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of Theology and Politics

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The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics

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Edited by
Calvin L. Smith
Stephen M. Vantassel

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Core Values

The *Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics* subscribes to the historic decisions of the early church councils. We hold dearly to the deity of Christ, the virgin conception, salvation through Jesus Christ, and the Trinity. We also believe in the unity of Scripture and consider the Bible as the final authority on all issues of faith and practice. This high view of Scripture requires submissions to be underpinned by a thoughtful biblical and theological analysis. The Editors also welcome non-Evangelical contributors to submit critiques of Evangelical political and social thought, providing they are suitably respectful of our values and beliefs, and that submissions are of interest and relevance to the aims and readership of the journal. Articles appearing in the journal do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editors.

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Review Articles

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Introduction

Calvin L. Smith

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The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics is an online journal. All articles and reviews are published online as PDF files, and are downloadable by subscribers.

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What you have here are the articles, review articles, and reviews from 2014 collected together in a single edition for subscribers to print-off, or consult in electronic mode on Kindle or an e-Book reader.

In addition all past volumes of The Evangelical Review of Society and Politics are available for subscribers from the website: www.theevangelicalreview.com

The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics is a peer-reviewed, online, subscription journal exploring God’s revelation to humanity in the form of Jesus Christ. Scholarly submissions that are suitably respectful of the Evangelical Christian tradition are welcomed and invited from across the disciplinary spectrum: Evangelical theology, biblical studies, biblical theology, politics, society, economics, missiology, homiletics, discipleship, preaching, conversion, salvation, atonement, redemption, the Church et al.

About...

The Evangelical Review of Society and Politics and *The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics*, are international peer-reviewed journals exploring Evangelical issues from an interdisciplinary perspective. The purpose of the journal is to bring an international and scholarly Evangelical analysis to bear upon various social and political issues of national and international interest. The Editors are committed to presenting the full spectrum of Evangelical thought to provide readers (whether Evangelical or those analysing Evangelical phenomena) with thoughtful, scholarly debate and original research that is biblically based and theologically sound.

Core Values

The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics subscribes to the historic decisions of the early church councils. We hold dearly to the deity of Christ, the virgin conception, salvation through Jesus Christ, and the Trinity. We also believe in the unity of Scripture and consider the Bible as the final authority on all issues of faith and practice. This high view of Scripture requires submissions to be underpinned by a thoughtful biblical and theological analysis. The Editors also welcome non-Evangelical contributors to submit critiques of Evangelical political and social thought, providing they are suitably respectful of our values

and beliefs, and that submissions are of interest and relevance to the aims and readership of the journal. Articles appearing in the journal do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editors.

Submissions

Scholarly submissions that are suitably respectful of the Evangelical tradition are invited from across the disciplinary spectrum. Given the broad and interdisciplinary nature of the subject matter covered by the journal, contributors should refer to our core values and submission instructions, which provide further details of material suitable for inclusion.

Intending authors should see our guidance notes for articles, review articles, and reviews and use and electronic submission form:

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Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics
Articles





“The Dissent of Man: Evangelicals and Evolution Nine Decades After Scopes”

Kyle R. Greenwood

KEYWORDS:

| Biblical Interpretation | Bible and Science |
| Darwin | Scopes Monkey Trial | Flood Geology |
| American Scientific Affiliation |

ABSTRACT:

When Charles Darwin first published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, evangelicals met his theory of gradation by natural selection with mixed reviews. Over fifty years later evangelicals remained unsettled on the effects of Darwin’s evolutionary theory on Christian anthropology. The diversity of opinions within evangelicalism were no more apparent than with the publication of *The Fundamentals* in 1917. While one of the purposes of the four-volume collection of essays was “to combat the inroads of liberalism,” the inclusion of three distinct viewpoints on evolution demonstrates that in the first quarter of the twentieth century evolutionary theory and evangelical theology were not yet seen as competing worldviews. This all changed drastically, however, in 1925 as a consequence of the so-called Scopes Monkey Trial. Although William Jennings Bryan successfully prosecuted John Scopes for violating Tennessee’s Butler Act which prohibited the teaching of evolution in public school, defense attorney Clarence Darrow deftly shifted the focus of the trial from Scopes to the compatibility of the Bible with Science. The Scopes Trial became a watershed moment whereby evolutionary theory came to be seen as conflicting with evangelicalism.

SCOPES MONKEY TRIAL OF 1925

The year 1925 marks a watershed year for evangelicalism. In that year William Jennings Bryan, a devout Christian, populist politician and three-time Democratic candidate for president, was instrumental in passing legislation in fifteen states outlawing the teaching of evolution in public schools. In March of that year Tennessee passed the Butler Act, named for the bill's sponsor John Butler, banning the teaching of evolution throughout the state. The tiny hamlet of Dayton soon found itself at the center of an international speculate when substitute biology teacher and part-time football coach John Scopes had agreed to test the new law with the financial and legal backing of the ACLU. On May 7, Scopes was formally arrested for violating the new law. After Bryan joined the prosecution team, the nation's leading defense attorney Clarence Darrow eagerly entered the fray, setting the stage for the "trial of the century."

The trial of *Tennessee v. Scopes*, more commonly known as the "Scopes Monkey Trial" commenced July 10 of that same year and adjourned less than two weeks later on July 21. Although the court's objective was to determine guilt or innocence of John Scopes, Darrow and Bryan were intent on trying a very different sort of case—the reliability of the Bible in matters of science. The lead defense attorney Darrow was outwardly antagonistic towards religious thought, and his sights were set on undermining religious fundamentalism. Using his expert trial skills, Darrow was further able to corner Bryan into pitting science against the Bible. Before Bryan was able to deliver his impassioned closing comments, Darrow requested that the jury return a guilty verdict with the hope of eventually gaining a larger audience with the Tennessee Supreme Court via appeal. After a mere nine minutes of deliberation, the jury found John Scopes guilty of violating the state law and fined the defendant \$100, the lowest possible fine for the infraction. Although the Tennessee Supreme Court did indeed reverse the guilty verdict, it was not in the way Darrow had hoped. Instead, the court ruled that the jury,

not Judge Raulston, should have set the fine. The court subsequently dismissed the case, noting, “Nothing is to be gained by prolonging the life of this bizarre case.”¹

While there are many factors that led to the current rift between evangelicals and evolutionary theory,² the Scopes trial plays prominently among them. Fifteen years prior to *Tennessee v. Scopes*, two Christian oil magnates commissioned scores of leading evangelical Bible scholars to write ninety essays “to set forth the fundamentals of the Christian faith” and “to combat the inroads of liberalism.”³ Over the next six years these essays, filling twelve volumes, were distributed free of charge to pastors, missionaries and churches. In 1917, the essays were published in four volumes as *The Fundamentals*. Highly acclaimed scholars wrote on topics such as historical criticism, the existence of God, the inspiration of Scripture, sin, atonement, evangelism, prayer, and the deity of Christ, to name a few.

The issue of human origins also received considerable attention, covering the full spectrum of positions on human origins deemed acceptable within evangelical theology. At one end of the spectrum was Dyson Hague’s “The Doctrinal Value of the First Chapters of Genesis.”⁴ At the other end of the spectrum was James Orr’s “Science and Christian Faith.”⁵ George F. Wright offered a middle position with his essay, “The Passing of Evolution.”⁶ On the one hand, the inclusion of such a wide range of views within *The Fundamentals* demonstrated the unsettled nature of the discussion nearly half a century after Darwin’s *On the*

1 Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America’s Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1998), 221.

2 See Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 109-45.

3 R. A. Torrey, and A. C. Dixon (eds), *The Fundamentals: The Famous Sourcebook of Foundational Biblical Truths* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1990); Originally published as *The Fundamentals*, 4 vols (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House, 1917).

4 Dyson Hague, “The Doctrinal Value of the First Chapters of Genesis,” in *The Fundamentals*, pp. 101-14.

5 James Orr, “Science and Christian Faith,” in *The Fundamentals*, pp. 125–134.

6 George F. Wright, “The Passing of Evolution,” in *The Fundamentals*, pp. 613–625.

Origin of Species.⁷ On the other hand, the breadth of acceptable positions within fundamentalist evangelicalism demonstrates that the discussion was welcome.

For Hague, the only appropriate way to read the first chapters of Genesis is as a straight-forward account of historical events. Allowing any latitude on the matter of evolution would undermine the entire rationale for moral existence.

A lowered anthropology always means a lowered theology, for if man was not a direct creation of God, if he was a mere indirect development, through slow and painful process, of no one knows what, or how, or why, or when, or where, the main spring of moral accountability is gone. The fatalistic conception of man's personal and moral life is the deadly gift of naturalistic evolution to our age.⁸

To concede to Darwin is to concede that human existence is meaningless, that the fall of humanity was fictional, and the Incarnation was unnecessary.

In contrast to Hague, James Orr's chief concern was that a dichotomy was unnecessarily emerging between science and biblical faith. Orr found parallels between evangelical responses to evolution and the Inquisition of Galileo in 1633, noting that it "is an unhappy illustration of how the best of men can at times err in matters which they imperfectly understand, or where their prejudices and traditional ideas are affected."⁹ For Orr, the

7 Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859). Darwin released a revised edition in 1860 [Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (2nd ed.; London: John Murray, 1860)], in which he attempted to make more explicit his conviction that natural selection was not at odds with creation or religious inclinations. Appealing to ecclesiastical support for his defense, he notes that a "celebrated author and divine has written to me that 'he has gradually learnt to see that it is just as noble a conception of the Deity to believe that He created a few original forms capable of self-development into other and needful forms, as to believe that He required a fresh act of creation to supply the voids caused by the action of His laws'" (p. 481). Darwin hoped to situate his discoveries in a context in which those who held to a high view of Scripture could also accept his observations of the natural world. The sixth and final edition of Darwin's work (1872) was simply titled *The Origin of Species*.

8 Hague, "Doctrinal Value of the First Chapters of Genesis," p. 112.

9 Orr, "Science and Christian Faith," p. 126.

laws of nature are an expression of God's providential sovereignty, rather than evidence against it. He closes his essay by appealing to God's two books of revelation: Scripture and nature, each of which enlightening the other, neither of which contradicting the other.

In "The Passing of Evolution," George Wright contended that Darwin's theory and Genesis were hardly at odds with one another, accepting that God had created each living thing "with the marvelous capacity for variation which we know they possess."¹⁰ Wright was not concerned about any detrimental effects of evolutionary theory on evangelical theology, commenting that if it were proved true, it would only strengthen the argument for a Designer. Wright's contribution is especially notable given his long journey away from his renown as a "Christian Darwinist" decades before. While he had grown weary of neo-Darwinian claims that mocked creation by divine fiat, he remained comfortable with the term evolution when properly used.¹¹

Perhaps the most vocal advocate for integrating evolutionary theory with evangelical theology was Benjamin B. Warfield, one of the most influential and enduring biblical scholars in American Calvinism. Most noted for his work on the doctrine of biblical inerrancy,¹² Warfield also wrote extensively on a biblical response to Darwinism. As a breeder of livestock, Warfield's father relied on breeding methods that drew heavily on Darwin's theory of natural selection.¹³ As an ardent proponent of biblical inerrancy, B. B. was compelled by life circumstances to determine the level of compatibility between evolution and evangelical

10 Wright, "The Passing of Evolution," p. 616.

11 For a fuller account of Wright's intellectual journey with evolution, see Ronald L. Numbers, *The Creationists* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 20–53.

12 Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies* (New York: Scribners, 1912); *Ibid.*, *Inspiration and the Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948); *Ibid.*, *Calvin and Augustine* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1956); Archibald A. Hodge, and Benjamin B. Warfield, "Inspiration," *The Presbyterian Review* 6 (April 1881), pp. 225–60; Mark A. Noll, and David N. Livingstone, eds, *B. B. Warfield: Evolution, Science, and Scripture, Selected Writings* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker, 2000).

13 William Warfield, *The Theory and Practice of Cattle-Breeding* (Chicago, J. H. Sanders, 1889).

doctrine. In his seminal essay on the topic, Warfield employed the term “mediate creation,” a term he borrowed from Augustus Strong¹⁴ to mean that God did not create *immediately* (at once), but *mediately* (over time).¹⁵ Warfield finds in mediate creation a more robust view of God, who did not just create once in the original composition of material substance, but continues to create anew “whenever and wherever during the course of God’s providential government anything comes into being for the production of which natural causes are inadequate.”¹⁶ So long as the term is rightly understood as God’s providential hand in the formation of new creatures, “the Christian man has as such no quarrel with evolution.”¹⁷

As amicable as the discussion seemed to be just a decade prior to the Scopes Monkey Trial, there were other forces at play that would eventually come to a head with the proceedings of 1925. Around the same time *The Fundamentals* were being produced, dispensationalism emerged as an influential theological framework within evangelicalism. Invigorated and cauterized by the publication of the KJV Scofield Study Bible (1909), the dispensationalist movement infiltrated the ranks of evangelicalism, particularly those outside of the mainline denominations. While dispensationalism came to mean many things to many people, at its core lay a hermeneutic of literalism, requiring readers of Scripture to ignore issues of genre, nuance, or polyvalent readings of the text.¹⁸ This simplistic approach to Scripture is what made Bryan such an easy target for Darrow. Bryan’s testimony on the witness stand had canonized an anti-intellectual approach to Scripture, formally pitting intellectual inquiry against faithful biblical interpretation.

Another fundamentalist force came by way of Seventh Day Adventist

14 Augustus Hopkins Strong, *Systematic Theology: A Compendium and Commonplace Book Designed for the Use of Theological Students*, 5th ed. (New York: A.C. Armstrong and Son, 1896).

15 B. B. Warfield, “Creation, Evolution, and Mediate Creation,” *The Bible Student* (1901), pp. 1–8; reprinted in Noll and Livingstone, B. B. Warfield, pp. 197–210.

16 *Ibid.*, 209.

17 *Ibid.*, 210.

18 See Noll, *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 114–45.

George McCready Price whose writings were heavily influenced by the teachings of the movement’s prophet-like leader Ellen G. White.¹⁹ In order to justify the core Seventh Day Adventist doctrine of Sabbath rest, the days of Genesis were interpreted as literal 24-hour solar days. Also, in keeping with White’s belief that the end of the world was imminent, she preached that the earth must also be a mere 6,000 years old. White’s teachings were an affront to the day-age and gap theories commonly accepted by evangelicals wishing to reconcile Genesis 1 with the latest geological findings. In *The New Geology* published in 1923, using logic and amateur geology Price laid out a compelling argument for a young earth, in which “flood geology” or “catastrophism” accounted for the apparent old age of the earth despite its relative youth. In fact, it was Price’s work that heavily influenced William Jennings Bryan in the Scopes trial, though Price was incensed at how poorly Bryan had communicated his theory. The fact that Price was never formally trained in geology or paleontology did not prevent him from making bold—and erroneous—claims about the nature of the field. Having been dismissed by the professional scientific societies, Price turned his writing attention to Christian publications like *Moody Monthly*, *Sunday School Times*, and *Christian Faith and Life*. As a champion against evolutionary theory, Price successfully convinced impressive numbers of evangelicals towards his flood geology.

Not everyone was impressed with Price’s conclusions, especially a core group of Christian scientists who were concerned with the implications of his views on unbelieving intellectuals. In 1941 five Christian scientists founded the American Scientific Affiliation (ASA). Their mission was to engage evolutionary theory and assess its merits in light of biblical authority. Their statement of faith was simple and straightforward:

I believe in the whole Bible as originally given, to be the inspired word of God, the only unerring guide of faith and conduct. Since God is the Author of this Book, as well as the Creator and Sustainer

19 For a more detailed sketch of Price’s history with young earth creationism, see Numbers, *The Creationists*, 72–101.

of the physical world about us, I cannot conceive of discrepancies between statements in the Bible and the real facts of science.²⁰

From 1941 to 1961 membership swelled to 860. Although the ASA tended towards civil dialogue with supporters of flood geology, one of its early members took great exception to the pseudoscience propagated by its proponents. A. Laurence Kulp had earned doctorates in physical chemistry (Princeton, 1945) and geology (Columbia, 1947), became one of the leading experts in carbon-14 dating, and was the first to apply the technique to geological dating.²¹ In an article for the *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation*, Kulp utterly dismantled Price's flood geology, concluding "that this unscientific theory of flood geology has done and will do considerable harm to the strong propagation of the gospel among educated people."²² Kulp's antagonism towards flood geology and strong influence within the ASA made amicable relations between the ASA and flood geologists no longer feasible.

In the wake of Kulp's critiques of flood geology, a new wave of evangelical thought emerged that sought to treat both Scripture and science according to their own aims. In 1954 Bernard Ramm wrote *The Christian View of Science and Scripture*, in which he argued for the concordance of modern science with biblical truth. He writes,

Almighty God is Creator, World Ground, and Omnipotent Sustainer. In his mind the entire plan of creation was formed with man as the climax. Over the millions of years of geologic history the earth is prepared for man's dwelling, or as it has been put by others, the cosmos was pregnant with man...From time to time the great creative acts, *de novo*, took place. The complexity of animal forms increased. Finally...he whom all creation anticipated is made, MAN, in whom alone is the breath of God.²³

20 Ibid., 159.

21 Ibid., 163.

22 A. Laurence Kulp, "Deluge Geology," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 2 (1950): 1–15, esp. 15.

23 Bernard Ramm, *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1954), 227–28.

Ramm concluded by admitting that “[m]ost evangelicals are opposed to evolution,”²⁴ but he wished to emphasize that the “Bible does not teach final scientific theory, but teaches final theological truth.”²⁵ Despite evangelicals’ aversion to evolution, Ramm sought to disavow evangelicals from an unnecessary wedding of biblical truth and anti-intellectualism, noting “that men whose orthodoxy is unimpeachable have accepted some form of theistic evolution or at least were tolerant toward evolution theistically conceived.”²⁶ Ramm’s views were refreshing for evangelicals looking for a way to reconcile special revelation with general revelation. Perhaps the most prominent endorsement of Ramm’s book was Billy Graham, who saw in *The Christian View of Science and Scripture* a way to move forward on the doctrine of biblical inspiration.²⁷

Two decades after the formation of the ASA, Henry M. Morris and John C. Whitcomb penned the single-most influential book in the saga of evangelicals and evolution. Henry Morris was a highly intelligent professor of hydraulic engineering. John Whitcomb graduated with honors from Princeton University before earning his PhD from Grace Theological Seminary. In many ways *The Genesis Flood* rehashed the same arguments first made by George McCready Price.²⁸ With Whitcomb’s knowledge of Scripture and Morris’s expertise in earth science, the pair offered a convincing explanation of flood geology that accounted for a 6,000-year-old earth and disallowed any version of evolution, theistic or otherwise. At the core of their argument, however, lay a complete distrust of so-called secular or evolutionary scientists. In the book’s forward John McCampbell, geologist at the University of Southwestern Louisiana, set the scene for ideological conflict between the “Biblical teachings” and

24 Ibid., 347.

25 Ibid., 348.

26 Ibid., 347–48.

27 George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1987), 158.

28 John C. Whitcomb, and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1961).

“the more inquisitive and rationalistic spirit among scholars.”²⁹ The only scientists evangelicals should or could trust are those whose assumptions begin with the Bible, not the natural world. Using a dubious methodology,³⁰ Morris and Whitcomb not only succeeded in casting a pall of suspicion over the entire scientific community, but also in staking out new grounds on acceptable biblical interpretation. For Morris and Whitcomb, only a hermeneutic based on young earth catastrophism treated seriously “the testimony of God’s infallible Word.”³¹

EVANGELICALS AND EVOLUTION NINE DECADES AFTER SCOPES

Nine decades have passed since “the trial of the century.” In the years since, evangelicals have remained in a love-hate relationship with the sciences. On the one hand, the sciences have resulted in better quality and duration of lives, and have opened our eyes to the wonder and splendor of God’s creation. On the other hand, science as an academic field of inquiry is often viewed suspiciously by evangelicals as a secular gatekeeper intent on insisting upon naturalistic presuppositions. The tensions have mounted to the point that in some cases Christian scientists are reluctant to admit that they are Christians to their professional colleagues, and hesitant to admit that they are scientists to their fellow parishioners.³² Christian scientists note that the situation is bad for society, as well as for the Christian witness. Christian theologians and Bible scholars recoil at the naïve and simplistic readings of Scripture that have potentially

29 Morris and Whitcomb, *Genesis Flood*, xv, xvi.

30 For a critique of the Morris and Whitcomb’s methodology, see David R. Montgomery, *The Rocks Don’t Lie: A Geologist Investigates Noah’s Flood* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2012), 225–46.

31 Morris and Whitcomb, *Genesis Flood*, 489.

32 A 2014 survey conducted by the American Association for the Advancement of Science revealed that although the tension between science and religion is lessening, less than half of evangelicals believed that “science and religion were in a collaborative relationship.” <http://www.aaas.org/news/religious-and-scientific-communities-may-be-less-combative-commonly-portrayed>.

detrimental effects on Christian faith and practice, as well as a weakened Christian testimony of the gospel.

In 1988, Stanley Rice took exception with his fellow evangelicals for their unfounded dogmatism in young earth creationism. As a biology professor at the evangelical King's College (then in Briarcliffe, NY, now in New York City), Rice studied fifteen years' worth of essays in *Creation Research Society Quarterly*, concluding that young earth creationists supplement the biblical text as frequently as they claim to treat it honestly.

The young-Earth creationists, therefore, do not subscribe to the motto of those true, humble literalists who say, "Speak where the Bible speaks, and keep silence where it keeps silence." Instead, they want to help the Bible out. This seems to occur for two reasons. Some extrabiblical beliefs are necessary in order to rescue biblical literalism and bring it into line with modern scientific knowledge. Because these beliefs are necessary corollaries of biblical literalism, they have achieved a doctrinal status among the scientific creationists and are given nearly equal credence with scripture itself. In other cases, the extrabiblical emendations are wholly unnecessary flights of fancy, upon which many creationists place as much emphasis as upon scripture itself.³³

Rice's frustration in creation-science interpretations of Scripture rests on the implications for science and Scripture. "The impression is created that these gigantic sagas are not only true science but straight two-hundred-proof Christianity. In this way, despite their zeal to defend the Bible, these creationists are bringing harm upon it."³⁴ While claiming to be biblical literalists, Rice demonstrated how creation-scientists augment the biblical text with extraneous material to support their young earth presuppositions.

