Atlanta: SBL, 1986), pp. 9-20; as well as G. G. Porton, “Diversity in Postbiblical Judaism,” in Kraft and Nickelsburg, *Early Judaism*, 57-80. Boccaccini rightly states that Judaism “is to be seen not as an ideologically homogeneous unit but, in today’s world as well as in the past, as a set of different ideological systems in competition with one another” (p. 13). Because of this diversity one would expect to see some non-canonical writing from this period that points to God’s knowledge of the future as open. I am aware of no such work.

¹⁶ Note that I am not including here the Hebrew Bible texts (on either side of the issue) because it is precisely the meaning of these texts that is at the heart of the question.

¹⁷ G. Boyd, *Possible*, 102 (Italics in original).

¹⁸ J. M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 118. It should be noted here that I am not arguing that *The Gospel of Thomas* is a first-century document, but only that it might shed some light on how this passage was perceived within the first few hundred years after it was written. I agree with Wolfgang Schrage, *Das Verhältnis des Thomas-Evangeliums zur synoptischen Tradition und zu den koptischen Evangelienübersetzungen* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964), that most of the parallels with *Thomas* are best explained by a dependence of *Thomas* on the Synoptics, rather than the other way around.

Fourth, Jesus sees the fact that God knows what we need before we ask as an encouragement to pray, not as a discouragement.¹⁹ Davies and Allison note, “prayer . . . does not inform or remind God of anything; it is instead worship, and it serves to cleanse the mind, purify the heart, and align one’s will with God’s will.”²⁰ Early comments on this passage point in the same direction. Chrysostom, for example, in his *Homily on Matthew* (19.5), asks, “Wherefore must we pray? Not to instruct him, but to prevail with him; to be made intimate with him . . .”²¹ From very early on, this passage was seen to speak very clearly about Jesus’ view of his Father’s omniscient knowledge of future prayer requests, yet this knowledge should cause us to *want* to pray, not to stop praying (as some openness proponents have claimed).²² Frank Tupper observes that this passage teaches that prayer “does not inform God.”²³ Thus this passage seems to teach that Jesus believed that his Father had knowledge of the future.

The openness proponent might argue that this passage simply teaches that God knows the present thoughts of man. Therefore, he would know what a petitioner was about to ask, because he knows the present, not the future. The problem is that this works against the argument that God’s openness gives incentive to prayer.²⁴ Bruce Ware shows this quite succinctly when he points out that not just in the classic view, but even the in the open view, “[i]t is strictly speaking impossible for human beings to inform God of their thoughts, concerns, longings, feelings and requests” (because all these things exist in the present).²⁵

B. *Matthew 10: 26-33*

A second passage that gives weight to the view that Jesus believed that his Father had knowledge of the future is found in Matthew 10:26-33 (pericope 101). Here Jesus again speaks very specifically about the nature and breadth of his Father’s knowledge. He states that a sparrow does not fall to the ground (or land on the earth, depending upon how one translates *πεσεῖται*) without the knowledge of the Father. He then goes on to argue from the lesser (the sparrow) to the greater (the human person). The argument is simply this: If God takes care of sparrows, he will take care of his children. Does this passage indicate future knowledge on the part of God, or only perfect knowledge of the present? Sanders seems to argue that this passage does not teach that the Father has accurate foreknowledge of such incidents. About this passage he asks, does it mean that no sparrow dies and no hair falls out without God specifically decreeing that it be so? Although some take it in this sense, it does

¹⁹ On God’s foreknowledge as a discouragement to prayer see Sanders, *Risks*, 268-271; Boyd, *Possible*, 95.

²⁰ Davies and Allison, *Matthew* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988)1.590. D. Hagner agrees, stating: “The disciples . . . are to realize that what they need is already known to God. Prayer does not inform God about their needs.” D. Hagner, *Matthew* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1993) 1.147.

²¹ Cited in Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1.590

²² See for example Boyd, who asks, “[If the future is exhaustively settled] [w]hat real difference could prayer possibly make?” G. Boyd, *Possible*, 95. See also D. Basinger, *Openness of God*, 157-162.

²³ E. F. Tupper, *Scandalous Providence*, 178.

²⁴ For a full critical examination (yet fair enough to be praised by Pinnock) of this aspect of openness see chapters four and five of T. Tiessen, *Providence and Prayer: How Does God Work in the World?* (Downer’s Grove, IL: IVP, 2000).

²⁵ B. Ware, *God’s Lesser Glory: The Diminished God of Open Theism* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 165.

not seem to be what Jesus meant.²⁶ Sanders goes on to argue that Jesus is essentially stating that the problems they may face do not imply that they have been separated from the concern of God. There are, however, a number of factors pointing toward the conclusion that Jesus meant for this argument to be understood as referring to his Father's knowledge of the future.

First, the context of the passage points to a knowledge of the future on the part of the Father. In Matthew 10, Jesus is sending out disciples. He warns them of a variety of problems they will face. They will be beaten (10:17), dragged before governors and kings (10:18), some of them will be killed (10:21). In the face of this promise of persecution, Jesus tells his disciples not to fear, for God cares more about them than about sparrows.

One could argue that Jesus' prediction of persecution is not divine foreknowledge but simply a clear understanding of the political climate of the day. The problem with this view is that the implication is that God knows what will happen to these men. If the Father is not sure about what will happen to them it would be exceedingly difficult for Jesus to make the promises of hope that he offers to the departing disciples. In fact, a syllogism could be constructed like this: You will face terrors; God knows about the terrors; Therefore, you need not fear. It seems highly unlikely that Jesus is only guessing about what will happen to them based on the political climate of the day.

Alternately, one could argue that the hope that Jesus is offering is that of eternal life, which would require no knowledge of the future, only perfect knowledge of the present state of human hearts. Thus, the argument could go thusly: Jesus is saying that they need not fear because ultimately they will be taken to heaven. The problem with this understanding is that it violates the very understanding of free will that open theists hold to so strongly. What is to prevent one or more of these men, under the pressure of the threat of death, from denying his faith? It would be impossible for Jesus to promise them hope without his Father knowing how they would respond under the upcoming persecution.

A second reason to see this passage as speaking of God's knowledge of the future lies in the grammar. Jesus states that “ἐν εἰς αὐστῶν οὐς πεσεῖται ἐπι' τὴν γῆν ἄνευ τοῦ πατρὸς” ὑμῶν.” Thus he seems, at least at first glance, to say that God knows about the smallest thing that will happen (a sparrow falling or landing) and therefore it is reasonable to believe that he knows about the larger things. The question that we must answer, of course, is this: Does God know this information before it happens, or does he come to know it at the time of its happening? Simply pointing out that the verb is in the future tense does not solve the problem. However, there are several reasons to believe that Jesus means for this passage to be understood as teaching that God knows at the time he (Jesus) is speaking about the sparrows that will fall in the future (i.e., his knowledge is now complete, he does not come to know about sparrows at the time they fall).

One of the problems in the interpretation of this text results from the fact that Matthew has only τοῦ πατρὸς” as the object of ἄνευ in the second part of the phrase. One expects a further (impersonal) object (e.g., your Father's will, knowledge, etc.) The literal translation would be “not one sparrow shall fall on the earth without your Father.” Most English translations have chosen to add an impersonal object such as “without your Father's

²⁶ Sanders, *Risks*, 113.

knowledge’ (see for example KJV, NASV, NIV). Justification for this translation is found in *BDAG*²⁷ which cites Matthew 10:29 as an example of ἄνευ used of a person (i.e., without an impersonal object). In this case, the word should be taken to mean “without the knowledge and consent.”²⁸ The question remains as to whether Jesus speaks of the perfect present knowledge or the knowledge of the future. Does ἄνευ imply present knowledge of a future event? If *BDAG* is correct in asserting that this term, as it is used here, connotes “knowledge and consent” then the idea of future knowledge is almost certain.²⁹ One gives consent for activities which are to happen in the future, not those that have already taken place. It would be impossible for God to give his consent for a sparrow to fall (or land) without having known about it in advance.

This word occurs in the New Testament only three times (Matt 10:29; 1 Pet 3:1; 4:9). The other two times ἄνευ has an impersonal object (without a word and without complaint).³⁰ The word occurs in 24 verses in the canonical books of the LXX.³¹ The most interesting of these occurrences, for our purpose, are two of the times that ἄνευ occurs without an impersonal object. In Gen 41:44 the LXX reads, “εἶπεν δὲ Φαραω τῷ Ἰωσηφ ἐγὼ Φαραω ἄνευ σοῦ οὐκ ἔξαρεῖ οὐθεὶς τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ πάσῃ γῆ Αἰγύπτου.” In this case the object is the second person personal pronoun (referring to Joseph) and both the ἄνευ and σου are translated from the Hebrew term רַחֲמֵי־בְּרַיִךְ which in this context clearly means “without your consent.”

The term occurs again without an impersonal object in Isa 36:10. The text here reads, “καὶ νῦν μὴ ἄνευ κυρίου ἀνεβήμεν ἐσπὶ τὴν χώραν ταύτην πολεμῆσαι αὐστήν.” Again the key phrase is translated from the Hebrew terms הַיְהוָה רַחֲמֵי־בְּרַיִךְ. In this case Rabshakeh is speaking to Hezekiah and telling him that he did not come into the land without the “approval of the Lord.”³² The implication is clear, Rabshakeh believes that the Lord knew what he was planning and gave him permission to carry out those plans.

Thus, in both of these cases, when the word occurs without an impersonal object it implies the permission of the person to whom it refers. This adds weight to the idea that Jesus means to imply that no sparrow falls without the approval of the Father, since it is impossible to grant permission for an act or event that one is ignorant of or that is in the past. The evidence strongly implies that this passage speaks of God’s foreknowledge. The very fact that the disciples are supposed to be encouraged by this speech lends credence to the view that Jesus’ argument is this: God knows all that will happen. The smallest event does not take place without his permission. Even the death of a sparrow requires the permission of God. Thus persecution will not mean that God has forgotten, is ignorant, or is

²⁷ *BDAG*, 78.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ See also Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2. 208 who cite *BAGD* and posit that the phrase is properly translated by the RSV who render it “without your Father’s will.” Hagner cites the phrase from *BAGD* approvingly as well. D. Hagner, *Matthew*, 1.286.

³⁰ 1 Pet. 3:1b διὰ τῆς τῶν γυναικῶν ἀναστροφῆς ἄνευ λόγου κερδηθήσονται ,ωιτηρου α ωορδ. 4”9 φιλόξενοι εἰς ἀλλήλους ἄνευ γογγυσμοῦ (without complaint).

³¹ Gen 41:16, 44; Exod 21:11; 1 Sam 6:7; 2 Kgs 18:25; Ps 9:27; 43:13; 58:5; Job 6:6, 8:11, 24:7, 30:28, 31:39, 34:6, 34:32, 39:16; Amos 3:5, Isa 10:15, 28:1, 36:10, 55:1; Jer. 51:19; Dan 2:34, 2:45.

³² NASB.

not in control. Not a sparrow falls, and not a disciple is persecuted without both the knowledge and permission of God.

Both of these passages seem to give significant weight to the argument that Jesus saw his Father as having accurate foreknowledge. It will not be enough for openness scholars to point out other possible options. The openness proponent must engage with the text and present significant reasons for not hearing these texts as it seems a second-temple Jewish person, steeped in the LXX, would have.

II. Jesus' Own View Of His Knowledge Of The Future

A second major question must now be asked. If he believed that his Father knew the future, did Jesus believe that he had that same knowledge? There are a variety of avenues open to the exegete in this area. Jesus seems to predict a number of events including his own death, the destruction of the temple, the betrayal of Judas, and the denial of Peter. Because these last two deal very directly with the free will of individuals they will be carefully examined.

A. Jesus' Prediction About Peter

Jesus makes a very specific prediction about what Peter will do within the next 24 hours. This prediction is found in all four of the Gospels (Pericope 315; Matt 26:34; Mark 14:30; Luke 22:34; John 13:38). The question that this issue raises is obvious. If God's inerrant foreknowledge violates the free will of the object of that knowledge, and if God will not violate the will of any free creature, how is he able to unerringly predict the actions of one of those free creatures?

While there have been a variety of answers to this problem, I will deal here with those offered by Sanders and Boyd. Boyd believes that Jesus knew Peter well enough to predict these actions based not on his knowledge of the future, but only on his knowledge of Peter's personality. He says, "[c]ontrary to the assumption of many, we do not need to believe that the future is exhaustively settled to explain this prediction. We only need to believe that God the Father knew and revealed to Jesus one very predictable aspect of Peter's character."³³

Sanders's answer, while slightly different from Boyd's, simply pushes the problem back a step. He posits that all that God needed to determine "in this case would be to have someone question Peter three times and a rooster crow."³⁴ The problem is obvious. How is it that God can be sure that one or two of those three people will not decide, at the last minute, not to question Peter? How is it that God can be sure that the particular rooster will not oversleep, or even be killed by its master? It seems that Sanders' answer has only made the problem more difficult rather than less so.

In another context, Sanders makes a very interesting statement about this prediction. He says that God, in the events that surrounded this prediction about Peter, could have "orchestrated events in order to drive home a point to someone God intended to be a leading apostle. In this case the "foreknowledge" is due to foreordination, which is

³³ Boyd, *Possible*, 35.

³⁴ Sanders, "How Did God Know?," *Christianity Today*, June 11, 2001, 54.

compatible with presentism”³⁵ One wonders precisely what this means.³⁶ Did God violate the will of Peter in the course of this “foreordination”? In what sense is foreordination compatible with presentism? The use of the word “foreordination” seems to point toward a certainty, yet this act involves the choice of individuals which would seem to place it in the realm of the “unknowable.” Unfortunately, Sanders’s use of language here is not very clear.

Several problems present themselves immediately with reference to both Sanders’ and Boyd’s views. First, the prediction is very specific not just concerning action (which might, I suppose, be only a result of the knowledge of Peter’s personality) but to time as well. How did Jesus know that these events would take place within the next few hours? This simply cannot be laid at the feet of Peter’s personality or at the feet of the personalities of the questioners. It has been countered that the crucifixion is the most important event in the history of redemption; therefore we might expect to see unusual things happening as God brings his plan to fruition.³⁷ The problem is that Peter’s denial is in no way integral to the crucifixion itself. One could argue that Judas’s betrayal was a key event in the passion, but that same argument cannot be made in reference to Peter.

A second problem can be seen when one realizes that there are only two options open to Jesus when he makes this statement. He is either sure that this event will take place, or he believes (but is uncertain) that it will happen. If he is sure, then God has apparently violated the free will of Peter (on the openness definition of free will).³⁸ If he is not sure, then one must construct a theology in which Jesus could possibly be mistaken, for just because it came to pass does not mean (if Jesus was uncertain) that it happened out of any sort of necessity.³⁹ Thus if Jesus was unsure about the future actions of Peter, then one must face the possibility that he could have been mistaken. Would Jesus have made such a prediction if he were not sure about its outcome? The so-called “ignorant son” passages (Matt 24:36; Mark 13:32) would indicate that Jesus felt no shame in admitting that his knowledge was limited in at least one area. Yet he makes a very specific prediction here. If Jesus had been unsure it seems that he would not have made such a prediction. Thus the evidence seems to point very clearly to the fact that Jesus believed that he could accurately predict the future actions of a free agent, yet that agent was still responsible for the evil which he committed. This seriously undermines both the necessity of defining free will as unrestricted in order to have responsibility for an action, as well as the argument for Jesus’ lack of foreknowledge.

³⁵ Sanders, *Risks*, 136.

³⁶ On the problem of the lack of sharp definition in some areas of the openness debate see Frame, *No Other God*, 20-21.

³⁷ This is the position that Sanders seems to take when he states, “Peter was to have a special role in God’s forthcoming work, so God works especially with him.” J. Sanders, “How Did God Know?” *CT*, June 11 (2001): 54.

³⁸ It should be pointed out that Peter is still held responsible for this act despite the fact that it was not “free” under the openness definition of freedom. See Frame, *No Other God*, 202.

³⁹ I mean this “mistake” as a much different and much more serious type than the sort of which Ben Meyer writes in *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), 242-249. This sort of mistake would not be simply a sharpening of some eschatological understanding, but an out and out error of fact. Note that Sanders is not hesitant to ascribe a mistake (albeit after a very carefully nuanced definition of mistake) to God. He admits that God could be mistaken in his beliefs, believing that something was going to come to pass which did not come to pass. Sanders, *Risks*, 132-3.

B. Jesus' Prediction About Judas

The betrayal of Jesus by Judas creates more problems for those intent on saving some sort of autonomous free will. The prediction is found in pericope number 310 (Matt 26:20-25); the action itself is reported in pericope 331 (Matt 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; Luke 22: 47-53; John 18:2-12). Jesus predicts beforehand that Judas will betray him and Judas goes out and does exactly what Jesus has predicted. If Jesus can predict the actions of Judas beforehand, how can his choices be said to be free in the autonomous sense? This prediction by Jesus and action by Judas raise serious questions for the open theist.

While it is true that verses 17-19 of Matthew 26 are “not supposed to display Jesus’ foreknowledge of events to come, what follows certainly does.”⁴⁰ Jesus speaks very clearly about being handed over by one of the twelve. In verse 24 Matthew quotes Jesus as saying “ὁ μὲν υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὑπάγει καθὼς γέγραπται περὶ αὐτοῦ” Davies and Allison see the term ὑπάγει as a euphemism for dying.⁴¹ Thus Jesus is seen very clearly making a prediction not just about the fact of the betrayal, but about the outcome of the betrayal as well. While one could argue that Judas had already made up his mind, and that knowledge of Judas’s present state was open to God, this will not answer the question of how Jesus would have known the ultimate outcome (death) of the betrayal, nor the question of what might have occurred had Judas changed his mind.

One of the more serious problems for openness scholars is that, in John’s gospel, Jesus links his prediction about the actions of Judas to the proof of his own Deity. In John 13:18-19, Jesus says:

18 "I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but *it is* that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.' 19 "From now on I am telling you before *it* comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am *He*. (NASB)

Thus, Jesus is basing his claim to deity on the accuracy of this prophecy. The very fact that John has reported to us the use of the phrase “I am” (ἵνα πιστεύσητε ὅταν γένηται ὅτι ἐγὼ εἰμι) is indicative of the seriousness with which Jesus took this prophecy. Sanders argues that a “risk is involved here, since there is no guarantee which way Judas will decide.”⁴² In the prediction, Jesus appears to place a great deal of weight (the proof of his own Deity) on an event for which there is no guarantee. If Judas had chosen otherwise (as both Boyd and Sanders say that he could have⁴³), would this have meant that Jesus was not the Messiah? Would Jesus have risked the proof of his own messianic status on such a rash and uncontrollable event as this? I think not.⁴⁴

Another serious problem for open theists is that in Matthew’s gospel the betrayal of Judas is said to be a fulfillment of prophecy (Matt 26:54-56):

⁴⁰ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3.460.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 3.462.

⁴² Sanders, *Risks*, 99.

⁴³ Boyd, *Possible*, 38; Sanders, *Risks*, 99.

⁴⁴ See Ware, *God's Lesser Glory*, 127.

54 "How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen this way?" 55 At that time Jesus said to the multitudes, "Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. 56 "But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled." Then all the disciples left Him and fled. (NASB)

Sanders argues that the use of fulfillment language in Matthew is not about future events but that Matthew is using the word to imply that what happened in the past is happening again.⁴⁵ While it is true that Matthew's use of the term "fulfillment" is very nuanced, this does not mean that he always uses the term to imply a typological event.⁴⁶ As Matthew 26:24 seems to indicate, Jesus was saying that the Scriptures had predicted that the events "must happen this way." Thus, it seems that the evidence is very strong in favor of seeing Judas's action as having been foreseen by both the Father and Jesus.

C. Counter Evidence

It should be noted here that there is some counter evidence. The most obvious example is the prayer of Jesus on the night before his death. The openness proponents rightly point out that Jesus' prayer seems to point toward uncertainty on his part. His cry of "Πάτερ μου, εἰ δυνατόν ἐστίν, παρελθάτω ἅπ' ἐμοῦ τὸ ποτήριον τοῦτο· πλὴν οὐχ ὡς ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλ' ὡς σὺ" (Matt 26:39) seems, *prima facie*, to add weight to Sanders's view that on the night that Jesus prayed, there was still a chance that the crucifixion would not happen. Sanders, in what is perhaps the greatest understatement of the book, realizes that the "notion that the cross was not planned prior to creation will seem scandalous to some readers."⁴⁷ Yet, despite this propensity for scandal, Sanders boldly puts forth his view by saying, "although Scripture attests that the incarnation was planned from the creation of the world, this is not so with the cross. . . . Until this moment in history other routes were, perhaps, open."⁴⁸ This prayer is a passage which classical theists must deal with. It is not enough simply to say that Jesus was praying "as a man and not as God," for this will be rightly seen as a case of special pleading. What then can the classical theist say in response to the analysis of Sanders?

It must be admitted that Jesus, by becoming fully human, "experienced the full human dread of death."⁴⁹ But this does not necessitate an open view of the crucifixion. First, Blaising has argued that this prayer does not indicate indecision on the part of Jesus. On the

⁴⁵ Sanders, *CT*, June 11, 2001, 54.

⁴⁶ The large bibliography on fulfillment in Matthew includes: N. Hillyer, "Matthew's Use of the Old Testament", *EvQ* 36 (1964), 12-25; S. E. Johnson, "The Biblical Quotations in Matthew", *HTR* 36 (1943), 134-41; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:577; K. Stendahl, *The School of Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament*, (Mifflintown, PA: Sigler, 1991); R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope*, (Leiden: Brill, 1975); G. N. Stanton, "Matthew's Use of the Old Testament" in *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), 346-363; and R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1989), 166-205.

⁴⁷ Sanders, *Risks*, 101.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 100. It should be noted that Boyd takes a different view of the cross than does Sanders. Boyd believes that God did "foreknow and foreordained aspects of Christ's ministry, especially his death. Boyd, *Possible*, 27.

⁴⁹ C. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1999), 639.

contrary, in this prayer, Jesus, knowing that the crucifixion is coming, prays “take this cup from me after I drink it.”⁵⁰

Second, the crucifixion is clearly seen as the consummate event for Hebrew prophecy. The most obvious passages are Psalm 22, Ephesians 1:4, 1 Peter 1:20, and Revelation 13:8. Sanders does point out that New Testament writers do not make use of Psalm 22 despite the fact that “the church has made great use of it.”⁵¹ The problem with this line of analysis (in addition to the fact that Jesus quoted a portion of Psalm 22 on the cross) is that New Testament usage is not the only criterion for recognizing a Hebrew Bible prophecy.

One of the most significant of these passages is found in Revelation 13:8, where the author states: “οὐ οὐ γέγραπται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ ἀρνίου τοῦ ἐσφαγμένου ἀπὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.” Sanders rightly points out that there is a grammatical difficulty with this passage. “What was it in particular that happened before the foundation of the world?”⁵² Was it the writing of names in the book, or the slaying of the Lamb? Sanders argues that while God did plan the incarnation from before the creation, he was not sure of which of the rationales (either as payment for sin or some other rationale) he would need to depend upon. Thus he says that God knew that Jesus would be incarnate, but not that he would be crucified. There are several problems with Sanders’s analysis.

First, the two options in the passage are that the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world or that there are those whose names were not written in the book before the foundation of the world. The problem is that either of the two options lands the openness theologian in trouble. One must admit either that the crucifixion was a fixed event before the foundation of the world, or that the salvation of those whose names are written in the book is a fixed event. That is, the writing of names of free agents in the book before the foundation of the world seems to infringe upon free will as much as the slaying of the Lamb.⁵³ Neither of these options is open to the consistent open theist.

A second problem comes from the grammar of the passage. Robert Picirilli, in a response to Sanders, argues that, “[t]he reason it is more natural to take “from the foundation of the world” with “slain” is fairly obvious. Nearly all the time in Revelation, prepositional phrases adverbially modifying a written verb or verbal go with the verb or verbal closest to them, either before or after.”⁵⁴

A third problem with Sanders’s analysis of this passage is his argument that neither camp interprets this passage literally because Jesus “was not literally slain prior to the creation, since he was crucified during the reign of Pontius Pilate.”⁵⁵ Of course this is little more than

⁵⁰ C. Blasing, “Gethsemane: A Prayer of Faith” *JETS* 22 (1979): 349

⁵¹ Sanders, *Risks*, 101.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 102.

⁵³ On the nature of this book see G. Beale, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 701-2.

⁵⁴ R. Picirilli, “An Arminian Response to John Sanders’s ‘The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence’” *JETS* 44 (2001): 481. Picirilli admits that this “should not be understood as proof to any degree.”

⁵⁵ Sanders, *Risks*, 102.

smoke and mirrors, for no one is arguing that the passage teaches that Jesus was literally killed before the foundation of the world.

It seems Boyd is much closer to classical theism when he agrees that Zechariah 12:10 is “an apparent reference to Christ’s crucifixion—centuries before crucifixion had been invented as a form of execution.”⁵⁶ Thus I see Boyd’s position on the crucifixion (that it was indeed a fixed event) as more biblical, while Sanders’s is more consistent within the scope of the claims of open theism.

Suggestions For Further Research

There are obviously a number of areas that still need work. One of the more important, I think, is finding non-canonical, second-temple Jewish texts that point either toward or away from what has been called the “classical” view of God. The New Testament was not written in a vacuum but entered into a world where there were many other books that claimed to speak about the Hebrew God.

A second area, if I may be so bold as to speak of something good coming from Nazareth, is that classical theologians must work harder to offer coherent explanations of those passages that seem to bolster the position of those who hold to openness theology. It will not do for either side to ignore the work of the other. Careful exegetical work must be done on the passages themselves. Clark Pinnock sees many classical theologians using what he calls the “proof-texting method of evangelical rationalism which disregards narrative but plucks texts out of context in support of traditional notions and a system already in hand.”⁵⁷ However, I think this criticism can be levied with equal force against openness proponents.

Third, more work should center on the view of Jesus. While one must realize that divine foreknowledge is enormously complicated by the incarnation, one must also realize that there is a great deal to be learned from the study of the historical Jesus in the context of this debate. I hope this brief paper might make some small advance in this area.

⁵⁶ Boyd, *Possible*, 27.

⁵⁷ OC. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover*, 20.

SAME AS IT EVER WAS: THE FUTURE OF PROTESTANTISM IN THE GLOBAL NORTH

D. G. Hart¹

It was the best of times. It was the worst of times. That Dickensian reading of nineteenth-century London also appears to be the story line for twenty-first-century journalists covering religion in North America. On the one hand, editors seem to want copy that reveals the spread and growth of Christianity in the global South like the report filed by Somini Sengupta and Larry Rohter for the *New York Times* in the fall of 2003. This article on “The Changing Church” revealed the remarkable vitality and popularity of Christianity (particularly Pentecostalism) among Nigerians. The reporters quoted one Lagos lawyer who said that in countries like the United States “where everything is O.K. . . . people are very lethargic when it comes to religion and God. . . . They seem to have it all.” The story went on to editorialize that this was not the case in the developing world like Nigeria “where Christianity is drawing followers as never before.” This growth, the reporters added, “is changing the complexion and practice of the Christian faith . . . and causing schisms between the old Christians of the north and the newer ones of the south.”²

On the other hand, editors also have a certain taste for stories on North American religion that feature the novel and unconventional practices of Christian churches. Roughly four months after the piece on Pentecostalism in Nigeria appeared in the *Times*, another story on church growth appeared, this time on “emerging” or “postmodern” churches in or around, of all places, the vicinity of Lake Wobegone, Minnesota. Here in the American heartland, as the headline for the report had it, “Hip New Churches Pray to a Different Drummer.” These cutting-edge congregations feature a mix of contemporary and ancient, rock praise bands and Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox rituals with a smattering of multi-media presentations for the more affluent of the “emerging churches.” Furthermore, with a website (www.ginkworld.net) listing more than 300 of such congregations, along with analysis from Northern Baptist Seminary’s Robert Webber about the churches with the best chance of reaching Generation X, the editors at the *Times* detected a phenomenon sufficiently large and growing to merit space among all that is fit to print.³

Although these two sorts of news stories, one on the spread of Christianity in the global South, the other on the vitality of North American Christianity, appear to be at odds, they actually reinforce a common rendering of Christian history over the last three decades. These stories reveal two different attitudes to the contemporary spread of Christianity. The

¹ D. G. Hart, PhD, is the Director of Partnered Projects at the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (www.isi.org). He was previously dean of academic affairs and professor of church history at Westminster Seminary California where he remains on the adjunct faculty. He is the author of numerous books, including: *Deconstructing Evangelicalism: Conservative Protestantism in the Era of Billy Graham*, *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism*, and *The University Gets Religion: Religious Studies and American Higher Education*. This article is adapted from Hart’s address in 2004 at “The Future of the Church in a Globalized World,” a conference sponsored by the Center for Christian Study in Charlottesville, Virginia.

² Somini Sengupta and Larry Rohter, “Where Faith Grows, Fired by Pentecostalism,” *New York Times* (Oct. 14, 2003).

³ John Leland, “Hip New Churches Pray to a Different Drummer,” *New York Times* (Feb. 18, 2004).

first, on the church in the southern hemisphere, underscores the vitality and growth of Christianity in non-western or non-European settings. Thanks to the work of a variety of academics, subsequently reinforced by journalists, the rise of so-called global Christianity has begun to challenge older notions about the West, the residue of Christendom in Europe and North America, and whether other parts of the world are in fact more Christian and thus indicate the direction of Christianity's future. The second story on innovative churches in the United States contradicts, at least to some degree, this reading of Christianity's prominence in the global South. The "emerging" church movement is simply the latest evidence of American Christianity's amazing dynamism and creativity. It also underscores the perception that the United States is uncannily Christian despite a variety of other political and social circumstances that make it one of the most secular nations on the planet. As such, while the growth of Pentecostalism in Nigeria leads to the Christianity-is-dying-in-the-West-and-alive-in-the-South story line, the rise of "emerging" churches reinforces the narrative of America's religious exceptionalism. Such uniqueness, of course, proves that God is indeed dead in the West except for that most modern and secular of places, the United States.

Despite this apparent tension in journalism about contemporary Christianity, these stories cohere in one important respect. Both reinforce the notion that the older patterns and forms of Christian practice, whether Roman Catholic or Protestant, have run out of gas. For instance, in their report on Nigeria, Sengupta and Rohter observe that Pentecostalism, not simply in Africa but also in South America, is "bumping up against established Christian churches . . . chipping away at what has been a virtual Roman Catholic monopoly" at least in Latin America. They add that these new churches' appeal has been "seemingly irresistible. Worship today is a far cry from the rituals once imposed by European missionaries. Services are conducted in Swahili and Igbo. Most of all, services can be much livelier than their European antecedents." According to the Bishop of Nairobi who was recently back from attending Mass in Rome, "I found the way they celebrate the Eucharist a bit boring."⁴ If historic Christian forms of worship are losing their appeal in the global South, in the upper mid-West of the United States the piety of boomers has become geriatric. The megachurches of the 1970s and 1980s, according to the story on the "emerging" church, were too rational, predictable, and oriented to performance. As the reporter describes the "emerging" congregations in Minneapolis, "At Spirit Garage . . . in a small theater, congregants can pick up earplugs at the door in case the Spirit Garage Band is too loud. At Solomon's Porch across town, a crowd of about 300 takes weekly communion 'house party'-style, chatting with plastic cups of wine and pieces of pastry before one announces, 'Take and eat the body of Christ.'⁵ Consequently, whether the site of greatest Christian vitality is the southern hemisphere or the home of Scandinavian-American culture and the Mall of America, the historic practices and worship of Protestant and Roman Catholic Christians is clearly in decline, at least by the lights of the *Times'* religion reporters.

What follows is an attempt to say an encouraging word on behalf of the old and decrepit, not a fun assignment but certainly one that could be valuable if it generated better understanding of the current predicament for Protestant churches. The particular old and

⁴ Quoted in Sengupta and Rohter, "Where Faith Grows."

⁵ Leland, "Hip New Churches."

decrepit that I have in mind are the faith and practices that gave rise to Protestantism. The concern here is not so much to defend the sociological phenomenon of denominationalism, a religious structure bound up with the polity of the United States particularly and the decline of ecclesiastical establishments in the West more generally. Instead, the aim is to show that the understanding of Christianity that fueled the formation of such different communions as Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, and Reformed, has a future even if its current prospects look bleak. Although the points to follow almost exclusively involve Protestantism, they do by implication extend to Roman Catholicism since both older branches of western Christianity depend upon an understanding of Christianity that features churchly ways of practicing the faith. To be sure, the ministry of word, sacrament, and discipline is a topic over which Protestants and Roman Catholics vigorously disagree (or at least used to). But these older ways of practicing the Christian religion and the debates over them that ensued in the West for at least two centuries after the Protestant Reformation are precisely at issue in current discussions about the future of Christianity. As such, to regard the current Christian situation as a question of either western or southern global hegemony is to miss a more basic issue of whether ecclesial Christianity is a legitimate, if not normative, Christian expression. Even if current discussions of religion in the press consider irrelevant the sort of theological, ecclesiastical, and liturgical questions that divided western Christianity first into Protestants and Roman Catholics and then into Protestant denominations, my own conviction is that these ecclesial forms of faith are still crucial to Christian ministry and witness and so cannot be neglected in any evaluation of Christianity's vitality.

The Sociological is Spiritual

Two questions are crucial to the argument here. The first addresses the criteria by which scholars and journalists assess the apparent vitality of contemporary Christianity and the so-called decline of older Christian practices. How do we evaluate Christian expressions and what are the standards used to regard one as more dynamic or vigorous than another? For those who have not spent much time thinking about the way scholars study religion, the answer to a question about criteria might look amazingly simple: you look and see where the most is, that is the most people, the most seats, the most excitement, the most energy, the most difference—in other words, the most religious stuff to count, measure, and analyze. But such an apparently empirical approach (the one preferred by the modern academy) begs all sorts of political, social, and religious questions.

For instance, the study of American religion fifty years ago was synonymous with the study of the most wealthy Protestant denominations in the United States. But what about groups outside the Protestant mainline: the Reformed Episcopalians, the Nazarenes, the Orthodox Presbyterians, let alone Mormons, Roman Catholics, and Jews? In other words, care needs to be given when describing a religious phenomenon as distinctly *American*, and scholars finally began to be more cautious coincidentally at the same time that the Supreme Court found mainline Protestant expressions of piety in public schools to be unconstitutional. So if caution is necessary when describing something as American religion—it was not simply Protestant—how much more so when using the word *Christian*? To conclude that a person, practice, group, or communion is Christian is not merely a descriptive act but one fraught with a host of normative factors. Rarely, however, do

journalists or scholars writing on contemporary religion show their cards in considerations of what constitutes real Christianity.⁶

What then have been the criteria to evaluate the current Christian situation in the global South? What traits, in other words, tempt observers to conclude that the new forms of Christianity are establishing patterns for the future? As already mentioned, the first feature that stands out is numerical. The statistics on Christianity in the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century are remarkable. In a review of David Barrett's *World Christian Encyclopedia* (2001), the Blue Book as it were of market value in the contemporary church, church historian Mark Noll summarizes to great effect the statistics that show Christianity moving from the global North to the South. Barrett's encyclopedia shows, that "For the African continent, . . . the number of affiliated Christians is increasing at a rate of more than eight million per year, with 1.5 million of that number 'net new converts (converts minus defections or apostasies)'. . . The numbers in Asia and Latin America are equally dramatic. The contrast to these numerical gains, however, is almost equally staggering losses in Europe and North America, where . . . each year nearly three million church members cease practicing the faith."⁷ According to Noll, not since the transfer of Christianity from the Mediterranean world to Europe during the early Middle Ages has such an unprecedented transformation occurred. He even refers to the history of Christianity in the twentieth century as *revolutionary* because of this shift from Europe and North America to Africa and South America. In sum, on the basis of these statistics a scholar can say the West is no longer the homeland of Christianity.

The advantages of new world Christianity are not merely quantitative. It also exhibits qualities that seem to explain its numerical success. According to Philip Jenkins, in his book, *The Next Christendom*, the issue that most divides northern and southern Christianity is the "matter of spiritual forces and their effects on the everyday human world."⁸ One important manifestation of this difference is the incredible popularity of Pentecostalism in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Indeed, two of the most important recent studies of the new Christian growth in Latin America, David Martin's *Tongues of Fire* (1990) and David Stoll's *Is Latin America Turning Protestant?* (1990), feature the tremendous appeal of Spirit-filled Christianity in regions formerly dominated by Roman Catholicism.

Although easily caricatured by God's "frozen chosen"—that is, Calvinists like myself—charismatic and Pentecostal Christianity does in fact display teaching and practices that to observers accustomed to more routine and measured (read: boring) forms of Christianity, a faith full of spontaneity, vigor, and excitement. How could it not? Here is a form of faith in which the miraculous and supernatural are not simply close to the surface but in your face. Jenkins describes this Pentecostal spirituality as one where exhorters "preach messages that, to a Westerner, appear simplistically charismatic, visionary and apocalyptic." He adds that "in this thought-world, prophecy is an everyday reality, while faith-healing, exorcism, and

⁶ On the dominance of Protestantism in the academic study of religion in the United States and the secular turn in religious studies, see D. G. Hart, *The University Gets Religion: Religious Studies and American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

⁷ Noll, review of Barrett's *World Christian Encyclopedia*, *Church History* 71, no. 2 (2002), 448.

⁸ Phillip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 123.

dream-visions are all basic components of religious sensibility.⁹ At several points in his book on Latin American Protestants, the sociologist David Martin describes Pentecostal services that follow the pattern of worship that has characterized contemporary Praise & Worship with an opening period of praise songs and prayer, followed by a long sermon, and concluding with a time of prayer, testimony, and healing. Martin's commentary on this kind of worship is instructive for explaining the perceptions of journalists and scholars from the North who may be unfamiliar with it. He writes: "Whereas the older Protestant denominations stressed literacy, which might turn out to involve a longish process of learning to read, Pentecostals work with the oral tradition, aided sometimes by the visual icons of religious television and cinema." It is an exhilarating mixture of fishing "in the deep waters of the ageless spirit world and, at the same time, [conveying] intimations of modernity." Such exotic combinations undoubtedly account for the perception that something truly new and more importantly spiritual is at work in southern Christianity.¹⁰

If the new Christianity presents a more vigorous and spiritual form of worship, its provision of physical blessings are no less striking, maybe more so. As many scholars have argued, part of the success of southern Christianity stems from its operating in a universe parallel to that of animism and spiritualism. Yet, the spiritual access provided by charismatic and Pentecostal faith is not simply religious in that adherents assume a new identity in Christ through the transforming work of the Spirit. The Spirit's presence and power also heals bodies and generates wealth. Many scholars have observed that the appeal of charismatic forms of Christianity is strong precisely among those segments of the population on the front line of urbanization and industrialization. In such conditions, the church becomes a vehicle for social services yet to emerge from either governmental or community sources. According to Jenkins, "The churches provide a social network that would otherwise be lacking, and help teach members the skills they need to survive in a rapidly developing society."¹¹

Yet the assistance to come from these new Christian communities is not the complete story. Undergirding the welfare and communitarian components of these churches is a theology that regards divine power as a daily and immediate aid in combating the desperate circumstances of poverty, hunger, and illness. Despite the popular perception that Spirit-filled Christianity is escapist and otherworldly, Jenkins counters by noting that southern Christianity is precisely the opposite "since faith is expected to lead to real and observable results in this world." The reason is the belief that "God intervenes directly in everyday life," thus constituting the antidote to the kind of spiritual evil these Christians believe to be constantly present.¹² In effect, the earthly realities of jobs and education are merely a platform upon which the contest between the forces of the Spirit and evil are performed. According to one Brazilian pastor, the new southern churches' "main appeal is that they present a God that you can use." "Most Presbyterians," he adds, "have a God that's so great, so big, that they cannot even talk with him openly, because he is far away. The

⁹ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰ David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 167, 168.

¹¹ Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 74.

¹² Ibid., 77.

Pentecostal groups have the kind of God that will solve my problems today and tomorrow. People today are looking for solutions, not for eternity.”¹³

Yet, upon closer inspection the success of this new form of Christianity reveals a phenomenon with more ties to the past and is less regional than first impressions might suggest. The apparent vitality and growth of Christianity in Asia, Latin America, and Africa is actually replaying earlier patterns of Protestantism’s expansion. Several students of southern Christianity have noted that revivalism accomplished among eighteenth century English Methodists and nineteenth century American Protestants what Pentecostalism is doing today in Latin America and other places. Jenkins summarizes this literature well:

What we are now witnessing in the global South is very much what occurred in the North when it was passing through a comparable stage of social development. We can trace countless parallels between Pentecostal growth today and the much-studied story of English Methodism in the century after 1760, the most rapid stage of British industrialization. Then, as now, popular sects arose to meet the needs that could be filled neither by secular society, nor by the established churches, which had scarcely a foothold in the burgeoning cities. The new Dissenting churches were a triumph of cooperative endeavor, at once providing material support, mutual cooperation, spiritual comfort, and emotional release in the bleak wastes of an expanding industrial society.¹⁴

What stands out in this comparison is a method of evaluation that tallies up Christian effectiveness by its churches’ ability to meet real financial and physical needs through teachings that conceive of divine power not as remote or spiritual but as immediately accessible and that overcome daily trials and sin. In sum, what northern Christianity used to possess but lost thanks to its churches’ affluence and power, southern Christianity now has in dramatic ways: profound and life-changing religious experiences, powerful demonstrations of divine presence, and churches that build solidarity and minister in a holistic fashion. It is no wonder that many fear whether European Christianity and its North American descendent can muster a faith as vibrant, Spirit-filled, relevant, and compassionate.

Them Dry Bones

One of the lessons of church history, whether corporate or individual, is that religious intensity cools. The very marks of religious success are also usually the ingredients of religious decline. Here it may be helpful to recall that the best North American parallel to contemporary southern Christianity, the Spirit-filled revivalism of Methodism and other pietistic Protestants, became so successful in overcoming Western Christianity that these Christians became the Protestant mainline or establishment, according to the parlance of an earlier time. Methodists and Baptists took their experiential faith all over the heartland while revivalist-friendly Congregationalists and Presbyterians established a myriad of organizations—educational, welfare, and religious—that constituted the so-called

¹³ Pastor quoted in *ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Benevolent Empire.¹⁵ These antebellum efforts succeeded in Christianizing the United States and forming the mainstream American Protestant tradition. By the early twentieth century this revivalist-inspired faith had lost some of its original religious vitality—how couldn't it given its staggering wealth and organizational might? But what William R. Hutchison wrote of these denominations in their twentieth century opulence, namely, that these churches “felt responsible for America: for its moral structure, for the religious content of national ideals, for the educative and welfare functions that government would not . . . carry out,” may also come to be true of today's southern Christian churches.¹⁶ After all, if both started with movements of the Spirit that issued in individual stability and community improvement, what is happening now in the southern churches could well yield the Third World equivalent of the National Council of Churches.

This might sound like an unpromising basis upon which to defend traditional Protestantism since it could come across as implying an inevitable decline of vibrant faith into organizational and bureaucratic torpor. It is also a perspective that could leaven optimistic predictions about the future of southern Christianity with the yeast of caution. Nevertheless, pointing out the loss of religious vitality among the older denominations is a flimsy foundation for establishing the ongoing necessity of historic Protestantism. After all, some of the most vibrant churches in the global South are Protestant denominations of western lineage. Moreover, defending one group on the basis of its rival's possible weakness does not constitute a vindication. To argue that sixteenth century Protestantism may still make a valuable contribution to future Christian witness and service will require those churches to produce real assets; this older faith cannot simply be the default setting for Christians who prefer their faith less enthusiastic.

But before proceeding with an argument on behalf of traditional Protestantism, an important conceptual clarification is necessary. As opposed to the common differentiation between Christianity in the global South and that of Western Europe and North America, a temporal classification makes better sense than the regional one employed currently by journalists and scholars. Here the difference has less to do with the contrasts existing on opposite sides of the equator or even with different patterns of modernization. Instead, a more fundamental issue concerns the altered state of affairs that emerged after 1740. Prior to that date, which is roughly the beginning of the First Great Awakening, Protestantism was an overwhelmingly churchly faith. That is to say, with the exception of the Anabaptists whose own forms of community encouraged a corporate conception of the Christian faith, the major branches of the Reformation—Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican—understood the fundamental realities of Christianity in relation to the teaching, liturgical, and disciplinary ministry of pastors and priests. Following the lead ironically of nineteenth-century American political history, some scholars have referred to this form of Protestantism as confessionalism or liturgicalism.¹⁷ One of the figures who lived during the times these

¹⁵ For an older but still informed assessment of this Protestant activism, see Timothy L. Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform: American Protestantism on the Eve of the Civil War* (1957; rev. ed., Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

¹⁶ William R. Hutchison, “Preface,” to William R. Hutchison, ed., *Between the Times: The Travail of the Protestant Establishment in America, 1900-1960* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), viii.

¹⁷ See, for instance, Daniel Walker Howe, “Religion and Politics in the Antebellum North,” and Robert P. Swierenga, “Ethnoreligious Political Behavior in the Mid-Nineteenth Century: Voting,

political historians analyze was John Williamson Nevin, a high-church German Reformed theologian best known for the theology that bore the name of the seminary where he and Philip Schaff taught, Mercersburg. Nevin rendered one of the better definitions of confessional or historic Protestantism in his autobiographical reflections about the small Presbyterian church in which he was reared. He wrote:

Being of what is called Scotch-Irish extraction, I was by birth and blood also, a Presbyterian; and as my parents were both conscientious and exemplary professors of religion, I was, as a matter of course, carefully brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, according to the Presbyterian faith as it then stood. . . . [T]hat the old Presbyterian faith, into which I was born, was based throughout on the idea of covenant family religion, church membership by God's holy act in baptism, and following this a regular catechetical training of the young, with direct reference to their coming to the Lord's table. In one word, all proceeded on the theory of sacramental, educational religion, as it had belonged properly to all the national branches of the *Reformed Church* in Europe from the beginning. . . . The system was churchly, as holding the Church in her visible character to be the medium of salvation for her baptized children, in the sense of that memorable declaration of Calvin (*Institutes* 4.1.4), where, speaking of her title, *Mother*, he says: "There is no other entrance into life, save as she may conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us from her breasts, and embrace us in her loving care to the end."¹⁸

As this excerpt makes clear, this older Protestant piety revolved around the churchly activities of word, sacrament, and ordination. To many of Nevin's peers, his account of Protestantism sounded Roman Catholic and he received criticisms in kind. But as he also pointed out effectively, the older forms of Protestantism shared much in common with Roman Catholics, thus initiating a reform of western Christianity's churchly piety, not a revolutionary new form of devotion.

Nevin is a valuable guide to confessionalism because he was astute in sensing an epoch-making shift in Protestant sensibilities in the wake of revivalism. Although he reserved his sharpest criticisms for Charles Finney, Nevin came to view the whole turn toward the subjective experience of individual believers in conversion and personal forms of devotion, first posited by pietists and some Puritans in the seventeenth century, and then reinforced in the First Great Awakening of the eighteenth, as a fundamental break with the older Protestant churchly faith.¹⁹ What Nevin recognized, as few American Protestants have, is that from its eighteenth century iteration down to the present, evangelicalism has had a fundamental disagreement with other versions of Christianity, Protestantism included. George Whitefield well captured that conflict in 1739 on one of his first preaching campaigns in America. After looking at the variety of Protestant denominations he

Values, Culture," in Mark A. Noll, ed., *Religion and American Politics: From the Colonial Period to the 1980s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 121-71.

¹⁸ John Williamson Nevin, *My Own Life: The Early Years* (Lancaster, PA: Historical Society of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, 1964), 2-3.

¹⁹ For Nevin's importance as a critic of new Protestantism, see D. G. Hart, *John Williamson Nevin: High Church Calvinist* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005).

concluded that “It was best to preach the new birth, and the power of godliness, and not to insist so much on the form: for people would never be brought to one mind as to that; nor did Jesus Christ ever intend it.”²⁰ This characteristic indifference to form was what drove the new form of Protestantism to oppose nominal Christianity, that is, the idea that people could simply go through the motions and fake true religion. But a consequence of this anti-formalism was to teach generations of born-again, Spirit-filled believers that forms do not matter, only the Spirit does. And so wherever revivalism and its zeal went, out also went the churchly practices that old-time Protestants identified with true Christianity.

With this distinction between the new and the old forms of Protestantism in mind, a case for traditional Protestantism can be more concrete and perhaps more useful than one that simply distinguishes between good and bad forms of revivalism.²¹ The new Protestantism, the one achieving significant momentum and adherents during the First Great Awakening, clearly has a future. As long as modernity continues to dislocate individuals from traditional communal patterns and create the need for new forms of association, healing, and a direct encounter with divine power, the new Protestantism will thrive. But this form of Protestantism does not leave much room for the older Protestant faith. Because religious experience and practical holy living are so central to new Protestantism, the church is at best a supplement to real religion, which is a direct encounter between the Spirit and the soul. And with a reduced role for the church, the sorts of doctrines and practices that define the older Protestantism appear to be little more than a luxury that SUV-driving, Latte-sipping North American believers can afford.²²

The issue then is whether the pre-revival form of Protestantism has a future and the answer depends on whether word, sacrament, and discipline have a future. Of course, not everyone would understand these hallmarks of the church to be the essence of traditional Protestantism. To be sure, sociologists and political scientists have good reasons for thinking about the different liturgies, creeds, and politics of the various Protestant churches as either a way of adjusting to religious liberty after the revolutions of the eighteenth century or as an expression of different strata within the socio-economic order. Still, the matters that separate Presbyterians from Lutherans and Episcopalians have much to do not only with the vicissitudes of Anglo-American politics but also with competing understandings of the church, its ministry, liturgy, and polity. So the question is whether the churchly matters that keep Protestants in traditions have a future. More specifically, in light of the dramatic shift of Christian zeal from the global North to the South, has a Presbyterian or Lutheran way of ministry become superfluous? What is the point of being an Orthodox Presbyterian when individual congregations in Africa and Asia by themselves have twenty times the members that the Orthodox Presbyterian Church does? In other words, can old-fashioned Protestantism produce religious goods and services comparable to the astonishing results of the churches in the global South?

²⁰ Whitefield quoted in Mark A. Noll, *The Rise of Evangelicalism: The Age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 25.

²¹ See, for instance, Iain Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism, 1750-1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994).