To be sure, scientists can be just as driven by ulterior motives or prejudices as defenders of Scripture. We have seen that borne out over the decades with the revelation of deceitful and deceptive reporting on the so-called Piltdown Man, the Cardiff Giant, and Andrew Wakefield's infamous

33 Stanley Rice, "Scientific Creationism: Adding Imagination to Scripture," *Creation/Science* 8 (1988): 25–36, esp. 26.

34 *Ibid.*, 34.

study fraudulently linking the MMR vaccine to autism. According to Marcus and Oransky, “Every day, on average, a scientific paper is retracted because of misconduct. Two percent of scientists admit to tinkering with their data in some kind of improper way.”³⁵ These acts of duplicity propel the popular perception that scientists belong to an elite guild that protects its own, conducting its corrupt “research” under the guise of science with the objective of misleading and misdirecting the populace on scientific truth. Evangelicals already skeptical of secular scientific studies are fed these missteps as symptomatic of the entire enterprise, without giving pause to the fact that it is, in fact, fellow scientists who eventually and ultimately expose the frauds.

The continued antagonism between evangelicals and the scientific community is more acute in the specific issue of evolution. Rather than becoming more open to the hermeneutical approach of Orr, Hodge, Warfield and Wright, many evangelical institutions are digging in their heels against the impending “inroads of liberalism,” siding instead with Hague, and, most curiously, George McCready Price. In the summer of 2015 Bethel College (Indiana) formally adopted the “Educational Philosophy Statement on Origins,” which contains a notable emendation from Bethel’s prior position: “We believe that the first man, Adam, was created by an immediate act of God and not by a process of evolution.”³⁶ Bethel’s new stance does not forbid the instruction of evolution in the classroom, but it does prohibit any faculty from actively supporting any professional society that promotes evolutionary theory. In other words, science faculty at Bethel have effectively been cut off from academic inquiry and exchange within their discipline. Earlier in the spring of the same year the prolific theologian Thomas Oord was removed from his

35 Adam Marcus and Ivan Oransky, “What’s Behind Big Science Frauds?” *The New York Times*, May 22, 2015; <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/23/opinion/whats-behind-big-science-frauds.html>. Marcus and Oransky do not say, however, at what stage an article is retracted, whether it is during the peer-review process or after it has been published.

36 <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/07/13/bethel-indiana-faculty-members-can-no-longer-take-leadership-roles-groups-differ>

longstanding tenure at Northwest Nazarene University in Idaho due to his conviction that evolution and evangelical faith are, in fact, compatible with each other.³⁷ In the summer prior, Bryan College (named after William Jennings Bryan), located in Dayton, Tennessee (home of the Scopes Monkey Trial), “clarified” its statement of faith about human origins to read, “We believe that all humanity is descended from Adam and Eve. They are historical persons created by God in a special formative act, and not from previously existing life forms.”³⁸ For Bryan College, God’s creative act cannot and did not involve any evolutionary processes, whether God initiated those processes or not. From the looks of things, the state of the conversation in evangelicalism about human origins has not evolved much, if at all, in the ninety-one years since Scopes.

EVANGELICALS AND EVOLUTION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The present clash between faith and science is not a new phenomenon. Although biblical cosmology was essentially ancient Near Eastern cosmology, biblical exegetes often interpreted biblical texts related to cosmology in light of the innovations of both Aristotle and Copernicus.³⁹ Aristotelian cosmology was not only adapted, but often adopted by Christian exegetes such as Aquinas, as well as in popular theology as in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. The regrettable narrative concerning Galileo and Copernican cosmology is so well known it has been woven into the very fabric of the science-faith dialogue. Catholics opposed Copernicanism because it undermined the Holy See’s status as the divine authority as the center of the cosmos. For Protestants, however, “the main point of

37 <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/04/09/theologian-whose-views-evolution-differed-his-church-loses-tenured-job>

38 <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2014/05/06/professors-and-students-bryan-college-protest-changes-statement-faith>

39 Kyle Greenwood, *Scripture and Cosmology: Reading the Bible Between the Ancient World and Modern Science* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015).

contention was its apparent violence against the ‘plain-sense’ meaning of Scripture.”⁴⁰ Ultimately, the Copernican system gave way to Newtonian physics, and the Big Bang theory ultimately dispelled any notion of a “center” of the universe. If the church has been able to wrestle with changes in our understanding of cosmology in the face of contradictory biblical testimony, why does there remain such a tension between evangelicals and evolution?

As contemporaries of Copernicus—whose *On the Revolutions of the Heavenly Spheres* was published in 1543—both Martin Luther and John Calvin were firmly entrenched in Aristotelian cosmology. In fact, despite the irrefutable empirical observations of Galileo and precise mathematical calculations of Kepler, Aristotelian cosmology thrived for another century and a half. It was not until Newton published his *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (1687) that Aristotelianism was finally overturned. Even still, it took the Vatican another 350 years to offer a formal apology for its treatment of Galileo. As Thomas Kuhn has helped us recognize, revolutionary paradigm shifts take time to infiltrate the populous.⁴¹ In light of historical precedent, it is to be expected that after a mere nine decades since Scopes a consensus in evangelicalism on evolutionary theory remains elusive.

While a consensus within evangelicalism may not be immediately forthcoming, it is noteworthy that in the past decade especially the atmosphere seems ripe for the conversation.⁴² But who should be the

40 Ibid., 186.

41 Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 50th Anniversary ed.* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2012), 150.

42 See, for example, Charles Halton (ed.), *Genesis: History, Fiction, or Neither? Three Views on the Bible’s Earliest Chapters*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015); John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Adam and Eve: Genesis 2–3 and the Human Origins Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015); Hans Madueme, and Michael Reeves (eds), *Adam, the Fall, and Original Sin: Theological, Biblical, and Scientific Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014); Matthew Barrett, and Ardel B. Caneday (eds), *Four Views on the Historical Adam* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013); J. Daryl Charles (ed), *Reading Genesis 1–2: An Evangelical Conversation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013); Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn’t Say About Human Origins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2012); Johnny V. Miller, and John M. Soden, *In the Beginning...We Misunderstood* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel,

conversation partners, and whose voice should carry the most weight in these conversations? Both Luther and Calvin grappled with the relationship of science and Scripture. While neither was willing to relent on the authority of Scripture, both recognized that Scripture does not address all matters of natural science. In his discussion on the greater light and lesser light in Genesis 1, for examples, Calvin writes,

Astronomers investigate with great labour whatever the sagacity of the human mind can comprehend. Nevertheless, this study is not to be reprobated, nor this science to be condemned, because some frantic persons are wont boldly to reject whatever is unknown to them. For astronomy is not only pleasant, but also very useful to be known: it cannot be denied that this art unfolds the admirable wisdom of God.⁴³

For Calvin, as was the case with Luther, the observational sciences played an important role in understanding the nature of God’s creation.

Holmes Rolston III is one of the most highly engaged figures in this conversation in modern times. He was awarded the Templeton Prize in Religion (2003) and has presented the Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh in 1997–1998.⁴⁴ In his *Science & Religion*, Rolston unapologetically states that, “Science is the most powerful analytic tool yet developed, especially in its accounts of nature.”⁴⁵ But, he rightly

2012); C. John Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist? Who They Are and Why You Should Care* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011); Mary Katherine Birge, Brian G. Henning, et. al, *Genesis, Evolution, and the Search for a Reasoned Faith* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2011); Seth D. Postell, *Adam as Israel: Genesis 1–3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tanakh* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011); John H. Walton, *Genesis 1 as Ancient Cosmology* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2011); Richard F. Carlson, and Tremper Longman III, *Science, Creation, and the Bible: Reconciling Rival Theories or Origins* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010); William P. Brown, *The Seven Pillars of Creation: The Bible, Science, and the Ecology of Wonder* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2010).

43 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. J. King, *Calvin’s Commentaries 1* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 86–87.

44 His Gifford Lectures have been published as *Genes, Genesis, and God: Values and Their Origins in Natural and Human History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1999).

45 Holmes Rolston III, *Science & Religion: A Critical Survey* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Foundation, 2006), 343.

notes, science only has the capacity to be analytical about the natural world. It is incapable of resolving the ethical components of life, such as how to value nature, how to guide the human experience, and how to engage history.

Beyond Rolston's ethical considerations, evangelicals have a stake in the grander consideration of theology, the relationship of the Creator with creation. Because of the intimate relationship of the Creator with creation, our scriptures expectedly interact and intersect with the natural world. As such, evangelicals often feel threatened or become nervous when scientists infringe on biblical territory. This is especially true of non-believing scientists, but is also true of evangelical scientists whose foray into Scripture puts them at odds with over-protective biblicists. But, the dichotomy between evolution and evangelicalism is as false as the dichotomy between modern medicine and biblical medicine (Lev 13:45–46; Is 38:21; Lk 10:34; 1 Tim 5:23), or Newtonian physics ($F_g = G \frac{m_1 m_2}{r^2}$) (and biblical physics (Job 26:7; 38:4; Ps 102:25; 104:5; Is 48:13). Rather, as Rolston has acutely articulated, this dichotomy is unfounded for two reasons. "First, any causes such as are alleged in biochemistry, are not so mechanical as to require the devaluing or desacralizing of life. Furthermore, any noncauses, such as the randomness alleged in evolutionary theory, are neither so confirmed nor so compelling as to prohibit assigning meaningfulness to the arrival of life."⁴⁶ For Rolston, then, there is room for the divine in evolutionary theory on two counts: evolutionary theory is limited to the natural realm and humans are more than natural creatures; and, evolutionary theory has yet to be fully explained.

Scientific discoveries are moving at break-neck speeds. Today's mystery is tomorrow's innovation. What if the apparent random noncauses are found to be purposed causes? What if evolutionary theory moves one step away from a tautology,⁴⁷ and another step closer to verifiable truth? In fact, with the successful mapping of the human genome, evangelical

46 Ibid., 123–24.

47 Robert H. Peters, "Predictable Problems with Tautology in Evolution and Ecology," *American Naturalist* 110 (1978): 759–61.

geneticist Francis S. Collins, has stated unequivocally, “Evolution, as a mechanism, can and must be true.”⁴⁸

The philosopher Alvin Plantinga offers another way forward by discussing evolution in terms of God’s omnipotence, rather than his mystery. In God’s omnipotence he established natural laws to provide order and constancy to our cosmos, such as the laws of thermodynamics, laws of motion, law of universal gravity, and the law of the conservation of energy. Plantinga defines these natural laws as “necessary truths in that there is nothing we or other creatures can do to render them false.”⁴⁹ None of these laws are “biblical,” in that we cannot find evidence for their existence within the pages of Scripture. In fact, in the case of some natural laws, it was long deemed that some of them contradicted Scripture. However, their absence from Scripture does not negate their presence in nature. Rather, Plantinga notes three ways in which natural science and theism are compatible.⁵⁰ First, for the scientific method to work, nature must abide by a set of constants, governing principles that comport with a rational Being who set those laws in motion. Next, not only must there be static laws in place, but scientists must acknowledge their existence, lending credence to the doctrine of the image of God. Finally, theism provides the rationale for understanding the necessity and requisite nature of these laws.

In essence, Plantinga is restating James Orr’s thesis from a century earlier, but in a more technically sophisticated and philosophical manner. “The World is God’s world,” Orr said. “[I]t is established by his decree; he has given to every creature its nature, its bounds, its limits; all things continue according to his ordinances.”⁵¹ If God is the one who has been revealed in Scripture, then there cannot be a conflict between faith and

48 Francis S. Collins, *The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 107.

49 Alvin Plantinga, *Science, Religion, & Naturalism: Where the Conflict Really Lies* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2011), 281.

50 *Ibid.*, 282–84.

51 Orr, “Science and Christian Faith,” 128.

science, or between nature and Scripture. All laws are God’s laws, and all truth is God’s truth. Or, in the words of Augustine, “[w]herever truth may be found, it belongs to his Master.”⁵² John Calvin echoes Augustine’s sentiments in his commentary on Titus: “All truth is from God; and consequently, if wicked men have said anything that is true and just, we ought not to reject it; for it has come from God.”⁵³ Evolution is not a Christian doctrine, but neither is gravity nor Einstein’s theory of relativity. The fact that they are not Christian doctrines does not necessitate that they be removed from the Christian lexicon.

If evangelicals are secure in their doctrine of divine providence, an approach to the challenge of evolution should not be one of isolationism and retreat, but invigoration and engagement. In his primer on the doctrine of creation, David Fergusson exhorts evangelicals to embrace the approach of Charles Hodge and Robert Flint whose aptitude in both the biblical literature and the sciences enabled them to understand the complexities of the issues, rather than responding reflexively to the potential threat to their theological systems. Fergusson reminds us of three important lessons to be learned from evangelical engagement with evolutionary theory. First, as Rolston argued, “a greater degree of independence between scientific and theological work can now be acknowledged.”⁵⁴ Second, “it showed the Bible and Christian tradition capable of providing resources for dealing with a new set of problems, in some cases resources that had been overlooked by earlier generations.”⁵⁵ Third, in the years immediately following the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, “Christian theology proved itself to be in a state neither of ignorance nor fear of what scientists were discovering about the age

52 Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*, II.18.

53 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, trans. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic; CCEL, 1981), 247–50 (online edition, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom43.pdf>)

54 David Fergusson, *Creation, Guides to Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 89.

55 Ibid.

of the universe and the emergence of life forms on earth.”⁵⁶ Fergusson reminds us that the trepidation evangelicals have with evolution has not always been present, and was virtually non-existent among the best and brightest theological minds closest to the historical scene.⁵⁷ If our doctrines of providence and creation are grounded in a firm commitment to God as Creator and sustainer as revealed in Scripture, evangelicals should delight in discovering the creative nature of our God whenever and however he reveals himself in nature, whether those truths are discovered by Copernicus, Newton, Einstein, or Darwin.

56 Ibid., 90.

57 Conor Cunningham goes so far to say that “Darwin’s idea will emerge as ‘pious’ because it allows us to test the relative ‘orthodoxy’ of our faith” with respect to traditional Christianity as opposed to modern categories. [Conor Cunningham, *Darwin’s Pious Idea: Why the Ultra-Darwinists and Creationists Both Get It Wrong* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), xvi.]



What Modernity gets Wrong
and the Classical Tradition got Right:
A Critique of Bruce L. McCormack's
Theology

David A. Graham

KEYWORDS:

| Bruce L McCormack | Karl Barth | Kenosis |
| Metaphysics & Theology | Christology |
| Immanent & Economic Trinity |

ABSTRACT:

This essay analyzes and critiques Bruce L. McCormack's post-metaphysical theology, including his development of a so-called Reformed doctrine of kenosis. This critique is then utilized as an opportunity to highlight some missteps that modern theology—represented by certain forms of kenoticism—tends to make. The essay concludes with an endorsement of an alternative paradigm for doctrines of kenosis, one commonly found implicit in the premodern tradition. It urges Christian thinkers to balance two values in their theology: on the one hand, the contingency of creation and redemption upon divine freedom, and on the other, the fittingness of the economy of salvation with the divine nature.

INTRODUCTION

Over a decade ago Bruce L. McCormack began to mount an uncompromising attack against the classical metaphysical tradition by way of a revisionist interpretation of Karl Barth.¹ In a nutshell, he proposed that we must no longer speak of God's being as ontologically prior to his gracious covenantal decision in Jesus Christ. Initially the discussion about McCormack's proposal remained confined to the domain of Barth aficionados, but it quickly spilled out into a plethora of lively debates—sometimes enriching, other times convoluting—among both theologians and philosophers of various denominational traditions. On the level of Barthian exegesis, it seems unlikely that any one position will emerge as the definitive interpretation in the near future, not least because Barth's thought appears multiform if not inconsistent.² For this reason I do not intend to enter the "Barth wars" proper, that is, to quarrel over whether McCormack offers a plausible exegesis of the *Church Dogmatics*.³ Rather, I am interested in exploring the connections that McCormack's theology might have with other late modern theological trends, in particular the tendency to define God's being exclusively in relation to created history. This tendency manifests itself quite starkly in his so-called Reformed doctrine of kenosis (κένωσις), which sets forth the idea that the incarnation makes God to be the sort of God he is.⁴

1 The initial essay was McCormack's "Grace and being: the role of God's gracious election in Karl Barth's theological ontology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* (ed. John Webster; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 92-110. A helpful collection of further contributions to the debate can be found in *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology* (ed. Michael T. Dempsey; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

2 I should note, however, that I find George Hunsinger's recent defence of the more traditional reading of Barth to be the most compelling interpretation to date (*Reading Barth with Charity: A Hermeneutical Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015)).

3 I borrow this phrase from Phillip Cary's recent article reviewing Hunsinger's latest monograph on Barth ("Barth Wars," *First Things* 252 (April 2015), 49-53).

4 The theological use of the term κένωσις derives from the self-emptying of Christ of which Philippians 2:7 speaks.

In this article I will examine and critique Bruce McCormack's post-metaphysical theology in order to expose some problems with modern theology more generally. The clash between McCormack's Barthian "revisionism" and more traditional perspectives leaves the impression that there are only two serious options for contemporary theology: a return to pristine, premodern modes of thought or the development of a new, radically anti-metaphysical approach.⁵ One of the problems with this dichotomy is that it alienates the majority of evangelical thinkers, for whom faithful scriptural reasoning leads somewhere in between. This essay aims to clear space for just such an excluded middle. It does so primarily by means of a critique of the latter extreme, the attempt to construct a Protestant theology that totally rejects the classical metaphysical distinctions that underlie historic orthodox dogma.

In part one I will trace some of the major themes of McCormack's project, including his critique of classical metaphysics, his theological ontology as it emerges in light of Barth's mature doctrine of election, his consequent theology of incarnation and Christology proper, and finally, his doctrine of kenosis. With this I intend to provide an accurate, succinct introduction to the modern revisionist form of Barthian theology as manifested in its chief representative. In the second part, I will critique McCormack's theology insofar as it raises questions about what I consider to be necessary Christian presuppositions concerning divine and created existence, the immanent Trinity, the nature of revelation and Jesus' divine identity. I seek to show that McCormack's proposals, as with other modern ideological trajectories, lead to intractable theological and Christological difficulties and thus do not coherently and compellingly supplant the Christian metaphysical tradition. In the final part, I will make a few suggestions regarding what an adequate doctrine of kenosis should entail. I propose that Christian thinkers ought to balance two values: on the one hand, the contingency of creation and redemption upon divine

5 "Revisionism" is Hunsinger's term. It's meant to indicate that the new system includes notions that Barth never explicitly affirmed and sometimes explicitly denied, as McCormack and his followers admit (*Reading Barth with Charity*, xi).

freedom, and on the other, the fittingness of the economy of salvation with the divine nature.

II. MCCORMACK'S POST-METAPHYSICAL THEOLOGY

From McCormack's perspective, the bane of classical theology concerns its habit of abstract speculation, thought and speech about some ultimate being-in-itself behind the God who encounters his people in history. Part of the problem is that the received tradition did not maintain a sufficiently Christian epistemology.⁶ If God as such is transcendently free, then we cannot encapsulate him within our predefined categories. We can only look to what he has freely chosen to be and do in history, renouncing those aspects of our theological systems which rub against his self-revelation in Jesus Christ. Take the theology given in the Calvinistic decrees. In McCormack's view, this suggests that an unknowable, indeterminate God subsists behind his economic self-disclosure.⁷ An adequate Christian epistemology, by contrast, must incessantly cling to the utter primacy of concrete divine action. But the problem does not concern epistemology alone, for the source of the tradition's abstracting tendency resides in the metaphysics which underlies it. Having inherited the substantialist presuppositions of Greek thought, the fathers and scholastics sharply distinguished God's inner essence from his external relations within created history. This distinction gave philosophy the authority to conceive of "God" abstractly as an immanent substance, a concept that tended to usurp the lively God revealed in Scripture.

According to McCormack, Barth's genius consists in his perception

6 "The Actuality of God: Karl Barth in Conversation with Open Theism," in *Engaging the Doctrine of God: Contemporary Protestant Perspectives* (ed. Bruce L. McCormack; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 186-8.

7 On Barth's criticism of Calvin, see McCormack, "Grace and being," 95-101; "Christ and the Decree: An unsettled Question for the Reformed Churches Today," in *Reformed Theology in Contemporary Perspective: Westminster: Yesterday, Today – and Tomorrow?* (ed. Lynn Quigley; Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 2006), 126-41.

that a definitive solution to this problem requires more than a Christocentric epistemology.⁸ It demands a post-metaphysical ontology, a way of conceiving divine being which breaks decisively not simply from modern deism but even from classical theism. Whereas classical theology remained captive to the category of static, ahistorical substance, McCormack argues that the mature Barth proposed an “actualist” alternative. God is not the *actus purus* (“pure act”) in the abstract realm of infinite essence but a being who is determined in a free, particular act of an eternal decision vis-à-vis created history.⁹ Therefore, “It is not simply that the being of God is *made known* to human beings in revelation; it is rather that the being of God is itself *established* in the act of revelation.”¹⁰ Whether Barth would have endorsed this radical theological actualism is what the “Barth wars” are all about. In any case, as we shall see, there is more at stake than the identity of the true Karl Barth.

The development of this new, non-substantialist ontology, according to McCormack, began with Barth’s re-conception of election in actualistic, Christocentric terms.¹¹ God’s absolute freedom consists in his freedom to become, to achieve his eternal identity precisely in the act of choosing. If God freely decides from eternity to be in one way rather than another—to be, for instance, the God who creates and redeems by way of covenantal love—then this is who God is. He constitutes his very being by this eternal act, the decision to be thus in relation to human beings in the person of Jesus Christ.¹² Put simply, God *is* his act of election, his eternal decision to be with us and for us.