²² For an extended discussion of the differences between old and new Protestantism, see D. G. Hart, *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

These questions pose the real rub for defenders of Protestant traditionalism and underscore the importance of being clear about the criteria for evaluating Christian faith and practice. The categories of analysis—whether visible or invisible, economic or doctrinal, physical or spiritual—determine not simply the answers but the very questions put to different Christian communions. For, when judged by the obvious success of southern Christianity, the historic Protestant denominations generally come up short. The older Protestants do not have the numbers, the transformed lives, amazing stories of healing, charismatic leaders, or close-knit community. Some might attribute this to the northern churches' wealth and status which inevitably quenches the Spirit. Others might look to a religious formalism that again poses barriers to the free movement of the Spirit. Whatever the explanation, the older Protestantism lacks vitality to attract large numbers and the power to make a difference. It may have possessed a dynamic spirituality at one time but its orthodoxy has died, its heart has grown cold, its practice has become formalistic or nominal.

Before calling for the mortician, perhaps the Protestant denominations need the care of a different specialist, one who can discern vital signs not obvious to the other spiritual experts. Here it may be useful to ask if the older Protestants possess benefits and their own stories of success not as obvious to empirically-oriented scholars and journalists. Interestingly enough, the Westminster Divines, a northern Christian body if there ever was one, asked just such a question in the Shorter Catechism that Presbyterians in Scotland, the United States, and Canada soon adopted as one of the better tools for learning the basic outline of Christian doctrine. In the thirty-second question of the catechism the teacher asks, "What benefits do they that are effectually called partake of in this life?" The use of the word *benefits* here is arresting if only because it implicitly promises a gospel that is utilitarian, one that works to give believers certain goods and services. It is a question that suggests northern Christianity would like to think that it possesses resources that are attractive and may even make the world a better place.

The answer to question thirty-two of the Shorter Catechism, however, gives a different impression. It reads: "They that are effectually called do in this life partake of justification, adoption, and sanctification, and the several benefits which in this life do either accompany or flow from them." That response likely disappoints many because it sounds like the same old issues about which western Christians have been debating and talking and since the sixteenth century. Such disappointment likely stems from the assumption, the Protestant modernist one to be specific, that the world situation has changed rather dramatically since the early modern period and consequently the church needs a new set of teachings for a different set of circumstances.²³

Before commenting on the differences between the benefits available through the new and old forms of Protestantism, the means by which these advantages described in the Shorter Catechism are accessible deserve some comment. The Westminster Divines also use the language of benefits in their discussion of the so-called "outward and ordinary means," or more commonly, word and sacrament. In question and answer eighty-five they elaborate three responses to the gospel required of true believers. The first two, faith and repentance,

²³ William R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976) discusses thoughtfully the modernist assumption that led American Protestants to revise Christianity to fit modern life.

are standard fare. But the third, “the diligent use of all the outward means,” is often a surprise to low-church Protestants of the revival-friendly variety, an unexpected response because of the new Protestant assumption that genuine belief is virtually independent of the ministry of the church. What is more important for my purposes here is that answer eighty-five explains that these outward means of word and sacrament actually become the instruments by which “Christ communicates . . . the benefits of redemption.” The word *benefits* is a reference back to the earlier part of the catechism where the Divines elaborate the doctrines of justification, adoption, sanctification, assurance, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, increase of grace, and perseverance to the end—all the privileges available to believers through the gospel. In other words, the benefits that Christ gives believers through the means of word and sacrament are the spiritual realities described in Calvinist teaching about justification and sanctification.

So what? So the Westminster Divines were smart enough to weave an understanding of the benefits of redemption through their Shorter Catechism? Why is this important? One way to answer is to note that these realities of Christianity, the basic benefits of salvation, are communicated through the ministry of the church. In other words, word, sacrament, and discipline (having a lot to do with ordination) are means of salvation. And if that assertion is plausible then the future of old Protestantism is indeed bright. For, those historic parts of Christian faith and practice are not mere relics from a bygone age but the power by which God effects salvation. Or at least that is how the Westminster Divines conceived of it, along with the officers in the Lutheran churches, and the Church of England. In fact, all Protestants, no matter how low their view of the church, at one time believed that the ministry of word, sacrament, and ordination was essential for the salvation of men and women, boys and girls. If they did not believe such, what was the point of being a Protestant? As such, if word, sacrament, and ordination have a future, then historic Protestantism does.

Some may be underwhelmed by such a case for old Protestantism’s future. After all, preaching, baptism, the Lord’s Supper, and the laying on of hands in the rite of ordination have been around for a long time and of late appear to be less than vigorous. In fact, ever since 1800 the most obvious displays of Protestant strength have been in those places, like the nineteenth-century United States and now the global South, where the Spirit appeared to use very different means from those older Christian forms. Consequently, isn’t a reiteration of the importance, if not the necessity, of word, sacrament, and ordination simply a naive way of ignoring Protestant history over the last quarter of a millennium?

To be sure, questions of this sort have a point. But they also beg another set of questions, which is why again the criteria for evaluating Christian phenomena is so significant. Whether they acknowledge it or not, many of the journalists and scholars who write about modern Protestantism, whether the revivals of the 1820s, the Toronto Blessing of the 1990s, or the recent explosion of Christianity in the global South assume that the religious practices and teachings they are observing are genuine. Far be it from me, a white man of European descent likely to be dead in a few decades, to question the sincerity or authenticity of southern Christians. Still, the point is simply to observe that to treat revivals, healings, charismatic experiences, and religious leaders uncritically—to accept these things as being really spiritual and alive—assumes they are the work of God in some way. In fact, to

call them Christian is not simply a neutral observation but a judgment perhaps best left to certain officers in the church.

Even so, the real aim of raising the question of evaluative criteria is to show how much more difficult it is for the older Protestantism to display religious phenomena that have the “ring” of a work of God. It is, in other words, to demonstrate how often the analysis of Christianity in the global South assumes that Christianity in the global North is dead. Ever since 1740 the expectation has been for divine power to manifest itself in highly visible ways such as ecstatic experiences, gifted, eloquent and spiritual leaders, powerful demonstrations of changed lives, and mass meetings of believers. But the sorts of benefits promised by the older Protestantism, to use again the Westminster Divines as an example, are incredibly hard to discern and, for that matter, even harder to believe. For instance, how can you spot someone who has been justified, that is someone who now walks around wearing the imputed righteousness of Christ (Shorter Catechism Q&A 33)? Or what signs do you look for when investigating those who have been “received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God” (Shorter Catechism Q&A 34)? And what about sanctification? This one may be more visible since it involves dying to sin and living unto righteousness. But observers should beware because the counterfeits of self-righteousness and moralism can easily mask the much more difficult feat of discerning who is actually “renewed in the whole man after the image of God” (Shorter Catechism Q&A 35). Of course, one response to these sorts of questions is to say that no journalist or religion scholar would ever pretend to be able to discern justification, adoption, or sanctification, that is, those older forms of salvific benefits. And if religion scholars and journalists could exhibit that kind of intellectual modesty, the reporting and analysis of faith might be far better than it is. The benefits of faith, those otherworldly goods and services, are indeed matters of the spirit and as such they lay outside the professional competency of journalism, history, anthropology, and sociology for starters.

But a nagging question persists. Why do journalists and scholars refuse to show a similar hesitancy or professional reserve when evaluating the *new* Protestantism? Why do these forms of religious observance such as healings, speaking in tongues, and revivals—religious expression no less mysterious or spiritual than justification, adoption or sanctification—generate descriptions and accounts which take these spiritual phenomena at face value as dramatic displays of vital Christianity? One obvious reason for the different kinds of coverage and scholarship on new and old Protestantism is that the former demonstrates its authenticity precisely through visible means while the latter’s manifestations of spiritual vigor are largely invisible. The Westminster Divines appeared to be aware of the invisible and mysterious quality of salvation when they wrote the chapter from their confession on Christian liberty. Because Protestants in the global North (at least since the seventeenth century) have assumed that Protestantism, as opposed to Roman Catholicism, was the form of Christianity on the side of political liberty and democracy, the language the Divines use to describe Christian freedom is striking, especially since they also explicitly deny that such liberty has anything to do with political or civil freedom. Christian liberty, they wrote:

... consists in [believers’] freedom from the guilt of sin, the condemning wrath of God, the curse of the moral law; and in their being delivered from this present evil world, bondage to Satan, and dominion of sin; from the evil of afflictions, the sting of death, the victory of the grave, and everlasting damnation; as also their free

access to God, and their yielding obedience unto him, not out of slavish fear, but a childlike love and willing mind. [20.1]

Again, what is striking about this description of another benefit of redemption is how spiritual and invisible it is. Yes, it does involve the resurrection of the body, an occurrence that could generate lots of news stories and scholarly monographs. But otherwise, except for the possible acquisition of certain virtues—many of which appear to be practiced by those outside the church—the benefits of salvation from the old Protestant perspective are not discernible. In this case, old Protestantism could very well be alive, well, and prospering. But no one would ever know it, nor would its vitality interest either an editor at a news desk or at a university press.

The Weight of Glory

Nevertheless, a bias toward the observable among journalists and scholars does not instantly make a case for old Protestantism. The benefits of redemption taught by Presbyterians, Lutherans, and Anglicans, may be hard to see but the question still remains: are they truly beneficial? The answer to this question again involves a more fundamental consideration. Because the benefits described in confessions like that of the Westminster Divines are articles of *faith*, not visible *effects* of religious causes or conclusions of logic, convincing the skeptic of these blessings' truly beneficial character will be a hard sell, one that may even require divine intervention of an illuminating sort. Still, a few comments about the public discourse employed in analyses of salvation might be useful, by way of conclusion, to put the question of religious benefits or advantages in perspective.

The differences between the old and new Protestantism are not simply in the realm of perception, one being invisible or hard to discern, the other being very visible because of its numbers, intensity, and dramatic displays of divine power. Perhaps a more fundamental difference is the one between the eternal and the temporal, that is, between the world to come and the here and now. As the Brazilian pastor quoted in Jenkins' book put it, "Most Presbyterians have a God that's so great, so big, that they cannot even talk with him openly, because he is far away. The Pentecostal groups have the kind of God that will solve my problems today and tomorrow. People today are looking for solutions, not for eternity."²⁴ This assertion may not be representative of most pastors ministering in the context of the global South. But its bold contrast between the temporal and the eternal, between the South and the West, does help to illustrate the outlook that has dominated analyses of global Christianity. Southern Christianity is booming because it daily proves its efficacy by producing real, tangible relief for those enduring suffering. Western Christianity, by contrast, offers theological complexity or liturgical precision, but hardly has the goods to make a difference upon those people most in need here and now.

Without wanting to diminish the difficulties that southern Christians face in their economic, political, and physical conditions, is it possible to suggest that pastors who concentrate on these realities are a tad short-sighted? What happens if another political or economic system takes better care, or if another religion provides more control over the spiritual forces seemingly causing so much affliction for Latin Americans, Africans, and Asians? This is more or less a pragmatic question. But the ultimate question is the eternal

²⁴ Quoted in Jenkins, *Next Christendom*, 77.

one of death. Will those Christians miraculously healed or even the ones benefitting from modern medicine still face death? Or how about those believers for whom Christianity has instilled a work ethic that yields physical comfort, whether it be clothing for children or a high-definition flat-screen TV? Will these benefits make much of a difference when men and women, as the prophet says, fade like the grass? And what of the significant manifestations of the Spirit in the worship of Christians, whether in Lagos or Minneapolis? What will be the advantages or benefits of these spiritual gifts on judgment day? To be sure, such questions may strike some as sanctimonious or precious. But if Christianity is at least in part a religion that promises eternal life, that no matter how difficult the sufferings of this life may be, believers have hope for relief in the world to come, then questions of eternal significance have genuine merit in evaluating contemporary Christianity, whether in the global South or West.

The eternal aspects of Christianity do not necessarily play to the older Protestantism's advantage. American churches have contributed their fair share to locating Christianity's chief benefits in the here and now, whether through the voluntary associations of the Second Great Awakening's Benevolent Empire or through the more ambitious programs of cooperation and ecumenicity cultivated by the Social Gospel. Even so, the Protestants who marginalized the eternal in their recognition of significant temporal realities, still affirmed in their creeds and confessions an understanding of the Christian ministry that regarded the gospel's chief purpose as overcoming sin and death. The first question and answer to the Heidelberg Catechism expresses the otherworldly character of the gospel in a remarkably simple and yet profound manner. It teaches that my only comfort in life and death is "That I am not my own, but belong, body and soul, in life and in death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven: in fact, all things must work together for my salvation. Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him."

A real temptation for folks who study Christianity or profess it after hearing such an affirmation of the gospel is to acknowledge its truth and even its poignancy but then add that the Christian religion involves more than salvation from sin. Such a reaction has merit since this affirmation from the Heidelberg Catechism is only the first of 129 questions and answers. Christianity does involve more than a remedy for sin and death. But one of the important reasons for the decline of Protestantism in the West is that temporal concerns—overcoming disease, poverty, grief—obscure eternal realities. As the bumper sticker has it, "Christ is the answer," and if he is not the answer to all of life's troubles then Christianity seems to be a poor contender for the allegiance of the world's inhabitants. But if older Protestantism has a future it needs to recover a conviction, once strong in its ministry, that the church's role is not to solve this world's problems, as soul-wrenching as they may be. Instead, it is to minister through word and sacrament what no other institution on earth can, namely, the good news of eternal salvation through Jesus Christ.

Here the example of J. Gresham Machen is instructive.²⁵ A leading New Testament scholar at Princeton Seminary who emerged as the most articulate spokesman for Presbyterian conservatives during the modernist-fundamentalist controversy, Machen was the token conservative for sundry debates, conferences, and roundtables. In 1933 the American Academy of Political and Social Scientists invited Machen along with representatives from mainline Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, and Judaism to speak on the responsibility of the church in the new age. The new conditions that the church needed to address were fairly obvious to most Americans four years into the Great Depression. But a failing economy was not the only matter on the minds of social scientists since the nation's experiment with Prohibition was just ending and overseas Germany was sending signals of a new political order. Machen was undeterred, however, in his conviction that the church's responsibility in such circumstances was the same as it has always been. He asserted:

The responsibility of the church in the new age is the same as its responsibility in every age. It is to testify that this world is lost in sin; that the span of human life—nay, all the length of human history—is an infinitesimal island in the awful depths of eternity; that there is a mysterious, holy, living God, Creator of all, Upholder of all, infinitely beyond all; that He has revealed Himself to us in His Word and offered us communion with Himself through Jesus Christ the Lord; that there is no other salvation, for individuals or for nations, save this, but that this salvation is full and free, and that whosoever possesses it has for himself and for all others to whom he may be the instrument of bringing it a treasure compared with which all the kingdoms of the earth—nay, all the wonders of the starry heavens—are as the dust of the street.²⁶

In Machen's day, fellow Christians objected to such a narrow and otherworldly conception of the Christian ministry. Similar criticisms could well be imagined today, many stemming from the sort of perspective that led Protestant modernists like Harry Emerson Fosdick to accuse fundamentalists like Machen of responding to the world's difficulties with the doctrine of verbal inerrancy. In his famous sermon, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" the Baptist provocateur declared, "And now, in the presence of colossal problems, which must be solved in Christ's name and for Christ's sake, the Fundamentalists propose to drive out from the Christian churches all the consecrated souls who do not agree with their theory of inspiration. What immeasurable folly!"²⁷ In Machen's case, Fosdick's charge had the correct vowel but the wrong doctrine since the vicarious atonement went far in the conservative Presbyterian's understanding of what the world needed to hear from the church. Even so, Fosdick's rejoinder about the foolishness of conservative Protestantism is not far from most people's sentiments when they encounter Machen's prescription for the responsibility of the church no matter what age or region, no matter how colossal the problem. For Christianity to be truly effective, most moderns think, surely it can do more

²⁵ On Machen, see D. G. Hart, *Defending the Faith: J. Gresham Machen and the Crisis of Conservative Protestantism in Modern America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

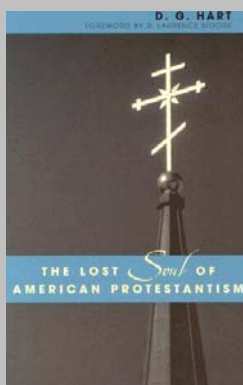
²⁶ Machen, "The Responsibility of the Church in the New Age," in *J. Gresham Machen: Selected Shorter Writings*, ed., D. G. Hart, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 376.

²⁷ Fosdick, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?" reprinted in William R. Hutchison, ed., *American Protestant Thought in the Liberal Era* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1968), 181.

than offer hope of another world to come. Certainly, if it is truly a powerful faith it can do something about human misery in this world.

One notable Christian evangelist in the history of Christianity responded to these sorts of objections in an instructive and provocative way. He conceded that some people looked for smart and effective ways for Christianity to make a difference, while others were more interested in powerful displays of Christianity's ability to transform lives. But in the end Christianity's significance consisted exclusively in Christ's death and resurrection. This particular evangelist happened to be the apostle Paul who was planting churches and evangelizing in places where the modern forces of industrialization and urbanization had yet to surface. But some of the churches to which he wrote were not entirely different from either Pentecostal congregations in twenty-first-century Lagos or "emerging" churches in the Twin Cities because first-century Christians, just like contemporary ones, looked for evidence of the Spirit in powerful displays of faith and devotion. But Paul's point about preaching only "Christ and him crucified" was that the matter of spiritual significance were not so easily discerned. The gospel, in fact, came packaged in "jars of clay" to prove that the power of Christianity was from God. For this reason he advised the church at Corinth to "look not to the things that are seen" but instead to the "unseen" because "the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Cor 4:18).

Aside from Paul's status as an apostle, even on the level of pastoral counsel or academic analysis his teaching is well worth considering when evaluating the health of either global Christianity or the historic churches in the West. Some churches today may not possess statistics, dynamic worship, or obvious social relevance. But to the degree that they minister Christ through word and sacrament, and to the extent that they offer a remedy for the eternally weighty matters of sin and death, those churches, along with all others that preach Christ and him crucified, may have more relevance than journalists or scholars can see. It might not be the kind of relevance that will attract reporters or inspire academic conferences. But as Paul counseled the Corinthians, such neglect might be precisely the result of a religion that to many looks weak and foolish but for those with eyes of faith it could very well be "the power of God" (1 Cor 1:18).



In *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism*, D. G. Hart examines the historical origins of the idea that faith must be socially useful in order to be valuable. Through specific episodes in Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Reformed history, Hart presents a neglected form of Protestantism, *confessionalism*, as an alternative to prevailing religious theory. He deftly argues that the history of confessional Protestantism is vitally important to current discussions on the role of religion in American life.. Hart suggests that, contrary to the legacy of revivalism, faith may be most vital and influential when it is not practical.

Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004; 232p.

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY: THE HARLOT AND THE CHURCH (1 CORINTHIANS 5-6)

Tom Holland¹

I recall the problems I had as a child with my shoes. I would pull with all my might on the laces, with the intention of pulling the shoes tight around my feet. Once the laces were tight, and the shoes were fitting firmly, I would attempt to tie the knots. The problem was that the laces were already tied, for during the previous wearing, the laces had worked loose, and I was able to step out of the shoes, leaving the knots in place. The next wearing of the shoes meant that I would push my feet into the already tied shoes, and pull on the laces. However, my efforts solely achieved a further tightening of the knots which, in time, became so tight that no effort on my part could undo them.

The story of the shoes is analogous to prevailing exegeses of 1 Corinthians 5 and 6. Repeated attempts to pull the text tight to fit the conditions in the Corinthian church, have not secured the desired fit, but have instead enhanced problems in understanding Paul's letter to the church. The text has been left with a number of issues inadequately resolved and the outcome is that the knots of the text have been left in place.

The aim of this paper is to challenge the traditional reading of the text in question, helped by a new insight into the mindset of Paul, so that the problems of exegesis can be removed and textual integrity restored. I would like to develop this paper by examining traditional arguments under the headings:

1. The Culture of the Argument
2. The Heritage of the Argument
3. The Language of the Argument
4. The Structure of the Argument

1. The Culture of the Argument

It has long been thought that Paul addresses problems which have arisen in the Corinthian church from the prevailing culture in the city. It is assumed that he goes on to draw theological lessons from the culture through which he exhorts the church to holiness. So, for example, it has been assumed that the mention of 'temple' in 6:19 ("do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit") is a link with the temple of *Aphrodite*, which was situated on the *Acrocorinth* overlooking the city. The mention of the Corinthians becoming members of the harlot was seen to refer to the practice of temple prostitution and the statement: "shall I take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute?" (6:15) was taken to refer to the horror that Paul felt at the Corinthians bringing the name of Christ into disrepute through their immorality.

But this traditional reading has been challenged. Recent scholarship has made discoveries that raise questions over this interpretation. Bruce Winter, in *After Paul Left Corinth*, says that

¹ The Rev. Tom Holland, PhD, is Lecturer in Theology at the Wales Evangelical School of Theology and author of *Contours of Pauline Theology*.

temple prostitution was never a part of the Roman Corinthian scene. On the basis of recent archaeological surveys of the temple of *Aphrodite*, Winter² says that: “Stabbo’s comments about 1,000 religious prostitutes of Aphrodite and those of Athenaeus are unmistakably about Greek, and not Roman, Corinth. As temple prostitution was not a Greek phenomenon, the veracity of his comments on this point has been rightly questioned. The size of the Roman temple of Aphrodite on the Acrocorinth ruled out such temple prostitution; and by that time she had become Venus - the venerated mother of the imperial family and the highly respected patroness of Corinth - and was no longer a sex symbol.”

Winter’s conclusion thus challenges the practice of temple prostitution at Corinth. He says that the reference to prostitutes in 1 Corinthians 6:16 refers to the behaviour at guild meetings which took place in the temple. Here, prostitutes were provided, at the end of deliberations, to fulfill the sexual fantasies of attendees. However, such women, he reasons, had nothing to do with the temple cult.

In fact, other research has gone further than Winter’s. Baugh³ has presented evidence which claims to show that there was no such thing as temple prostitution in the Roman Empire. The belief that there was such widespread practice, Baugh says, depends on one Greek manuscript that has been badly interpreted. Baugh claims that once this particular text has been recognised as the only source of the tradition, it will become clear that it was not part of Corinthian culture as Paul knew it.

If the conclusions of these studies are correct, they challenge the way 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 has been read. The traditional reading has been determined by the temple context and its practices. The removal of this widely held context requires that we revisit the text in order to see if there are previously unnoticed clues which will point us in a different direction.

It is not only the reference to the prostitute that this discovery challenges. We will see that the supposed temple context has driven the interpretation of other parts of the chapter as well, and this has resulted in a hermeneutical myth which has bestowed credibility to a reading not supported by the text.

2. The Heritage of the Argument

The New Perspective on Paul has highlighted Paul’s on-going commitment to Judaism for those who were born under the law, but his insistence that Gentiles should not be required to adopt the Jewish law and its lifestyle. I have expressed concerns about the presuppositions of the New Perspective,⁴ but what I do note is that commitment to the New Perspective has tended to be limited to the Law and its immediate concerns. I think this is a sad situation, as I see evidence of arguments that bear a distinctively Jewish flavour in many places in Paul’s letters. These need exploration to see if the themes married to the arguments are better understood from the context of his Jewish heritage, rather than the widely accepted Greco-Roman context. From my observations, few proponents of the New

² B. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth. The Influence of Secular Ethics and Social Change* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 200), 87-88.

³ S. M. Baugh, ‘Cultic Prostitution in New Testament Ephesus: A Reappraisal,’ *JETS* 42/3 (1999), 443-460. who argues for its absence in Ephesus and then extends his argument to cover the whole Roman Empire.

⁴ T. Holland, *Contours of Pauline Theology* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2004), chapter 4.

Perspective have ventured into these areas to the extent that one might have expected. So, I propose to consider Paul's Jewish mindset, to see if there are pointers that suggest a different conceptual thought-world.

I am going to assume that there is a unity between chapters five and six of 1 Corinthians.⁵ I want to suggest that, if we approach the two chapters as a whole, we will discover a dynamic, theological motif that drives the argument, and provides the platform for the powerful, ethical appeal at the end of chapter 6.

To begin, let us note that in 1 Cor. 5:8 Paul says that "Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us keep the Festival."

Now, it has been noted by a range of authorities, including Jeremias and Cullmann, that when Paul makes this throw-away statement regarding a Jewish feast, the Gentile Corinthians will understand the theological implications of the statement. The commentators suggest that these Gentiles had a familiarity with the Passover that was beyond a superficial knowledge. Paul assumes that the Gentiles in the Corinthian church were able to appreciate the theological significance of an event in the history of Israel that few Gentiles outside of the church would be aware. This fact suggests that they had been educated to such a level of theological sophistication that they were able to read the OT text in the light of the new covenant, and then understand how the lessons of the Jewish scriptures applied to the New Testament church. This, of course, should not surprise us, as Paul uses the same Exodus events to warn the Corinthians of the danger of falling away (1 Cor 10:1-11). There are other passages that support this observation but they go beyond the brief of this paper.⁶

The point that I want to make is this: because the Corinthians are expected to know the Old Testament background to the statements that Paul makes (i.e. an understanding of Old Testament events and their typological significance), it would be wise to explore if the believers could understand chapters five and six in the light of the history of Israel, and to see if there were events in that history which would better inform the argument that Paul is making.

We are indebted to Brian Rosner for his work: *Paul, Scripture & Ethics*⁷ in which he identifies the Old Testament as the foundation for Paul's social ethics, as well as showing the importance of the Torah in shaping Paul's thinking and teaching. It is my conviction that the identification of this background to the apostle's thinking is crucial, and that most scholars have not appreciated the full extent of the significance of this discovery. They have amalgamated this source, i.e. the Old Testament, with what they thought was the practice of the Corinthian community, i.e. practices rooted in the temple and have, in my opinion, failed to see the full dimension of the argument Paul is making.

But Rosner's clarification ought to encourage us to consider if the OT has a greater role in moulding the wider argument than has previously been recognised. With the emergence

⁵ So following R. Kempthorne, 'Incest and the Body of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians VI.12-20,' *NTS* 14 (1967-68), 568-574.

⁶ For examples of this see Hays. R.B, *Echoes of Scripture in Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁷ Rosner. B., *Paul, Scripture & Ethics A Study of 1 Corinthians 5-7* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994).

of the evidence that sacred prostitution did not exist in Corinth, we are forced to rethink Paul's argument.

3. The Language of the Argument

In this section, I want to show how the Greek context has shaped the exegesis of the passage, and has consequently read meaning into the text, violating the grammatical and theological logic of the apostle.

Firstly, Paul speaks of the Corinthians as having been "bought at a price". (1 Cor. 6:20). Sacral manumission, as advocated by Deissmann⁸ (and generally followed with modification by most commentators⁹), reveals exegetical difficulties. Deissmann's argument is that in 1 Cor. 6:20, Paul focused on the process adopted for the release of a person from slavery. He points out that in the ANE, a slave could pay a sum of money into the treasury of the local temple. Through this act, the god of that temple technically purchased him. He was freed from his old master, because he had become the property of the god.¹⁰

The difficulty with this explanation is that it clashes abruptly with other teaching about salvation written in Paul's letters. For Paul, man contributes nothing to the process of salvation; yet this is the inevitable outcome of the explanation offered by Deissmann. It is this contradiction that tolls the death knell for Deissmann's argument, rather than the fact that the term used by Paul for "bought" (ἀγοράζω) is not used for securing freedom, but for transfer of ownership. The linguistic concerns are valid, but they are not of the same weight as the theological ones.

Another problem is the fact that the traditional interpretation, which we have noted earlier depends on the crucial setting of the temple for identifying the πόρνης, has guided the interpretation of 6:19, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?" The passage is seen to be about sexual sin, where the Corinthian men have broken covenant faithfulness by taking temple prostitutes. In this context, the argument is that their bodies must not be used for immorality because they are temples of the Holy Spirit.

The problem with this understanding is that it is individualistic. The Greek text is σωμα ὑμῶν (your [sing] body [plural]). Only two textual authorities, A and 33, give σώματα

⁸ A. Deissmann. *Light from the Ancient East* (trans. L.R.M. Strachan; London, 1927). p324 followed by Ernst Käsemann. *Perspectives on Paul* (*The New Testament Library*; London: SCM Press, [1971]), 44.

⁹ So Hans Conzelmann. *1 Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (*Hermeneia: a Critical and Historical Commentary*; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, [1975])p.112; Gaston Deluz. *A Companion to 1 Corinthians* (London: Darton, Longman, & Todd, 1963)p.76; J. Moffatt, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, London, 1938, 70; Leon Morris. *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (*The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*; 2nd ed; Leicester: Inter-Varsity, 1985)p.104; Richard B. Hays. *First Corinthians* (*Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997)p.106 and R.J. McKelvey. *The New Temple. The Church in the New Testament* (*Oxford Theological Monographs*; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969)p.104, contra W. Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther. 1. Teilband, 1 Kor 1.1-6.11* (Benziger Verlag, Neukirchener Verlag. 1991).Vo.2:35 note 373.

¹⁰ This form of slave purchase, sacral manumission, (rather than purchase from a slave market) is preferred by most scholars for interpreting the passage (because of the temple context). This is assumed because of what has been seen to be a reference to the sacred prostitute, referred to as the harlot. I shall examine this assumption shortly.

(bodies) and yet almost all commentators have followed this reading, resulting in an understanding that the temple of the Holy Spirit is the believer's body.

Clearly, any argument must be suspect if it overrides the clear meaning of the text, and this is what all the prevailing Greco-Roman interpretations do. If the statement is about the individual's body being the temple of the Holy Spirit, then it is the only text in the whole of the Bible that says this.¹¹ There is, of course, one apparent exception and that is in John 2, where Jesus says: "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." However, it does not refer to any man, but to the body of the Son of Man.

In the light of the Greek construction, Paul is not referring to the body of the individual Corinthian believer, but to the corporate body, to which all the believers belong, i.e. the Corinthian church. It, as a collection of believers, is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

The corporate perspective is repeatedly over-ridden. This observation ought to alert us to the way we read these texts, so that we read them with the same understanding as that of the early church. Also, we must recall that the early church had the letters read to them. The whole congregation came together to hear the letter and, in that corporate setting, the message was delivered. What we read as individualistic appeals, because we own the text for ourselves, would never have occurred to the first century believer. This is true of all the letters written to churches, not only to the church in Corinth but in Ephesus, Colosse, Rome and wherever the letters of Paul were taken.

This corporate context brings clarity to another term and the way Paul uses it - the term $\sigma\mu\alpha$. The debate continues to run as to what meaning should be given to such statements as "he who sins sexually sins against his own body" (6:18). Inevitably, in the individualistic setting, it is seen to be about the effects of sexual impurity on the offender. However, when we begin to see the corporate setting, and recall how the letter would have been received and heard, another meaning comes into view.

Kempthorne, even though he has argued within the individualistic, Greco-Roman framework, has claimed that $\sigma\mu\alpha$ has an ecclesiastical meaning. Kempthorne was challenged over this reading by R.H. Gundry in his work, *Soma in Biblical Theology*.¹² He assesses Kempthorne's¹³ argument that 'soma' in 1 Cor. 6:18 refers to the Church as the body of Christ, and says: "But we may suspect over-interpretation in the proposal of a double meaning. And the precipitous importation of the Church as The Body of Christ, a theme wholly undiscussed so far in the epistle and presumably unknown to the Corinthians, once again proves problematic. Moreover, the association of 6:12-30 with chapter 5, by which an individual reference is supplied, raises a doubt. Although *porneia* occurs in both passages, in 6:12-20 the female partner in immorality is *pornē*, a prostitute, but in chapter 5 the female partner is the wife of the man's father. An equation between the two, therefore,

¹¹ For other references to the temple see 1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2 19-22; 1 Pet 2:5; Rev 21:3. All are references to the church being the temple of the Holy Spirit.

¹² R. H. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology: With Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology (Monograph Series; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976)*p.75, so also B. Bryne, "Sinning Against One's Own Body: Paul's Understanding of the Sexual Relationship in 1 Cor 6.18" *CBQ* 45 (1983) 608-16. 612.

¹³ R. Kempthorne, "Incest and the Body of Christ: A Study of 1 Corinthians V1.12-20" *NTS* 14 (1967-68) 568-574.

seems doubtful, especially if the *pornē* is a temple prostitute, as the figure of the temple in verses 19-20 and the local color of the Temple of Aphrodite near Corinth both suggest.¹⁷

But what of Kempthorne's argument? Is Gundry's criticism valid? I would suggest that it is unreasonable of Gundry to argue that the body concept was unknown to the Corinthians at this point. Acts shows that Paul realised, from the outset, the existence of solidarity between Christ and His people. He was arrested on the Damascus road by the very statement: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"¹⁴ Munck says that Paul's testimony was part of his missionary preaching.¹⁵ One can assume that seekers would have asked Paul in what way he had persecuted Jesus, and they would have been told that the church is the body of Jesus. It cannot be maintained that this body concept had developed no further in Paul's thinking until it emerged in I Cor. 12-14. The bride/bridegroom analogy, from which some believe the body of Christ concept came, had existed for centuries within Judaism, and Paul's statement in 2 Cor. 11:2, that he had espoused the Corinthians to Christ, certainly does not suggest that the Corinthians lacked understanding concerning the imagery, as Paul does not bother to explain himself beyond the statement.

Furthermore, Paul uses the same 'body language' when he instructs on the Eucharist in 11:29, and he clearly expects the Corinthians to understand the meaning. If it is argued that the term is used to speak of the sacrament, it has to be explained why the section returns to the behaviour of the Corinthians, and their lack of respect for those who should be cared for (11:33-34). This suggests that the "sinning against the body" is ecclesiastic rather than Eucharistic, and that the language was not introduced in chapter 12 as Gundry argues. But, even if this point is not accepted, there is an earlier text that is indisputable. In 10:17, Paul says: "Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." This use of *soma* is undeniably ecclesiastical in its meaning even though it is within a Eucharistic context. This adds support to the meaning argued for 11:33-34, because both are in the same context, that of the Eucharist and the well-being of the body. Thus, Gundry's rejection of Kempthorne's reading of 1 Cor. 6:18, on the grounds that the Corinthians could not understand a corporate use of *pornē*, is not valid.¹⁶ And, of course, Gundry's own argument has been constructed in the context of a now defunct paradigm: the temple and its practices.

But, perhaps more important than these considerations, which support a corporate/ecclesiastical meaning for *σωμα*, is the fact that Paul speaks of the Corinthians as being 'members' of Christ in 6:15. Gundry observes this terminology and concedes it to be 'body language', but dismisses the problem by saying that it anticipates the introduction of

¹⁴ Acts 9:4

¹⁵ J. Munck, *Paul and the Salvation of Mankind* (London, SCM Press, 1959)p.36-68.

¹⁶ Anthony C. Thiselton. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text (The New International Greek Testament Commentary (NIGTC))*; Grand Rapids, Carlisle: William B. Eerdmans, Paternoster Press, 2000). 470 says "Many versions insert other into the Greek text (REB, NIV, NJB), although it is not strictly explicit, for the sake of clarification. But it remains an interpretative gloss. This verse is notoriously difficult, except perhaps with reference to its most immediate rhetorical context. Is not such a sin as drunkenness and drug addiction a sin against his or her own body, let alone suicide? Does not this support the view of Nietzsche and many others that Christianity is responsible for a negative evaluation of sex, placing it below social oppression or personal greed for wealth or for power?"

the body concept later in the epistle.¹⁷ He also acknowledges¹⁸ that, if the passage is corporate, his own interpretation does not stand. Obviously, Gundry is making an argument that equally suits Kempthorne's exposition, for he can also say that the use of 'body' in its corporate sense anticipates its later introduction. But Gundry is missing the true significance and importance of the passage. To say that Paul introduces this concept of the Corinthians being members of Christ into his argument - a concept which has not yet been explained - is to ask us to believe that Paul would leave his readers to guess at the meaning of an expression which is at the centre of his argument, viz. their relationship with Christ, and the possibility of this relationship being severed. This is made even more difficult to accept when one realises that this warning is one of the main reasons for the writing of the letter. Paul was anxious to warn his readers of the consequence of fornication.¹⁹ In order to accept Gundry's interpretation, and criticism, of Kempthorne's exposition, one has to accept the failure of Paul to present his argument, for he has been unable to explain himself in commonly-held concepts. It would seem to me, that this is not compatible with one whose discipline in logic has been widely acclaimed. I suggest, therefore, that the body concept was already known to the Corinthians, and that Gundry is wrong in saying that it emerged for the first time in I Corinthians 12.

Both Kempthorne and Gundry miss the significance of the use of *μελη*. It is assumed that it speaks of sexual union, of becoming members, but this is not the language of such a union. The term that is used throughout the scriptures for sexual union, and the covenant that it is intended to seal, is 'one flesh'. *Μελη* is corporate language. We are members of His body (Ephesians 5:30). The discussion is, therefore, not at the level of a man and a prostitute, but a man and a community called 'the prostitute'. The offender is in danger of being made a member of this alien community by an apostolic decree.

This exegesis is acknowledged as being possible by Moule, but because of the individualistic/Hellenistic setting he followed, he discounted his own insight. He said, commenting on 1 Cor. 6:15:

If whole individual bodies belong to Christ as his limbs, then he must be more than individual body. It is true that in the very same verse, Paul asks the indignant question: 'Shall I then take the limbs of Christ and make them limbs of a harlot?' Which, if we pressed the analogy, would have to imply that a harlot too, had more than an individual body made up of a plurality of persons....Paul only used the outrageous phrase 'a harlot's limbs', by a kind of false analogy, and simply to emphasise the scandal of intimate union of the same person with both Christ and a harlot.²⁰

¹⁷ Gundry, *Soma*, 72.

¹⁸ *Op cit*, 60.

¹⁹ As well as partaking in the table of demons and denial of the resurrection. Kempthorne understands the Corinthians to say that the church is not affected by fornication "Incest and the Body of Christ," 58-74.

²⁰ C.F.D. Moule, *The Origins of Christology*, (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1977)p.73. Dale B. Martin. *The Corinthian Body* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995)p.176 argues that Paul "rejects a hierarchical notion of the body... as if the body and food are lower on a hierarchical scale of meaningfulness than the human mind or will... Instead of placing the human will or soul on the one

Moule's explanation must be challenged. Admittedly, the language of 'making members of the Corinthian congregation into members of the harlot' is unique to this passage, but the idea behind it is not. In 5:5, Paul told the congregation to deliver the offender "over to Satan". In 1 Tim 1:20, Paul says that he has handed Hymenaeus and Alexander "over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme". Similar imagery is found in Rev 2:22, where Jesus says: "So I will cast her on a bed of suffering, and I will make those who commit adultery with her suffer intensely, unless they repent of her ways". Here, Jesus is warning the church at Thyatira that if her members continue to tolerate Jezebel, practicing all manner of sexually immoral acts with her, and eating food sacrificed to idols (the very issues Paul is dealing with in 1 Corinthians), then He, (Jesus), will throw them into a bed of suffering with her. In other words, the concept of handing over to Satan is taught elsewhere in the NT and to use the expression: 'taking members of Christ and making them the members of a harlot' is expressing the same concept in a different way.

Thus, Paul is not using a false analogy to emphasise the scandal of a Christian being in sexual union with a harlot. He is describing a spiritual reality of discipline that others had, or were, to experience. Moule is left, along with others, to resort to back-peddling on the explicit statement Paul makes, because he has been interpreting the passage, indeed the whole letter, in a highly individualistic manner. I have argued that Paul's letters to the churches speak of the churches' experiences, not the experiences of their individual members. If this corporate perspective was brought to the Corinthian text, it would resolve the problems that are endemic in the letter.

I have tried to suggest²¹ that the *pornē* is not an individual, but a community. It is another term for the 'kingdom of darkness'. There are several challenges to this proposal that need to be addressed. Firstly, it is claimed that the correct usage of the term is 'prostitute'. This is an understandable but inadequate challenge. It is understandable, because that is how we have been taught to read the text, and we have been taught how to read it in the context of our own culture. We need better grounds than this to settle an issue of interpretation. We have seen the unresolved problems that are acknowledged to exist in a traditional reading of the text. What needs to be established is whether there was a different mindset existing amongst the early believers, one that is not reflected in the traditional reading of the letter. I would suggest that the way the singular has been imposed on 6:20 (sw,mata u`mw/n your body) is an example of the imposition of a different understanding due to a different mindset from that of the original readers. My argument is that the other 'knots' in the text are pointers to the mindset of the Corinthian readers and that this mindset is different from the one that we in the West are acquainted with.

Another perceived weakness of the corporate argument is that Paul says ὁ δὲ πορνεύων εἰς τὸ ἴδιον σῶμα ἀμαρτάνει: "He who sins sexually, sins against *his own body*" (6:18). It is reasoned that this confirms that the argument is about the individual, and not the

side, and food and the body on the other, he opposes *porneia* as representative of the estranged prostitute in her own right, but a representative of the cosmos that is estranged and opposed to God and Christ."

²¹ The following points were raised by members of the Tyndale Fellowship who attended the giving of the paper. I am very grateful for their interaction that provided the stimulus to reflect further on the argument.

community. However, this response is not adequate. Firstly, we have to remind ourselves that there is a distinct difference, despite Gundry's claim. Bultmann has shown²² that when Paul uses $\sigma\mu\alpha$, it has the Semitic perspective of community, unless he makes it clear that it refers to the human corpse. This study was not aimed at pressing a particular theological view point, but was a piece of linguistic research which unearthed some interesting observations of the apostle's writings. So now, if we ask what the reference to 'the body' is in this passage (6:18), it is reasonable to assume that it has the general meaning used by Paul elsewhere. As Rom.1:1 is widely acknowledged to refer to the whole man, and not just his body, the reference to sinning against his body is the same as saying 'he defiles himself'. This is an important point to grasp. Paul's concern is that this person, who had defiled himself, brings that defilement with him into the community, because he is a member of Christ's body. It is for this reason that Paul switches from the individual's condition to appeal at the corporate level, because they are, as a congregation, the temple of the Holy Spirit. So, this section of the letter, beginning at 5:1, is an appeal to the church to discipline its members, to make sure that the body is not defiled and compromised over the issue of righteousness. The individual is important in the context of this corporate argument, because they must: "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast" (1 Cor. 5:7).

The point that needs to be noted, however, is that there is no need to say that the defilement comes through taking a prostitute. It is not sex itself that defiles, (not that sex with a prostitute in NT teaching is not serious), but the violation of the covenant through covenantal unfaithfulness. The purity of the community is threatened because someone has taken his step-mother, and the church has done nothing about it. This sin is of the sort that even the Gentiles would not tolerate, and has far more significance than illicit sex.

But, can this earlier incident be the focus of chapter 6? I would suggest that it is, and it is 'the prostitute', who has suddenly appeared in the text without any prior intimation, who has to be proved to be the source of this defilement. In fact, the suggestion that the Corinthians were taking prostitutes after trade guild events, as argued by Winter, needs to be handled with caution. Why has this matter so suddenly been raised in the letter? There is no introduction to the matter, so common in Corinthians, such as: 'now concerning some men's behaviour at guild meetings' We see from chapter 8, how he raised the issue of eating meats that had been bought from the markets: "Now about food sacrificed to idols"(8:1) There is no suggestion in the letter that he has been asked for advice over these practices at the guild meetings, and certainly no suggestion that this practice has been reported to him, as has the case of incest in 5:1. For Paul to suddenly raise this issue, accusing them of such a practice, would need an admission of evidence. Without such evidence, he is risking doing serious damage to his relationship with the Corinthians.

²² Rudolf Bultmann. *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. Kendrick Grobel; London, 1952 (vol.1); ca.1955. (vol.2)). This was developed further by John A. T. Robinson. *The Body: A Study in Pauline Theology* (*Studies in Biblical Theology*, no. 5; London: SCM, 1953). Robinson's mistake, in this authors thinking, was to attempt to develop a sacramental theology from the evidence. This is what Gundry was really responding to in his rejection of Paul's use of $\sigma\mu\alpha$ having Semitic/holistic significance. It is possible to accept the argument of a Semitic understanding underpinning of the meaning of Paul's use of the term without embracing sacramentalism. For a discussion on this see Holland, *Contours*, chapter 5.

However, he does not need to go into this detail because he is not dealing with such practices. He continues to argue from the matter he has introduced in 5:1. He knows that the case of incest is tolerated, because it has been reported to him. His concern is that this case of incest, if not dealt with by the church, will be the source of defilement for the whole body. The leaven of unrighteousness must be put away, not once, but continuously. The man, and any who support him, must be handed over to Satan.

It will no doubt be argued that the Corinthians will see the reference to the prostitute in the light of the guild practices. That response makes the assumption that there were members of the Corinthian congregation who participated in such behaviour. It also assumes that the believers had no other context with which to interpret the term. However, we know that 'harlot' was a common term, used to speak of unfaithfulness to God throughout the Old Testament.²³ It was used corporately in those writings: Israel is the harlot for deserting her husband, Yahweh. Indeed, we find that the tradition continues into the New Testament where it clearly has a corporate meaning.²⁴ All the Semitic/corporate overtones that we have found in the passage strongly suggest that the Corinthian hearers would relate the term to this theological paradigm. This is supported by the ongoing typological use of the OT which we find throughout 1 Corinthians, showing that they had been taught how to understand the OT in this way, and how it was used to interpret Christian experience. Chapter 10 of the letter, does not need any comment, beyond saying that Israel's experiences were written down as warnings for the church. She was eventually handed over, literally, to Babylon, the mother of harlots.

A final objection to the case I have made is the clear mention of sexual relations in the passage: "The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord." (6:13) and "Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh'." (6:16-17).

It is understandable why these statements should appear to support the traditional view. The Passover is seen, by the Old Testament writers, to be the occasion when Yahweh took Israel as His bride, and for this reason the Song of Solomon is read at the celebration of Passover. But it must be recognised that the statement in 6:13 can equally refer to the case of incest, it does not require a different case to have been raised. The statement in vs 16 & 17 is not so easy to resolve, as it does seem to point to marriage language, and therefore the sexual relationship implied by it. If we accept that the 'harlot' is a prostitute, Paul is saying that a casual, sexual relationship has no deeper meaning than a sexual relationship within the covenant of marriage and he does an incredible disservice to his high view of marriage (Eph 5:22-33).

But, this is not the conclusion that we have to reach. We find that this marital language is also used corporately by Paul. The church becomes one flesh with Christ (Eph 5:31-32). He admits it is a profound mystery (v.32). So the use of marital, sexual language is not proof that the passage is about human sexual union. If the harlot is a community, and if she has a

²³ Jer. 3:8; Ezek. 16:35; Hos. 4:15.

²⁴ Rev. 17:5. In fact, the argument receives support from Klein, George L. 'Hos 3:1-3 – Background to 1 Cor 6:19b – 20?', *Criswell Theological Review* 3/2 (1989): 373-75. who has argued that 1 Cor 6.19-20 is based on Hosea. If this is true, then it brings the imagery of Israel as the harlot right into the heart of the argument.

similar status to the church, then such language can be appropriate. This is certainly implied in Rev 18 where the imagery is powerfully used, and it is expected that the churches in Asia Minor can understand it. Is that because it was widespread throughout the early church? It was certainly available to the church through her scriptures, i.e. the Old Testament. It is in the texts of these sacred writings that Israel is often chided for playing the harlot, and joining herself to the gods of other nations. Clearly, what Israel was supposed to be to Yahweh she had become to other gods.

Now, while the language of 'one flesh' is clearly transferable to the corporate reality of Christ and His church, the language of membership –μελη- is never transferable. It is always corporate. A man is never a member of his wife, or a woman a member of her husband. This is reserved for corporate relations, and for this reason the warning about the *pornē* is corporate. The church is in real danger of being handed over to Satan (5:5) and so being made, in some way, the members of the harlot οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ὁ κολλώμενος τῇ πόρνη ἐν σώμα ἔστιν; ἔσονται γάρ, φησὶν, οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν.

Could Paul have expected the Corinthians to understand such corporate concepts? The idea of bringing defilement into a community, as a result of improper actions, was certainly not beyond what Paul expected his readers to grasp. He goes on to apply this theology of sexuality to the realm of marriage in chapter seven, and in this section he discusses the difficulties of those women who have unbelieving husbands. He urges them not to leave their husbands, and to recognise that there is something authentic about their marriage relationship, even though it is not 'in the Lord'. He tells these women that their faith sanctifies their husbands. This is clearly nothing to do with the husbands being included into the Christian community, because Paul says it is possible that through their continuing relationships, their husbands might be converted to Christ. He drives home the reality of the marriage relationship by saying that if this relationship did not exist, their children would be unclean.

This passage is useful to our discussion as we see that Paul is building his appeal on concepts that are specifically Semitic. Indeed, it is quite probable that the conceptual background of his reasoning is the Torah's injunction to Israel to relate to the aliens within her. If these people were willing to live at peace with the community, and to respect her laws and honour her God, then, even though they were not Jews, they could still live among the covenant people, and benefit from the presence of Israel's God.²⁵ It is these principles that Paul seems to be applying to the unbelieving husbands. They can live among the people of God, and, as a result of their spouses' faith, they benefit from the teaching and blessing of the community, and are drawn to the God their wives have come to serve. Their children also have this blessing, and so they are sanctified by the faith of their believing mother.

To argue with a Gentile congregation in this way suggests that the Corinthian community had knowledge and appreciation of the Old Testament's teaching on relationships with unbelievers. Paul's argument in chapter 6 also suggests that the believers in Corinth were an informed community and well able to follow the appeal he advances.

²⁵ Ex. 12:48; Lev. 17:15, 19:34; Num. 9:14.

4. The Structure of the Argument

What context should the text be read in? As I have indicated earlier, the traditional way of reading the text is heavily contextualised, drawing on the religious and social setting in Corinth. It has been noted that the Temple was not a place where sacred prostitution was practised and so interpretations that rely on that setting have to be rejected. We have also found grammatical and theological tensions, suggesting that the individualistic interpretation was not Paul's intended meaning. So, what is the intended setting of the text?

Studies by Wright and Keesmat have shown the presence of the Exodus theme in both Romans and Galatians. Other works have demonstrated how widespread this theme was in the early church. The gospels are saturated with it. So, it should not be surprising to find it in the Corinthian letter as well.