McCormack repeatedly emphasizes the radicalism of this approach. It

8 “Seek God where he may be found: a response to Edwin Chr. van Driel,” *SJT* 60, no. 1 (2007): 71n23.

9 “The Actuality of God,” 214-5.

10 *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology: Its Genesis and Development, 1909-1936* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 461-2, emphasis added.

11 For McCormack’s arguments on the genetic history thereof, see *Karl Barth’s Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology*, 458-63, and “Seek God where he may be found,” 63-5.

12 “The Actuality of God,” 217.

is not simply that the economy of salvation, as the proper epistemic ground of theology, must guide, control and refine our concept of the immanent Trinity, who, in contradistinction to modalism, truly condescends to reveal himself therein. One could argue that this is precisely what the best theologians of the pre-modern tradition affirmed. Rather, the radicalism consists in overcoming the very idea that there really exists an independent and self-sufficient Trinity, a God whose actual being is intrinsically unrelated to the created economy. If God is freely *constituted* by his eternal decision in relation to that which is not God, then the reason we cannot talk about an immanent Trinity—or, for that matter, a non-incarnate Son—is because none exists. God is who he freely chooses to be in relation to humanity, that is, the Trinity who covenants with us in Christ.

Against the received tradition, this leads to McCormack’s most controversial proposal. The act of election logically precedes God’s trinity. The Father’s self-positing of himself as Son and Spirit occurs only as the consequence of the logically prior covenantal decision:

The eternal act of Self-differentiation in which God is God ‘a second time in a very different way’...and a third time as well, is *given in* the eternal act in which God elects himself for the human race. The *decision* for the covenant of grace is the ground of God’s trinity...In other words, the works of God *ad intra* (the trinitarian processions) find their ground in the *first* works of God *ad extra* (viz. election).¹³

McCormack thus turns the classical understanding of the immanent Trinity on its head. The divine missions (the sending of Jesus and the Spirit) are

13 “Grace and being,” 103; cf. “Seek God where he may be found,” 66-7. Kevin W. Hector thinks that McCormack goes too far here. But his alternative seems to me to be incoherent. He claims that tri-unity and self-determination are “each logically prerequisite” for the other. But what could this mean? Either the triune God makes the decision, in which case his identity logically precedes it, or the triune God is constituted in it, in which case McCormack’s position follows (“God’s Triunity and Self-Determination: A Conversation with Karl Barth, Bruce McCormack and Paul Molnar,” in *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology* (ed. Michael T. Dempsey; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 43).

no longer the grace-induced historical outcome of the eternally necessary and self-sufficient divine processions (the begetting and spirating of the Son and Spirit); rather, the processions stem from the decision to save humanity via the missions. Lest we misunderstand, McCormack clarifies that his position does not imply that there actually exists a pre-trinitarian God. The act of election “has never not taken place,” and thus the only concretely subsisting God is he who constitutes himself by this eternal decision.¹⁴ Since God *eternally* constitutes himself as triune, there is no God but the Father of Jesus Christ and the Spirit of both.

The radicalism of McCormack’s ontology re-emerges in his theology of incarnation. Inheriting the patristic tradition’s distinction between the pre-existing subject of incarnation and the contingent act of incarnation itself, Reformed orthodoxy had distinguished the subject of election, the λόγος ἄσαρκος (unfleshed Word) along with the Father and Spirit, from the object, the *Logos incarnandus* (the Word as eternally chosen to become incarnate).¹⁵ From this perspective, while Jesus Christ is the *noetic* ground of the electing God, the only means by which we know the Son as *incarnandus*, he does not determine the Son’s hypostatic identity. According to McCormack, Barth’s novelty consists in his claim that Jesus Christ, “the God-human in his divine-human unity,” is not merely the object of election but its *subject*.¹⁶ Insofar as the eternal decision for the Son to become incarnate for our salvation constitutes the very being of the Trinity, it no longer makes sense to distinguish the independent subject as λόγος ἄσαρκος from the eternally chosen object as *incarnandus*. On the contrary, since the Son’s very subsistence is determined in the elective act, “the *Logos* is the *incarnandus* in and for himself, in eternity.”¹⁷ As McCormack points out, this historicized ontology absolutely precludes speculation based on epistemic grounds besides revelation: “The second

14 “Grace and Being,” 101.

15 *Ibid.*, 92-5.

16 *Ibid.*, 94.

17 *Ibid.*, 95.

‘person’ of the Trinity has a name and his name is Jesus Christ.”¹⁸ Moreover, it illumines how God can “become” in Christ and yet remain ontologically constant, since the incarnate life of the Son is simply God enacting in time his eternally self-constituted identity: “he is not changed on an ontological level by this experience for the simple reason that his being, from eternity, is determined as a being-for this event.”¹⁹

Lest we confuse such historicism with full-blown Hegelianism, McCormack clarifies that there remains a distinction between God’s being-in-act in eternity and the same being-in-act in time.²⁰ The Trinity “is complete” apart from creation, which is the consequence of God’s free, pre-historical act, not the result of a historical process. This is true because “God is already in pre-temporal eternity – *by way of anticipation* – that which he would become in time.”²¹ The second person of the Trinity is “constituted by the anticipation of union with the humanity of Christ.”²² In other words, on the one hand, it is the eternal decision rather than the temporal execution of that decision that determines God’s being. On the other hand, this self-constitutive act of election regards what “will” happen in time, and thus the *Logos incarnandus* is simply the eternal form of what is, in temporal translation, Jesus Christ. The Son’s eternal identity-in-act proceeds to his becoming flesh as one continuous motion, from anticipation to fulfillment.

McCormack elaborates on this theme in his exposition of Barth’s doctrine of reconciliation. Seeking “to bring the obedience of the Son in time and his obedience in eternity into the closest possible relationship,” Barth had spoken of the Son’s outer and inner “moments” of obedience, which concern “human comprehension of a single moment in the divine life.”²³ Within this perspective, the Son as eternally self-constituted is

18 Ibid., 100.

19 Ibid., 98.

20 Ibid., 99-100.

21 Ibid., 100.

22 Ibid., 104.

23 “Divine Impassibility or Simply Divine Constancy? Implications of Karl Barth’s Later Christology for Debates over Impassibility,” in *Divine Impassibility and the*

“already” what he “will” be in his enfleshment. Since he is constituted by the eternal decision for his incarnate mission, “the “mystery” of the incarnation is finally the mystery of God’s own deity.”²⁴ The Son’s temporal human existence emerges as “the outworking of an eternal humility that is truly *essential* to God,” and thus “the Son in time perfectly “corresponds” to the Son in eternity.”²⁵ The purchase of this approach consists in its capacity to show that the incarnation neither alienates nor mythologizes the divine nature. In light of a commitment to impassibility and immutability, the fathers tended to view the incarnation as strange, new and ineffable. Cyril of Alexandria, for example, affirmed the Son’s eternal unchangeability and his appropriation of mutable human life as sheer paradox. Barth’s theological ontology, according to McCormack, charts another course in that majesty and humility, command and obedience, become intrinsic to the trinitarian life.

The eternal humility of the Son has consequences for how McCormack deals with Christ’s ontological and psychological constitution. Although Barth maintains an Alexandrian commitment to Christ’s single-subjectivity, McCormack stresses that he eschews the Docetic tendency to conceive the Word as using the human flesh as a mere instrument. He thus treats the *man* Jesus as “a thinking, willing, “performative agent” who has an independent *power of action*.”²⁶ According to McCormack there are three reasons why this need not compromise Christ’s divine identity.²⁷ First, Barth construes the hypostatic union in historicist terms without denying the ontological priority of the Son. The union is a process in which the Son continually gives Jesus “being and existence in

Mystery of Human Suffering (ed. James F. Keating & Thomas Joseph White; Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2009), 162. Compare “The Actuality of God,” 219-22, and *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 219-29.

24 “Divine Impassibility or Simply Divine Constancy?,” 163.

25 “Divine Impassibility or Simply Divine Constancy?,” 170-1, 173. Compare “The Actuality of God,” 233.

26 *Ibid.*, 169.

27 *Ibid.*, 174-8.

his own being and existence” “in the form of a history.” Second, in light of the first clarification, McCormack communicates a Barthian doctrine of *genus tapeinoticum* (or kenosis): “The only act of the Son of God in relation to his humanity is the act in which he gives it existence... All subsequent acts of the God-man made possible by *this singular act* are acts performed by the man Jesus.” Again, while “the man Jesus” becomes “the performative agent” of the “divine-human unity,” the pre-temporal Son remains the initial subject, the author of the “*singular act*.” Third and finally, since the Son’s free and eternal constitution bears the character of humility, this kenotic act is precisely what accords with his pre-temporal being. Insofar as “the modality of receptivity” constitutes God’s eternity, “the historical enfleshment is simply the actualization in history of that which God has determined for himself from eternity and which, therefore, is already in him.” In sum, although his formulations are “a complex way of describing a *single* subject,” McCormack insists that his Christology remains Alexandrian in that it affirms one performative agent who is both human and divine.

At this point we can finally appreciate the manner in which McCormack perceives Barth’s thought as a resource for a uniquely Reformed concept of kenosis.²⁸ When Barth rejected the doctrine of kenosis, he reacted against the nineteenth century German kenoticism which implied that God’s becoming and human life were alien to the divine nature. In view of his mature theological ontology and Christology, however, Barth provides grounds for retrieval. As McCormack explains,

it would be in complete accord with the eternal humility of the Son which characterizes his eternal relation to the Father to express itself through a sovereignly willed receptivity vis-à-vis the human nature to be assumed. Complete and total receptivity towards everything that comes to him in and through his human nature – that, I want to suggest, is the meaning of *kenosis*, and that is why *kenosis* entails no divestment of anything proper to deity.²⁹

28 “Karl Barth’s Christology as a Resource for a Reformed Version of Kenoticism,” *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 8, no. 3 (July 2006): 248ff.

29 *Ibid.*, 250.

The primordial receptivity of the Son grounds the incarnation, the initial act of receiving a human nature, as well as the “willed non-use of certain attributes *in relation to* the human nature,” which allows the man Jesus to be the one performative agent of the divine-human being. Therefore, when the God who is essentially kenotic by virtue of his eternal covenantal decree executes his kenotic plan in the incarnate life of the Son, he does not negate or displace his divine nature. On the contrary, he simply enacts in time his true, self-actualized being. Moreover, since this concrete revelation occurs in the life of the divine-*human* one, Jesus Christ not only redeems us as our representative but manifests the truth of our human being: “insofar as true humanity is realized only in the *act* of faith and obedience, ‘covenantal ontology’ is actualistic on the human side as well.”³⁰ In this sense, McCormack affirms, Barth advocates a Christocentric form of the analogy of being. For as God determines himself in the act of kenotic love, so we constitute our true selves in the act of kenotic response.

III. PROBLEMS WITH THE POST-METAPHYSICAL PROJECT

McCormack considers the philosophical substructures of traditional Christian theology to be epistemologically and metaphysically inadequate. In his estimation, the notion of God as infinite being and pure act is an abstraction that cannot account for how God actually is as we encounter him in his self-revelation in Jesus Christ. To a certain extent, McCormack’s project is an admirable one. He prioritizes the economy of salvation to which Scripture witnesses, and with much of the Protestant tradition stemming back to Luther, he discerns that philosophical preconceptions can thwart attentive engagement with this economy. But can McCormack’s post-metaphysical theology and kenoticism serve as a cogent alternative? I will now proceed to point out what I view as serious

30 “Grace and being,” 108-9.

problems with McCormack’s approach, seeking to establish that it does not coherently and compellingly transcend the presuppositions of the received tradition of Christian theology. First, I will address various issues relating to his theological ontology and Christology. Second, I will situate McCormack’s project within the unfortunate trajectories characteristic of late modern theology more generally.

The first problem concerns the relation between divine being and contingent existence. McCormack seeks to overcome the substantialist paradigm by asserting that God’s being is the result of a decision that is free and contingent yet truly self-constituting. But can he avoid positing an abstract distinction between the *necessary* God as free elector and the triune God of love as the *contingent* consequence of free decision? McCormack argues that this distinction need not constitute a concrete separation, since election is eternal and thus contingently necessary:

God may indeed be said to exist necessarily, but *how* he exists, how his being is structured, is (I am suggesting) a function of his will and decision...The only thing that is absolutely necessary for God is existence itself but such a consideration may not be abstracted from the decision in which God gives to himself his own being – and then played off against that which is contingently necessary for him. To think in this way is to snap back into the logic of a pre-critical metaphysics of ‘pure being’³¹

Has McCormack really overcome abstraction here? What could it possibly mean to affirm that God’s “existence itself” is necessary, other than to contrast it with the posterior, freely chosen *how*, the “contingently necessary” mode of such existence? On the assumption that the necessity of divine being means nothing if we cannot distinguish it from the form which proceeds from a decision that might not have been, it seems to me that logically speaking McCormack replaces a metaphysics of infinite triune being with an absolute theological voluntarism. Consider his concession that “A statement which takes the form ‘*God* would be God without us’ is

31 “Seek God where he may be found,” 67.

a true statement and one whose truth must be upheld at all costs."³² While he denies that we can say anything specific about what this God would actually be without us (for example, the Trinity), how could McCormack logically avoid the distinction between God's necessary existence as such and his contingent existence constituted in a free act? Herein lays the problem with his post-metaphysical approach: by reducing God as we know him to the realm of the "contingently necessary," all that remains of divine being, in the sense of what constitutes his necessary, could-not-have-been-otherwise existence, is pure, indeterminate will.³³ Perhaps the agnostic voluntarism that McCormack associates with Calvin's doctrine of double predestination lurks in the background of his own system. And perhaps this is inevitable whenever one attempts to propound an account of divine being as constituted in a contingent act.

A second problem concerns the relation of God to the created order. While McCormack claims to "preserve the ontological distinction between God and the human,"³⁴ he does not appear to address the extent to which his approach undermines the transcendence of the immanent Trinity and, by direct consequence, the utter gratuity of creation and redemption. If God is eternally constituted in relation to created history, does God not depend on such history for his very being? And would this not undermine the basic biblical notion that creation and redemption are pure gifts? McCormack seems to think that once we distinguish the divine decision from its temporal outworking, we safeguard post-metaphysical theology from radical historicism. God "will" enact such a decision in the economy, but the event of self-constitution occurs eternally as logically prior, and thus the Only Begotten precedes his human existence as the *Son-whose-identity-is-constituted-eternally-as-the-one-to-become-flesh-for-our-sake*. The problem with this qualification is that God's self-

32 Ibid., 76.

33 Compare Paul D. Molnar, "Can the Electing God Be God Without Us? Some Implications of Bruce McCormack's Understanding of Barth's Doctrine of Election for the Doctrine of the Trinity," in *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology* (ed. Michael T. Dempsey; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 63-90.

34 *Orthodox and Modern*, 260.

constituting decision is still bound up with the contingent, mutable order, for the God we know in Jesus Christ is who he is only by virtue of his chosen orientation toward fallen created beings.³⁵ As long as this remains the case, then the God whom we worship—the eternally self-actualized God—cannot logically be the author of the economy by sheer grace.³⁶ If that which truly renders God to be the sort of God we know him to be requires a historical enactment, or even an eternal anticipation thereof, then our history, with all of its contingencies, is necessary for the being of the Trinity as the historical condition in which God determines himself. Created history, in that case, cannot be the result of the Trinity’s utterly gratuitous act.

It seems to me that McCormack’s rejection of traditional accounts of divine being vis-à-vis contingent, created history presupposes that the very concept of divine revelation demands that God’s identity be determined in the act of revealing. But this creates an unjustified dichotomy. For instance, McCormack claims that if God’s identity is already established prior to the eternal act of election, then Jesus as Redeemer “tells us nothing about who or what the Logos is in and for himself,” and this undermines our confession of Jesus’ deity.³⁷ I would suggest, however, that this line of reasoning follows only on McCormack’s own voluntaristic premise. If divine freedom is prior to divine essence, as is logically the case for McCormack, then only the choices of God that are self-constituting can be seen as revelatory. Otherwise God-in-himself recedes into the agnostic abyss of arbitrary will. But if one accepts the classical position that the

35 McCormack responds to this objection by stating, “Only that is ‘essential’ to God, and therefore ‘constitutive’ of the divine being, which God has determined *himself* to be, not what he has determined the world to be – as the ‘space’ in which he becomes what he chose to be” (“Seek God where he may be found,” 68-70). Here I think he misses the point of his critics. If God’s identity emerges in relation to the created order, even only as the “space” within which he freely determines himself, his being as we know it remains inextricably dependent upon our world. Kevin Hector comes closer to admitting this when he calls creation “contingently necessary” for God’s being (“God’s Triunity and Self-Determination,” 46).

36 Compare. David Bentley Hart’s argument in *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 2003), 155ff.

37 “Grace and being,” 97, cf. 99.

infinite triune God is fully what he is and ever will be *ad intra*, then the contingent quality of the *ad extra* by no means undermines its character as true divine revelation. On the contrary, the freedom of the immanent Trinity is his freedom to be himself, both immanently and (contingently) economically.³⁸ As Joseph L. Mangina points out, one can affirm that “God is who he is in his act of revelation, in his covenant relation to the world,” without affirming that “God becomes who he is *through* this relation.”³⁹

The problems with McCormack’s theological ontology spill over into his Christology. The Alexandrian-Chalcedonian tradition affirmed that the primal and continuous single-subject, the one who is intrinsically divine and contingently human, is the divine ὑπόστασις (hypostasis or person in the sense of concrete instance of being) who eternally proceeds from the Father. This remained non-negotiable despite ongoing confusion over the implications of the one divine ὑπόστασις being fully human and thus having two natures, energies, wills, and so on. Hence, although Cyril of Alexandria employed imprecise, conflicting language which Chalcedon sought to rectify, in retrospect he still emerged as a champion of Christological orthodoxy because he grasped that it is the divine *who* in contrast to the *what*, the consubstantial *someone*, not the principle *by which*, who is the object of Christian devotion. If the continuous singular subject or ὑπόστασις was other than the ὑπόστασις of the Word, then the Church’s thought and practice, its habit of treating the man Jesus himself as consubstantial with the Father, would no longer make sense.

While McCormack appreciates the basic single-subjective impulse safeguarded by Alexandrian Christology, he lambasts the *de facto* Docetism that he thinks continually crops up in the tradition. McCormack

38 Compare Paul D. Molnar, *Divine Freedom and the Doctrine of the Immanent Trinity: In Dialogue with Karl Barth and Contemporary Theology* (London: T & T Clark, 2002), and Molnar, “The Trinity, Election, and God’s Ontological Freedom: A Response to Kevin Hector,” in *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology* (ed. Michael T. Dempsey; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 47-62.

39 Joseph L. Mangina, *Karl Barth: Theologian of the Christian Witness* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 138.

does maintain that Christ is one subject, but for him this subject is not the eternal Word. Besides the initial kenotic act, the independent performative agent “of the divine-human unity” is the man Jesus. But this raises a question that McCormack never coherently answers: If we ascribe performative agency to the man, and this is meant to contrast the ongoing subjectivity of the eternal Word, how does this not entail that the ὑπόστασις, the *someone* of Christ throughout his mission, is a human rather than a divine ὑπόστασις? In creating ambiguity on this point, McCormack undermines the most basic conviction of pro-Alexandrian and indeed pro-Chalcedonian Christology. When read in context, even the most minimalistic reading of Chalcedon’s Definition excludes the possibility of identifying the continuous “one and the same” Lord Jesus Christ as a human ὑπόστασις.

Of course, McCormack’s express goal is a noble one: to affirm that the incarnate Son leads an authentically human life. But within Alexandrian-Chalcedonian rationality, an insistence that the Word is the singular ὑπόστασις need not *ipso facto* negate Jesus human particularity. On the contrary, for Cyril and the Chalcedonians the miracle of the incarnation was precisely the event in which the Word became a particular instance of human nature through himself, that is, not by joining himself with an already concretely personalized human being but by “in-personalizing” human nature within his divine ὑπόστασις.⁴⁰ On this view, the man Jesus indeed has performative agency, but that very performative agency belongs to the singular ὑπόστασις of the divine Word. Where, then, does

40 The origin of the post-Chalcedonian doctrine of ἀνυπόστασις/ἐνυπόστασις (anhypostasis/enhypostasis) is complicated. But when one reads the writings of Cyril and other documents that contextualize the Chalcedonian Definition, there is no question that the judgment internal to this doctrine is logically integral to premodern dogmatic Christology. On the one hand, the humanity that the Son took on cannot be spoken of as a concrete personal reality, which would lead to the Nestorian notion of union as a conjoining of two concrete agents. On the other, this by no means negates the “personality” of Christ’s humanity in the sense that he exists as a concrete human being with a capacity for human action and passion. The point is that Christ’s human personality was never seen as its own individualized instance of human nature (ἀνυπόστασις) but a nature miraculously personalized through (ἐνυπόστασις) the person (ὑπόστασις) of the Word.

this leave McCormack's opposition? It is difficult to understand how McCormack and other revisionists think they can accuse the tradition of Docetism, radically revise its basic premise, and then insist that they have maintained orthodox values.⁴¹ Perhaps there lurks an underlying dualism, the characteristically modern supposition that God and humanity are ontological antagonists, which prevents theologians from appreciating the miracle in which the Word, without setting aside his primal hypostatic identity, became the subject of an authentic human existence.