I would argue that there is plenty of evidence to show that the Corinthians were very familiar with the Old Testament scriptures and the promise of the New Exodus, which was spoken of especially by the prophets. Many crucial Second Exodus texts are quoted from Isaiah and other prophets in order to expound the themes of the letter. For example, Paul uses Isaiah 29:14 at the beginning of the letter (1:19), when he warns the church about worldly wisdom. When he wants to reassure the Corinthians in chapter 2, that the Spirit knows the deep things of God, and by Him we know the things that God has prepared for us, Paul quotes from Isaiah 64:4. Chapter 3 contains references to the field and the temple, both OT images of Israel. In chapter 4, Paul presents himself and Apollos as servants. He sees himself and Apollos at the back of the victory parade, the most insignificant of the captives (vs 9-10). What should be remembered is that this victory parade is defined by its context. The rest of the letter makes it clear that this is not a Roman emperor leading his captives, but Yahweh, leading His people out of humiliation and slavery. In other words, it is part of the divine warrior motif that has been identified by others. It is a re-enactment of the Exodus (see Rom. 15:17-19), with Paul counting himself as the least of the saints. He charges the Corinthians with being obsessed with status, position and power. Paul sees his salvation to be about servanthood and humiliation but that the Corinthians see theirs to be about privilege and status.

It is this arrogance that is at the root of the problem in Corinth. The believers see themselves to be all-victorious and beyond the power of Sin. What they do, they claim, is not sinful, but the display of their liberty in Christ. Paul will have none of this. He reminds them that Christ, their Passover, has been sacrificed for them and that they must continue to keep the feast by putting away the sin of fornication. Paul warns the Corinthians of judgment, making it even clearer in chapter 10, when he reminds them that the Israelites died in the desert because they dared seek the pleasures of the Midianites, falling in their thousands as they came under the judgment of God.

It is the OT background which informs the imagery and vocabulary found in chapters 5 and 6. The Corinthian church tolerates a sexual impurity that even the Gentiles would not accept. If the believers will not accept the word of rebuke from God's servant, they will come under the judgment of God Himself. Just like the covenant curses meant that the Jews were eventually delivered over to their enemies, Paul warns the believers that this is what will happen to them. The church is called to discipline the man guilty of incest, but if it will not, Paul warns the believers that he will be forced to come and exercise his apostolic authority,

and hand not only this man over to Satan, but possibly the church herself for being his accomplice. Israel, of course, was eventually handed over to Babylon for the final covenant curse to come upon her, but this was only after repeated appeals that she turn from her sins and seek the Lord. Paul is conscious that the church in Corinth is heading towards judgment and so pleads with them to take control of the situation.

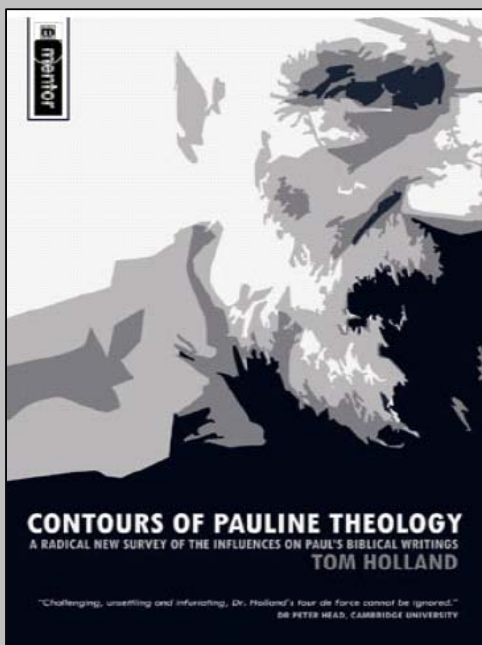
Conclusion

I would argue that it is in this corporate, salvation-history context that these chapters, and the rest of the letter, should be read. If the immoral man persists in his actions, Paul will be forced to hand him, and all those who take his side, over to Satan. He will make them the members of the harlot. They will be removed from the realm of God's grace, and put into the situation where they are judged. In other words, the harlot is the world without God. Its existence, in the understanding of the early church, is evident from Revelation 18. Babylon is the mother of harlots, and those who will not leave her will be destroyed with her. This is Paul's warning to the Corinthian church, a warning that is developed in chapter 10.

Paul's appeal to the Corinthian church to appreciate that it is the temple of the Holy Spirit is based on the OT promise that God would dwell with His people. It is not individually that they are temples of the Holy Spirit, but collectively. No individual Jew in the OT was a temple of the Holy Spirit, but Israel was: "When Israel came out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of foreign tongue, Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel his dominion" (Ps 114:1-2). (The Qumran community was keen to develop this theme for itself, and parallels with the argument being made can be found in its text.)

The statement that they "were bought at a price" is not to do with anything that happened in Corinth, but what happened outside the walls of Zion. There, "Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed" (5:7), and in that event Jesus took the church as His bride.²⁶ For that reason, 1 Corinthians 6:13-17 echoes much of the language of Ephesians 5:25-33 in which Paul describes Christ's love for His bride.

²⁶ The Passover is seen by the Old Testament writers to be the occasion when Yahweh took Israel as His bride and for this reason the Song of Solomon is read at the celebration of Passover.



In his *Contours of Pauline Theology*, Dr Holland argues forcefully that the main contours of Paul's thought can only be understood when we understand Paul as an exegete and theologian of the Old Testament, with the hoped-for New Exodus, now fulfilled in Christ, at the centre of his reading strategy. This approach finds corporate and covenantal themes to lie at the very heart of Paul's concerns. In constant critical engagement with the whole range of contemporary scholarship Holland maps out for himself and his readers new ways of understanding Paul and offers new insights into a range of absolutely vital issues from justification to Christology, and new insights into Pauline texts from Romans to Colossians. Challenging, unsettling and infuriating Dr Holland's tour de force cannot be ignored.

- Dr Peter Head, Lecturer in Theology, University of Cambridge.

'Dr. Holland provides a timely emphasis on the corporate and communal structures of Paul's thinking as well as on its roots in the Old Testament...it provides a fresh and useful treatment of Pauline theology, and many of its arguments offer corrections to widespread misunderstandings of Paul'.

- Anthony C. Thiselton, Emeritus Professor of Christian Theology in Residence, University of Nottingham.

'Those who would seek to discredit Pauline theology will appreciate Holland's scholarship and the sound arguments on Paul's behalf. Those who ascribe to Paul as an apostle of Jesus Christ will appreciate Holland's apologetic prowess and find Paul's Jewish hermeneutic illuminating.'

-*American Journal of Biblical Theology*

Holland mounts a sustained critique of new perspective understandings of justification and approaches the issue in a fresh and convincing way that posits justification as a creative, and not declarative, act with respect to the question of covenant membership. This is a valuable and provocative study full of broad-brush big ideas and some very important concerns. Holland is surely correct to point to the Old Testament scriptures as our primary source for understanding Paul's thought. He may also be right in pushing us to consider the more corporate aspects of Paul's thinking. Much of what he says concerning the Passover background rings true for not only Paul but also the rest of the New Testament and bears careful consideration.'

- Dr. Bill Saller, *Reformation Theological Review*

A RECENT HISTORY OF THE ORDINARY UNIVERSAL MAGISTERIUM

Raymond W. Belair¹

It is clear that there are certain truths central to the Catholic faith which have never been solemnly defined by the extraordinary Magisterium of either the Pope or the ecumenical councils. The Ten Commandments would be an obvious example. It further appears that the reason they have never been so defined is that there was no need for such definitions because such truths have been taught constantly and without question. The infallibility of the Church's magisterial teaching authority was not itself formally defined until the First Vatican Council. However, for most Roman Catholics theologians, the New Testament, Patristic writers, and the Tradition of the Church show a clear awareness of the Church's inerrancy in preserving the deposit of faith.

This ancient teaching authority has, since the 19th century, come to be known as the "ordinary and universal Magisterium." This means that the Church holds that certain central truths, never solemnly and infallibly defined, have nevertheless been infallibly taught by the Pope and the bishops when they are united with the Pope. Further, as with other infallible statements, the infallibility of the ordinary universal Magisterium extends to both matters of divine revelation and to those truths so closely connected to divine revelation as to be necessary to preserve the deposit of revelation.

While part of the Church's Tradition, use of the term "ordinary magisterium" was first employed in a Church document in 1863 when Pope Pius IX's Apostolic Letter *Tuas Libenter* was sent to Archbishop Gregor von Scherr of Munich. The Letter was written because a group of theologians from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland had been invited to a congress in Munich without the knowledge of any of the bishops. The conference had come to the attention of the papal nuncio in Munich, who reported the matter to the Vatican Secretary of State. At that time the theological orthodoxy of certain German theologians was of concern to the nuncio.² Among other actions, the congress adopted a resolution stating that, other than when solemnly defined teachings were involved, theologians enjoyed freedom of inquiry in all theological matters. This resolution failed to take into account the ancient dogmatic significance of the universal episcopate.³ While earlier extending his blessing to the congress, after learning of it, Pius IX later sent his Apostolic Letter *Tuas Libenter* to Archbishop von Scherr praising the intentions and faithfulness of the participants, while questioning their failure to obtain Church permission for the congress. The major issue was the congress's resolution purporting to limit the teaching authority of the Church to matters

¹ Raymond W. Belair, JD, DMin (cand) is a senior founding partner of the law firm of Belair & Evans LLP. A Diplomate of both the American Board of Professional Liability Attorneys and the National Board of Trial Advocacy, for whom he has also served as an examiner, Belair is a graduate of Fordham University Law School and holds an M.A. in dogma from the Institute of Religious Studies at St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie, New York. He is a doctoral candidate at The Graduate Theological Foundation in South Bend, Indiana.

² Gerald McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century: The Quest for a Unitary Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1977), 129-132.

³ Richard Gaillardetz, *Witnesses to the Faith: Community, Infallibility and the Ordinary Magisterium of Bishops* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 24.

solemnly defined. In his letter, Pius IX corrected the resolution, stating that Catholic teachers and writers are not bound only by what had been solemnly defined as dogma:

For even if it is a matter of that subjection which must be given in the act of divine faith, it must not be limited to those things which have been defined by the express decrees of the councils or of the Roman Pontiffs and of this Apostolic See, but must also be extended to those things which are handed on as divinely revealed by the ordinary magisterium of the Church dispersed throughout the world and therefore are held by the universal and constant consent of Catholic theologians to pertain to the faith.⁴

Although infallibility was only later defined at Vatican I, Pius IX described it as including those teachings handed on as divinely revealed by the universal Magisterium.

Understanding of the infallibility of the ordinary universal magisterium was further advanced at Vatican I when the “object of faith” was described in the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius*:

Further, all those things are to be believed with divine and Catholic faith which are contained in the word of God, written or handed down, and which are proposed by the Church, either by solemn judgment or by the ordinary and universal magisterium, to be believed as being divinely revealed.⁵

While papal infallibility was directly defined at Vatican I, the infallibility of the ordinary magisterium was not, though it was implicitly confirmed in *Dei Filius*.

Vatican I had broader aspirations than it was able to complete before it was abruptly concluded in 1870. However, the Dogmatic Constitution *Pastor Aeternus*⁶ solemnly defined the infallibility of the Pope. In doing so, it made clear that the Pope’s “supreme power of teaching” itself enjoyed the approval of the perpetual usage of the Church and the ecumenical councils which promulgated it. This had been done by virtue of the fact that the “first thing required for salvation is to preserve the rule of true faith.”⁷ It was not possible to set aside the words of Jesus Christ.⁸ Knowing that the “See of Peter always remained unstained by all error” according to the divine promise which Jesus made, the successors of Peter have always been heeded. Therefore, when the Roman Pontiff exercises his office as pastor and teacher of all Christians in defining—by his supreme apostolic authority as respects a doctrine of faith or morals—he enjoys through divine assistance the infallibility promised by Christ. Such definitions are irreformable by themselves, not by the consent of the Church⁹:

For the Holy Spirit promised to the successors of Peter, not that they would unfold new doctrine which He revealed to them, but that, with His assistance,

⁴ Pius IX, Apostolic Letter *Tuas Libenter* (December 21, 1863).

⁵ Vatican I, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* (April 24, 1870).

⁶ Vatican I, Dogmatic Constitution *Pastor Aeternus* (July 18, 1870).

⁷ *Ibid*, ch 4 .

⁸ *Ibid*, ch 2 .

⁹ *Ibid*, ch 11.

they would piously guard and faithfully expound the revelation or deposit of faith handed on through the Apostles.¹⁰

After Vatican I, the infallibility of the ordinary universal Magisterium was invoked in certain documents. One of these was *Munificentissimus Deus*, in which Pius XII in 1950 solemnly defined the Assumption, while essentially stating that formal definition was not strictly necessary. He wrote that “certain and firm argument is taken from the universal consensus of the ordinary universal magisterium of the Church by which the bodily Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary into heaven is shown. . .to be a truth revealed by God.”¹¹ Still, the infallibility of the ordinary universal Magisterium was not formally set forth until Vatican II.

Vatican II

At Vatican II the Council addressed the matter of episcopal authority which they had been unable to reach at Vatican I. The Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium* both reaffirmed and broadened the teaching on infallibility given at Vatican I. This included the three methods by which the Church acts infallibly. The first method occurs when the Pope solemnly defines a doctrine concerning faith and morals to be held by the universal Church. The bishops also act infallibly in solemn action at an ecumenical council or in the ordinary universal magisterium when dispersed throughout the world so long as they teach in union with the Pope. The formal teaching on the infallibility of the ordinary universal magisterium is:

Although the bishops, taken individually, do not enjoy the privilege of infallibility, they do, however, proclaim infallibly the doctrine of Christ on the following conditions: namely, when, even though dispersed throughout the world but preserving for all that amongst themselves and with Peter's successor the bond of communion, in their authoritative teaching concerning matters of faith and morals, they are in agreement that a particular teaching is to be held definitively and absolutely.¹²

Lumen Gentium is the formal authoritative acknowledgement of the infallibility of the ordinary universal magisterium whereby the bishops embody the truth on matters of faith and morals in their everyday teachings. This is true so long as they remain in communion with the Pope and with each other in forming one judgment with moral unity, which judgment is to be held definitively. But to what does this infallibility pertain?

This infallibility, however, with which the divine redeemer wished to endow his church in defining doctrine relating to faith and morals is co-extensive with the deposit of revelation, which must be religiously guarded and loyally and courageously expounded.¹³

This has been understood to mean that the infallibility of the Church pertains to both revealed truths and to those truths which are necessary for the revelation to be preserved.

¹⁰ Ibid, ch 7.

¹¹ Pius XII, Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus* (November 1, 1950), 12.

¹² Vatican II, Dogmatic Constitution *Lumen Gentium*(November 21, 1964), 25.

¹³ Ibid.

This interpretation of *Lumen Gentium* was confirmed by the International Theological Commission:

The object of the infallibility of the Church has the same extension as the revealed deposit; hence it extends to all those things and only to those, which either directly pertain to the revealed deposit itself, or are required in order that the same deposit may religiously safeguarded and faithfully expounded.¹⁴

These two aspects of the truth are known, respectively, as the primary and secondary objects of infallibility. This was also reinforced by the 1973 declaration of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Mysterium Ecclesiae*:

According to Catholic doctrine, the infallibility of the Church's magisterium extends not only to the deposit of faith but also to those matters without which that deposit cannot be rightly preserved and expounded.¹⁵

Then, in 1989, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published a new *Formula for the Profession of the Faith and Oath of Fidelity*.¹⁶ The *Profession*, containing the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, also contained three paragraphs pertaining to the truths of Catholic Faith. The first paragraph provides that:

With firm faith, I also believe everything contained in the Word of God, whether written or handed down in Tradition, which the Church either by a solemn judgment or by the ordinary and universal Magisterium sets forth to be believed as divinely revealed.¹⁷ (Emphasis added).

The second paragraph stated:

I also firmly accept and hold all those things concerning doctrine about faith and morals which are definitively proposed by the same Church.¹⁸ (Emphasis added)

The third paragraph provided:

Moreover, I adhere with submission of will and intellect to the teachings which either the Roman Pontiff or the college of Bishops enunciate when they exercise their authoritative Magisterium, even if they do not intend to proclaim these teachings by a definitive act.¹⁹ (Emphasis added)

The following year, The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued its *Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian*²⁰, which provided an explanation of the *Profession's*

¹⁴ *Acta Synodalia Concilii Vaticani Secundi* III/8, 89.

¹⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration in Defense of the Catholic Doctrine on the Church Against Certain Errors of the Day, *Mysterium Ecclesiam* (June 24, 1973), 3.

¹⁶ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity* (January 9, 1989), 105.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian Donum Veritatis*, (May 24, 1990).

three quoted paragraphs. When the Magisterium of the Church makes an infallible pronouncement and solemnly declares that a teaching is found in Revelation, the assent called for is that of “theological faith.” This kind of faith is to be given even to the teaching of the ordinary universal Magisterium when it “proposes” for belief a teaching of faith as divinely revealed. When the Magisterium proposes in a definitive way truths as to faith and morals which, even if not divinely revealed, are nevertheless strictly and intimately connected with Revelation, these “must be firmly accepted and held.”²¹ When the Magisterium, not intending to act “definitively,” teaches a doctrine to foster a better understanding of Revelation, make explicit its contents, recall how some teaching is in conformity with the truths of faith, or to guard against ideas that are incompatible with these truths, the response called for is that of “religious submission of will and intellect.”²² The truths of the second paragraph fit the definition of the secondary object of infallibility—truths of faith and morals not divinely revealed, but strictly connected with Revelation. Yet the assent called for is not that of “theological faith,” as is the case with solemn declarations. Rather, these truths of the secondary object of infallibility must be “firmly accepted and held.” This prompted at least one theologian to observe that these infallible truths of faith and morals “[did] not call for a response of faith.”²³

But this matter was revisited and further clarified in 1998 when John Paul II’s Apostolic Letter *Ad Tuendam Fidem* was issued.²⁴ The purpose was to fill a perceived void in Canon Law. Specifically, it was intended to bring the 1983 Code of Canon Law into conformity with the doctrinal categories established by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in the 1989 *Profession of Faith and Oath of Fidelity*.²⁵ Canon 750 of the *Code of Canon Law* dealt with the matters in the first paragraph of the Profession—matters to be believed as having been divinely revealed—just as the matters in the third paragraph, not proclaimed by a definitive act, but requiring submission of will and intellect were dealt with by Canon 752. Matters of the second paragraph, dealing with faith and morals (and to be firmly accepted and held), had no corresponding legislation in the Codes of the Catholic Church. The correction of this omission was stated by John Paul II to be of the utmost importance, since the matters in question were truths necessarily connected to divine revelation.²⁶ Therefore, the Code of Canon Law was amended as respects Canon 750. It would retain its original passage regarding matters of divine revelation, but would now also contain a new paragraph:

2. Furthermore, each and everything set forth definitively by the Magisterium of the Church must be firmly accepted and held; namely, those things required for the holy keeping and the faithful exposition of the deposit of faith; therefore anyone who rejects propositions which are to be held definitively sets himself against the teaching of the Catholic Church.²⁷

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid. This is not not simply exterior or disciplinary, but under impulse of obedience to the faith.

²³ Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., “The ‘Secondary Object’ of Infallibility,” *Theological Studies*, Vol. 54 (1993) 542.

²⁴ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Ad Tuendam Fidem* (May 28, 1998)

²⁵ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Profession of faith and Oath of Fidelity*, AAS 81(1989) 104-106.

²⁶ *Ad Tuendam Fidem*, 3

²⁷ Ibid,4

Shortly after the Apostolic Letter was issued, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a *Commentary* containing some illuminating information on the categories of infallible teachings. The first category—doctrines set forth by the Magisterium as divinely revealed—are irreformable and are doctrines *de fide credenda*. They require “the assent of theological faith” and may be either solemnly and infallibly defined by the Pontiff or the College of Bishops in council, or infallibly proposed by the ordinary and universal Magisterium.²⁸ As to the secondary object of infallibility—the matters definitively proposed in the Church’s teachings which must be “firmly accepted and held”—the *Commentary* provides:

The object taught by this formula includes all those teachings belonging to the dogmatic or moral area, which are necessary for faithfully keeping and expounding the deposit of faith, even if they have not been proposed by the Magisterium of the Church as formally revealed.²⁹

As with divinely revealed truths, these doctrines pertaining to the secondary object of infallibility can be defined by the Pope or a council or infallibly taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium as a “*sententia definitiva tenenda*.”

Every believer, therefore, is required to give *firm and definitive assent* to these truths based on faith in the Holy Spirit’s assistance to the Church’s Magisterium, and on the Catholic doctrine of the infallibility of the Magisterium in these matters.³⁰ (Emphasis added).

These truths require the assent of faith *de fide tenenda*. To deny such truths, one would be “rejecting a truth of Catholic doctrine and would therefore no longer be in full communion with the Catholic Church.”³¹

The truths of the secondary object of infallibility can be connected in different ways to revelation; they could have an historical relationship to revelation or there could be a logical connection which expresses a stage in the maturation of the Church’s understanding of revelation. That these doctrines are infallibly taught, though not proposed as formally revealed, does not diminish their definitive character, nor preclude that they may later be proclaimed as divinely revealed.³²

The *Commentary* then explained how both objects of infallibility can be established in different ways by the Magisterium. The Magisterium teaches both the divinely revealed doctrines and the doctrines to be held definitively with an act that is either defining or non-defining. A defining act is a solemnly defining pronouncement by the Pope or by an ecumenical council. In the case of a *non-defining* act:

[A]doctrine is taught *infallibly* by the ordinary and universal Magisterium of the Bishops dispersed throughout the world who are in communion with the

²⁸ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Commentary on The Concluding Formula of the Professio Dei* (29 June, 1998), 5.

²⁹ *Doctrinal Commentary*, 6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 7.

Successors of Peter. *Such a doctrine can be confirmed or reaffirmed by the Roman Pontiff even without recourse to a solemn definition*, by declaring explicitly that it belongs to the teaching of the ordinary and universal Magisterium as a truth that is divinely revealed (first paragraph) or as a truth of Catholic doctrine (second paragraph). Consequently, when there has not been a judgment in the solemn form of a definition, but this doctrine, belonging to the inheritance of the *depositum fidei* is taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium, which necessarily includes the Pope, such a doctrine is to be understood as having been set forth infallibly. The declaration of *confirmation or reaffirmation* by the Roman Pontiff in this case is not a new dogmatic definition, but a formal attestation of a truth already possessed and infallibly transmitted by the Church.³³ (Emphasis added).

The *Commentary* makes it clear, however, that the infallible teaching of the ordinary and universal Magisterium is *not* set forth only in explicit declarations of doctrine to be believed or to be held definitively, but is also expressed by a doctrine implicitly contained in a practice of the Church's faith. It is derived either from Revelation or from what is necessary for salvation and attested to by uninterrupted tradition.³⁴

Finally, the *Commentary* lists a number of examples of infallible doctrines which are either 1) divinely revealed, or 2) closely connected with revelation. Among those doctrines in the first category would be the articles of faith of the Creed, Christological dogmas, Marian dogmas, Christ's institution of the sacraments and their efficacy regarding grace, the real presence in the Eucharist, original sin, inerrancy of original texts, and the grave immorality of direct and voluntary killing of innocent human beings.³⁵ In discussion of the second category it is noted that before papal infallibility was dogmatically defined at Vatican I the primacy of the Pope was always believed as a revealed fact even though discussion remained open as to whether jurisdiction and infallibility were an intrinsic part of Revelation (primary object of infallibility) or only a logical consequence (secondary object of infallibility). Vatican I simply confirmed that the doctrine of infallibility and primacy of jurisdiction of the Pope, recognized as definitive before the Council, was also accepted as a divinely revealed truth.³⁶

Examples of non-defining infallible teachings, either divinely revealed or closely connected with Revelation, are part of the recent history of the Church, and one of the most prominent examples thereof is now discussed in more detail.

³³ Ibid, 9.

³⁴ Ibid, fn 17.

³⁵ Ibid, 11.

³⁶ Ibid.

Evangelium Vitae

This Encyclical Letter³⁷, proclaiming “the Gospel of Life” and confirming the Church’s condemnation of all direct taking of innocent human life, was not unexpected. What attracted some attention was the formula John Paul II chose to express the condemnations of murder, abortion and euthanasia:

Therefore, by the authority which Christ conferred upon Peter and his Successors, and in communion with the Bishops of the Catholic Church, *I confirm that the direct and voluntary killing of an innocent human being is always gravely immoral*. This doctrine, based upon that unwritten law which man, in the light of reason, finds in his own heart . . . is reaffirmed by Sacred Scripture, transmitted by the Tradition of the Church and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium.³⁸

* * * *

Therefore, by the authority which Christ Conferred upon Peter and his Successors, and in communion with the Bishops-who on various occasions have condemned abortion and who in the aforementioned consultation, albeit dispersed throughout the world, have shown unanimous agreement concerning this doctrine – *I declare that direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, always constitutes a grave moral disorder*, since it is the deliberate killing of an innocent human being. This doctrine is based upon the natural law and upon the written Word of God, is transmitted by the Church’s Tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium.³⁹

* * * *

Taking into account these distinctions, in harmony with the magisterium of my predecessors and in communion with the Bishops of the Catholic Church, *I confirm that euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God*, since it is the deliberate and morally unacceptable killing of human person. This doctrine is based upon the natural law and upon the written Word of God , is transmitted by the Church’s Tradition and taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium.⁴⁰

Each of the three foregoing paragraphs ends with a footnote to *Lumen Gentium* 25. The reference clearly refers to the infallible teaching authority of the ordinary and universal Magisterium described therein, which has been both quoted and referenced repeatedly here. It is worth observing that Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., the same theologian who had earlier opined that matters of the secondary object of infallibility might not call for a response of faith, has more recently quoted *Lumen Gentium’s* language in support of his view that *Evangelium Vitae* was an exercise of the ordinary and universal Magisterium’s infallible

³⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter, *Evangelium Vitae* (March 25, 1995).