It appears to me, then, that McCormack's Christology is just one more variation of the less-than-compelling kenoticisms of modernity past.⁴² To pursue the point, it may be helpful to situate McCormack within two general trends in late modern kenoticism. As S.W. Sykes summarizes, on the one hand, there is an "old-style kenosis" beginning with the nineteenth century Germans, which "felt obliged to speak of a limiting of the divinity so that the humanity of Christ might be the more genuine."⁴³ Insofar as McCormack speaks of the "willed non-use of certain attributes *in relation to* the human nature," he embraces an "old-style kenosis." He may differ from the Germans in that no attributes are abrogated, but still he appears

41 To take another example, evangelical theologian Roger Olson defends certain kenoticists (e.g. Clark Pinnock and Stanley Grenz) who emphasize the integrity of Christ as a human person. Against critics worried about how this might undermine the divinity, Olson claims that such proposals merely supplement rather than oppose Chalcedonian orthodoxy, (Olson, "Christology," in *The Westminster Handbook to Evangelical Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 156-8. But as is obvious to those immersed in the Alexandrian and pro-Chalcedonian texts, a failure to affirm unequivocally that the Word is the singular ὑπόστασις of Christ is clearly to undermine the basic insights of premodern Christological orthodoxy.

42 The following critical discussion does not necessarily pertain to the myriad of theologies that employ "kenosis" language. Recent philosophical reappropriations of kenotic Christology, for example, lay outside the scope of this article (see, for example, C. Stephen Evans, ed. *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), and Oliver Crisp, *Divinity and Humanity: The Incarnation Reconsidered* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 118-153). While I do have reservations, many analytic theological approaches are more cautious and sophisticated than the German and English systematic trajectories at which I aim my critique.

43 S.W. Sykes, "The Strange Persistence of Kenotic Christology," in *Being and Truth: Essays in Honour of John Macquarrie* (ed. Alistair Kee & Eugene T. Long; London: SCM, 1986), 359. See pages 351-60 for a history of development of modern kenoticism.

to maintain the dualistic premise: something of God must be suspended or unused in order that the man Jesus can have authentic “performative agency.” How is one to understand such a theory except as a sort of reverse Eutychianism whereby the concrete humanity of Jesus swallows up the subjective continuity of the eternal Word? Like other forms of old-style kenoticism, McCormack’s theory seems to teeter between outright unorthodoxy and incoherence. On the other hand, as Sykes notes, there is a “new-style kenosis” that remains popular among both German and English-speaking theologians, which “speaks of Christ as the revelation and affirmation of God’s nature.”⁴⁴ McCormack recapitulates this form of kenoticism in his own Barthian revisionist way. The Son can “empty out” his divine agency in the initial act of incarnation without self-alienation because, from eternity, he is constituted in humility, in the decision to be for us in this kenotic act and the subsequent shape of Jesus’ human life. This kind of kenoticism is surely a more promising direction, and as I will argue below, Scripture warrants that some form of it ought to be retained. Like many other new-style kenoticisms, however, McCormack’s version tends to compromise the transcendent nature of the immanent Trinity.⁴⁵

The basic problem with McCormack’s doctrine of kenosis is the problem of late modern Christology in general: it tends toward a Christological reductionism whereby a combined focus on unity and humanity excludes the primacy and continuity of Christ’s divine ὑπόστασις. The irony is that, at the most basic level, such approaches remain indebted to the Docetic paradigm, the very thing they set out to supplant. For beneath both ancient Docetisms which undermine the human and the modern christologies which truncate God lay a Nestorian-like dualism that cannot apprehend the relation of God and human being without curtailing one or the other. In light of an insufficient account of the relation between infinite Being

44 This turn to theology proper is by no means novel. Indeed, Gottfried Thomasius himself had already tried to root kenosis in a re-thought doctrine of the Trinity (Sykes, “The Strange Persistence of Kenotic Christology,” 353-6).

45 For a penetrating critique of new-style kenoticism, see Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), 22-5. Compare Sykes, “The Strange Persistence of Kenotic Christology,” 59-60.

and finite beings, neither the Docetists nor the modernists hold together the mystery of Christ, the eternal ὑπόστασις of the Son taking on and living his own, concrete human life for us and our salvation.

At this point it may be helpful to locate McCormack's theology within the trajectory of late modern theological thought conceived even more broadly. The theologians of the received Christian tradition, and arguably Barth himself, consistently maintained two things with regards to the immanent Trinity's relation to created history. First, in light of the biblical witness to God's otherness and creation's non-necessity, creation and redemption are wholly contingent upon the triune God's freedom. Since there is absolutely no necessity intrinsic to the created order, even the incarnation and human life of Jesus cannot determine God's immutable triune identity. Second, although creation and redemption are wholly contingent and gratuitous, the Holy Trinity fittingly creates and redeems. He is the sort of God who is able to do what Scripture says he has in fact done, that is, to speak a finite other into being by participation in himself, and to redeem and elevate such participation by way of the missions of the incarnate Son and outpoured Spirit. The triune love subsisting apart from us appropriately expresses such love in free covenantal love for us, and God does so precisely as the infinite God who remains immutable and impassible. In other words, God's freedom includes his freedom to reveal himself in, to, and for the other precisely as the God who eternally is.

Late modern theology has not remained satisfied with these two affirmations. If God's acts *ad extra* are only fitting, that is, truly self-revealing but absolutely contingent and thus by no means self-constituting, then it seems that God is not bound to us as many would like him to be. The scandal of transcendence prompts an attempt to bring God down to earth, defining his existence in terms of a delimitation of his very being in relation to created history. In McCormack's case the justification for such a path proceeds from the fear of "abstraction," a fear concomitant with an utter rejection of classical theism's analogy of being. But whenever one conceives divine transcendence in a manner that denies created

beings' graced participation in the Infinite, one inevitably begins to view metaphysics in any form as necessarily obscuring God's economic self-disclosure and thus as an exercise in intellectual idolatry. This is perhaps why Barthian revisionists have difficulty distinguishing between deistic modern natural religion and premodern Christian philosophy. As I have sought to show, however, one cannot avoid abstractions while coherently speaking of divine being and grace in relation to creation. Indeed, if McCormack wants to be consistent, he would have to collapse the immanent God into our economic encounter. This is the logical consequence of post-metaphysical thinking, which some trinitarian theologians have admitted and embraced.⁴⁶ Of course, McCormack is not willing to go this far. He attempts to salvage the immanent Trinity by locating the self-determining act in the eternal, to-be-temporally-enacted realm. As we have seen, this does not neutralize the problems but compromises divine transcendence and freedom just the same.

In sum, perhaps post-metaphysical theology too readily appropriates the characteristic values of late modernity. Perhaps the drive to think beyond the metaphysical formulations of the past have sprung forth from a coveting of the profane rather than from their inadequacy vis-à-vis Scripture. Too many modern theological quests concern the search for a figure who is with us on earth such that he is no longer above us in heaven, a *ὑπόστασις* who is identified with his earthly individuality such that his eternal procession has no logical priority, a Trinity whose covenantal boundedness means the abnegation of eternally self-sufficient love. But the vast majority of Christian thinkers have aimed to resist historicism just as rigorously as they seek to transcend dualism; the gospel revels in the scandal of transcendence just as that of particularity. Too many late modern theologies seek to overcome the dualists while insufficiently safeguarding the faith from modern historicist mythology. In this way they do not advance Christian discourse ahead of the premodern tradition,

46 For example, see Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1991).

a tradition which maintained a proper place for ineffable paradox and thus navigated through inadequate dualisms and monisms, neither of which did justice to the miracle of the kenosis of the superabundant Word.

IV. THE PROSPECT OF CHRISTIAN KENOTICISM

If McCormack's modern kenoticism lacks scriptural intelligibility, then what should we do with the language of kenosis? At this point I would like to clarify that I am not arguing that there is no need for creative expansion of the received tradition. Exploring biblical and doctrinal resources in order to develop a more robust theology that includes a doctrine of kenosis may indeed result in a more adequate grasp and communication of the second of the tradition's two major recognitions: that creation and incarnation, precisely in their kenotic depths, are fitting for a God of infinite triune love. Evangelical theologians should continue to build upon the tradition by creatively showing how the kenotic shape of incarnation constitutes a fitting and true manifestation of God.⁴⁷ The fathers and scholastics were not always clear that God does not merely hide himself in humility in order to reveal his glorious self in resurrection, ascension and triumphal second coming. I would suggest, however, that when we seek to construct a doctrine of kenosis, we must expound the fittingness of the incarnation while properly distinguishing the eternal Creator and created history. For all forms of kenoticism which obscure the conceptual difference between God and the economy of salvation end up making the gratuitous character of the Trinity's creative, covenantal love incoherent.

Here we might take Thomas Aquinas as our guide. In the first article

47 Two non-evangelical theologians who I think have done this more or less successfully, repudiating both Gnostic and Hegelian solutions, are Hans Urs Von Balthasar (*Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter* (trans. Aidan Nicholas; San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990), 23-35, and David Bentley Hart (*The Beauty of the Infinite*, 155ff., 357ff.).

of the initial question in his *Treatise on the Incarnation*, he illuminates the appropriateness of the incarnation in both theological and anthropological terms, all the while maintaining the infinite disproportion between Creator and creature.⁴⁸ Without denying that “the mystery of the Incarnation was not completed through God being changed in any way,” Thomas provides at least two reasons why the incarnate life of the Son befits God. First, insofar as goodness bears an intrinsically diffusive character, God fittingly communicates his infinite goodness in the highest manner in the Word’s assumption of human life for man’s salvation. Second, on the side of human being, “it is fitting that a creature which by nature is mutable, should not always be in one way.” For “as the creature began to be, although it had not been before, so likewise, not having been previously united to God in Person, it was afterwards united to Him.”

In this passage Thomas does what many kenoticists seek to do, only without supplanting the metaphysical tradition that safeguards divine transcendence and creation’s gratuity. On the one hand, the incarnation is “new” as a contingent act of sheer grace, adding nothing to the divine being per se but rather a salvific effect for creation. On the other, there is something intrinsic to God and human being that renders the hypostatic union fitting. While Thomas employs neither trinitarian nor kenotic language, one could rather easily exploit the same paradigm of thought by rooting the self-emptying of the Son in the self-giving nature of the Trinity and giftedness of created being.⁴⁹ But as Thomas would have known well, one can only avoid the pitfalls of modern theology by making clear that the act’s fitness does not do away with its contingent, mysterious quality. If the immutable divine Son lives humanly as a consequence of a free, miraculous act, and if the concrete reality of his human life, therefore, does not determine or change his eternal identity, then whatever we predicate of the Son *ad extra*, we cannot escape the conceptual distinction between the immanent Trinity, including the λόγος ἄσαρκος, and how God freely

48 *Summa Theologica* (trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province; London: Burns Oates & Washborne, 1911), III.1.1.

49 For example, see Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 357-8.

yet fittingly and truly manifests himself in the economy of salvation. The subject matter of the kenosis hymn in Philippians 2, therefore, does not permit us to conflate the immanent and economic order such that one term and concept could univocally encompass what it means to be the eternal Trinity, the Son incarnate, and the body of Christ.⁵⁰ On the contrary, kenosis can function as a useful metaphor for the triune God's transcendentally self-giving life, the free expression thereof in Christ, and the Church's kenotic participation therein, *only insofar as* it does not undermine the infinite disproportion between Creator and creature, the utter self-sufficiency of the former and the utter giftedness of the latter in accordance with the whole of Scripture's testimony.

This becomes even more necessary in view of the lingering effects of sin. Whatever "self-emptying" might signify in the Godhead, we must beware a kind of "first-Adam" anthropomorphism. What in eternity might best be spoken of as an infinite excess of hypostatic self-gift manifests itself in rather different terms within the sin-stained economy. Theological kenosis, in this sense, differs from kenosis in its salvific trajectory, with all the self-sacrifice, humiliation, suffering and death that it entails. Theologians should recognize, against the various anthropomorphic trinitarianisms, that eternal relations of origination constitute a unity that is wholly other than the "otherness" of alienation that fallen humanity experiences within created history. We must resist a theology which consists of, as Barth put it, "the image of our own unreconciled humanity projected onto deity."⁵¹

V. CONCLUSION

If we are to continue to employ the language of kenosis while avoiding the pitfalls of modern theology, I would suggest that we pay closer attention

50 Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 29.

51 *Church Dogmatics* (trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley & Thomas F. Torrance; New York: T & T Clark, 2009), IV/1, 186.

to the paradoxical Christological phrases that the Fathers and ancient laity held dear. As Cyril of Alexandria once doxologically proclaimed:

He who was above all creation was in our human condition; the invisible one was made visible in the flesh; he who is from the heavens...was in the likeness of earthly things; the immaterial one could be touched; he who is free in his own nature came in the form of a slave; he who blesses all creation became accursed; he who is all righteousness was numbered among the transgressors; life itself came in the appearance of death.⁵²

Insofar as the incarnation and hypostatic union are utterly unique, a contingent miracle that resists transposition into a human principle, perhaps we ought not hurry past this paradoxical mode of thought for the sake of conforming to more general criteria of rationality. Perhaps we ought to think of kenosis primarily as a metaphor signaling the ineffable mystery of an apocalyptic, salvifically-oriented miracle, the mystery in which the infinitely proceeding Son freely pours himself into his economic mission, while simultaneously remaining transcendently full, for the Church and her salvation. In this sense God's kenosis is the human form that the immutable Son's superabundant life takes when he freely chooses to share redemptively his infinitely self-giving life with impoverished creatures. To quote Cyril once more, it concerns the "mystical, profound, and truly wonderful" work in and through the person of Jesus Christ.⁵³

52 *On the Unity of Christ* (trans. McGuckin; Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 61.

53 *Ibid.*, 105.



Christian Socialism? A Critical Evaluation of Christian Socialist Theology

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KEYWORDS:

| Christian Socialism | Social Gospel | Liberation Theology |
| Politics | Political Theology | Eisegesis |

ABSTRACT:

Despite the more obvious associations between Christianity and right-wing politics, left-wing Christianity does exist in various forms, one of which is the Christian Socialism of Britain. This paper draws on British Christian Socialism from the late-Nineteenth to mid-Twentieth Century – a formative period, following from the paternalistic “Christian Socialism” of Maurice and others, coinciding with the formation of the British Labour Party, and leading up to the formation of the Christian Socialist Movement (now Christians on the Left) in 1960. Christian Socialism is shown to be drawn from Christian theological thought, including Scripture, church teaching, and the sacraments. Christian Socialism’s key concepts – equality, collectivism and democracy – are drawn from the core concept of human brotherhood, itself drawn from the notion of God’s universal Fatherhood. However, this foundation of Christian Socialism in theological thought is deeply flawed, the result of misinterpretation, misapplication and eisegesis. Biblical warnings against the wresting and twisting of Scripture and against the preaching of any false gospel are therefore to be taken into account, indicating that Christian Socialism may not be Christian at all.

INTRODUCTION

The idea of Christian Socialism can appear to be an aberration when Christianity in the US and UK – particularly evangelical Christianity – is more readily associated with conservative politics. White evangelicals in America form a solid base for the Republican Party, and hold to a variety of conservative political positions.¹ This political partnership has led to the notion within British politics that Christians are necessarily right-wing. While, for example, research by Theos indicates that there is not a comparable Religious Right operating in the UK, several instances are given of where the media and others have made the assumption that such a phenomenon does exist; a commentator in the *New Statesman*, to take one, argues that “the Christian movements both here and in the USA clearly feel most at home on the right”, because “the agendas of the Christian church and the political right-wing make comfortable bed-fellows. You know the kind of thing: anti-abortion, anti-unions, opposed to same-sex marriage and tough on crime”.²

Left-wing Christianity nevertheless does exist. It cuts across denominational and cultural lines, from the primarily Roman Catholic liberation theology of Latin America, to the progressive evangelicalism and “red-letter” Christianity of Sojourners in the US, to the largely Anglican and Nonconformist Christian Socialism of Britain. Neither is this left-wing Christianity a secular phenomenon with a religious façade; those who practice it draw from the Bible, church teaching, and the sacraments – even if, as we shall see, these things are often misinterpreted and misapplied.

It is F.D. Maurice and his circle, including Charles Kingsley, Thomas Ludlow and others, who established the term “Christian Socialism” in

1 D.K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford, 2010), p.193 and p.206.

2 A. Walton, A. Hatcher and N. Spencer, *Is there a 'Religious Right' Emerging in Britain?* (London, 2013), pp.11-13; A.Z. Williams, ‘Faith should not dictate political affiliation’, *New Statesman*; <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/06/god-debate-faith-grayling>; accessed 14th Dec 2015.

1849.³ These early Christian Socialists were, however, more instinctively conservatives, and “much of the first Christian Socialist writings seem no more than pious, paternalist but benevolent Toryism”.⁴ Maurice, for example, “held traditional views about social rank, monarchy and aristocracy and was opposed to unions”.⁵ The concern of this group was, despite their chosen name, not to espouse socialism but to find “what Christianity had to offer the *challenge* of socialism”.⁶ It was instead the group’s successors in the late-Nineteenth and early-Twentieth Century who espoused a truly left-wing Christianity. This latter period therefore stands as a formative one in the history of Christian Socialism: following the paternalism of Maurice and others, coinciding with the formation of the British Labour Party, and leading towards the formation of the Christian Socialist Movement (now Christians on the Left) in 1960.

For that reason the doctoral research from which this paper is drawn was focused on this period in seeking to discover and systematise the ideological make-up of Christian Socialism. The research was based on a number of key individuals from the period in question, those who espoused Christian Socialism and left enough written material in the form of books, pamphlets and transcripts of speeches to allow a hermeneutical analysis of their ideological views. As some of these figures are not widely known it is helpful to introduce them at the outset:

- John Clifford (1836-1923) – Baptist minister, President of the Christian Socialist League.
- James Keir Hardie (1856-1915) – Labour politician, often considered the founder of the Labour Party.
- Stewart Headlam (1847-1924) – Anglican minister, founded the Guild of St Matthew.

3 C. Bryant, *Possible Dreams: A Personal History of the British Christian Socialists* (London, 1997), p.51.

4 *Ibid.*, p.41.

5 A. Wilkinson, *Christian Socialism: From Scott Holland to Tony Blair* (Oxford, 1998), p.18.

6 Bryant, *Possible Dreams*, p.41. Emphasis added.

- Henry Scott Holland (1847-1918) – Anglican minister, founded the Christian Social Union.
- Samuel Keeble (1853-1946) – Wesleyan Methodist minister, founded the Wesleyan Methodist Union for Social Service.
- George Lansbury (1859-1940) – Labour politician, Labour Party leader 1932-5.
- Richard H. Tawney (1880-1962) – Labour political activist, economic historian.
- William Temple (1881-1944) – Anglican minister, successively Bishop of Manchester, Archbishop of York and Archbishop of Canterbury.
- Wilfred Wellock (1879-1972) – Labour politician, Independent Labour Party MP, Independent Methodist lay preacher.
- John Wheatley (1869-1930): Labour politician, founder of the Catholic Socialist Society.

These men, representing an array of denominations and social backgrounds, as well as being divided evenly between ministers of religion and those who operated primarily within the political sphere, constitute a representative sample of Christian Socialists in this period.

Christian Socialism is distinct from other forms of socialism – Marxism or Fabianism, for example – insofar as it is derived primarily from moral or ethical standards rather than scientific (it may be preferred, pseudo-scientific) ones, such as economics, eugenics or “laws” of history. It is also distinct, however, from other forms of ethical socialism, for it draws particularly from Christian thought. As one writer puts it, Christian Socialism is “rightly bracketed with other ‘ethical’ socialisms. But although it has fed from them and into them, it rests on unique foundations”.⁷ These foundations include the Bible, the historical and contemporary teaching of the church, and the example of the sacraments. We will examine each of these in turn, followed by a critique of the Christian Socialist interpretation from an evangelical perspective.

⁷ P. Bickley, *Building Jerusalem: Christianity and the Labour Party* (London, 2010), p.8.

THE BIBLE

Christian Socialist use of the Bible as a basis for their political beliefs was extensive. This section is therefore split into two, examining, firstly, Christian Socialism's core concept of brotherhood and, secondly, other proof texts advanced in favour of Christian Socialism.

(a) Brotherhood of Man

A key theme in Christian Socialist writing – indeed, the core concept which holds Christian Socialism together as a political ideology – is the brotherhood of man, drawn from the notion of God's universal Fatherhood. This idea is drawn in part from the teaching of Christ in the Gospel of Matthew: "But be ye not called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven".⁸ The Christian Socialist understood the Bible to teach, as George Lansbury put it, God's "Fatherhood and the consequent Brotherhood of man", and that they were sent forth with, in James Keir Hardie's words, a "Gospel [...] proclaiming all men sons of God and brethren one with another".⁹

This apparent teaching was used as a powerful argument against capitalism. Samuel Keeble identified "the great Christian principles of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man" as in tension with the inherent selfishness and individualism of capitalism. Competition, according to Keeble, "is contrary [...] to the teaching of the Christian religion, which [...] condemns selfishness, and demands that men love their neighbour as themselves. It is contrary, because Christianity

8 Matthew 23:8-9. Unless otherwise stated Scripture is quoted from the Holy Bible: King James Version. Quotations marked "ESV" are taken from the Holy Bible: English Standard Version.

9 Interview with Lansbury from the Christian Commonwealth Newspaper, 11 August 1915, London School of Economics and Political Science [LSE] archive, Lansbury/7 213; J.T. Leckie, *Socialism in Britain: From the Industrial Revolution to the Present Day* (London, 1972), p.106.

proclaims the brotherhood men”.¹⁰ John Wheatley made the point even more strongly in a letter to the *Glasgow Observer*, ‘A Catholic Defence of Socialism’, asking “in a society which is one of swindler versus the swindled, how can there be brotherly love?”¹¹ Capitalism therefore stood condemned, for it ignored and made impossible to practice the familial relations which the Bible declared existed between all people.