³⁸ Ibid, 57.

³⁹ Ibid, 62.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 65.

teaching authority.⁴¹ After quoting the much referenced portion of *Lumen Gentium*, the theologian apparently concluded that the encyclical met the conditions of *Lumen Gentium*, which had in this case been laid down respecting murder, abortion and euthanasia. He adverted to the “Vatican Summary”⁴² of the Encyclical as confirmation for appropriate invocation of *Lumen Gentium*’s authority. After some discussion about considerations which might have been given to making *Evangelium Vitae* a solemn defining statement, rather than an encyclical, Sullivan observed:

It is clear that it was decided not to issue any solemn papal definition in this encyclical and not to make an explicit claim to be speaking infallibly. And yet, to say that it would be “a little absurd’ to solemnize teachings so clearly evident in Scripture and tradition,” could be taken as practically equivalent to saying that there was no need to define doctrine that was already so obviously the traditional teaching of the Catholic Church. And this is not very different from saying that the Church’s judgment on murder, abortion and euthanasia was a doctrine proposed by the ordinary universal magisterium as definitively to be held.⁴³

The theologian went on to observe that *Evangelium Vitae* was an encyclical, which had not previously been used by Popes to speak infallibly and, in his opinion, no dogma had ever been defined in an encyclical. It should be noted, however, that since what John Paul II said he was doing was “declaring” and “reaffirming” what had already been infallibly taught, there was nothing “new” for him to define. As can be seen, solemn definitions are not necessary for the operation of the ordinary and universal Magisterium.

Sullivan conceded that no Pope prior to John Paul II had ever consulted the entire episcopal college, as John Paul II had done prior to *Evangelium Vitae*. He thus gained unanimous agreement on what he was to say before he declared a teaching as “taught by the ordinary and universal magisterium.” Moving to an assessment of the encyclical concerning the moral law, Sullivan agreed that in order to be capable of being taught with infallibility, “a moral doctrine must be either formally revealed, or so intimately connected with revealed truth as to be required for its defense or exposition.” He concluded that *Evangelium Vitae*’s teaching on the immorality of murder, abortion and euthanasia “meets that requirement.”⁴⁴

Thus, conditions for the exercise of the infallibility of the ordinary universal Magisterium are seen as having been met. First, the teachings fall within the object of infallibility—truths directly revealed or required for the defense or exposition of the faith. Both Scriptural support and the Church’s Tradition in supporting innocent human life are stated and obvious; they are based “on the natural law and the written Word of God.” The requirement of *Lumen Gentium* 25—faith and morals—has been met. Further, the moral unanimity of the world’s bishops agreeing in one judgment in communion with the pope is shown by the unanimity of the 1991 Cardinal’s Consistory and the unanimous response of all of the world’s bishops to John Paul II’s personal letter. The final requirement, that the doctrine

⁴¹ Francis A. Sullivan, S.J., The Doctrinal Weight of *Evangelium Vitae*, *Theological Studies*, Vol. 56(1995) 560.

⁴² The Vatican Summary of “*Evangelium Vitae*”, *Origins* 24/42 (6 April 1995).`

⁴³ Sullivan, The Doctrinal Weight of *Evangelium Vitae*, 563.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 564.

must be taught as to be held definitively by all the faithful, is so apparent as to be undeniable. It is hard to see how any other interpretation would do justice to the language which John Paul II used.⁴⁵ Moreover, the encyclical embodies the very formula described in *Lumen Gentium* 25 for confirming doctrine as having been infallibly taught. There is explicit reference thereto in footnotes following each of the doctrinal statements. This stands on its own as confirmation that the norms against killing the innocent, abortion and euthanasia should be understood as definitive and infallible, apart from the internal analysis.

The lengths to which John Paul II went to ensure that the bishops of the world were in communion with him before he issued *Evangelium Vitae* are at least arguably unnecessary. No such detailed survey was undertaken as respects the Apostolic Letter *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* on the teaching that the Church has no authority whatsoever to ordain women as priests. In that case, however, the same formula and reference to *Lumen Gentium* 25 was made as was made in *Evangelium Vitae*. Moreover, *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis* has been the subject of a *Dubium* as to whether the prohibition belongs to the deposit of faith. The *Responsum* was in the affirmative and stated that the teaching was founded on the word of God and from the beginning constantly preserved and set forth infallibly by the ordinary universal Magisterium. This *Responsum* from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith was approved by John Paul II. Accordingly, extraordinary consultations with the bishops are not necessary for the confirmation or reaffirmation of what has been infallibly taught by the ordinary universal Magisterium. However, in the case of *Evangelium Vitae*, it certainly provides added reinforcement to the exercise of the ordinary universal Magisterium.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 563.

PRAXIS THEOLOGIES AND THE PROJECT WELCOME SUDANESE REFUGEE COMMUNITY

Joan Mueller, OSC¹

Our creedal formulations are based on the insistence of the early fathers that “God became human so that human beings could become divine.”² As a teacher of Christology, I frequently outline the belief that we are invited as Christians to participate as adopted sons and daughters of God not only in liturgy and prayer, but also in daily life and society. After a study of biblical and classical Christologies, I discuss with my students contemporary theologies that encourage faith grounded in both prayer and praxis.

At the end of the 2002 fall semester, my students were writing reflection papers integrating the biblical, classical, and contemporary Christologies we had studied. The Sunday before semester finals, with the sinister winds of winter already whipping across the dreary Omaha plain, I was driving home after giving an Advent talk. My heart echoed the grey gusts with a kind of “is-that-all-this-is” feeling, even though it was simultaneously still reveling in the reception of tenure and promotion I had received the previous April. After the poverty of grad school, the brutalities of the academic job search, and the challenges of “publish or perish,” I had expected to relax a bit and settle into my profession. Instead, I felt an unexpected angst. It seemed like the surety of following God’s will had suddenly disappeared from my life. The uncertainty was so acute, in fact, that I had decided that by the end of the spring semester, if I couldn’t find a sense of mission in my life, I would leave the academic world and begin again. I prayed for the grace to know God’s will.

I passed a little church on Omaha’s south side just as the bells tolled and stopped in, found a pew, and began the service absorbed and exhausted from the typical whirlwind semester. It was the celebrant’s invitation to offer the sign of peace that prompted me to turn and notice those who were praying around me. A young Sudanese man with his wife and six children held out his hand. “Peace be with you,” he said with an infectious smile. I extended my hand also to his wife, who nodded and held out a timid hand. At their father’s prompting, two of the children took my hand, while the other two hid their heads in their mother’s skirt. In addition, there were twin baby boys, one in the arms of each parent.

After the service, the couple spoke with me and invited me to visit their home. I accepted and followed them to their apartment in a low-income housing unit not far from the church. The family was lovely, but the house was strangely empty. It took me awhile to identify what was missing. This was a family of six children, and there wasn’t a single toy. More disturbing was that the family was dressed in summer clothes, including flip-flops instead of shoes, and neither children nor parents had worn coats to church. I asked simply, “Do the children have warm clothes for the winter?”

¹ Joan Mueller is Professor of Theology at Creighton University and founder of the Project Welcome Sudanese Refugee Community. She is the author of several books including, *The Privilege of Poverty: Clare of Assisi, Agnes of Prague, and the Struggle for a Franciscan Rule for Women* and *Francis: The Saint of Assisi*.

² Athanasius “, *On the Incarnation* 3.4.11; and *Discourses Against the Arians* 2.68; 1.51; 3.33; Clement of Alexandria, *Exhortation to the Greeks* 1.8.4; Origen, *Against Celsus* 3.28; to name just a few texts.

Many years before, I had worked with Vietnamese and Hmong refugees, and having asked the first question, dusty skills began to return. I looked at the mother and asked with my hands, “Do you have anything for the children to eat?” She shook her head, “no,” her eyes still looking downward. I asked the father, whose spoken English was more proficient, “May I have your wife’s permission to see the refrigerator and the cupboards.” He asked his wife in the Nuer language, and she rose with one of the twins in her arms. “My babies,” she said brokenly, “I have no food.”

I stood up and went with her into the tiny kitchen. She opened the refrigerator. It was completely empty—not even catsup or milk. The cupboards were the same—totally bare. There was no food in the house—none at all—and there were six children to feed over the Christmas holiday. We sat down again, “My babies,” she said brokenly, “I have no food.”

I realized at that moment that she was pleading only for her newborns. “Can your wife breastfeed the babies?” I asked the father. In response, he showed me burns running from his head to his back. “They dropped chemical bombs on our village,” he said. In the course of the story I learned that the mother had lost her entire family in the chemical bombing and had only her husband and children. Because of effects of the bombs, she was unable to nurse the babies. She hoped that her other children would survive two weeks of Christmas vacation with little food, but she knew the babies would not. She was begging literally for the lives of her babies.

But, I wondered, what about WIC, the federal program that provides food to mothers who need nutritional assistance? I asked the father about it who by now seemed overwhelmed. He had a job assembling window blinds at a local plant, but his paycheck barely covered rent and utilities. He showed me a devastating utility bill and I realized that the high ceilings of the apartment and drafty windows were eating a large portion of the family’s income. There was no money, and with the arrival of two babies rather than one, the city had notified them that they exceeded the limits of those who could live in the present apartment. He was frustrated and confused by the endless red tape of social service agencies. The father looked at his babies and said to me: “God has cursed me.” He held his baby boy closer to his chest betraying his conflict. His twin boys were a great blessing that he was unable to sustain.

As we talked, relatives in the same apartment complex appeared and I was asked to visit them also. I went to two more homes, and found dire situations. Here were people whose children were in danger of malnutrition and cold, living only blocks from the university where I taught—the very place where I frequently expressed the need for prayer and practice to adorn our faith! I had worked at the university for seven years and had never seen the needs of these people.

Driving home late that afternoon, I began listing the practical problems that needed to be addressed:

1. Food.
2. Clothing.
3. Shelter (some families were living with others).

4. Employment (none of the women were employed and some of the men were not working).
5. Learning English (none of the women spoke English).
6. Access to services (WIC, food stamps, unemployment, etc.).
7. Education (I had asked to see report cards and every child I reviewed was failing in school).
8. Utility assistance.
9. Community isolation.
10. Financial help (I was given back bills for each family equaling almost \$10,000/family).
11. Plane ticket assistance (refugees coming to America have to pay back their plane ticket from Sudan. For most families, this bill is between \$4,000-\$5,000. Bill collectors begin hounding families about this debt after they were here only three months).
12. Fraud in local refugee agencies. This was so egregious that one agency was temporarily shut down by the federal government. The fraud and strong-arm tactics of local refugee agencies was a consistent complaint.

Feeling overwhelmed, I tried to discern what to do. Since there were children involved, it was not possible to put one's hands in the air and walk away. Searching for a way to sort through the difficulties, the image of an onion popped into my head. I knew that if I worked through one layer at a time, dealing with the most crucial layers first, that eventually the onion would be peeled.

I called every friend and acquaintance I knew and shared the situation. Immediately there was food and clothing. I talked to churches, university administrators, and agencies. Help came pouring in, mostly from churches, and the work began. No child was hungry or without clothes that Christmas, and the number of families affected kept growing. It soon became evident that there was an epidemic of poverty among Sudanese refugees in Omaha that no one was addressing.

Developing a Working Theology

As I worked and continued teaching, I became progressively dissatisfied with praxis theologies that propose the struggle against injustice as the primary Christian paradigm for promoting social change. It was not that I disagreed with these methodologies, but it seemed that they needed to be amplified and more informed by the efforts that people of faith were making in responding to the cries of the poor. I also noticed in my classes that while a few students deeply identified with structural change-oriented Christologies, most walked away unaffected. I wanted my business and education majors to be as excited about theological praxis as my social justice majors, and this was simply not happening.

Work with the Sudanese community also challenged theologies I had once accepted without much critique. Omaha Sudanese refugees at this time came from Southern Sudan, a place that has been and continues to be in a media blackout for more than fifty years—the refugees we work with are not from Darfur, an area where there has been significant media coverage from the very beginning of the genocide. Many Southern Sudanese women talk

about rape as the moment when one “becomes a woman.” Rape is a normal rite of passage rather than an isolated tragedy. In some tribes, if a woman disobeys the man in her life, a pole is driven through her leg and she is hung upside-down in the sun. Men spend their time plotting and planning how to survive against a government willing to commit genocide for oil revenues. They vie with neighboring tribes competing for cattle and land. When this way of life is transported to the United States, the tribal conflicts continue. Unlike working with the Vietnamese and Hmong, developing a focused community out of the refugees proved to be difficult, and some days seemed impossible.

Is injustice at the root of the Sudanese problem? Of course. But naming the perpetrator is virtually impossible. Because children were involved and every minute wasted was a minute less of their valuable childhood, identifying immediate solutions for social change were necessary. This meant that we needed to identify those things that were holding the Sudanese in poverty. These families were poor:

1. Because adults weren't working.
2. Because women didn't have English skills.
3. Because families were isolated and not connected to essential services.
4. Because local refugee agencies were placing them in substandard housing and depriving them of services and assets they were claiming to give.
5. Because people without a homeland are not welcomed.
6. Because many men and nearly all women did not have basic reading and math skills even in their own languages.

Where injustice was obvious, action was taken. I started taking pictures of the work of local refugee agencies and sending them to Washington D.C. One Omaha agency was closed, lost their status, and had to begin again proving their worth. A second with Arabic speakers was more difficult to deal with. Exasperated one day, I called the federal office only to be told that Homeland Security had a vested interest in keeping the organization afloat. What could be done? We decided that hitting our heads against a brick wall was not productive, so we organized to take over aspects of the agency's mission. We provided beginning house wares, monitored housing, purchased beds and bedding for the children, provided clothing and food, monitored the school placements of the children, and assessed health needs. When time is a critical element, injustice may best be countered by justice, not by rooting out the injustice itself.

Much of what we were facing, however, wasn't simply injustice. Many people wanted to help the Sudanese, but did not have the skills. Project Welcome—as we ended up calling our project—began to organize the needs of refugees so that ordinary people could do their part to welcome their new neighbors. People gave us food, clothing, money, and learning toys. We raised hundreds of thousands of dollars and paid for the airplane ticket debts of all our families. We bought runner cars so that people could go to work. We hired a social services director who managed the social services outreach and paired this outreach with potential donors. She also worked tirelessly to help Sudanese families establish clear credit histories so that they would be eligible to obtain low-income homes through Habitat for Humanity and

another local program. We held summer school classes for the children, summer math and reading camps, sports camps, and English language programs.

Our work in addressing critical needs while always trying to help the community to move forward in their skills and cultural competencies was changing my approach to praxis theologies. In order to make a difference in the lives of the poor, many skills and methodologies are needed, and it seemed to me that consciously developing a praxis method demonstrating that this would be helpful both to students and to the poor. I applied and received from my university a grant funded by the Office for Academic Excellence and Assessment and another by the Lilly Endowment funded Cardoner program at Creighton to work out the model that we were using in the field.³ This grew into the Project Welcome Model Approach I now use for inviting students to put their faith into action.

Praxis Models

The Project Welcome Praxis Models describe six different ways that people in the real world can address the needs of the poor:

1. The Nonprofit Model
2. The Education Model
3. The Solidarity Model
4. The Investment Model
5. The Structural Change Model
6. The Organic Model

Although not intended to include every possible methodology, the Project Welcome Praxis Models are intended to initiate critical thinking and practical imagination in regard to developing real-life solutions to the needs of the poor. In a sense, students and other persons of faith are asked to bring a “bag of methods” to the table so that the most effective method for each situation can be discerned and applied. People with various gifts—yes, even business majors!—have professional and personal skills needed in this faith-in-action approach.

I divide students into groups according to interests giving them the following material as individual worksheets. Students are asked to consider the advantages and disadvantages of their chosen model for the lives of the poor first in their interest groups and then in the larger group. This encourages both an appreciation of each model as well as an acknowledgment of its limits. For each model, I attempt to give general information, critical sources for further research, internet resources, and possibilities for employment and volunteering. Many students, of course, already have experience in one or more of these models, adding to the richness of the discussion.

The Nonprofit Model

In the United States, Christian efforts to feed, cloth, educate, and heal are often tied to nonprofits. The IRS National Center for Charitable Statistics reports more than 1.4 million

³ I'm deeply grateful to the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley who offered housing while I worked in the Berkeley libraries on this project.

registered nonprofit charities in the United States.⁴ A few of the most well known include Catholic Charities, The Salvation Army, Lutheran Social Services, the YMCA, and the Red Cross. Many of these nonprofits were founded by Christians trying to find an effective way to love and serve their neighbors.

There are a variety of jobs and volunteer possibilities in social, educational, healthcare, and other nonprofit services. Unlike for-profit businesses, the success of charitable nonprofits is judged not by monetary gain but by their effectiveness in fulfilling their mission to serve the common good. This being said, a nonprofit is still a business and, like other businesses, needs to pay salaries, expenses, and program costs. While the nonprofit organization needs to remain solvent in order to provide services, it does not need to make a profit for its owners and stockholders.

One way to discern the difference in spirit between the profit and nonprofit business can be illustrated by observing the expectations companies have for their employees. People who are employed by a for-profit business work to make a profit for their company. Their performance reviews focus on bottom-line statistics as well as the efficiency and marketability of their services. A nonprofit employee, on the other hand, will be reviewed by how well she or he has executed and furthered the goals of the public service defined by the organization's mission.

Nonprofits rely on both government resources and private foundations to provide the funding necessary to run their operations. Often, it is successful acquisition of government contracts that decide the fate of particular nonprofits. This is true especially in the area of social services such as adoption, health and human services, care for the elderly and infirmed, and services for the developmentally disabled. Charities that have religious names are often primarily government funded. Lutheran Social Services, for example, includes nursing homes funded primarily by Medicaid and Medicare; foster care services, funded primarily by state government contracts; counseling services, funded by private monies and insurance; and refugee services, funded by government contracts. This complexity of contractual agreements often requires an agency to hire Washington lobbyists to politick for funding as well as executives who have the skills to administrate transactions or the resources to hire lawyers, accountants, and other professionals to manage these operations.

Volunteering with a nonprofit organization is usually easy. Those needing service hours for classes, honor societies, or resumes, or who just want to offer some time will usually discover user-friendly websites and volunteer networks. Applying for a job at a nonprofit is essentially the same as applying for employment at a for-profit business. The interviewee, however, should be aware that those hiring are listening for a desire to serve the mission of the institution, not merely to earn money or accomplish personal career goals. Competition for nonprofit employment can be fierce, especially in larger nonprofits or in those specializing in high-interest causes. Volunteering or interning is an effective way to become known in the organization and to familiarize oneself with its internal climate.⁵

⁴ The statistics refer to the 2007 report. See: <http://nccsdataweb.urban.org>.

⁵ Thomas Wolf and Barbara Carter, *Managing a Nonprofit Organization in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1999); Peri H. Pakroo, *Starting and Building a Nonprofit: A Practical Guide* (

The Education Model

From the beginning, Christians in America have been convinced that the way to bring people out of poverty is to educate them. In order for the fledgling American democracy to take hold, its citizens needed tax-supported, universal education that would bridge the gap between rich and poor. There was the idealistic sense that if children were provided a fair and equal opportunity, poor houses, prisons, and poverty lines would be eliminated. Schools would guarantee social stability by assuring the young that it was merit, not class, which ruled American life. Education was a path out of both ignorance and poverty.⁶

Today, young children in America are deeply affected by poverty: 43% of children under 6, 39% of children ages 6-11, and 35% of children 12-17 live in low-income families. Given these statistics, it is obvious that the poverty of low-income children is an educational problem. This problem is compounded along racial lines: 61% of Latino children, 60% of Black children, and 63% of American Indian children live below the poverty level. As has been historically true, the education of poor children involves both the education of the immigrant child as well as the child of multi-generational poverty.

Responding to the unique educational needs of immigrant children is not only humane, it is good business. 57% of children born to immigrant parents live in poverty. Not responding to the children of new immigrants means that these children will often grow up without completing high school. This is a dire prediction since a low level of education is an indicator that the next generation of children will also grow up in poverty. 57% of children living in poverty have parents who did not complete high school. If the first generation of immigrant children fails, multi-generational poverty follows. And multi-generational poverty is much more difficult to cure.⁷ It is in a country's best interest to educate its immigrant children, especially when those children account for one-fourth of the country's children. If educational systems fail these children, the business of the country will be severely compromised. Social service networks will also be crippled, as the poverty of a failed generation will create difficulties more complex and expensive than the original problem.

Educating children out of poverty is not an easy task. Immigrant children, for instance, come into preschool or kindergarten programs not understanding simple directions such as "sit down" or "stand up." Learning these simple instructions can be traumatic. In my own family, which was German-speaking until my generation, my 70-year-old aunt often recounted the story of her first day of school when she learned the meaning of "sit down." Of course, she taught the lesson to her siblings, but the point is that preschool and primary teachers have tremendous challenges when a student or group of students do not understand even simple directions in English.

Berkeley, CA: Nolo, 2007); and *The Harvard Business School Guide to Careers in the Nonprofit Sector* (Boston: Harvard Business School, 2000).

⁶ L. Dean Webb, *The History of American Education a Great American Experiment* (New Jersey: Upper Saddle River, 2006); Sarah Mondale and Sarah Patton, *School: The Story of American Public Education* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

⁷ On the concept of multigenerational poverty see Ruby Payne, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty* (Highlands, TX: Aha! Process, Inc., 2005), and Ruby Payne, Philip E. DeVol, and Terie Dreussi Smith, *Bridges out of Poverty Strategies for Professionals and Communities* (Highlands, TX: Aha! Process, Inc.: 2001).

School and educational programs usually welcome volunteers. Tutors are needed both in regular classrooms as well as in English learning contexts. Schools in high-risk areas often depend on volunteers for secretarial, kitchen, and fund-raising services. To volunteer, contact a school that serves at-risk children or your local school district and ask what opportunities are available.

The Solidarity Model

In every age there are a few souls called to join the poor in their poverty--to become voluntarily poor. When faced with those without food, clothing, and shelter, there are some who will share what is on their plates, give the coat off of their backs, and open their homes to the poor. While most of us prefer a more measured approach to the works of mercy, there are some called to give everything so that the poor can have a better life, at least for today.

Two well known figures, Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa of Calcutta, are contemporary examples of the solidarity model. Dorothy Day was no ready-made saint. She was born in 1897 and grew up in a family of journalists. She survived what seems to have been a botched suicide attempt and two pregnancies outside of wedlock—one of which ended in an abortion. Having experienced the terrible California earthquake of 1906 that left half of the population of San Francisco homeless, Dorothy became sensitive to the plight of the poor and critical of religious organizations that did not open their doors to the homeless. She rented a tenement that she shared with the homeless and started a soup kitchen. Within a short time, Dorothy founded several of these Catholic Worker Houses that offered hospitality to those on the streets of New York. The movement spread internationally and today there are nearly 200 Catholic Worker communities dedicated to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, prayer, social justice, advocacy, and hospitality for the poor.⁸

Perhaps even better known is Mother Teresa. At the age of 17, she joined a group of Irish missionary nuns known for their work in India and was stationed in Calcutta. While in India, she experienced what she termed “the call within the call,” basically the call to solidarity with the poor in Calcutta. Accepting the plight of the poor, she obtained permission from the Archbishop of Calcutta to leave her congregation and follow this call.

Mother Teresa established a school in the slums and went into homes offering basic medical assistance to the poor. Soon, some of her former pupils joined her and they began ministering to men, women, and children who they found dying on the streets. The sisters rented a room where they could provide a loving and dignified home for the dying. Her congregation, the Missionaries of Charity, serve the sick, dying, and abandoned in 450 centers throughout the world. In the United States, Mother Teresa established hospices for AIDS victims in New York, San Francisco, and Atlanta. Her philosophy of serving the poor

⁸ Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness the Autobiography of Dorothy Day* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981). William Miller, *A Harsh and Dreadful Love: Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker Movement* (New York: Liveright, 1973).

was immediate. When a poor person dies of hunger, she insisted, it is not because God did not listen to his cry. It is because neither you nor I gave him what he needed.⁹

Those called to this model are individuals who step out of their place in society to follow their vocation. They accept voluntary poverty and live among vulnerable people. Because they live among the poor, they understand the situation of poverty from personal experience. Their service to the poor is, therefore, immediately effective. If someone is hungry, they are fed; if they are cold, they are clothed; if they are homeless, they are welcomed. They are ordinary people, often wounded people, who see a need and attempt to respond.

Solidarity groups often do not accept governmental aid because this restricts their sphere of operation or simply because they are peace activists and embrace an anti-war stance. Action is motivated by the desire to alleviate the problems of poverty without necessarily addressing their root causes. They are less concerned with solving global poverty and more concerned with feeding, clothing, and offering hospitality to those at their door. Often those embracing this model use their own paycheck to pay for the needs of those served. After working at their jobs to pay for the housing, food, or clothing needed, they also work to provide daily services such as making meals, providing daycare, and repairing things in the house. This is ordinary, unglamorous work.