This negative argument – that capitalism was contrary to the brotherly existence urged by Scripture – was also accompanied by a positive one – that socialism was the system by which brotherly love could be practiced. According to Keeble, a “great cry of Socialism” was “for brotherhood – the most Christian of cries”. “The Socialist”, in Keeble’s opinion, “who demands brotherhood in industry is far nearer the mind of Christ than the economist who clamours for ‘free’ competition”.¹² This view was also expressed in the declaration of John Clifford’s Free Church Socialist League:

Believing that the principle of Brotherhood as taught by Jesus Christ cannot adequately be wrought out under existing industrial and commercial conditions, and that the faithful and commonplace application of this principle must result in the Socialization of all natural resources, as well as the instruments of production, distribution and exchange, the League exists to assist in the work of eliminating the former by building the latter Social Order.¹³

For the Christian Socialist, therefore, socialism is the natural and rightful outworking of Biblical Christianity; the Bible teaches that God is the Father, and socialism is that system whereby the people of the world, or of a particular society, can live as brothers and sisters.

The main defining features of the society envisaged by Christian Socialists were equality, co-operation and democracy. These are Christian

10 S.E. Keeble, *Industrial Day-Dreams: Studies in Industrial Ethics and Economics* (London, 1907 – original publication 1896), pp.17 and p.,214.

11 J. Hannan, *The Life of John Wheatley* (Nottingham, 1988), p.11.

12 Keeble, *Industrial Day-Dreams* ,p.151 and p.152.

13 S. Mayor, *The Churches and the Labour Movement* (London, 1967), p.203.

Socialism's key concepts, and each one is underpinned by the core concept of human brotherhood, itself derived from the universal Fatherhood of God. The concept of equality flows naturally from the concept of brotherhood, as William Temple explained:

Apart from faith in God there is really nothing to be said for the notion of human equality. Men do not seem to be equal in any respect, if we judge by the available evidence. But if all are children of one Father, then all are equal heirs of a status in comparison with which the apparent differences of quality and capacity are unimportant; in the deepest and most important of all – their relationship with God – all are equal.¹⁴

“Men are brothers, whether rich or poor, masters or men, high or low, white or coloured [*sic*]”, wrote Keeble. “They are equally the children of the heavenly Father.”¹⁵

The concept of co-operation in economic and industrial matters is also drawn from the concept of brotherhood, for those who were, on this interpretation, part of one family should work together rather than competing against each other. “A well-conducted family”, declared R.H. Tawney, “does not, when in low water, encourage some of its members to grab all they can, while leaving others to go short. On the contrary, it endeavours to ensure that its diminished resources shall be used to the best advantage in the interests of all”.¹⁶ Keeble agrees with this, writing that “if Christ came to teach anything, and if reason and God's Word have any validity, then all we are brethren, the human race is God's family, and mutual service is the only true law of human or industrial society”¹⁷

It may not be immediately obvious that the concept of democracy is drawn from the concept of brotherhood; if, however, democracy is viewed as that system which allows each individual to take part in the governance

14 W. Temple, *Christianity and the Social Order* (London, 1976 – original publication 1942), p.37.

15 S.E. Keeble, *Christian Responsibility for the Social Order* (London, 1922), p.261.

16 Wilkinson, *Christian Socialism*, p.105.

17 Keeble, *Industrial Day-Dreams*, p.200.

of society, then it makes sense from a perspective which views humanity as a family that each family member should have their say and their part in the political process. “Man is created for fellowship in the family of God”, argued Temple, “fellowship first with God, and through that with all God’s other children. And that is the primary test that must be applied to every system that is constructed and every change in the system that is proposed. Does it help us nearer towards the fullness and richness of personal fellowship?” From this Temple argued that democracy was the best system, for by including everybody in the political process it led to the greater expression of fellowship, and “gives the highest value, higher than any other political scheme to the personality and the personal relationships of all the citizens of the community”.¹⁸ We can see, therefore, that the key political concepts of Christian Socialism are all derived from a core concept which is primarily Biblical and theological in nature.

(b) Other proof texts

Apart from this core concept Christian Socialists appealed to a wide variety of Scriptural ideas and proof texts. Many of these, as well as the concept of brotherhood, were drawn from the teaching and example of Christ. One historian speaks of Christian Socialism as a “Christ-centred faith”; Keir Hardie went so far as to declare that “the impetus which drove me first of all into the Labour movement, and the inspiration which has carried me on in it, has been derived more from the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth, than from all other sources combined”.¹⁹ The view of Stewart Headlam was that “[a]ll those ideas which we now express vaguely under the terms solidarity, brotherhood, co-operation, socialism, seem to have

18 W. Temple, *The Church Looks Forward* (London, 1944), p.141 and p.143.

19 P. d’A Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival 1811-1914: Religion, Class, and Social Conscience in Late-Victorian England* (Princeton NJ, 1968), p.88; J. Keir Hardie, ‘Labour and Christianity: Is the Labour Movement against Christianity?’, in *Labour and Religion: by Ten Members of Parliament and Other Bodies* (London, 1910), p.49.

been vividly present in Jesus Christ's teaching".²⁰

Christ's Sermon on the Mount was a particular influence on Christian Socialists with "its message of hope for the poor and forgotten".²¹ Hardie, for example, declared: "Socialism is the application to industry of the teachings contained in the Sermon on the Mount", which is "a consistent and powerful argument against property".²² The teaching in the Sermon about Mammon was also influential for Christian Socialists, who attacked capitalism for enshrining the worship of Mammon, in the form of material wealth, rather than Christ. A journalist summarising a speech by George Lansbury reported: "Society was not based (he said) on the principle of Christ, but on the principle of money worship".²³

Christian Socialists pointed to other of Christ's denunciations of wealth; Headlam, for example, referring to the account of the rich man and Lazarus, argued that "the rich man was in Hell simply because he allowed the contrast between rich and poor to go on as a matter of course, day after day, without taking any pains to stop it".²⁴ This view is expounded by John Wheatley in *How the Miners are Robbed*, in which he imagines a trial of capitalists and those who have supported them. One of the witnesses called to give evidence before the magistrate on behalf of the capitalist accused is a clergyman:

Mag. – My dear sir, you are injuring Christianity by trying to explain away that on which it was founded. Did not its Divine Founder say – 'Woe to the rich, for you have your consolation.?'

20 S.D. Headlam, *The Meaning of the Mass: Five Lectures with Other Sermons and Addresses* (London, 1905), p.73.

21 G. Foote, *The Labour Party's Political Thought: A History* (London, 1997), p.44.

22 J. Keir Hardie, *Can a Man Be a Christian On a Pound a Week?* (Manchester, c.1905-10), pp.13-4 and p.3.

23 Newspaper cutting about Lansbury speaking at Llanelly, 1919, LSE archives, Lansbury/8 99.

24 Headlam, *Meaning of the Mass*, p.79; S.D. Headlam, *Christian Socialism – A Lecture: Fabian Tract No.42* (London, 1899), p.4.

Wit. – Yes, your honour; but I think He meant they should use their wealth properly.

Mag. – Why close your eyes to the fact that it is not the mismanagement of wealth, but the possession of it that is here condemned?²⁵

The parables were also employed as arguments for socialism. It was the parable of the sheep and the goats which, to Headlam, “seems to compel every Christian to be a socialist”.²⁶ Keeble made the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard into an argument for a government-mandated minimum wage, suggesting that, a denarius per day being a sufficient amount on which to live, each of the workers in the parable received a living wage, even those who had not been hired for a full day.²⁷ Christ was also, at times, viewed by the Christian Socialists as Himself a political revolutionary. For Headlam, Christ was “a radical reformer”, “a Socialistic carpenter” and a “revolutionary Socialist from Galilee”.²⁸ Lansbury viewed Christ as “the greatest revolutionary force of His times”, “the lonely Galilean – Communist, agitator, martyr – crucified as one who stirred up the people and set class against class”.²⁹

Other parts of Scripture, Old as well as New Testament, were advanced as part of the socialist cause. The words of Paul in 2 Thessalonians – “if any would not work, neither should he eat” – could be used to argue against provision for the unemployed; Christian Socialists reversed

25 J. Wheatley, *How the Miners are Robbed: The Duke in the Dock (startling court case)*, (Nottingham, 1973 – original publication 1907), p.17. Wheatley refers here to Luke 6:24 – “But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation.”

26 Headlam, *Meaning of the Mass*, p.83.

27 Keeble, *Industrial Day-Dreams*, p.246.

28 S.D. Headlam, *Priestcraft and Progress: Being Sermons and Lectures* (London, 1878), p.7; J.R. Orens, *Stewart Headlam's Radical Anglicanism: The Mass, the Masses, and the Music Hall* (Chicago IL, 2003), p.24. K. Leech, ‘Stewart Headlam, 1847-1924, and the Guild of St Matthew’, in M.B. Reckitt, ed., *For Christ and the People: Studies of Four Socialist Priests and Prophets of the Church of England* (London, 1968), p.78;

29 J. Schneer, *George Lansbury* (Manchester, 1990), p.1.

that interpretation by making the verse refer to a capitalist class which exploited the labouring class and lived without having to work. Such an argument was made by Headlam Hardie, Wheatley and Keeble.³⁰

Headlam and Hardie also pointed to the condemnation of the rich in the Epistle of James: “Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted [...] Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth”.³¹ One historian of the movement points to Paul’s description of “the body” in 1 Corinthians and its importance “to Christian Socialists with its image of the body where every part has a function and where the body prospers by mutual interdependence and fellowship”.³² Keeble, for one, declared the image to be “the pattern to society. This is how men are meant to dwell together on all the face of the earth”.³³

The Acts of the Apostles, in which Luke records that “all that believed were together, and had all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need”, were also used to argue for a collectivist, co-operative order of society.³⁴ In the words of Headlam: “The first Christians were, as you well know, in the simplest sense of the word communists – they put all their goods into a common fund and distribution was made to every man according to his need”.³⁵ For Hardie the Christians here were also “Communists”, while

30 Orens, *Headlam's Radical Anglicanism*, p.97; J. Keir Hardie, *Socialism and Christianity: Keir Hardie Library No.4* (London, 1907), p.5; J. Keir Hardie, *From Serfdom to Socialism* (London, 1907), p.39; Wheatley, *Miners*, p.17; Keeble, *Industrial Day-Dreams*, p.228 and p.245.

31 Headlam, *Socialist's Church*, p.59; J. Keir Hardie, *Can a Man be a Christian on a Pound a Week?* (Manchester, c.1905-10), p.3; Hardie, *Serfdom to Socialism*, p.39. The Biblical reference for the above is James 5:1-2a, 5.

32 Wilkinson, *Christian Socialism*, p.105. The passage in question is 1 Corinthians 12:20-26.

33 Keeble, *Christian Responsibility*, p.256.

34 Acts of the Apostles 2:44-5.

35 Headlam, *Meaning of the Mass*, p.29.

Temple describes the situation as “voluntary communism”.³⁶

The main arguments advanced from the Old Testament were drawn from the doctrine of creation and from the land laws given to Israel. Christian Socialism’s core concept of brotherhood is clearly linked to the idea of all people having been created equal by God, as has been explained in the context of Tawney’s thought: “Fundamental to Tawney was his belief that there was a common humanity created by God, each member of which is of equal worth”, and “for Tawney the doctrine of Creation meant that society must be based on the equal worth of all”.³⁷ Tawney viewed the consequences of capitalism as “an odious outrage on the image of God”.³⁸ The same argument was advanced by Wilfred Wellock, who declared that the issue of whether society should be capitalist or socialist “depends upon whether we are going to regard man as a beast or a soul, a collection of physical appetites or a spiritual being made in the image of God”.³⁹ Another implication of the doctrine of creation was that the land, being created by God, ought not to be privately or exclusively owned. Lansbury’s view was that “land was not made by man but by God, and belongs to the whole people, for the use of mankind and not for the profit of the idle few”.⁴⁰ Similarly, Wheatley told a working-class audience, that the “gifts of God” in creation “have been stolen from you”.⁴¹

Keeble makes just the same argument from the laws given to Israel regulating the use of land: “The Hebrew regulations concerning the Sabbatic year, land-debts, rural housing, the pledge, and the year of Jubilee, all declare that ‘the earth is the Lord’s’, and not the landlord’s, and they all aim at preserving the economic freedom of the worker and his

36 Hardie, *Can a Man be a Christian?*, p.11; Temple, *Christianity and Social Order*, p.47.

37 Wilkinson, *Christian Socialism*, 107; Bryant, *Possible Dreams*, p.197.

38 A. Wright, *R.H. Tawney* (Manchester, 1987), p.93.

39 W. Wellock, *Christian Communism: What It Is and Why It Is Necessary* (Manchester, 1921), p.10.

40 Newspaper article in the ‘Liverpool Daily Post’ on a speech made by Lansbury as Carnarvon, 18 September 1911, LSE archive, Lansbury/4 219.

41 I.S. Wood, ‘John Wheatley and Catholic Socialism’, in A.R. Morton, ed., *After Socialism? The Future of Radical Christianity* (Edinburgh, 1994), p.21.

family. There is no absolute property in land in the Bible".⁴² According to Headlam "a study of Hebrew polity shows that careful arrangements were made, by the Jubilee laws especially, to deal righteously with the land, to see that the whole community enjoyed its value".⁴³ Likewise, Hardie writes that "land could neither be sold outright nor held for more than a limited period as security for debt; even the debtor was freed from all obligations when the year of Jubilee came round".⁴⁴ Temple argued that the year of Jubilee should be reinstated in order to prevent monopoly of land.⁴⁵ Again, we can see that Christian Socialists made extensive use of the Scripture in defending and advancing their political programme.

CHURCH TEACHING

The writings of Christian Socialists indicate that, in addition to Scripture, they in part derived their socialist beliefs from the teaching of the church. This included both the teaching of church fathers, as well as the contemporary teaching of the church. For example, in his *Catholic Working Man* John Wheatley's arguments were "reinforced with wide-ranging quotations from the church fathers, Cardinal Manning, and, perhaps most effectively in its immediate local context, Archbishop Maguire himself", Maguire being an Archbishop of Glasgow who had attacked Wheatley for his socialist views.⁴⁶ R.H. Tawney's view was that "if men accepted the teaching of the Christian Church they would have a body of principles not only resting on authority [...] but setting out the main lines of a moral scheme of the universe and deducing man's duties and rights, freedom, responsibility, justice, etc".⁴⁷

42 S.E. Keeble, 'Introduction', in S.E. Keeble, ed., *The Social Teaching of the Bible* (London, 1909), p.19.

43 Headlam, *Socialist's Church*, p.59.

44 Hardie, *Serfdom to Socialism*, p.32.

45 Wilkinson, *Christian Socialism*, p.118.

46 I.S. Wood, *John Wheatley* (Manchester, 1990), p.27.

47 L. Goldman, *The Life of R.H. Tawney: Socialism and History* (London, 2013), p.183.

It is Samuel Keeble who gives the most extensive treatment of the teaching and example of the church throughout history, giving in his *Christian Responsibility for the Social Order* – after a similarly extensive Biblical theology of socialism – just over forty pages to a chronological account of socialism throughout the history of the church. He begins by noting the contribution of the earliest Christians to social reform, arguing that they “protected the poor, the widow, and the orphan”, and “dignified labour by engaging in it”.⁴⁸ James Keir Hardie adds that “it is now known that Communism in goods was practiced by Christians for at least three hundred years after the death of Christ”.⁴⁹ Keeble goes on to reference some of the apocryphal gospels and epistles from the early church, pointing to the “Way of Light” described by the writer of the Epistle of Barnabas – “thou shalt communicate to thy neighbour all thou hast; thou shalt not call anything thine own” – and quoting from the Shepherd of Hermas – “Justify the widow, judge the cause of the fatherless, and spend your riches and your wealth in such works as these”.⁵⁰

Keeble then moves on to the writings of those regarded as the Church Fathers, first pointing to the words of Tertullian: “We who mingle in mind and soul have no hesitation as to fellowship in property”. Cyprian is then quoted, commanding that Christians should “imitate the equality of God in the common gifts of nature, which the whole human race should equally enjoy”. “The unequal division of wealth,” writes Ambrose of Milan, “is the result of egosim and violence”.⁵¹ Again, these quotes appear to compel both equality and common ownership. Keeble also writes of Augustine, who is elsewhere quoted: “Let us, therefore, my brethren, abstain from the possession of private property, or from the love of it if we cannot abstain from the possession of it”.⁵² William Temple also makes reference

48 Keeble, *Christian Responsibility*, p.36 and p.51.

49 Hardie, *Socialism and Christianity*, p.5.

50 Keeble, *Christian Responsibility*, pp.37-8.

51 *Ibid*, p.39 and p.41.

52 S.E. Keeble, *The Ideal of the Material Life and other Social Addresses* (London, 1908), p.227.

to Augustine in his *Christianity and the Social Order*.⁵³

Keeble then shifts his focus to the pre-Reformation and Reformation era, citing firstly John Wyclif – “the ideal remains that no man should hold separate property, and that all should be had in common” – and his contemporary, John Ball – “things would never go right in England as long as goods were not in common, and so long as there were villeins and gentlemen”.⁵⁴ Some praise is offered for Martin Luther, but Keeble is critical of Luther’s opposition to the peasants, and chooses to quote Thomas Muntzer: “our sovereigns and rulers are at the bottom of all usury, thievery, and robbery; they take all created things into their possession”.⁵⁵ Other ecclesiastical figures from the era such as John Calvin, Hugh Latimer and Thomas More are also given as examples.⁵⁶ Wilfred Wellock, similarly, argued that socialism was “in the spirit of men like Wyclif, Luther, Knox”, while Hardie pointed to Ball, the “Communistic teachings of Wycliffe”, “John Huss the Communist”, Muntzer, the Anabaptists and the Levellers.⁵⁷

Christian Socialists not only looked back to the church of the past for inspiration, but could also find elements of socialism in the modern-day church. Stewart Headlam, according to one biographer, “used the Book of Common Prayer as a textbook in socialism”.⁵⁸ Tawney also references the Book of Common Prayer in arguing that a prosperous society “depends upon co-operative effort, and co-operation upon moral principles. And moral principles are what the prophets of this dispensation despise. So the world ‘continues in scarcity,’ because it is too grasping and too short-sighted to see that ‘which maketh men to be of one mind in a house’.”⁵⁹

53 Temple, *Christianity and the Social Order*, p.50

54 Keeble, *Christian Responsibility*, pp.58-9. Villeins: medieval, a feudal tenant entirely subject to a lord or manor to whom he paid dues and services in return for land (OED).

55 *Ibid.*, p.68, p.71 and p.72.

56 *Ibid.*, p.73, p.76 and p.77.

57 W. Wellock, *The Way Out, or The Road to the New World* (London, 1922), p.31; Hardie, *Serfdom to Socialism*, pp.40-1.

58 Orens, *Headlam’s Radical Anglicanism*, p.1.

59 R.H Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society* (London, 1921), p.12. Here Tawney

That which came to be known as Catholic social teaching has been identified as important in the political thought of John Wheatley.⁶⁰ “Catholic social teaching”, according to one writer, “unequivocally maintains that the purpose of the state is to promote the common good, both for individuals and in terms of conditions appropriate for all”.⁶¹ The only major document to have been written during Wheatley’s lifetime was Pope Leo XIII’s *Rerum novarum* or *On the Condition of Labour* in 1891, an encyclical written in response to the problems caused by the industrial revolution. It is not difficult to see why such a document could be used by socialists such as Wheatley to argue for socialism, or as a basis or their personal socialist beliefs. For instance, Leo writes: “But all agree, and there can be no question whatever, that some remedy must be found, and quickly found, for the misery and wretchedness which press so heavily at this moment on the large majority of the very poor”.⁶² Again Leo refers to “the cruelty of grasping speculators who use human beings as mere instruments for making money”, and calls for rulers to ensure that the poor are “housed, clothed and enabled to support life”.⁶³ Here Pope Leo seems to be supportive of socialist ideas. In various ways then the teaching and example of the church throughout history was deployed as an argument for Christian Socialism.

THE SACRAMENTS

The sacraments have been identified as a key aspect of Christian Socialism, with one historian of the movement writing of “sacramental socialism”,

is quoting from the Book of Common Prayer paraphrase of Psalm 68: “He is a Father of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widows; even God in his holy habitation. He is the God that maketh men to be of one mind in an house, and bringeth prisoners out of captivity”.

60 Wood, *Wheatley*, p.160.

61 D. Cloutier, ‘Modern Politics and Catholic Social Teaching’, in D.M. McCarthy, *The Heart of Catholic Social Teaching: Its Origins and Contemporary Significance* (Grand Rapids MI, 2009), p.106.

62 C.E. Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological and Ethical Analysis* (Washington DC, 2002) p.174.

63 *Ibid.*, p.199 and p.188.