The Investment Model

The very rich and the destitute are usually separated by a wide chasm. Throughout American history, however, the wealthy have frequently reached out to those in need. Economists, business people, and the socially conscious wealthy have dreamt about a world where wealth was shared. Many believe that fighting poverty is good not only for the poor, but for them as well. Fighting poverty is simply good business, good humanity.

Since the earth is shared by all, what happens to one happens to all. Air quality, for instance, is not a state affair. It is a global product shared by human beings no matter where they live. Countries that abuse the ozone shield impact climate change around the world. Diseases that take hold without resistance in areas of rural poverty can easily hitch a ride across borders. Terroristic ideologies fester among young men who do not have the opportunity for education or work. In a global economy, a weak link can become a global crisis. Concern for the common good is not only good ethics, but good business.

Although poverty is a complex phenomena, a little planning and investment can go a long way to help a community become self-sustaining. This planning and investment requires coordination among governmental agencies, national governments, private companies, and the local community. Forging these alliances and maintaining the focus to make a long-term difference in the lives of the poor is difficult, especially among those more accustomed to competitive rather than cooperative environments. Governments, when stressed, tend to be isolationist. Companies focus on satisfying investors and, despite philanthropic rhetoric, the poor are often left behind.

⁹ Mother Teresa and Jose Luis González-Balado, *My Life for the Poor: An Autobiography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2005). Malcolm Muggeridge, *Something Beautiful for God: Mother Teresa of Calcutta* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

It is not easy to give away money. One needs to discern if one is actually enabling poverty rather than making progress toward alleviating it. Countries that are impoverished by corruption will not become healthier if the wealthy just throw money at them. Investment in infrastructure and public institutions is useless without security and accountability. And yet, areas of the world are often poor precisely because of a lack of security and accountability.

Nearly one-sixth of the world's population is desperately poor. These poor live hand-to-mouth and fight daily for survival. If their lives are stressed in any way by natural disasters or disease, they will likely die. The desperately poor lack basic housing, drinking water, sanitation, education, and they work for pennies a day. Their poverty is so acute that even low cost methods of improving their lives such as common vaccines, mosquito nets, and drought resistant seeds are beyond their reach. Many adopting an investment approach to poverty believe this kind of poverty can be cured. It is simply a matter of will.

Of course, international cooperation is necessary. How international efforts at eradicating poverty should be financed, however, is a particularly challenging question. Regulatory strategies are necessary to foster communication between government and private interests. In the investment model, public and private finance work together in the global economy replacing old methods of providing government aid with new methods of funding and outsourcing services. While all this might look good on paper, monitoring and choreographing competing interests and complex strategies is the contemporary challenge. While private corporations might be aggressive in promoting their newfound social consciousness, the mission of the corporation—to make money for its investors—is by definition self-serving. It must be acknowledged that corporate investment is frequently no more than a public relations initiative. That being said, the private sector brings expertise into the dialogue, and those truly committed to eradicating poverty must move beyond self-promotion into serious consideration of the problem of global poverty.¹⁰

The United Nations Millennium Project launched by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in 2002 is an unprecedented international investment effort to combat global poverty.¹¹ Practitioners and experts involved in the project crafted eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to organize the United Nations' effort and galvanized unprecedented worldwide national, corporate, and private efforts. The eight goals, with a target date of 2015, guide the United Nations' program of reducing poverty and human deprivation, while promoting sustainable development.

The first MDG is to eradicate extreme hunger and poverty. To this end, the commission proposes to cut in half both the number of persons on the planet earning less than a dollar a day, as well as those suffering from hunger. The second goal is to achieve universal primary

¹⁰ See Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty: How We Can Make It Happen in Our Lifetime* (London: Penguin, 2005). One must also mention the efforts of Bono to "Make Poverty History" in his YouTube video http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eih_ybKdVXU. Links are also included on this site to other spots featuring a cast of stars who have joined Bono's effort.

¹¹ For information on the UN Millennium Project see <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org>. Of particular interest is the text available on this site: *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals*. For a critique of the UN's/Sach's approach see William Easterly's *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Save the Rest Have Done so Much Ill and So Little Good* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2006).

education by setting up the infrastructure by which all children in the world will be able to obtain a free elementary education. The third MDG is to promote gender equality and empower women through equal access to education. The fourth, reduce childhood mortality by two-thirds. The fifth, improve maternal health by cutting maternal mortality rate by three-quarters. The sixth goal is to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases by stopping stop the spread of these diseases by 2015 and reversing the number of incidences. The seventh MDG is to establish environmental sustainability. Here the commission proposes a three-prong approach. Nations need to integrate sustainable environmental policies into their development blueprints and reverse the loss of environmental resources; the number of persons living without access to sanitation and safe drinking water needs to be halved; and 100 million people living in slums need to experience a significant improvement in the quality of their lives. The eighth goal is to develop a global partnership for development. This strategy is the most diverse and complex. A regulated and non-discriminatory international system for trade and finances needs to be developed that will reward countries that commit to fair governance, poverty reduction, and globally responsible development. Special assistance such as debt-reduction and developmental assistance for poverty-stricken and landlocked countries are to be provided to level the playing field. Strategies to employ youth, develop access to affordable pharmaceuticals, and provide information and communications technologies to all developing nations must be implemented.

This investment approach addresses poverty at the local, national, and international levels. Those adopting this model seek to distribute resources intelligently and work across boundaries to address the needs of the poor. They garner resources, business acumen, and work toward the eradication of poverty for the betterment of the entire global community. Those working in this model are wealthy investors and those hired to administrate financial resources. Volunteers are often business persons who work on boards to distribute funds or offer their professional expertise.

The Structural Change Model

The Structural Change Model works to address the root causes of poverty and to break the cycle of poverty. This model seeks to unite the poor in the struggle against injustices that keep them in poverty's grasp. Perhaps the slogan best fitting this model is: "Don't give someone a fish, teach them how to fish." The idea is that the poor need to be empowered, not simply given a handout.

Pioneered in Chicago's stockyard neighborhoods during the depression, the contemporary structural change movement was masterminded by Saul Alinsky. Manipulated by the wealthy who abused and exploited them without external controls, Alinsky observed that the poor were abused by demagogues and deprived of voice and power. Alinsky envisioned a coalition of organizations uniting community groups, small businesses, and churches working together to promote the common good. He took the anger experienced by grassroots people and transformed it into an effective movement for social change.

Alinsky's work forever changed American democracy, influencing the struggle for civil rights and the American farm workers' movement. His organization, the Industrial Areas Foundation,¹² is a complex national network of citizens' organizations giving ordinary people

¹² See: <http://www.industrialareasfoundation.org>.

a voice in determining their future. Action is undertaken primarily by churches that in turn form coalitions with other religious, small business, and grassroots organizations. Alinsky wanted to create an organizational power that would unite people and neighborhoods in a commitment to serve the common good.

If the root cause of poverty is oppression, Alinsky argued that poverty is eradicated by recognizing and using the adversarial relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor. Alinsky identified conflict as inherent in society and promoted confrontation as a means to force compromises with those in power. For the oppressed to win, the balance of power needed to tilt in their favor. To do this, Alinsky used militant, direct-action tactics that attempted to out-strategize and undo his foe.

Alinsky codified these tactics in his book, *Rules for Radicals*.¹³ He counseled that one must understand that power is not only what one has, but what the enemy thinks one has. While organizers are encouraged never to go outside the experience of their own people, they are, whenever possible, to force the enemy outside his experience. This causes confusion, fear, and retreat.

Organizers are to force the enemy to live up to their own book of rules. If an oppressor claims that he answers every letter, write thousands of them. Not following his own rules will subject him to popular contempt. Because ridicule infuriates and is difficult to counterattack, organizers are to use it as a potent weapon. A target should be labeled, exposed, and polarized. Organizers are to cutoff the enemy's support network and isolate him from all sympathy. They are to use threats as a weapon, since a threat can be more terrifying than action. When fighting, anything goes. Don't worry about fighting dirty. Attack a target's vulnerability, and make it personal. In Alinsky's words, "It almost reaches the point where you stop to apologize if a chance blow lands *above* the belt."¹⁴

The structural change model is concerned not so much with feeding a child, but with asking why a child is hungry. Funds are spent not on direct aid, but on community action that will effect change. Members of the community are trained for leadership, buses of people are sent to state capitals to lobby for legislative change, and action plans are designed and executed. The goal is to change unjust socioeconomic systems that oppress the poor. One sees structural change groups politicking for a higher minimum wage, promoting the formation of unions, or lobbying for better access to public housing.

Most of us have seen the bumper sticker: "If you want peace, work for justice." Those in the structural change model experience the quest for justice as a biblical imperative: "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice" (Mt 5:6). This hunger and thirst for justice attempts to redistribute social power. Power is imagined as the ability to speak on one's own behalf so that all people can participate in building a fair world. A world of justice and fairness is a sign of the reign of God that is to come.

Many structural change groups are church-based. Tired of handing out sandwiches and giving away used clothing, churches and religious organizations attempt to use their civic influence to change the lives of the poor in their neighborhoods. These churches have social

¹³ Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New Jersey: Princeton, 2005).

¹⁴ Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, 127-30.

action groups that work—often in ecumenical and interfaith coalitions—to try to remedy the root causes of poverty.

The importance of church communities in affecting redistributive policies is perhaps best illustrated in the complex issue of land reform. The Latin American populist governments of the 1950's and 60's encouraged the growth of an urban proletariat whose economic interests displaced peasants and rural farmers. Those who had farmed land for decades found themselves in shantytowns on the sides of mountains. Capitalist development quickly outpaced the skills of unschooled workers and the debt of underdeveloped countries inflated the price of basic goods and services. When mobs formed to protest this state of affairs, military dictatorships protected the wealthy and their investments, citing national security concerns. In response, peasants and others formed pockets of armed resistance in an attempt to fight for a future.

For the most part, the only viable community organization in rural areas of Latin American countries was the local church. Ministers were forced to decide between sticking their heads in the sand and ignoring the inflammatory situation, or addressing it. In 1968, a Catholic conference of bishops in Medellin, Colombia decided to encourage their pastors to listen to the cry of the poor,¹⁵ while another conference in Puebla, Mexico in 1979 adopted the operating principle of a “preferential option for the poor.” In practice, this option demands that churches prioritize the needs of the poor when allotting resources. Rather than retreat behind pious grilles, the church is called by evangelical duty to stand with the poor, discern the cause of justice, and do what is right to promote the common good. The church listens to marginalized voices, comes to the aid of the vulnerable, and confronts social institutions, policies, and lifestyles that negatively impact the poor. In doing this, the church forms an inclusive community where all have a voice and a home.

The preferential option for the poor is an ethical imperative that postulates that a society owes its individual members in proportion to the depth of individual need, the resources available, and the promotion of the common good. The poor, because of their greater need, may have a greater claim to a community's resources but only as these resources are available and divvied out in a way that equitably promotes the common good. A church cannot credibly say that it cares about people's souls if it does not care about their struggle for food, land, shelter, and human dignity.

Those who work in this model are often involved in fundraising, community organizing, and lobbying efforts. Success is measured by policy changes that positively impact the lives of the poor.

The Organic Model

There are times when a population needs intensive care and the diverse talents of many people. Those who have suffered severe devastation from natural disasters, refugee populations, and populations that have been brutalized by torture need a critical-care approach to their suffering. The Organic Model attempts to deal with the complex layers of poverty found in these desperate cases. It invites the talents of many and accepts the help of those who are willing to serve.

¹⁵ See: <http://personal.stthomas.edu/gwschlabach/docs/medellin.htm>.

The organic model simply attempts to do whatever is needed to address the critical needs of a population in crisis. It is most helpful when one needs an “onion approach” to the problem of poverty. Some situations of poverty are so desperately complex that one cannot hope to offer a one-service solution. Since it is a critical care approach, it is designed for intensive care in the short term and then works to integrate a population into mainline services as needed.

The organic model provides services that a community specifically needs at different stages of growth. The Project Welcome Sudanese Community,¹⁶ for example, provides services and then does away with these services when the community grows beyond them. The first year we had a food pantry, for instance, but closed it at the beginning of the second. We provided assistance to a local school for three years and then trained the administrative assistant at the school to deal with the Sudanese herself—no easy task given the number of languages involved. The effort in the organic model is to work so that the community can grow beyond the organization. In other words, the organic model works not to perpetuate itself, but to become progressively irrelevant to a community. Since there are no buildings, no infrastructure, and no one’s career depends on the organization, the organic system can simply disappear, leaving only the friendships made.

Assessment of the Project Welcome Praxis Model Approach

In my own work, the effectiveness of the Praxis Model approach needed to be assessed in two areas. First, it was necessary to assess its effectiveness in the field. This December will mark Project Welcome’s sixth year. What has been accomplished? Are Sudanese refugees better off? Have practical issues overwhelming the population been addressed? Second, it was necessary to assess the Praxis Model’s effectiveness as a theological paradigm to invite students to express their faith in practice.

Since the aim of Project Welcome was to do critical care in an at-risk population and then to get out of the way, one would expect the work of Project Welcome to diminish over time rather than to increase. And this has, in fact, been the case. In the area of social services, Project Welcome no longer buys cars, pays utility bills, pays back rents, or finances medical bills. Instead of “making problems go away,” our social services worker continues to help families solve problems with case workers, budgeting, and wise financing. These skills were impossible to teach in the beginning, but are now part of the common language among our refugees. The food pantry that was the lifeblood of many families is no more. Parents are now taking care of providing children with Christmas presents and Thanksgiving meals. In all this, benefactors who became comfortable with our “project” needed as much education as the refugees to ensure that we did not institutionalize a particular level of need or dependence. Through efforts in job placements, our Sudanese men and women have been working for the past five years. This connection to a regular paycheck, even though the jobs are not glamorous, has, over time, made a significant difference in the economic, linguistic, and enculturational health of our refugees.

In the area of education, none of our teenagers has become pregnant in the past five years. We say this with humility knowing that this can change at any moment, but we have

¹⁶ The Project Welcome website is: <http://moses.creighton.edu/mueller/projectwelcome/default.htm>.

spent considerable time and resources working on this issue. About 95% of our children are doing average or above-average work in school, and our first grade students for 2006 were at the very top of their class—some were reading before first grade. Junior High students are studying pre-algebra and pre-geometry before Grades 6 and 7. Our greatest academic challenge at this time is working against a “gang culture” that infests the neighborhoods where our families live and work. Much of our education and sports activities are now focused on teaching and modeling values.

In regard to my university students, the praxis method has been quite successful. By recognizing the structural change model as one model within a more inclusive system, students of all talents and training are more effectively imagining themselves as incorporating service as an expression of their faith into their professional and personal lives. One advantage of using the praxis models that I did not expect is that it calls forth creativity and original thinking in developing solutions to the needs of the poor. I receive emails from former students explaining how when their preferred approach failed, they collaborated with others to try another “tool from the tool bag.”

There are, of course, challenges in both areas. At the university, students sometimes delve into a praxis approach but fail to appreciate the need for liturgy and prayer to keep praxis inspired. Solving the problems of the poor is not in itself a theology or spirituality. A theological praxis requires faith, prayer, and worship. Sometimes students need to be reminded of this.

In the Project Welcome community, benefactors like organizing their projects around the Sudanese project and have a hard time letting go of their “cause” in order to allow the community to mature. Because the social services programs change radically each year, benefactors need to be constantly educated, requiring no small amount of time and patience on both sides. The most challenging shift came when we decided that it was time for our Sudanese families to buy Christmas gifts for their own children and asked our benefactors to provide gas and food cards for Christmas, instead of toys. The transition was the right one for the growth of the community, but a difficult one for our benefactors. It took a lot of education for the transition to proceed smoothly.

The goal of Project Welcome is to listen to the cry of the poor and offer opportunities for change. In this, the methodology has proven extremely effective. Members of the Project Welcome Sudanese Community are employed. Not one person is in jail—beating enormous odds. Our children are learning and are often at the top of their classes—a radical shift. About one-fifth of our families now own their own homes. Families are completely responsible for their own finances, although our social services director is still available for counseling when needed. What is more, the group, while not yet self sufficient or consistent, is becoming a vibrant community of faith with its own choir, liturgical ministers, and youth group.

There are also some cautions. Students and volunteers alike must be reminded of their professional limits and protocols. One cannot simply be endlessly creative at every whim. But, given the numbers of children in the world presently doomed to a life of poverty, educating university students to think creatively concerning a mission-centered response is producing professionals in the field willing to explore creative solutions. Perhaps the most significant academic award is that, instead of simply cranking out a required reflection paper,

education majors develop a deeper sense of commitment and vocation regarding the education of disadvantaged children, and business majors leave theology class discussing ways to make a difference in the lives of the poor.

BOOK REVIEWS

How the Bible Became a Book. By William M. Schniedewind. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; i-xiii, 257 pp.

This well written book seeks to describe the process by which the vast diversity of Israelite literature evolved into what is now called the Hebrew Bible. Of crucial significance in this process is the period when Israelite society moved from a largely non-literate society to a literate one: “One of the most central moments in the history of the written word occurred in ancient Israel when the written word spread from the narrow confines of the palace or temple scribes to the wider society, when writing became part of the fabric of everyday life.” This happened in the later monarchy beginning with Hezekiah. The implications of this understanding are significant since the literary origins of biblical texts are dated much earlier than the proposals of minimalist scholars.

Schniedewind begins by noting that writing in the ancient world was originally thought to have magical roots and numinous powers (e.g., the Execration Texts in Egypt and the ordeal for the suspected adulteress in Num. 5). The awareness of such a phenomenon helps explain the problem with the Davidic census in which names written down on a list encroached upon the domain of God. The numinous nature of writing reaches its apogee in ancient Israel with the Ten Commandments.

Along with this association with the numinous, writing obviously had more practical functions, as is clear from its origins in Mesopotamia and Egypt. This coincided with the development of urbanization associated with the growth of temple and state in which record keeping was required for organizational and administrative efficiency. Thus the importance of developing an infrastructure to accomplish this: an elite class of highly specialized scribes—masters of hundreds of signs—along with schools, teachers and ample writing materials. In time, kings would write down their accomplishments and place these texts in locations for all to see, e.g., in prominent steles, but these did not assume literacy of the masses, but were calculated for “shock and awe.” One would think that the later invention of the alphabet would eventually transform society, introducing literacy to the masses since it is relatively easy for even a child to master a small number of signs. Schniedewind, however, contends this did not happen immediately since the social infrastructure necessary to allow for widespread literacy was not present until later in the monarchy. This seems a highly questionable point to me to which I will return in a moment.

Schniedewind suggests that before the late monarchical period, writing in Israel was mainly limited to the temple and state, while the biblical traditions were largely oral, consisting of songs and epics and such. But during the period of Hezekiah, writing was playing an increasingly important role, important enough to warrant the textualization of these traditions. The evidence for this is suggested by a casual reference to Hezekiah’s scribes copying the proverbs of Solomon (Prov. 25:1): “It is just this type of *disinterested* statement that can be the key to historical research” (76). Further evidence of urbanization, along with texts used for neither administrative nor religious purposes, testify to the spread of writing and literacy (e.g., the Siloam inscription). Events during Hezekiah’s reign such as the massive influx of refugees from the North with their northern traditions would have been the catalyst for the writing of large sections of the Hebrew Bible (e.g., a first edition of Deuteronomy-Kings). This would have been true not only for historical traditions, but

wisdom and prophetic ones. Moreover, during the time of Josiah, the scroll found in the temple showed that writing had lost something of its numinous character since it was used to implement a religious vision for the nation, a rather practical matter. Literacy began to mushroom, evidenced by letters from soldiers, agricultural workers, and writing on the amulets of ordinary people. During the exile, a reversion took place confining literacy to the royal house in Babylon and a group of scribes associated with it. After the exile, literacy was still not widespread as an impoverished population lacked the social infrastructure necessary for it to thrive. A type of dark ages ensued until the Hellenistic period in which other books were written (e.g., Daniel). It was during and after this period that the process which led to the canonization of the Hebrew Bible occurred.

This is a well argued and stimulating thesis and is plausible given the paucity of evidence for the production of literature in ancient Israel. It is a convenient compendium of biblical, archaeological, and linguistic evidence that bears on the question of literacy and the production of the biblical texts.

Despite these strengths, there are some crucial questions that must be raised. If there is a sacred quality to writing, why then is the writing viewed as less sacred than the oral voice? Schniedewind seems to embrace a polarity in early Israel between the oral voice and the written word, exemplified by Jeremiah's reference to the pen of the lying scribe (Jer. 8:7-9). At the same time, Jeremiah does not seem at all to feel the contradiction of employing a scribe to textualize his own proclamations (Jer. 36). Schniedewind's interpretation, which assumes that the lying pen of the scribes refers to the textualization of the oral word, is therefore questionable. Perhaps there were many texts besides the texts that survived which distorted the truth in contrast to prophets like Jeremiah. At least such a possibility should be considered.

Moreover, much has been made about the social infrastructure necessary for literacy to take place. While certainly there is merit to this point in Mesopotamia and Egypt, the invention of the alphabet truly revolutionizes things. The alphabet eliminates the need for an elaborate social infrastructure. The recent discovery of an tenth century BCE abecedarium at Tell Zayit in one of the smaller villages in the outback of ancient Israel, suggests that literacy was not confined to an isolated elite in the temple and court. Thus I find it curious that incidental biblical texts in the Deuteronomistic History were not considered for the light they could shed on the question of literacy. An ordinary resident from Succoth was able to write down all the names of the elders of his village—a mere 77—for the ancient version of a “hit list” (Judg. 8:14). Or, perhaps at least one queen in the ninth century BCE knew how to write (1 Kgs. 21:8-9). Laws in Deuteronomy, which undoubtedly had ancient roots, also appear to assume that individuals could write commands on *mezuzot* and gates (Deut. 6:9). A divorcee would have received a written document certifying the divorce from her husband (Deut. 24:1-2). By the time of Isaiah, it seems there were as many who knew how to write as did not (Is. 29:11). I would like to have seen more interaction with scholars like Alan Millard and Richard Hess who have argued for more widespread literacy in Israel during earlier periods.

While there is no doubt that the reference to Hezekiah's scribes copying Solomonic proverbs points to a flourishing of literary activity during that period, why could such activity not have happened earlier? After all, the scribes were simply adding to an already existing

document. In addition, the presupposition of many of the prophetic proclamations assume that their audiences were aware of core requirements, many of which had been textualized.

These issues notwithstanding, Schniedewind has provided a valuable book which should stimulate important, ongoing reflection on the evolution of the Hebrew Bible.

Stephen G. Dempster, PhD
Professor of Religious Studies
Atlantic Baptist University

Can We Trust the Gospels? Investigating the Reliability of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. By Mark D. Roberts. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007, 202 pp.

When I attended Dallas Theological Seminary in the 1970's, the required text in defense of the reliability of the New Testament was F. F. Bruce's widely acclaimed *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Eerdmans, 1960). In 1987, Craig Blomberg published his *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (InterVarsity Press), a more detailed treatment of the same issues. For some, Bruce was too brief, and for others, Blomberg was too long. That's what makes this new book by Mark Roberts just right: it is mid-level, written in a popular style, yet substantive enough to satisfy the curiosity and questioning of most inquiring minds.

Roberts, a graduate of Harvard University, is senior pastor of Irvine Presbyterian Church in California, but is best known for his blog (<http://www.markdroberts.com/>) where the material for this book was first developed.

One of the more helpful features of this volume is found in the opening chapter where Roberts gives a very personal account of his own theological journey as a student at Harvard, studying under the brilliant but less than conservative NT scholar, George MacRae. Notwithstanding the best that modern critical scholarship had to offer, Roberts eventually emerged with a healthy confidence in the reliability of the four gospel accounts of Jesus of Nazareth. In what follows I want to provide a brief summation of the more important arguments that Roberts makes.

In chapter one he devotes his attention to the relationship between the original compositions and the manuscripts that we now possess. As for the antiquity of our gospel manuscripts, he responds to the oft-heard argument that too much time had elapsed between the writing of the original gospel accounts and the documents on which our English Bibles are based. He points out that "the oldest extant manuscripts of Tacitus and Suetonius come from the ninth century. Those of Josephus date back only to the eleventh century. We're talking about a time gap of 800 to 1,000 years, yet historians accept the manuscripts as basically reliable representations of what was originally written" (30). Yet the gap between our earliest manuscript of John's gospel and the original composition itself is only two generations. "The more complete manuscripts are about a century later than the original writings, with extant copies of the whole New Testament more than two centuries later than the time of composition" (30). In other words, "if someone were to claim that we can't have confidence in the original content of the Gospels because the existing manuscripts are too far removed from the autographs, then that person would also have to cast doubt upon our knowledge of almost all ancient history and literature" (30-31).

He also points out that the number of Gospel manuscripts in existence (more than 5,700) is about twenty times larger than the average number of extant manuscripts of comparable writings. In response to those, such as Bart Ehrman, who make much of the quantity and quality of textual variants, the vast percentage of them are nothing more than spelling errors or differences in word order that have no affect on the integrity of the text. In fact, only about 1% of the textual variants make any substantive difference and none have any bearing on theologically important matters.

In chapter three Roberts turns his attention to the question of whether the evangelists knew Jesus personally. We need to remember that the four gospels are anonymous and that it wasn't until the second century that scribes began to ascribe these documents to the names of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There is no evidence that Mark or Luke knew Jesus personally, although clearly Matthew and John did. Roberts believes a good case can be made from internal evidence and tradition that Mark and Luke wrote the gospels with which their names are associated and argues persuasively that "Matthew and John may not have been the ones who finally put pen to papyrus, but they, their memory, and their authority stand behind the Gospels that bear their names" (49).

Chapters four and five are devoted to a discussion of the dates when the gospels were most likely written and the sources that were probably employed by their authors. The more important issue of how accurately the early church passed down the oral tradition about Jesus is taken up in chapter six. Here we find Roberts at his best, as he explains in layman's terms how a culture in which few people were literate faithfully preserved the story of Jesus. His conclusion is worth citing in full. The early followers of Jesus, says Roberts,

...had both the ability and the motivation to pass on oral traditions with accuracy. The combination of context, people, content, community, and process helped them to faithfully recount what Jesus did and said. A study of the Gospels shows that the early Christians did this very thing with considerable success. Thus the first-century dating of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, combined with their use of earlier oral traditions, combined with early Christian faithfulness in passing on these oral traditions, add up to a convincing rationale for trusting the Gospels. What we find in these books accurately represents what Jesus himself actually did and said (81).

One of the more helpful issues addressed by Roberts is the question of what a "gospel" was in a first-century context. Contrary to the expectations of many modern believers, an ancient "gospel" was neither a novel, a book of history, nor even a "biography" in the sense in which that word is used today. Ancient authors of this genre exercised considerable literary liberties in constructing their material to communicate a theological message. "It sometimes comes as a shock," notes Roberts, "when Christians discover that the Gospels don't present the sayings of Jesus in exactly the same way, or don't give the same details when telling what must obviously be the same story. Skeptics love this sort of thing and use it to diminish confidence in the Gospels. But both scandalized Christians and zealous skeptics must learn to see the Gospels in the context of their own time and history" (88).

We should hardly be surprised to discover that the authors of the four Gospels often paraphrased or rephrased statements and speeches as well as rearranged events in thematic rather than chronological order (91). "Minor variations of wording or a different ordering of

events do not mean that we should discount the reliability of the Gospels as sources of genuine knowledge of Jesus. They do mean that we must closely examine the intent and process of the Gospel writers, however, in order not to misconstrue their purposes” (92).

In a very helpful chapter (nine), Roberts addresses the question: “Are There Contradictions in the Gospels?” He reminds us that “saying something differently [which the gospel authors often did] isn’t disagreement, unless of course the two statements couldn’t both be true” (102). He has a good summary of common variations among the Gospels and demonstrates that these are hardly grounds for rejecting their reliability as accounts of who Jesus was and what he did and said. Unlike the modern reader, people in the first century “wouldn’t have expected Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to narrate all of the events in the precise order in which they happened. That’s just not how it was done in those days. So if we come along and insist that, in order to be reliable, the Gospels must get everything in precise chronological order, we’re demanding something that is both anachronistic and inconsistent with the intentions of the evangelists. We’re asking the Gospels to be something that they are not” (104).

Roberts takes up the relation between history and faith in chapter ten and insists that the theology of the gospel authors “was anchored in past events” (120). “It was in the realm of history that God made his presence known, revealing himself and his salvation” (120). There’s simply no reason why someone can’t have sincere theological convictions and at the same time write accurate history.

As for miracles in the life and ministry of Jesus (chapter eleven), in the final analysis those who object to them do so primarily because they begin with a world view that rules out the possibility of miracles altogether. Few critical authors, Roberts rightly notes, “admit openly that their bias against the trustworthiness of the Gospels is fundamentally based on their personal belief that miracles don’t happen and that therefore the Gospels must be substantially fictional” (136). In a later chapter Roberts returns to this point and makes the following incisive observation:

If your worldview excludes the possibility of miracles, then you have an intractable problem with the historicity of the Gospels. But your acceptance of such a worldview is a matter of faith. There’s no way you can prove that miracles don’t happen, even as there’s no way I can prove that they do. There’s an irreducible element of faith on both sides of this argument (194).

Chapters twelve and thirteen are devoted to a discussion of the ways in which historical sources from the era of the gospels, as well as more recent archaeological discoveries, support the reliability of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Especially helpful is Roberts’ summation of the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Nag Hammadi Library. Nothing in either of these “undermines the reliability of the biblical Gospels. In fact, the opposite is true” (161).

Neither the alleged “political agenda” (chapter fourteen) of the early church nor the process by which the canonical books were selected (chapter fifteen) provide any justification for questioning the reliability of what we read in our New Testament.

In the final analysis, does Roberts believe he has *proven* beyond any doubt that the New Testament Gospels are historically reliable? No. “I do believe, however,” says Roberts, “that

I've shown it is reasonable to trust the Gospels as historically accurate" (194). So, can we trust the Gospels? In a word, concludes Roberts, "yes" (195).

This is a wonderful book for several reasons, only three of which I'll note. First, it is extremely *timely* given the plethora of TV documentaries, alleged archaeological discoveries (e.g., the bones of Jesus that were unearthed in his family's tomb!), ludicrous novels like *The Da Vinci Code*, and the ill-fated Jesus Seminar, all of which have made feeble and now discredited attempts to undermine the reliability of Holy Scripture.

Second, Roberts has presented the evidence in a wonderfully *readable* way. Often material such as this can be quite dry and tedious, but Roberts has a gift for putting the difficult into easily understandable terms. I highly recommend this book for high school seniors about to begin their studies at college. It is no less valuable to college seniors who have the courage to challenge the spurious and often prejudicial arguments of their liberal professors.

Finally, Roberts is to be commended for demonstrating *how to read the Bible as it was meant to be read*. All too often Christians of the present day ignore the principles that governed the composition of literature in the ancient world and subject the New Testament Gospels to standards of judgment that were quite foreign, if not utterly unknown, to the original authors. The bottom line is, if we understand the days and ways of the biblical authors and interpret the text as they intended, we have nothing to fear from liberal critics. The Bible, God's inspired Word, will always stand the test. It will not return unto Him void.

Sam Storms, PhD
Enjoying God Ministries

God's Judgments: Interpreting History and the Christian Faith. By Steven Keillor. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007, 223 pp.

This is a thought-provoking book, one which is sure to provoke a bit of controversy. Steven Keillor is an American historian, who also happens to be a Christian. He argues that a primary way of understanding Christianity is to see it as an interpretation of history. The Judaeo-Christian religion is indeed grounded in history.

Jews and Christians worship a God who acts, and who is very much involved in the affairs of this world. As such, they reject deism, the idea that God initially created the world but has had nothing to do with it thereafter. No, the Biblical God is one intimately involved in this world, and in human history.

And part of this involvement is the judgment of God. This judgment, which can be understood in part as a sifting process, is a double-edged sword. There is not only judgment of unbelievers, but of believers as well. It is often a testing process, one that allows us either to come nearer to God, or to get further away from him.

And this sifting happens to nations, not just individuals. This is quite clear in the Old Testament. The question is, are nations still judged by God in New Testament times? Keillor believes God still does judge nations today, even though there is relative silence about this in the New Testament.

Such questions especially came to the fore after September 11. Was God judging the US?, many asked after that tragic event. Keillor rejects any simple yes or no answer to that

difficult question, and he rejects many of the explanations offered by those on the left, the centre and the right. But he does allow for the possibility that God was somehow involved in that fateful Tuesday morning.

Keillor tries to deal with these current situations by first examining what the Bible has to say about judgment. That God is judge is clear, in both Testaments. And Yahweh certainly was judge of the nations in the Hebrew Bible.

Of course modern man is squeamish about the idea of judgment. The Enlightenment did give us deism, and many are unwilling to believe that God – if he exists – is even remotely concerned about the affairs of men. But the Biblical picture is a far cry from this view.

God is overwhelmingly concerned about us and our activities, and is involved in what happens on planet earth. But New Testament believers may still ask if God is the same as Yahweh in terms of judgment. Keillor argues – rightly, I feel – that God has not changed between the Testaments, and is equally a just, holy and judging God, as he is loving and merciful, throughout all of Scripture.

When Jesus was on the scene, his life and teachings constantly brought separation and division to his hearers. Sifting, or judgment, in other words, was the inevitable result of confronting Christ and his claims. As Jesus said in John 9:39, “For judgment I have come into this world”.

Says Keillor, “From beginning to end, Jesus’ life and teachings involved a sifting-out based on responses to him”. And he experienced the judgment of God on the cross, when he suffered for our sins. Moreover, one day he will come back as judge of the entire world. Thus judgment is part and parcel of the life and work of Christ.

After seeking to make the case that God may well still judge nations today, Keillor offers two test cases: the 1814 burning of Washington, and the American Civil War. He notes that many people living during these events did see God’s hand of judgment at work. For example, Lincoln was convinced that the Civil War was God’s judgment on the evils of slavery, although he saw both sides as sharing in the guilt.

In all this Keillor rightly recognises that unlike Old Testament times, we have no clear prophetic word from God on the events of the day, so great caution must be exercised here. What Keillor is mainly trying to establish is that God is actively involved in this world, and has not become an absentee landlord in the New Testament dispensation.

This is an intriguing book. One may not agree with every detail found here. But it seems that the general theme of the book is heading in the right direction. And Keillor is quite right to begin his book with a quote from Os Guinness: “The cross of Jesus runs crosswise to all our human ways of thinking. A rediscovery of the hard and the unpopular themes of the gospel will therefore be such a rediscovery of the whole gospel that the result may lead to reformation and revival”.

We certainly have shrunk away from proclaiming the whole counsel of God, and his holiness and justice must be maintained as adamantly as his love and grace. Anything less is a distortion and truncation of the Biblical record. Thus Keillor is to be commended for getting us to think more carefully about who God is, and how we are to understand his current dealings with planet earth and its inhabitants.

Bill Muehlenberg, PhD (cand)
Deakin University
Melbourne, Australia

Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism. By Fergus Kerr. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007; i-ix, 230 pp.

In this lively and accessible little book, the brilliant Dominican theologian Fergus Kerr surveys some of the leading Catholic thinkers of the past century. The book opens with Walter Kasper's remark that "the outstanding event in the Catholic theology of our century is the surmounting of neo-scholasticism" (vii)—a remark that sets the tone for the whole volume. Throughout the book, Kerr's main interest is in the diverse attempts of modern Catholic theologians to overcome their unwelcome heritage of neoscholastic Thomism.

The story thus begins with Marie-Dominique Chenu, who developed a new historical and existential approach to the study of Thomas Aquinas. Chenu criticized the neoscholastic Thomists for preferring "a philosophy of essences" over "the problems of existence, action, the individual, becoming, and time" (23). Coming from very different directions, theologians like Rahner, Lonergan, Schillebeeckx and Karol Wojtyła engaged in epistemological work as a way of subverting the rigid conceptualism of neoscholasticism. And Henri de Lubac's brilliant theory of the "supernatural" was a radical attempt both to "undermine neoscholastic dogmatic theology" and to "destroy standard natural theology" (75). Again, in contrast to neoscholastic metaphysics, Karl Rahner forged a theology which "could not be more radically embedded in the historical existence of Jesus Christ" (91).

Interestingly, the Jesuit theologians Rahner, de Lubac, Lonergan and Balthasar all agreed that the Thomism they had been taught as students was in fact Suárezian metaphysics. The most explicit critique of this Suárezianism came from Balthasar, who condemned its "apologetic all-knowingness," its lack of "feeling," and its tendency to "annul the experience of reality and [to enclose] thought in a sphere which is characterized by bare, essential predications" (126). For Balthasar himself, it was especially Karl Barth's doctrine of the divine beauty that provided the means to dethrone this "sawdust Thomism" (131).

The narrative is peppered with humorous and memorable insights, thanks to Kerr's alert sense of irony. We discover, for instance, that scholars of immense learning like Schillebeeckx and de Lubac were effectively self-taught, relying only on their own voracious reading; while the infamous Hans Küng, on the other hand, "is the only one of the theologians we are considering in this book who completed the seven-year course in neoscholastic philosophy and theology at a Roman university" (145). Some other examples: after years of marginalization, de Lubac learned that he had been summoned to help draft the texts for Vatican II only while casually reading a newspaper; Rahner failed his first attempt at a doctoral dissertation (on Thomas Aquinas); the young Ratzinger was forced to rewrite his postdoctoral dissertation because of its "modernist" tendencies; and when Karol Wojtyła became pope, the Vatican tried to prevent publication of his book on *The Acting Person*—until the book's translator threatened to sue the Vatican!

There is plenty to chuckle over in incidents like this. But the best thing about the book is the sheer patience and sympathy with which Kerr discusses controversial figures like Rahner, Schillebeeckx and Küng. For instance, he defends Rahner's theory of "anonymous

Christianity” against misunderstanding; he highlights the unsurpassed scope of Schillebeeckx’s exegetical–theological synthesis; and he observes that Küng’s work is, like it or not, essential “for beginning to understand what happened at Vatican II” (151). The only thing that really ruffles Kerr’s feathers is the recent move toward “nuptial mysticism” and the (Barthian) anthropology of sexual differentiation—themes that have become influential through the work of Balthasar, John Paul II and Ratzinger.

In any survey like this there will, of course, be regrettable omissions. It is unfortunate that Kerr excludes from his treatment all Catholic theologians writing in Italian and Spanish—so that liberation theology, for example, is scarcely mentioned. In any case, the book is really an introduction to *European* Catholic theology (centered around Vatican II), and it makes no pretense at a global scope.

The book concludes with the observation that, since Vatican II, the Church has been characterized by confusion, by “deep divisions and intractable rifts” (222). This is not a criticism of Vatican II, of course—indeed, it highlights something important about the nature of the Catholic Church itself. As Kerr points out, the Catholic Church “is not the monolithic entity that her enemies and her most zealous members believe” (203). And if the aftermath of Vatican II has been widespread confusion, this should not detract from the fact that the Council was a great and pivotal moment in church history. After all, as Newman himself observed back in 1870, “there has seldom been a Council without great confusion after it.”

Benjamin Myers, PhD
Postdoctoral Research Fellow
The University of Queensland

Barth, Israel, and Jesus: Karl Barth’s Theology of Israel. By Mark R. Lindsay. Barth Studies Series. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007; i-xx + 124 pp.

In his remarkable history of the Jews, *Wanderings* (1978), the American writer Chaim Potok stated: “The Jew sees all his contemporary history refracted through the ocean of blood that is the Holocaust.” The central argument of Mark Lindsay’s impressive book is that Christian theology must likewise be “refracted” through the horrors of the Holocaust—and so he interrogates Karl Barth’s theology to find out whether it meets this fundamental requirement.

For Lindsay, the Holocaust is a theological criterion in the strict sense. Christian theology as a whole has been “decisively ruptured” by this historical event, so that it is impossible to carry on doing theology in the same way (2). The book thus locates Barth within the context of post-Holocaust theological discussion and recent Jewish–Christian dialogue.

Barth’s interpreters have tended to be sharply critical of his theological understanding of Israel and the Jewish people. In her influential study, *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew* (1992), Katherine Sonderegger argued that Barth’s theology is underpinned by a deep supercessionism and anti-Judaism. But Lindsay marshals substantial evidence to rebut this claim. For instance, in the 1940s Barth “was intimately involved with resistance efforts from Switzerland on behalf of Jews and Jewish-Christians” (33)—indeed, within his own

household, his secretary Charlotte von Kirschbaum was coordinating the assistance of Jewish and Jewish-Christian refugees.

But the most interesting question is whether Barth's dogmatic theology was altered by the Holocaust—whether, that is, Barth became more open to the possibility of divine revelation through events in world history. Lindsay himself believes that there should indeed be a natural theology of the Holocaust, so that this event becomes “determinative for doctrine” (55). He notes with regret, however, that Barth's critique of natural theology was never withdrawn, and that he was never willing “to embed the lessons of the Holocaust deeply into his theology” (38).

But although Barth never retracted his insistence on the absolute distinction between revelation and world history, his mature dogmatic thought includes a recognition that some events in history can have theological *significance*. In *Church Dogmatics* III/3, Barth described four “signs and witnesses” in history which stand in a special relationship to revelation: the history of scripture, church history, the history of the Jews, and human mortality. It was in this connection that Barth famously described the Jewish people as “a riddle.” While interpreters have generally assumed that this terminology reflects a supercessionist outlook, Lindsay convincingly argues that this is a misreading. It is not because of any commitment to supercessionism that Barth speaks of the Jews as a “riddle”; rather, Jewish history is a riddle precisely because it bears witness to God's secret lordship in history. Indeed, for Barth, “the Bible, the Church and the limitation of human life are riddles in exactly the same way” (75).

In short, although Barth at times succumbs to a form of “allosemitism,” i.e., to an abstract idea of the Jew as “a radically different other” (81), he must nevertheless be credited “with an unambiguous repudiation of secular and theological anti-Semitism, a thoroughgoing endorsement of the Jews' continuing status as God's chosen and beloved people, and a realization of the necessity of [Christian] solidarity with them” (83). In Barth's own words, in order to be elect we ourselves “must either be Jews or belong to this Jew,” Jesus Christ (*CD* III/3, p. 225).

Further, Barth criticized the notion of Christian missions to Jews. He perceived that the possibility of fellowship with God is wider than the walls of the Christian church, and he insisted on a fundamental soteriological continuity between Jews and Christians. The church can exist only as “a guest in the house of Israel.” To evangelize Jews is to misunderstand the Jewish-Christian relationship entirely, since *we* are the ones who have already received everything from *them* (103). In Barth's view, there is therefore a continuing dialectic between church and synagogue. His point is not merely (as Sonderegger has argued) that the synagogue depends on the church; it is also that “the Church has no independent existence as the people of God apart from the Synagogue” (105).

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Lindsay's book is his analysis of Barth's political attitude toward the state of Israel. Barth was strongly supportive of the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, and Lindsay argues that this political stance was deeply grounded in the logic of Barth's theology. Lindsay himself is clearly also supportive of the state of Israel, since this is the politics demanded by his theological conception of the revelatory character of the Holocaust. To my mind, however, this raises a whole cluster of pressing questions. In the first place, is it possible to speak of the state of Israel without addressing, in the same breath, the injustices suffered by the Palestinian people? And, more importantly, is the

church authorized to supply direct theological validation of *any* geopolitical entity? Formally speaking, is not Lindsay's natural theology of the state of Israel only a hair's breadth away from that form of natural theology which the "German Christians" propounded during the 1930s, where the revelatory character of world-historical events functioned as theological legitimization of "blood and soil"?

Lindsay's profound concern to foster Jewish-Christian dialogue is admirable, and his wide-ranging command both of Barth's work and of recent Jewish theology is impressive. But I cannot help wondering whether the development of this new natural theology might in fact undercut Jewish-Christian dialogue, rather than bolster it. Is not the distinctiveness of the Christian message itself one of the basic resources needed for a rich mutual dialogue with the Jewish faith? And is not the problem with natural theology—as Barth so clearly perceived—precisely that it erodes this distinctiveness?

Notwithstanding these questions, Lindsay has offered a remarkably vigorous challenge to the Barthian stricture on natural theology—and it is commendable that he has presented this challenge in the context of a warmly sympathetic reading of Barth's own complex (and often conflicted) understanding of the significance of the Jewish people. If Lindsay's own proposal leaves me feeling uneasy, it is only because he is raising questions that are of fundamental importance—not only for Jewish-Christian dialogue, but also for the way in which the Christian community understands its own identity and calling in a post-Holocaust world.

Benjamin Myers, PhD
Postdoctoral Research Fellow
The University of Queensland

John Calvin's Ideas. By Paul Helm. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; i-viii, 438 pp.

Paul Helm is both a historian of early Protestant thought and a leading authority in the philosophy of religion. In *John Calvin's Ideas*, he brings these two fields together in an engaging and provocative philosophical account of Calvin's thought.

Throughout the twentieth century, Calvin scholars tended to exaggerate the distance between Calvin and his medieval background. Thus Calvin was often portrayed as an anti-scholastic thinker, or as an anti-philosophical biblicist, or even as a proto-Barthian "theologian of the Word." Recent Calvin scholarship has gone a long way toward dismantling such interpretations, and the best scholarship (e.g. that of Richard Muller) has foregrounded Calvin's complex relation to medieval thought on the one hand and to later Protestant scholasticism on the other. Paul Helm builds on this revisionist approach to Calvin, and, focusing especially on the contexts of late medieval philosophy and theology, he offers a portrait of Calvin "as a receiver, user, and transmitter of ... ideas" (1). He shows that Calvin has "an intimate knowledge of scholastic distinctions and their associated doctrines" (282), even though he used and criticized these distinctions and ideas with considerable freedom.

Helm's interest in Calvin is driven largely by debates within contemporary North American analytic philosophy. Thus he explores themes such as providence, the soul, free will and determinism, religious epistemology, common grace, and the natural knowledge of God. In particular, he advances some very pointed (and, I think, convincing) criticisms of

contemporary Reformed epistemologists like Alvin Plantinga. For example, Plantinga uses Calvin's concept of the *sensus divinitatis* to support his own theory of "properly basic" beliefs, so that Calvin is interpreted as a theorist of the rationality of religious belief. But as Helm observes, Calvin has no interest in questions of religious rationality or of epistemic justification, nor is he interested in debates between foundationalist and non-foundationalist epistemologies. Rather, Calvin's concern is strictly *soteriological*: what human beings need is "not the development of an alternative epistemology, but the knowledge of God the Redeemer freely given to us in Christ" (240).

In all this, Helm is keenly alert to the dangers of anachronism. And the book's most interesting arguments often arise from a sense of Calvin's stark historical *distance* from our own concerns. In his account of Calvin's doctrine of God, for instance, Helm rightly observes that Calvin "is not a modern Trinitarian theologian" (34), and that his distinction between God *in se* and God *quoad nos* "requires a robust metaphysical theism" (29) which has little to do with "the theological agnosticism of . . . post-Kantian Protestant theology" (193).

Indeed, Helm argues that this medieval distinction between God-in-himself and God-toward-us is of great importance for understanding the structure of Calvin's theology. Unlike modern theologians, Calvin drives a "wedge" between the immanent and the economic Trinity precisely in order to preserve this fundamental distinction between God *in se* and *quoad nos* (48). So too, Calvin's insistence on the so-called *extra calvinisticum* arises from the same distinction: the incarnation "expresses the divine essence without exhaustively revealing it," so that God-toward-us can never be identified with God-in-himself (pp. 63–65).

In a similar way, Helm observes that Calvin's whole christology is shaped by an asymmetry between the person of the Son and the Son's "assumed" human nature. At the heart of Calvin's *extra*, therefore, is the claim "that the expression 'Jesus Christ is God' cannot be an expression of identity" (91). If all this sounds strange (and deeply problematic) to modern ears, it should nevertheless remind us that we cannot simply read our own theological questions back into the sixteenth century—as though Calvin could or should have been alert to our characteristically modern (i.e. post-Kantian and post-Barthian) concerns.

Helm's important chapter on divine accommodation and religious language includes a similar reminder that Calvin's view of accommodation has nothing to do with Kantian concerns about God's knowability. Indeed, "the reasons Calvin gives for the language of accommodation have surprisingly little to do with the limitations of human knowledge" (193)—his focus, instead, is on the problem of human idolatry and the mode of God's gracious intervention.

Helm's consistent attempt to recover Calvin's thought from its entanglement in anachronistic frameworks is of great value. Like Richard Muller, Helm wants to present a Calvin who has not been "accommodated" to contemporary concerns and debates. Of course, Helm's own theological and philosophical commitments occasionally lead him into anachronisms of his own—for instance, while his critique of Reformed epistemology seems right on target, one cannot help wondering whether his own interpretation of Calvin as the proponent of an "internalist" evidentialist epistemology is also straining too hard to find the answers to modern epistemological questions in Calvin's work.

Similarly, while Helm is right to concentrate on the contexts of Calvin's thought, I'm not sure he always attends to the most pertinent contexts. Above all, I'm unconvinced by the argument that Calvin's context owes more to Thomas Aquinas than to Duns Scotus (even though Helm is right to highlight Calvin's divergences from Scotist thought). And I'm not convinced that we should downplay the significance of the Lutheran controversy for the development of the *extra calvinisticum*—as though here Calvin were simply repeating well-worn patristic insights.

In spite of these isolated problems, though, Helm's approach to Calvin represents a very fruitful way both of interpreting Calvin contextually and of bringing Calvin's thought into dialogue with contemporary philosophical and theological questions. The book thus offers a creative contribution to Calvin studies, as well as a wonderfully spirited engagement with contemporary philosophy of religion in the analytic tradition.

Benjamin Myers, PhD
Postdoctoral Research Fellow
The University of Queensland

THE ECUMENICAL CREEDS OF CHRISTENDOM

THE APOSTLES' CREED (OLD ROMAN FORM)

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

THE NICÆNO-CONSTANTINOPOLITAN CREED

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

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

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

THE ATHANASIAN CREED

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

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

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

Thus the Father is God, the Son God, the Holy Spirit God; and yet there are not three Gods, but there is one God. Thus the Father is Lord, the Son Lord, the Holy Spirit Lord; and yet there are not three Lords, but there is one Lord. Because just as we are compelled

by Christian truth to acknowledge each person separately to be both God and Lord, so we are forbidden by the catholic religion to speak of three Gods or Lords.

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE DEFINITION OF CHALCEDON

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

declared concerning him, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.

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