“a phrase which stands for the belief that the best proof and witness of the socialism of Christ is in the Holy Sacraments of the Church – especially Baptism and the Mass”.⁶⁴ It need hardly be stated that this sacramentalism held more significance for Catholics – whether Roman Catholics or Anglo-Catholics – than for Nonconformists; in the former tradition it is the administration of the sacraments rather than the preaching of the Word which is the focal point of worship. The foremost sacramental socialist, Stewart Headlam, saw both sacraments as of equal significance: “Baptism, the Sacrament of Equality, and Holy Communion, the Sacrament of Brotherhood: these two are fundamental, the one abolishing all class distinctions, and admitting all into the Christian Church, simply on the ground of humanity; the other pledging and enabling all to live the life of brotherhood”.⁶⁵

This view was shared by Henry Scott Holland, who linked the “social solidarity of man” with “the essential solidarity of Church fellowship” as expressed in the Eucharist.⁶⁶ Holland’s Christian Social Union passed a resolution that its members should be those who had a “bond of union in the Sacrament of Christ’s body”, on the grounds that this allowed the CSU to “demand from Communicants that social service to which their Communion pledges them”.⁶⁷ William Temple, similarly, viewed the Eucharist as “the perfect picture of the Christian society”.⁶⁸ George Lansbury also speaks of the meaning of this sacrament, writing that “the Communion service to me is not only the sacrifice again of Christ but a reminder of all the good men and women who have made their sacrifices in order to make the world better”.⁶⁹ Headlam reportedly declared that

64 Jones, *Christian Socialist Revival*, p.28.

65 Headlam, *Socialist’s Church*, p.5.

66 H. Scott Holland, ed., *Our Neighbours: A Handbook for the C.S.U.* (London, 1911), p.60.

67 Jones, *Christian Socialist Revival*, p.178; Holland, *Our Neighbours*, p.60.

68 W. Temple, *The Church Looks Forward* (London, 1944), p.113.

69 Interview with Lansbury from the Christian Commonwealth Newspaper, 11 August 1915, LSE archive, Lansbury/7 213.

“those who come to Holy Communion must be holy communists”.⁷⁰

Headlam linked the mass with baptism as we have seen above, writing that “we claim every little baby born into the world as being equal with every other little baby, no matter whether it be the child of a costermonger or the child of a prince”.⁷¹ Headlam viewed the two sacraments as complementary:

And so, just as the most old-fashioned clergyman, whatever may have been his politics, or views on social questions, was by the mere fact of his baptising the labourer’s little baby bearing witness to the truths of equality in a more far-reaching way than any French Revolution ever did: so the quietest and the most retiring of you when you kneel on Easter morning to receive Jesus Christ for your strength and refreshment, are also bearing witness to truths which, when realised, will regenerate the world: which will put down the mighty, scatter the proud, empty the pockets of the rich.⁷²

To the Christian Socialists therefore – and especially to Headlam – the sacraments are both examples of and arguments for a socialist order of society.

CRITIQUE

We may conclude from the above that Christian Socialism is an ideology rooted in a form of Christian thinking – arguments being made from the Bible, church teaching, and the sacraments – rather than being merely secular socialism with a religious appellation. The question which remains, however, is whether or not the Christian Socialist appeal to Christian theology is justified. In this final section we will see that the theological basis of Christian Socialism is in fact deeply flawed.

The concept at the core of Christian Socialism, as argued above, is brotherhood, and the other key concepts – equality, co-operation and democracy – are all drawn from that. The concept of universal brotherhood

70 Mayor, *Churches and Labour Movement*, p.215.

71 Headlam, *Meaning of the Mass*, p.28.

72 *Ibid.*, pp.27-8.

is itself drawn from the notion of God's universal Fatherhood. This notion, however, is easily refuted. A key text is found in John's Gospel: "Then said they to [Jesus], We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me [...] Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do".⁷³ We may also point to the words of the writer to the Hebrews: "It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons".⁷⁴ Both passages indicate that those who are not Christians do not have God as their Father.

This then refutes the Christian Socialist argument is that all people on earth make up one big family, and ought on that familial basis to share resources. We have seen, for example, John Clifford arguing "that the principle of Brotherhood as taught by Jesus Christ cannot adequately be wrought out under existing industrial and commercial conditions, and that the faithful and commonplace application of this principle must result in the Socialization of all natural resources, as well as the instruments of production, distribution and exchange". The "principle of Brotherhood as taught by Jesus Christ", however, does not suggest a universal family as the basis for a collectivist order of society; it in fact states that humanity is divided into two camps – those who follow Him, and those who do not.

The Christian Socialist might counter that all the people on earth have been equally created by God, and on that basis relate to Him as sons and daughters and to each other as brothers and sisters. While, however, it is correct to say that all people are God's children in the sense that they are His creation, in a fallen world they do not all relate to Him on that basis; Christ clearly states that those who oppose Him cannot claim to have God as their Father. The Christian Socialist vision of a

73 John: 8:42 and 44.

74 Hebrews 12:7-9. (ESV)

collectivist society requires unity of vision and purpose; this unity could potentially exist between those who share brotherhood on the basis of a common Christian faith, but cannot exist between those who share no such brotherhood, even if it is accepted that they share brotherhood on the basis of a common creation. All mankind are linked insofar as they are all created by God, but, again, in this fallen world, mankind consists of believers and unbelievers, and these two groups will have different aims, objectives and priorities. If then the Christian Socialist argues for the existence of brotherhood on the basis of a common faith with its unity of vision and purpose, this is false; if the argument is for brotherhood on the basis of a common status as God's created beings, this is insufficient.

Questions may also be raised over other Christian Socialist uses of Scripture. Keir Hardie's view of the Sermon on the Mount as "a consistent and powerful argument against property" cannot be sustained. Hardie might have had in mind Christ's instruction "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth", yet we are not to understand from this verse that private property must be collectivised, but rather that we ought to concentrate more on eternal and spiritual things than temporal and materialistic things.⁷⁵ Socialism is no less focused on the materialistic than capitalism; it is not evident that the creation of a socialist society would remove the Mammon worship against which the Christian Socialists argued.

Criticisms may also be applied to Samuel Keeble's interpretation of the parable of the workers in the vineyard as an argument for the government-mandated minimum wage. The Lord taught that parables spoke of "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven", rather than earthly issues; in this case the parable refers to the common reward that each believer will receive – eternal salvation – regardless the stage of life at which they are saved.⁷⁶ We may also take issue with the application of Paul's discussion of "the body" in 1 Corinthians 12 to the right ordering of society. The

75 Matthew 6:19.

76 Matthew 13:11.

“body” referred to is not society but the church; Paul writes that “by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”, and that this body is “the body of Christ”, “the church”.⁷⁷ The description of common ownership in Acts of the Apostles does not compel a socialist order of society as this generous giving and sharing of resources took place solely within the church rather than throughout society.⁷⁸ The same applies to Israel’s land laws; these laws were given to the community of Old Testament believers, and today point to the free sharing of resources within the church, as exemplified in Acts.

The idea of Christ as a revolutionary figure must also be dismissed given that Scripture teaches Christ to have been falsely accused of these things:

And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it. Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man [...] And Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, Said unto them, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him.⁷⁹

We can ourselves look to the synoptic Gospels and see that Christ did not forbid “to give tribute to Caesar”, but rather taught: “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s”.⁸⁰ This stands as a denial of, for example, Lansbury’s description

77 1 Corinthians 12:14, 27 and 28.

78 Some have also advanced the argument that the holding in common of property in Acts does not suggest socialism as it was purely voluntary. This is true, but cannot be used as an argument against a socialist interpretation; there are, at least in theory, libertarian, voluntarist and democratic forms of socialism and communism as well as coercive, authoritarian ones.

79 Luke 23:1-4 and 13-14.

80 Matthew 22:21. Also Mark 12:17 and Luke 20:25.

of Jesus: “the lonely Galilean – Communist, agitator, martyr – crucified as one who stirred up the people and set class against class”.⁸¹

The Christian Socialist use of past and contemporary church teaching to argue for socialism can also be faulty. For example, the use of *Rerum novarum* must be dismissed given Pope Leo’s declarations in the encyclical itself that “the main tenet of socialism, the community of goods, must be utterly rejected”, and that “[e]very human being has by nature the right to possess private property as one’s own”.⁸² Some of the quotes employed by Keeble from sources such as the Shepherd of Hermas and the Epistle of Barnabas could be interpreted as advocating individual acts of charity rather than economic organisation, while those from church fathers – for example, Tertullian: “We who mingle in mind and soul have no hesitation as to fellowship in property” – appear to apply to the church as a community rather than society. Drawing on our discussion of brotherhood, above, we can re-state that Christians and non-Christians do not “mingle in mind and soul”. While much of the past and contemporary teaching of the church is open to interpretation, it does have to be allowed that some – such as the teaching of Wyclif that “the ideal remains that no man should hold separate property, and that all should be had in common” – seems clearly to suggest socialism. From the evangelical perspective, however, with its doctrine of *sola scriptura*, it suffices to conclude that whether or not figures from church history or the modern church have argued for or against socialism matters very little.

The flawed interpretations given to the sacraments, however, matter much more. Stewart Headlam’s view of baptism as a “Sacrament of Equality” is easily dismissed from a Baptist perspective, as stated in the 1689 Confession of Faith: “Those who do actually profess repentance towards God, faith in, and obedience to, our Lord Jesus Christ, are the only proper subjects of this ordinance”.⁸³ It is, however, not even necessary

81 Scheer, *Lansbury*, p.1.

82 Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching*, p.199 and p.200.

83 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, 29:2.

to take this Baptist perspective. The Heidelberg Catechism argues that “by baptism, as sign of the covenant, [children of believers] must be grafted into the Christian church and distinguished from the children of unbelievers”.⁸⁴ In fact, even the Thirty-Nine Articles of Headlam’s own Church of England view the sacrament as “a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of Regeneration or New-Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church”.⁸⁵ Here we see that, in the Baptist, Presbyterian and Anglican traditions, baptism, rather than representing universal equality, in fact differentiates between believers – or, the children of believers – and unbelievers.

The same is true of the Lord’s Supper: rather than “enabling all to live the life of brotherhood”, the Thirty-Nine Articles – based on 1 Corinthians 11 – restrict the sacrament to Christians, for when non-Christians eat the bread and wine “in no wise are they partakers of Christ: but rather, to their condemnation, do eat and drink the sign or Sacrament of so great a thing”.⁸⁶ Headlam’s universal application of the sacraments is therefore denied by one of the foundational documents of his own church. Lansbury is also wrong in his view that “the Communion service to me is not only the sacrifice again of Christ but a reminder of all the good men and women who have made their sacrifices in order to make the world better”, for the teaching of Christ at the institution of the Lord’s Supper is that the sacrament is solely in remembrance of Him.⁸⁷ Much of the theological argument underpinning Christian Socialism does not then stand up to scrutiny, for the Christian Socialist interpretation attached to scripture, church teaching and the sacraments can be shown to be, at best, questionable, and at worst, demonstrably false.

84 Heidelberg Catechism, 74.

85 The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, 27.

86 *Ibid.*, 29.

87 Luke 22:19-20.

CONCLUSION

On Sunday the 25th September 2016, the day after his re-election as leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn received a rapturous welcome at the Christians on the Left conference service, held at an evangelical Anglican church near the conference venue in Liverpool. The Christians who had gathered for worship that morning offered vocal support for Corbyn as he described the “fundamental tenets of Christianity” as being “social justice”, “sharing” and “compassion”. The same morning Corbyn appeared on the BBC’s *Andrew Marr Show* arguing for a £500 billion government “investment” into the economy, and at the Momentum “The World Transformed” rally, arguing for the “central and mainstream” relevance of the left-wing group’s ideas.⁸⁸ Just over 12 months earlier, in the United States, Bernie Sanders made a campaign visit to the evangelical Liberty University, at which he set out a vision of social justice based on the words of Amos, “But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream”, adding that this was not possible “in a nation and in a world which worships not love of brothers and sisters, not love of the poor and the sick, but worships the acquisition of money and great wealth”.⁸⁹ Sanders’ speech caused one pastor and Liberty graduate to endorse the senator for President, for Sanders “declares justice for the poor. He declares Good News for ‘the least of these’. He has come to bring Gospel”.⁹⁰

These examples indicate the contemporary relevance of the above discussion. Christians, including evangelical Christians, continue to offer support for a socialist agenda, and socialist figures such as Jeremy

88 ‘Jeremy Corbyn on Brexit, NHS and Syria – BBC News’, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XxO_5_0xGdw, accessed 5th November 2016; A. Cowburn, ‘Momentum’s ideas ‘absolutely essential’, says Jeremy Corbyn’, *Independent*, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/momentum-s-ideas-absolutely-essential-says-jeremy-corbyn-a7329276.html>, accessed 5th November 2016.

89 ‘Bernie Sanders Liberty University speech, annotated’, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2015/09/14/bernie-sanders-liberty-university-speech-annotated/>, accessed 5th November 2016. Sanders is referring to Amos 5:24.

90 ‘Biblical Argument for Bernie’, <https://clyp.it/eusxalwe>, accessed 5th November 2016.

Corbyn and Bernie Sanders. Yet even in the key formative period for – at least, British – Christian Socialism, the Christian case for socialism has simply not been made. The Sermon on the Mount does not render a “consistent and powerful argument against property”, nor was Jesus Christ a revolutionary, “crucified as one who stirred up the people and set class against class”; Church teaching is not consistent on the matter of politics or economics, and even if it was ought not to be treated as authoritative; the sacraments illuminate distinctions rather than picturing equality, as it is only believers – or the children of believers – who are legitimately baptised, while communion is only for professing Christians. The notion of universal human brotherhood cannot be sustained to any adequate degree, and if it is accepted that this is the concept at the heart of Christian Socialism, then the very foundation of Christian Socialism is flawed.

This, it should be noted, is not to suggest that Christians ought to offer their support for conservative positions over liberal ones, or a capitalist economy over a socialist one, for a discussion of the Christian case for capitalism would find the theological arguments advanced equally faulty. Samuel Keeble, for example, used the parable of the workers in the vineyard as an argument for a government-mandated minimum wage; we may view this as ridiculous, and yet it is no more or less ridiculous than Bryan Fischer of the American Family Association using the very same parable to draw precisely the opposite conclusion, on the grounds that the owner of the vineyard had control of his own property and reserved for himself the right to set wages. “Bottom line”, argues Fischer, “Jesus was a capitalist. The economy in which his stories take place is an economy predicated on the private ownership of the means of production”.⁹¹

In contrast to both positions, the Christian should not expect the Bible to teach support for any political ideology, any man-made political belief system. With that caveat in place, however, we may conclude that the combination of Christianity with socialism represents a two-fold

91 B. Fischer, ‘Jesus was Not a Socialist’, <http://www.afa.net/the-stand/bible/2015/10/jesus-was-not-a-socialist/>, accessed 5th November 2016.

danger. Firstly, it often seems that Christian Socialists were engaging an eisegetical rather than exegetical exercise, reading their socialism into their theology rather than drawing their socialism from their theology. The warning of the Apostle Peter therefore applies, for Christian Socialists may be among those that “wrest” or “twist” the Scriptures “to their own destruction”.⁹² Secondly, the Christian Socialist message may act as a false gospel, replacing the Gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ with a message of social improvement; note, for example, that the pastor above views Bernie Sanders’ message as “Gospel”. The Apostle Paul declares: “If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed”.⁹³

There is then such a thing as left-wing Christianity, obscured though it is by the more visible tradition of right-wing Christianity. Left-wing Christianity is not a secular creed with a religious façade, but draws very much from theological thinking. The core concept of Christian Socialism, human brotherhood – itself derived from the idea of God’s Fatherhood and leading to the concepts of equality, collectivism and democracy – is based on an interpretation of Biblical teaching. In the same way parables of Christ, apostolic epistles and Old Testament land laws could be transformed into arguments for socialism. The teaching and example of the church, both in the past – such as the writings of church fathers and the example of early Christians – and in the present – interpretations of liturgical documents and the papal encyclical which laid the foundation for Catholic social teaching – also contributed to the socialist case. The same is true of the messages seemingly conveyed by the sacraments: brotherhood and equality. So much of this theological argument is flawed however, derived from misinterpretation, misapplication and eisegesis, that we may question whether Christian Socialism is really Christian at all.

92 2 Peter 3:16.

93 Galatians 1:9.



Politics and Religion in the European Union: Christian Zionist Advocacy in Brussels*

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KEYWORDS:

| Brussels-Based Christian Zionist Advocacy |
| EU Normative Values | Offensive and Defensive Lobbying |
| Holocaust Memorial Day | San Remo Initiative |

ABSTRACT:

Recent research has shown that European Christian Zionism is a numerically small, but vigorous, movement that has existed for a number of decades in Europe. By focusing on the European Coalition for Israel (ECI) this article demonstrates that Brussels provides a politically conducive environment for politico-religious lobby groups, where the ECI employs both defensive and offensive strategy in its pro-Israel campaigns. Whilst its lobbying regarding the two-state solution remains largely unsuccessful, its contributions to fighting antisemitism are substantial, thus confirming that successful lobbying by politico-religious organizations in Brussels is conditioned by the EU's normative values.

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INTRODUCTION

By presenting the values, networking and strategy of Brussels-based Christian Zionist lobbying, this paper affirms the scholarship about the role that religious organisations play in the politically conducive environment of the European Union (EU), which was afforded by the Article 17 of the 2009 Lisbon Treaty (Foret, 2009; Laudrup, 2009; Luxmore, 2005; Silvestri, 2009; Willaime, 2009). Regarding Christian Zionism specifically it is surprising that it has not been a subject of an academic enquiry to date, considering the importance of the EU's relations with Israel and the fact that the movement is active in nearly all European countries. The existing academic work on Christian Zionism, as helpful as it may be, is focused exclusively on its (past) influence on the American foreign policy (Clark, 2008; Lewis, 2010; Mearsheimer and Walt, 2007; Shindler, 2000; Sizer, 2004; Weber, 2004), but fails to offer any insights into the normative premise and lobby strategy of European Christian political activism on behalf of Israel. This paper therefore aims to reduce this academic gap by explaining these fundamental blocks, based on the case study of the European Coalition for Israel (ECI), an organisation that is based and operates in Brussels since 2004.

The study was framed within the Policy Network theoretical approach because its affirmation of anti-hierarchical conceptualisation of power provides a suitable analytical tool for the Brussels-based interest groups. It challenges the rationalist institutionalist approach of power maximisation, and explains how policy outcomes are often premised on the network's collectively shared belief system (Borzel, 1997). The political influence of lobby groups in Brussels is hard to identify, both conceptually and in practice, since institutional fluidity defines decision-making, and complexity of institutional functioning requires an ongoing presence and education on the part of the lobbyists. This is precisely why Policy Network allows for conceptualisation of European Christian Zionism

as a faith-based civil society movement that is capable of occupying a political space beyond the nation-state and uses both defensive and offensive lobby strategy for its aims and goals. As the EU seeks to exert greater political leverage in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, so too the ECI does not restrict itself to lobbying for cultural and economic co-operation between the EU and Israel, but it tries to influence both the Commission and the European Parliament (EP) in matters that pertain to hard politics. Whilst Christian Zionist lobby strategy at the national level is pursued in the context of specific political culture and according to nation-state governmental structures, in Brussels the ECI's quest for influence has to be pursued exclusively within a consensus-building political culture whilst continually engaging in network 'updating' due to anti-hierarchical and often de-centralised network functioning.

EU-ISRAEL RELATIONS THROUGH THE CHRISTIAN ZIONIST LENS

As the EU aims to build positive political, economic and cultural relations with the countries in the Mediterranean region through its neighborhood policy (EEAS; Holden, 2009; Johansson-Nogues, 2004), the most vexing question for the EU has been whether to include Islamist parties in the political dialogue and the democratisation process. A dominant academic stream, which questions consistency in the EU's normative discourse and democracy building in the Middle East and the Mediterranean, particularly the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, calls for the EU's engagement with civil societies that includes Islamist parties as representatives of political Islam and facilitators of political liberalisation and the democratisation process (Asseburg, 2010; Pace and Seeberg, 2010; Burgat, 2009; Pace, 2007; Youngs, 2006). Christian Zionists, in contrast, make no distinction

between Islamism and political Islam (in its aims, if not in practice), and regard the EU's ambiguous attitude toward Islamist organisations (e.g. Hizballah), and potential political engagement with Islamist parties (e.g. Hamas) as morally outrageous and politically detrimental to Israel's security, as well as to Europe's interests in the long-run, thus affirming the opposing academic stream that is critical of the pragmatic approach toward Islam/Islamists by the European governments (Caldwell, 2010; Guitta, 2010; Vidino, 2005; Shepherd, 2009).

Secondly, given the close geographical proximity and economic cooperation between the EU and the Mediterranean region, the EU's active role in the Quartet is expected and welcomed, even though the complex institutional segmentation of the EU generates the structural incoherence in the common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) (Vogel, 2009; Portela and Raube, 2009). Moreover, the EU's commitment to its normative values and principles that fail to translate into reality on a consistent basis generates debates about their applicability generally (Hyde-Price, 2008; Lucarelli and Menotti, 2006; Orbie, 2008), and the Mediterranean region specifically (Bicchi and Martin, 2006) where the assessment about the EU's role in the Peace Process remains contentious (Assenburg, 2003; Dieckoff, 2005; Miller, 2011). Although Christian Zionists maintain and somewhat accept that lack of uniform position by the diverse national governments on the issues related to the Middle East politics and Israel's security often create policies according to a lowest common denominator, their objection is primarily directed at the EU's insistence on, what they term as, the inherently flawed framework of the Peace Process that defines Israel as an occupying force. The legality of Jewish settlements, so their argument goes, is enshrined in international law that was established in San Remo, Italy in 1920 (more below), and the EU's failure to recognise this fact seriously undermines its claims that it is a community based on shared values and law.

Thirdly, whilst the political dimension of Israel's relationship with the EU remains uneasy at best, the economic cooperation, paradoxically,

between the two is mostly successful (The Henry Jackson Society, 2014; Herman, 2006; Miller, 2006; Tovias, 2011). For Israel's supporters, including Christian Zionists, this is an area that requires a continual advocacy, for upgrade in the economic agreements in particular, since its frequent politicisation in the EP (Ryness, 2012) has a potential to further undermine the EU-Israel relations. For instance, the Commission's guidelines on the eligibility of the Jewish settlers "for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards"¹, is regarded by Christian supporters as an unwise policy that would hurt both Jews and Palestinians economically, but also damage the Peace Process. Moreover, Christian Zionist criticism of the EU's economic policies is frequently aimed at the EU's lack of consistent application of the conditionality principle that is evident in the EU's lenience toward the Palestinian financial corruption (Buhler, 2005).

In view of such firmly defined positions on the EU's involvement in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is unsurprising that a sizable number of Europe's Christians understood the potential for political influence which extends beyond advocacy on a national institutional level, particularly in the late 1990s when it became apparent that the progressive institutional changes were gradually increasing political leverage of the EP. As a result several Christian Zionist organisations (including the well-known and controversial American organisation ICEJ – The International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem) established in 2004 the first pro-Israel Christian advocacy group, the ECI, in the EP. Since 2008 however the ECI's official member organisations happen to be distinctly European, partly as a matter of its approach to lobbying, and partly for the purpose of retaining a 'European' identity of the ECI.

1 *Official Journal of the European Union*
<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2013:205:0009:0011:EN:PDF>

THE EUROPEAN COALITION
FOR ISRAEL (ECI)

The ECI values – Holocaust Remembrance Day

The values which motivate European Christian Zionist advocacy could be distinguished as spiritual, moral and political, with the Christian Zionist core as a defining characteristic in terms of the theological position. In contrast to the American variant, which is almost exclusively right-wing and heavily focused on eschatology, European supporters for Israel have politically diverse views and tend to be less focused on apocalyptic passages in the Bible. In terms of the political context the ECI operates in a unique setting. Whilst other religious representations, which are in essence the outposts of large denominational structures, have carved a significant political space for themselves in Brussels, (Bollmann, 2010; Mihut, 2011), the ECI contends for influence as the network that consists of mainly, but not exclusively, Charismatic and Pentecostal groups on the margins of the European Church. This necessitates a certain level of pragmatism where the ECI uses the EU's normative benchmarks, such as human rights, democracy and good governance, as the instrument with which it presents its political positions in the EP and the Commission (King, 2016).

It should be noted that American Christian Zionist influence is quite considerable among European Christians, evidenced by pro-Israel literature authored by American theologians and disseminated at Christian Zionist events in Europe, and by the established transatlantic networks that pursue common goals². Upon greater scrutiny, however, it is apparent that this influence is not as all pervasive as it seems, since European and American Christian Zionism do not share an identical theological

2 International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem (ICEJ) is an American organisation that was one of the five founding organisations of the ECI. Although it is no longer part of the ECI's structural core, the two organisations continue their cooperation.

ground. The American variant tends to be mostly dispensationalist³, whilst in Europe Christian Zionism is much more historically oriented (Pawson, 2008: 23), and it is not quite as homogenous, as the intensity and degree of its spiritual, political and moral values vary from country to country. Whilst European Christian Zionists are keen on conveying that both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament must be interpreted holistically in order to understand why the second coming of Jesus Christ necessitates the physical return of the Jews from Diaspora to their ancient land, at the same time their commitment to non-eschatological matters equally defines, if not more, their advocacy. This is understandable given that moral dimension of European Christian Zionism has been shaped by the centuries-long painful experience of Europe's Jews, and indicates why the ECI's political campaigning is solidly embedded in fighting against resurgent antisemitism in European societies and churches. This twofold normative position allows the organisation to share some spiritual/ideological premises with American Christian Zionists, whilst demarcating itself on other grounds.

Given that the level and intensity of antisemitism in each European country has been shaped in specific historic settings, its current resurgence likewise does not affect all European countries equally, but it is driven by specific socio-cultural changes and political discourses in each country. In order to combat antisemitism therefore, Christian Zionists lobby their national institutions within each country's political and legislative rules and constraints whilst at the same time utilising best national practice at the EU level⁴ where they lobby for institutionalising the eradication of antisemitism. This is done in a clear recognition that the EU's instruments in combating antisemitism are available, though perhaps not as effective as they should be. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in

3 Dispensationalism rigidly divides human history into (usually) seven dispensations: Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, Promise, Law, Grace, and Millennial Kingdom. The more extreme form of dispensationalism teaches two distinct plans of salvation for Gentiles and the Jews.

4 Unsurprisingly it is the German Christian Zionist stream that carries greatest moral and political credibility.

Europe (OSCE) is the most prominent one, as is the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), which succeeded the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) in 2007 and regularly collects data and provides analysis of antisemitic crimes. Crucially, the EU's decision in 2008 to criminalise racism and xenophobia in member states⁵ is commended by the ECI as a powerful instrument with which to challenge antisemitism and agitate against the parties and governments that might display antisemitic attitudes.

The ECI's prioritisation of fighting antisemitism stems not only from the theological position that this battle is primarily a duty to God, but Christians in Europe have a historic opportunity to provide a moral leadership where previously they largely failed (Heschel, 2008; Paul, 2004; Wright, 2002). For that reason the Holocaust Remembrance Day, which the ECI initiated in 2005, is regarded as the ECI's major advocacy achievement. The campaign established a close cooperation with the Jewish organisations, most notably the European Jewish Congress (EJC), and it is afforded recognition at the highest level. For instance, the President of the EP Martin Schultz made a decision to outlaw Holocaust denial in the EP and to declare the International Holocaust Remembrance Day as an official parliament event from year 2013.⁶

The ECI values – 2010 San Remo Initiative

In terms of political affiliation, the ECI network consists of groups and individuals from across Europe whose convictions span from centre right to centre left of the political spectrum (King, 2016: 120-141). This includes not only the diverse preferences of the economic models

5 Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32008F0913:EN:HTML>

6 The ECI, 2013 January 23rd press release, available at http://www.ec4i.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=177:holocaust-memorial-to-become-official-ep-event&catid=74:press-releases&Itemid=53

and social policies, but also the diverse attitudes toward the European integration, where a typical pro-integrationist stance is found among German Christian Zionists in contrast to their British co-religionists who are very skeptical or even opposed. Another interesting fact is that European Christian Zionists seem to be, in contrast to their American 'spiritual cousins', less inclined to agitate for political issues, including those relating to Israel. Some prominent leaders of the European Christian Zionist movement find this problematic since, in their view, Christians should defend Europe's Judeo-Christian heritage, as well as the Jewish state and the Jewish people.⁷

Such a political position is clearly rooted in the 'civilizational clash' paradigm⁸ where, on a narrower level, the reassertion of traditional Christian faith would curb inroads of political Islam into European societies,⁹ but it would also have a broader impact on Europe's relations with the Jewish state whose social and political culture and economic model are very similar, or perhaps even identical, to that of Europe. That is why the ECI periodically challenges the EU for its lax implementation of the conditionality principle in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict¹⁰ which, in their view, impedes the democratisation of the Palestinian society (Buhler, 2005: 10). This demonstrates that the ECI affirms the EU's principled stance and normative commitment regarding its use of the economic instrument in its neighborhood policy, but it also demonstrates that the application of the conditionality principle in the resolution of the conflict remains a contentious issue (Assenburg, 2003; Miller, 2011;

7 Interview with Simon Barrett, 12 April 2012; broadcaster and journalist Revelation TV.

8 A controversial hypothesis by Samuel P. Huntington's that post-Cold War geopolitics will be primarily shaped by conflicts driven by people's cultural and religious identities.

9 The ECI 2010 annual policy conference in the EP was titled "Israel, the EU and the intercultural dialogue: How will the demographic and cultural changes in Europe change relations with Israel?" The participants, including several MEPs, called for reassertion of the Christian faith in Europe's public space.

10 The ECI 2005 annual policy conference in the EP titled "Promoting the reform process in the Middle East – what role can the European Union play?" focused heavily on financial corruption and lack of accountability in the Palestinian Authority.

Ottolenghi, 2010).

In light of the fact that human rights is one of the EU's 'core' foundational values (Manners, 2006), the ECI's fight against antisemitism is an ongoing campaign that increases on the one hand the EU's moral credibility since it evidently presents the organisation's substantial contribution to the EU's 'normative power' self-identification, and on the other hand, the campaign is clearly beneficial to the ECI as it was instrumental for the ECI's accreditation in the EP in 2004. Notwithstanding such success, an area where the ECI encounters difficulty in its pro-Israel advocacy relates to its contextualisation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the interpretation of the United Nations 242 resolution in particular (King, 2016 173-177). This effectively puts the organisation in an adversarial position against the official EU policy on the Palestinian statehood and the Peace Process¹¹. It is pertinent to emphasise that the ECI, contrary to widespread assumptions about Christian Zionist aversion toward a two-state solution, is not opposed to the Palestinian statehood per se. Rather, its objection is premised on a conviction that the solution should be reached through direct negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians guided by the original agreement in San Remo, Italy about the Jewish settlements and the status of Jerusalem (ibid). In the words of the ECI's Founding Director: "[T]he pledge that was made in San Remo on the 25th April 1920, then affirmed unanimously by the United Nations in 1922, was then carried over to the United Nations through Article 80, which means that any commitment that the League of Nations made is still valid"¹². Hence the San Remo Initiative, which was launched officially in 2010 in the EP, that carries a central message about the legality of the Jewish state and Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), Jewish jurisdiction over Jerusalem, as well as rejection of the 1967 lines as the future state borders.

11 EEAS (European External Action Service); EU positions on the Middle East peace process

http://eeas.europa.eu/mepp/eu-positions/eu_positions_en.htm

12 Interview with Tomas Sandell, 30 May 2011; Founding Director of the ECI.

Such stance could be characterised as hawkish and right-wing even though the ECI aims to utilise international law in its advocacy (Wallace, 2012) since it is contrary to the position of the European Court of Justice, as well as the dominant position in academia that declares Israel's policies as immoral and illegal (Ali, 2012; Finkelstein, 2003; Kelman, 2011). Accordingly, the ECI faces considerable difficulties in lobbying the EU officials in the area of hard power politics where its take on Israel's security and conflict resolution is not sufficiently credible to challenge the mainstream interpretation of the international law.

Defensive and offensive lobbying

So how does the Christian Zionist lobbying aim to influence the EU's policy toward Israel? According to David Coen, the Commission is the main institution that the EU interest groups, both private and public, target for their lobbying. They provide reliable information and identify how to become part of the EU policy cycle where they create complex alliances and political presence "via 'gate keeping' and identity-creating functions" (2007: 341). However, successive EU treaties brought gradual institutional changes in the EP to the point where it has become sufficiently empowered to broaden lobby activity by integrating private/public national and sub-national actors into the policy cycle (Kohler-Koch, 1997). This is broadly applicable to the Christian Zionist network in Brussels since the ECI certainly maintains access to the Commissioners from specific policy areas, and has over the years established close partnerships with both Christian and non-Christian groups in and outside of Europe. In addition, it has also formed at times ad hoc alliances, usually to conduct short-term campaigns. Having said that, it is apparent that the ECI prefers to use the EP as its main platform for lobbying, partly in recognition of the growing influence of specialised committees on the legislative process (Bouwen 2004: 482), and partly as an 'investment' into MEPs who could

potentially become future high rank influential officials in their national governments.¹³

With this in view it is clear that the ECI is an organisation that organises its lobbying through the access mode. This is also logical given its limited resources in Brussels' highly competitive political environment that hosts well-funded private interests and large public NGOs. However, when the organisation resorts to using the voice mode in its advocacy, i.e. public demonstrations, it is always done in national capitals. The ECI's lobby strategy, therefore, could be categorised at times as defensive and at other instances as offensive, depending on the nature, aims and duration of the ECI campaigns on the one hand, and the combined use of access, the input of national networks, and use of media on the other. It should be noted that either lobbying style is typically conducted by the ECI in a non-adversarial manner, since it exists within the EU's consensus-building system that is preconditioned by a complex governance model, unlike in Washington DC where lobbying is shaped by its adversarial political culture (Woll, 2012: 193-195; Mahoney, 2007). A combative posture would clearly prove to be counter-productive in Brussels, therefore the Christian Zionist lobbying, as indeed lobbying of all Brussels-based interest groups, must be conducted constructively and emphasise primarily pan-European goals and principles, in this case the eradication of antisemitism.

Most recently established religious associations are still in the process of asserting their influence in Brussels, owing to the fact that they are organisationally less effective in terms of professionalisation and network quality than the well-established ones, such as the Catholic COMECE – the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community and an ecumenical CEC – the Conference of European Churches (De Vlieger, 2012). It is understandable therefore that the defensive lobby strategy is presumably almost non-existent among these groups. This is relatively true with the Christian Zionist advocacy in Brussels. As the only Christian pro-Israel organisation in Brussels, whose stance on the

13 Interview with Tomas Sandell, 30 May 2011; Founding Director of the ECI

Israeli- Palestinian conflict is substantially different from the EU's official policy, the ECI had to 'break grounds' in many ways and establish itself as a credible lobby organisation in a relatively short time. This is a factor that shapes the ECI's strategy (positions and policy recommendations) most of the time as offensive, though never aggressive in its demands, nor combative in its approach. The 2010 San Remo Initiative is the most substantial example of its offensive approach since the desired outcomes of the campaign are defined as long-term goals and pursued by engaging in the area of international law and academic research (Wallace, 2012; Grief, 2004). Secondly, the ECI uses primarily access mode in disseminating information through private meetings with officials in national capitals¹⁴ and in Brussels, but it resorts to voice mode also through the extensive use of media, mainly Youtube, the ECI Facebook page and the ECI Twitter account. Thirdly, the ECI's offensive advocacy extends beyond the EU and aims to influence delegations at the UN during the annual General Assemblies sessions (King, 2016: 173-177). Given the constitutive roles that the EU and the UN hold in the Quartet, the ECI's lobbying on the pan-European and international level makes sense, even as it appears too ambitious given that no other pro-Israel organisation uses the League of Nations document to challenge the existing legal and political framework of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolution (*ibid*).

Having said that, there are times when the defensive strategy is necessary from the point of view of the ECI, which usually happens when the EU-Israel existing good trade relations are called into question, but also during the times of periodical crisis/military confrontations when Israel faces severe criticism, which according to Christian Zionists nearly always amounts to defamation and delegitimisation of the Jewish state. This was exemplified by the ECI's alliance with the AJC Transatlantic

14 The ECI selected the parliaments of Rome, Paris, London and Tokyo to present their material to policy-makers since Italy, France, Britain and Japan were former members of the Supreme Council of the Principal Allied Powers of the First World War that signed the 1920 San Remo Resolution.

Institute¹⁵ in 2012 that started a ‘Pass ACAA’¹⁶ campaign, calling on the EU to finalise the pharmaceutical deal between the EU and Israel. It was conducted primarily through the media, and the ECI for its part called on its Facebook members to sign and expand the EU citizen petition, which at the time of the Strasbourg plenary session on 23rd October 2012 numbered over 2,500. Most recent battle, and arguably most important one, in which the ECI had been engaged for some years through the defensive mode, focuses on discrediting Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS), a formidable political force that challenges Israel’s political and moral legitimacy.

CONCLUSION

Political influence of religious lobby groups in Brussels is difficult to measure. In the case of the Christian Zionist aspirations it is evident that the ECI’s San Remo campaign has failed so far to shift the EU’s official position on the Peace Process, future state borders and Jewish settlements. On the other hand, the ECI’s commitment to the eradication of antisemitism has achieved recognition and commendation at the EU’s highest institutional level. Such discrepancy demonstrates that even though Christian Zionist advocacy remains on the margins of political influence, it has nonetheless secured for itself a sufficient breadth and quality of access at Brussels’ policy-making level. The ECI’s commitment to both the Christian Zionist spiritual framework and the EU’s normative political values evidently shows that a successful acclimatisation of the religious interest representations to Brussels’ political culture requires a high level of common normative ground between religious and secular

15 The AJC (American Jewish Committee) Transatlantic Institute is a global advocacy organisation based in Brussels, founded in 2004 for the purpose of strengthening ties between Europe and the United States and promoting global security, human rights and Middle East peace.

16 Agreements on Conformity Assessment and Acceptance of Industrial Products; ACAA Fact Sheet
<http://passacaa.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/factsheet.pdf>

institutions. In other words, the proliferation of religious lobby groups in Brussels is a trend that is embedded in a wider normative shift in Europe where the EU's policies in areas that are of concern to such groups could prove to be either conducive to their goals, or a source of hindrance. The research conducted so far about the level of success of politico-religious NGOs remains modest when compared, for example, to the extensive research that has been done on business interests. This reflects the fact that, in general terms, NGOs arrived late on the Brussels scene and are lacking, according to Karolina Karr, in organisational competence and sufficient funds (2006: 152). This assessment may well be applicable to the religious lobby groups, although it should not be assumed that the acquisition of lobbying skills and resources is necessarily a lengthy process. Research into the ECI has shown that its professionalisation process and resource acquisition was relatively rapid and successful, given that the organisation is numerically small when compared to some other, centrally and hierarchically organised, religious representations (King, 2016: 111-116). Additionally, the ECI's internal structure and lobby strategy contains a high degree of motivation and coherence that is necessary for competent conduct of pro-Israel campaigns. It is therefore plausible that other such similar politico-religious groups and organisations in Brussels possess organisational capacity, as well as an adequate knowledge of the EU's structural complexity and its anti-hierarchical mode of governance, where they can promote their interests and fully participate in agenda-shaping and decision-making.

Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics
Forum



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The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics

ERTP Forum E RTP

*The Church, Evangelism,
and the Political in Countries of
the Western Pacific Rim*

Introduction

P.H. Brazier

Papers

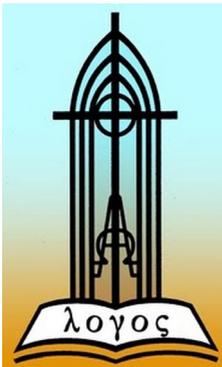
Timothy T. N. Lim

Yuxiao Su

Amos Yong

Henry Kuo

Pascal Bazzell



INTRODUCTION

The Western Pacific Region is a term used by many agencies, including the World Health Organization and includes 37 countries (over 1.5 billion people), some small island nations, other with vast populations. What we have attempted to focus on here is some of those countries on the Western Pacific Rim. The writers are academics and Christians who either lived in these countries or are experts in their field and are deeply familiar with the place of the Church, Evangelism, and the Political in these countries. I believe it is fair to say that most people in the West know very little of what is going on in these countries, apart from the occasional mention in the news if something disastrous happens.

Tim Lim sets the scene in the opening paper – ‘Shifts in Local Missional Evangelism in the Pacific Rim’ – extrapolating across the region. Yuxiao Su (Susan) is a Professor of English at Xiamen University, Fujian, P.R.China, she is also a ‘mere Christian’ in the sense of the Christian in Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, Bible-believing, evangelical, with the conviction of the heaven-bound destiny in the daily Christian walk on earth. Amos Yong writes on ‘Evangelism and the Political in Southeast Asia: A Pentecostal Perspective’ focusing on Islamic Malaysia and Indonesia, and the Christian Philippines. Henry Kuo writes on ‘The Church in Singapore: An Ecclesiology on the Way’, in particular examining the relations between Islam and Christians. Finally Pascal Bazzell writes on ‘The Church and Politics in the Philippines: Mindanao, the “Land of Promise” and the “Moro Problem”’.

Therefore this forum is intended as an introduction to the issues of Evangelism, the churches and the political in this region.

Shifts in Local Missional Evangelism in the Pacific Rim¹

by Timothy T. N. Lim

OVERVIEW

“Churches should not meddle with politics and culture: their sole business is saving souls from eternal hell fires!” While the opening statement would have stirred debates among contemporary Christians particularly in the western hemisphere, until the recent century, churches in the Pacific Rim had treaded cautiously with culture (embracing Niebuhr’s Christ-against culture mentality) and avoided politics in promulgating the faith.² In recent decades, churches in Asia seem more ready to engage with the political, cultural, and societal issues as part of their mission and service to the world.

In this short essay, after locating succinctly a global conversation in shifting missional perspectives, I turn our attention to *some* shifts that churches in the Pacific Rim have understood about politics and evangelism in their ecclesiological and local missional self-understanding. Some of the changes in Indonesia, Malaysia, North Korea, and Singapore occur as a result of geo-political policies on interfaith relations. Other changes emerge as churches in these and other areas mature in their views on public engagement, missional models, and interreligious dialogue, such as evident in China. I will conclude by asking, what do these data suggest about missional evangelism and theological construction in the Pacific Rim for foreign missionaries and Asian believers.

1 My appreciation to Dr. Calvin Smith and Dr. P.H. Brazier of *The Evangelical Review of Theology & Politics* for invitation to contribute at this forum, and my lovely wife, Ms. Sharlene Yeo, and *ERT&P* reviewers for comments on the original draft.

2 For historical account, see Samuel H. Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia, 2-vols.* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1998-2005).

CHURCHES' MISSIONAL
SHIFTS GLOBALLY AND
IN THE PACIFIC RIM

At the centennial celebration of the 1910 World Missionary Conference of Edinburgh, Christians from Catholic, Orthodox, Evangelical, Pentecostal, and other major Protestant denominations affirmed *The Common Call* at the Church of Scotland Assembly Hall. The participants agreed that the church witnesses to Christ's love and functions as a sign and symbol of the reign of God through her missional life.³ The Holy Spirit stirs, guides, and empowers the Christian people of God to live out the gospel through dialoguing and becoming inculturational cum incarnational exemplars of *imago dei*, such as witnessing God's love, reconciliation, righteousness, and justice in the world.⁴ From the conventional missional view to the World Council of Churches' multi-dimensional envisioning of *Together Towards Life* (2012), the scope of the gospel mission has slowly expanded from a predominant focus on caring for the soul's eternal state (such as exhibited historically in model, message and method of the father of modern missionary movement William Carey and pursued by American evangelist Ray Comfort) to advocating justice, peace, and care for the whole of creation (and not only the human community). Mission is conceived less as *merely* fulfilling the Great Commission and reaching indigenous people (cf. anthology found in *Perspectives on World Christian Movement*) or the rise of indigenous evangelistic outreach (cf. Samuel Escobar's *The New Global Mission*, 2003) to including political and social activism (e.g., racial inclusion social justice efforts from faculties in the New York Theological Seminary). *Together Towards Life* even urges the re-reception of the marginalized and oppressed as facilitators, teachers and

3 See *Ecumenical Missiology*, edited by Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi and Roderick R. Hewitt (Oxford: Regnum Books, and Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2016).

4 E.g., Kirsteen Kim, *The Holy Spirit in the World* (New York: Orbis, 2007); Timothy Lim, "The Holy Spirit in EG, TTL, and CTC: The Pneumatological Impulse for Christian Mission," *International Review of Mission* 104.2 (November 2015): 203-216.

revealers (instead of seeing them only as beneficiaries or recipients who are to be indebted) to the rest of the Christian world.⁵

Christian mission in the Pacific Rim also experiences proposals for revisiting paradigms and practices in mission. Notably, the joint executive secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, Hope Antone reports in her Edinburgh centenary keynote address at the Asia Mission Conference held in Tainan, Taiwan that “the old paradigm of mission is no longer the best or the most relevant for our context in Asia today.”⁶ For Antone, missional language carries caricatures of complicity with colonialism, aggressive stance towards people of other faiths, and poses as a hindrance to dialogue. Expanding on Sri Lankan Wesley Ariarajah’s proposal, Antone urges that new paradigms for reaching Asians would want to make several shifts: 1) from liberation to reconciliation, 2) from conversion (or proselytization) to healing, 3) from seeking a majority effect in mission (size of conversion for instance) to becoming comfortable as a minority in culture, and 4) from a narrow missions pursued apologetically and theologically (such as evident in the saving of souls from hell fires) to an expanded mission that cares for the deep spiritual and endemic conditions of the people through genuine partnership and solidarity (the contrast is a narrow view of missions with a program in connivance with capitalistic, exploitative

5 E.g., *Together Towards Life*, §33, §35. *TTL*’s broadly inclusive framing would invite criticisms especially from communities that embrace an older, gospel-centric view of mission, salvation, and the work of Christ. Since I have already alluded to the critique in my published review elsewhere, I shall not repeat them here. For examples of contradistinction, compare *TTL*’s missional expression with Ray Comfort, *Hell’s Best Kept Secret* (New Kensington, Philadelphia: Whitaker House, 1989); Samuel Escobar, *The New Global Mission* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2003); *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, 4th ed., edited by Ralph Winter and Steven Hawthorne (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 2014). See also Daesung Lee and Stephen Bevans, “Culture,” *Ecumenical Missiology*, edited by Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi and Roderick R. Hewitt (Oxford: Regnum Books, and Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2016), 201-217, and the contemporary missional activism in Peter Goodwin Heltzel, *Jesus and Justice* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos, 2009); idem, *Resurrection City* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2012), and Alexia Salvatierra and Peter Heltzel, *Faith Rooted Organizing* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity, 2013) among others.

6 Hope S. Antone, “New Paradigm Concepts of Mission,” Keynote presentation at the Asia Mission Conference, held in Tainan, Taiwan on “Beyond Edinburgh 1910 – Asian Reflections on Mission,” September 29 to October 3, 2008.

business and/or political enterprises and agendas).⁷

The approaches and scope of Christian mission in Asia are also varied because of contextual factors. Some churches voluntarily or involuntarily adjust to social, geo-political, and economic circumstances. Others change their church missions involvement to reflect their maturing understanding of God, discipleship and Christian mission.

Indonesia

With Muslims making up approximately 80% (some claim 96%) of the Indonesian population, more Muslims live in Indonesia than in the entire Arab world.⁸ The founding president of the republic Sukarno instituted *Pancasila*, known also as five basic principles, to nurture a secularized society as part of Indonesian nationalism. Implementing *Pancasila* later ensured the free practice of religions without discrimination (though the *Pancasilian* ideology has stirred dissension, politically and religiously, on the roles of religion and the state in the nation's history towards civility).⁹

However, the amiability of Christian-Muslim relations is not homogenous across the country or across time periods. Ethnic and religious tensions between Christians and Muslims have been brewing ever since Catholic and Protestant missionary activities (some of which started in 1522) and especially after a number of tribal chiefs and their villages converted to Christ during the Dutch colonial rule.¹⁰ The built-up animosity is notwithstanding that in the Dutch colonial reign, Christian natives fought hand in hand with their Muslim countrymen against

7 S. Wesley Ariarajah, "Wider Ecumenism: Some Theological Perspectives," *Encounters with the Word*, edited by Robert Cruz, Marshal Fernando, Asnga Tilakaratne (Colombo: Ecumenical Institute for Study and Dialogue, 2004).

8 For statistics, see <http://www.islamicweb.com/begin/population.htm> and CIA Fact Book, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/id.htm>, accessed September 2, 2016.

9 Benyamin F. Intan, Religious Violence in Indonesia: The Role of State and the Civil Society," *International Journal for Religious Freedom* 5.2 (2012): 63-77.

10 John A. Titale, "From abandonment to blessing: the theological presence of Christianity in Indonesia," *Christian Theology in Asia*, edited by Sebastian C. H. Kim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 71-88; see also *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, edited by Jan Sihar Aritnang and Karen Steenbarink (Leiden; Brill, 2008), Part 1.

foreign invasions.¹¹

Peaceful co-existence and hostility between Muslims and Christians have occurred periodically. For instance, more recently, especially in Jakarta and Surabaya, the government seems to welcome growth experienced in evangelical-type mega-churches.¹² Yet in other regions, such as West Sulawesi, interreligious violence and the burning of churches have been heightened between the 1990s and 2005 due to some Muslim animosity against the Indonesian Christian minority.¹³ As many as 452 church buildings were destroyed or burnt within a five year period, and the world probably still remembers the Black Sunday on June 9, 1996 when at least ten churches in Surabaya were brutally attacked. Even the former president's attempt to enforce protection for the free practice of religion was contested; for instance, the Bogor city government refused to act on the Supreme Court's order to reinstate and repossess the building belonging to the Christian Church of Indonesia (*Gereja Kristen Indonesia*) in December 2010.¹⁴

How did Christianity grow in such a hostile environment? Nearly seven years prior 2010, political reader Leo Suryadinata observes an annual Christian growth rate of 2.5% and a diminishing annual Muslim growth rate of 1.9%.¹⁵ Maybe, Indonesia's quest to become an "Islamic civil society" (which is a contested notion as Islamic ideology does not

11 Olaf Schumann, "Christian-Muslim Encounter in Indonesia," *Christian-Muslim Encounters*, edited by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Wadi Z. Haddad (Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995), 285-299.

12 See video, "Indonesia - Jakarta for Christ 2011": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6XHikEPOvA&feature=related>, accessed September 2, 2016.

13 See video, "Indonesian Christians Jailed for Preaching Gospel to Muslims": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Dmts2OOPu4>; "Muslim Attack Christian Minority in Indonesia - 2 Parts": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhvOUBN2feo&feature=relmfu>; and http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3reMUh_n04&feature=related among others (accessed September 2, 2016).

14 See "Indonesian President Sidestep Church Controversy": <http://www.christianpost.com/news/indonesian-president-sidesteps-church-controversy-70282>, accessed August 24, 2016.

15 Leo Suryadinata, Evi Nurvidya Arifin, and Aris Ananta, *Indonesia's Population: Ethnicity and Religion in a Changing Political Landscape* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asia Studies, 2003).

accept a co-existence/co-op relationship with a civil society ideology)¹⁶ has provided room for the sharing of faiths? And might the experience of religious brutality have provided impetus for Evangelical, Pentecostal, and Charismatic mega-churches to engage socio-politically? In the aftermath of interreligious showdown, Pentecostals and Charismatic leaders began to influence the state of civility through their various forms of engagement in business, politics, civic, interfaith, and other public witness.¹⁷

Malaysia.

Though also an Islamic country like Indonesia, Malaysia operates on a parallel legal system: Shari'ah law, and secular law. The Malaysian Prime Minister's Office regularly consults with Christian bodies (such as National Evangelical Christian Fellowship of Malaysia) and Christian leaders who have been conferred "*Datuks*" (Malay word for someone honored by the state/nation for chivalry). One therefore has to recognize some extent of Christian influence on political, social, and interreligious affairs in the land. Furthermore, because the nation's constitution grants the freedom of practice of religion (cf. Article 11 of its Constitution), one may reasonably presume that religious freedom translates to amiable relationship between religions.

Yet, in the land that operates on a parallel legal system, religious peace is not a guarantee, and religious rights of citizens are not necessarily enforceable. Converting a Muslim is not just socially unacceptable, but the convert faces prosecution (and charges of apostasy) in Shari'ah tribunals.¹⁸ Some in the dominant populace have criticized Malaysian Christians as "unethical" or "denigrating the cultures of others" [particularly, other

16 Robert W. Hefner, *Civic Islam* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000).

17 Bambang Budijanto, "Evangelicals and Politics in Indonesia: the Case of Surakarta," *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Asia*, edited by David H. Lumsdaine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 155-183; and Aritonang and Steenbarink, *A History of Christianity in Indonesia*, 750-821, 867-902.

18 See several essays in *Religious Liberty After 50 Years* (Petaling Jaya, Selangor, Malaysia: National Evangelical Christian Fellowship Religious Liberty Commission, 2008).

religions] when they evangelize (though many Christians have been respectful of other faiths when they shared their beliefs and practices). Three decades ago, the government detained more than a hundred Malaysian Christians suspected of Christian activities among Malays/Muslims. The operation is known as *Operasi Lallang*. The memory of *Operasi Lallang* in 1987 still grips some Malaysian Christians with fear.¹⁹ Thus, even though Christianity as a faith urges discipleship and sharing the gospel (cf. the Great Commission in Matthew 28 as a biblical imperative) churches struggle to witness to their Muslim neighbors.

In recent decades, Christian social and public involvement has been varied. Pentecostals and Charismatics have stepped up their influence in Malaysian politics. Some exercise mediatory roles between the government and their affiliated network of churches. Others collaborate to express social concerns. The results of such engagements are uneven. In June 2013, at the 23rd Pentecostal World Conference held in Kuala Lumpur, fringe groups bombed the Metro Tabernacle Church because the senior pastor of Metro Tabernacle was the chairman of the conference and general superintendent of the Assemblies of God of Malaysia. In a few other states – such as Selangor, Islamic authorities raided the Bible Society of Malaysia among other incidents.²⁰ Still others like the Christians for Peace and Harmony in Malaysia effectively drew 1200 representatives from 300 churches and non-church groups at its inauguration in June 2015, to promote moderation, goodwill, and love for its nation as their step to overcome interreligious hostility.²¹ Most recently, a Sarawak state

19 Peter Rowan, *Proclaiming the Peacemaker* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf&Stock, 2013; originally, Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2012), 182, ch. 2-4; Min Choon Lee, *Religious Freedom in Malaysia* (Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Kairos Research Centre, 1999).

20 Ong Sek Leang, “responses from Rev. Ong Sek Leang, Senior Pastor of Metro Tabernacle Church,” July 1, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNUnjPG-6c8>; and “Christians Persecuted in Malaysia,” January 4, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkjGkeO1OOE>; Krisis and Praxis, “The Beginning of Persecution of Christian Minorities in Malaysia?” January 3, 2014; <http://www.krisispraxis.com/archives/2014/01/the-beginning-of-persecution-of-christian-minorities-in-malaysia/> (all accessed Aug 24th, 2016).

21 “Hope for a More Peaceful Malaysia,” in CPHM’s inauguration opening, June 2nd, 2015: <http://www.cphm.org.my/v1/2015/10/01/hope-for-a-more-peaceful-malaysia/> (accessed

High Court Judge, Yew Ken Jie, in Kuching city rules in favor of the plaintiff, Rooney Rebit's conversion to Christianity in March 2016, setting a precedent for a controversial issue.²² However, the matter of state or tribunal rule cannot rest solely on the law but on social demographics. Unlike the rest of West Malaysia, which has a majority of Malays residing there, Kuching is located in East Malaysia, which finds more Chinese, Tamils, and Malays, and Christians in the city's population. Thus, one is likely to find a greater degree of interreligious toleration in East Malaysia than in West Malaysia. The uneven policy and practice of religious liberty in Malaysia's geo-politics have shaped how variedly believers live out their faith.

North Korea.

Compared to the time North Korea was called the Antioch of Christianity in Asia – in part due to the revival and/or indigenous outpouring of the Spirit at the beginning of the twentieth century (1901),²³ Christian gathering or activities, such as evangelism, outside of the official state Christian Federation (comprising of five churches) is not permitted. Open Doors, a para-church missions agency, has consecutively numbered North Korea among the top countries where there is no freedom in the practice of religion/s. North Koreans who possess a Bible or convert to Christianity will face execution (death penalty) or be sent to a political prison camp. Thus, Christian mission, if any, will have to exist in secrecy. Compass Direct News claims that there are as many as four hundred thousand Christians, while other agency statistics report anywhere from thirty thousand onwards, and still, others doubted the statistics because

September 19, 2016).

22 "Malaysia Rules Muslim May Convert to Christianity," *Christianity Today* (March 30th 2016); See <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2016/march/malaysia-rules-muslim-can-convert-to-christianity.html> (accessed September 1st, 2016).

23 Allan Anderson, "Pentecostalism in East Asia: Indigenous Oriental Christianity," *Pneuma* 22.1 (2000): 115-132; Young-Hoon Lee, "Korean Pentecost: The Great Revival of 1907," *Asian Journal of Pentecostal Studies* 4.1 (2001): 73-83; Sung Won Yang, "The Influence of the Revival Movement of 1901-1910 on the Development of Korean Christianity" (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2002).

in a society of strict and high surveillance, believers could hardly gather for worship, prayer, bible study, and fellowship, albeit 'underground' in existence and operations.²⁴

Singapore.

In its unique way, the governmentally inspired, grassroots network of Interreligious Confidence Circle, along with the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act (first introduced in March 31, 1992, and revised July 31, 2011), has facilitated both the spread of religions and the respect religious adherents hold with regards to other faiths.²⁵ Also, at the Singapore government's encouragement through her state leaders' public and social addresses over the years (which indirectly have relegated the role of religion in the public square to that of social and personal wellbeing), religious groups in Singapore, and especially the affluent churches have contributed much to society through innumerable social and community outreach programs – either as initiatives of respective local churches, or in collaboration with non-profit social and community outreach organizations that is organized at a national scale, such as the Touch Community.²⁶

To be clear, Singapore churches have provided a vital social role and in nation-building not simply because of the government's invitation. Rather, Singapore churches have perceived that by contributing to individual and social wellbeing, social responsibility, and indirectly to the ongoing development of public policy, they are witnessing for the faith,

24 Paul Marshall, Lela Gilbert, Nina Shea, *Persecuted* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, 2013), 1, 52-62.

25 *Religious Diversity in Singapore*, edited by Ah Eng Lai (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008); cf. my published notes, and analysis, which are too much to repeat in this paper. See Timothy Lim, "Pentecostalism in Singapore and Malaysia: Past, Present, and Future," *Global Renewal Christianity*, vol. 1, edited by Vinson Synan and Amos Yong (Lake Mary, Florida: Charisma House, 2016), 213-232, 442nn54-55.

26 See for instance, Henry Khoo, *Shoes Too Big: Continuing a Legacy of Hope and Transformation* (Singapore: Armour Publishing, 2007); Michael Nai-Chiu Poon, *Religion and Governance for Social Harmony in Singapore* (Singapore: Trinity Theological College, 2012).

albeit in a non-evangelistic way.²⁷ Furthermore, churches rarely retreat completely from sharing the gospel; she has grown to approximately 20% of the population. After some discipline by policymakers, churches, local preachers, and pastors are learning to share their faith vis-à-vis other faiths more sensitively and respectfully over the pulpit.²⁸

While proselytizing (i.e., winning converts from other faiths) may raise some eyebrows, few restrictions (or some would say, no restrictions) have been placed on citizens pursuing and/or deepening their own religion insofar as believers respect other faiths and abide by the Maintenance of Religious Harmony Act.²⁹ Revivalism and rationalizing the faith carry much “currency” in the churches’ deliberation.³⁰ A social cum political observer Terence Chong claims that Christians in the land seek to “fill the moral void.”³¹ Another sociologist Mathew Mathews suggests that Singapore Christianity sees herself as “the voice of moral conscience to the state.”³²

And as Christian political and social leader Li Ann Thio affirms, Singapore Christians have contributed to the public square not just in the private spheres of their own lives, but also for the ramifications of their lifestyle as disciples in the public sphere. The ramifications have

27 See for instance, various essays by Daniel Koh and Roland Chia in *Engaging Society*, edited by Michael Nai-Chiu Poon (Singapore: Trinity Theological College, 2013), chs 6 and 7 respectively.

28 I am thinking here about the inquiry into the message of Rev. Rony Tan, senior pastor of Cornerstone Church as an example, who had to issue a public apology to other religions for his insensitive and pejorative comments about other faiths. The insensitive comments were delivered over a few of his sermons, which have been identified as violations of interreligious harmony and social cohesion. See statements by National Council of Churches in Singapore on a pastor’s sabbath by Internal Security Department Singapore and a four-parts video series of interviews with Rony Tan in 2010.

29 Daniel P. S. Goh, “Pluralist Secularism and the Displacements of Christian Proselytizing in Singapore,” *Proselytizing and the Limits of Religious Pluralism in Contemporary Asia*, edited by Juliana Finucane and R. Michael Feener (Singapore: Springer Science+Business Media, 2014), 125-146.

30 Chee Kiong Tong, *Rationalizing Religion: Religious Conversion, Revivalism and Competition in Singapore Society* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

31 Terence Chong, “Filling the Moral Void: The Christian Right and the State in Singapore,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 41.4 (2011): 566-583.

32 Mathew Mathews, “The Voice of Moral Conscience to the State,” *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 24.1 (2009), 53-65.

been carefully negotiated and navigated to ensure interreligious cohesion and fidelity to one's religious center (God).³³ Amid the complicities of Singapore Christianity's relationship with the State, and state-policy on interreligious relations,³⁴ missions and evangelism have been active components in the discipleship program among Singapore Christians. The accolade of Singapore churches as "an Antioch" of/for Asia – with an active missions outreach to Asia has been noted by missiologists for decades, and the successes in organizing for more than a decade now a national-level missions conference, known as GoForth have demonstrated Singapore churches' evangelistic or gospel-centric frame of being and doing church.³⁵ Along with the mix is what religious sociologists have identified as characteristic of younger mega-churches in Singapore: modernizing, market-driven, and possessive of a commodificative pragmatism.³⁶ To what extent is Singapore churches' focus on mission and evangelism an obedience to the call of the gospel, and to what extent is the drive towards organizing missions and evangelism more or less a pursuit that have emerged from the efficient, effective, and commodified lifestyle of busy Singapore?

33 Li Ann Thio, "Religion in the Public Sphere of Singapore: Wall of Division or Public Square," *Religious Pluralism and Civil Society*, edited by Wade Roof Clark (Oxford: Bardwell Press, 2008), 73-104.

34 Roland Chia, "Rendering to Caesar: A Theology of Church-State Relations," *Church & Society* 7.2 (2004): 41-63; Mathew Mathews, "Accommodating Relationships: The Church and State in Singapore," *Christianity and the State in Asia: Complicity and Conflict*, edited by Julius Bautista and Francis Khok Gee (New York: Routledge, 2009), 184-200.

35 John S. H. Tay, *A Short History of Indigenous Mission in Singapore with a Special Focus on the Pioneering Role of Dr. Tan Kok Beng* (Singapore: Armour, 2010), 7. N.B., by Western naming convention, Tan Kok Beng ought to be printed as Kok Beng Tan. In other places, where necessary, I have printed Singaporean authors in keeping with western naming convention (of listing last name after the first and middle name). For contests to Singapore as Antioch of Asia, see Robbie B. H. Goh, "Asian Christian Networks: Transnational Structures and Geopolitical Mappings," *Journal of Religion & Society* 6 (2004):1-13, and Jean DeBernardi, "Global Christian Culture and the Antioch of Asia," *Religious Diversity in Singapore*, edited by Ah Eng Lai (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), 116-141.

36 Joy Tong Kooi Chin, "McDonalization and the Megachurches: A Case Study of City Harvest Church, Singapore," *Religious Commodifications in Asia: Marketing Gods*, edited by Pattana Kitiarsa (New York: Routledge, 2008), 186-204.

China.

Turning to traces of revival, missions, and evangelism in the People's Republic of China and the innumerable missiological data, one can easily lose perspective, no less because many reports repudiate one another, either directly (i.e., outright rejection of others' reports) or indirectly (with information that conflicts with dominant readings and empirical data, and given the immensity of the population, the veracity and verifiability of the data cannot be easily determined). Is Christianity "persecuted and suffering" as the world remembers?³⁷ I still recall disagreements among missiological statisticians at the Lausanne Conference on Missions and Evangelism 2000 held in Changmai on the reliability of the statistics pertaining to what Tony Lambert calls, *China's Million Christians*?³⁸ And has revival fervor and indigenous evangelistic efforts that spread like wild fire in the 1990s to 2000s ceased or has the missionary zeal found other expressions in both the formerly peasant-led house church movement and in what has been labeled as "cultural Christianity" for the intellectually astute and professionals, apart from the official Three-Self Patriotic Movement, which had received negative review by the house churches as China plunged into the era of the Cultural Revolution?³⁹

What is involved in the ever persistent negotiation between *God and*

37 E.g., Mike Falkenstone, *The Chinese Puzzle: Putting the Pieces Together for a Deeper Understanding of China and Her Church* (Longwood, Fla.: Xulon Press, 2008), 77-93. See a review that contests Falkenstone's claim in Wright Doyle's analysis in <http://www.globalchinacenter.org>.

38 Tony Lambert, *China's Million Christians*, fully revised and updated (New York: Monarch Books, 2006); compare with the missiological field statistician Michael Jaffarian (now coordinator for CBInternational, Richmond, Virginia) and his data compiled previously for David Barrett, et al's *2000 World Christian Encyclopedia* and his quibble with Patrick Johnstone and Jason Mandryk's *Operation Mobilization* statistics; see Michael Jaffarian, "The Statistical State of the Missionary Enterprise," *Missiology* 30.1 (January 2002): 15-32.

39 E.g. of a revival record, Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2010; un-translated monograph in Mandarin); Jonathan Chao and Rosanna Chong, *A Contemporary History of Christianity in Socialist China, 1949-1997*, edited by Amos Wang and Susanna Chen (Taiwan: Chinese Ministries International, 1997); Philip L. Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity and the Three-Self Movement and China's United Front* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1990).

Caesar in China?⁴⁰ How do we evaluate the spread of Christianity since the mid-twentieth century revival in light of the schism and the “tendencies to a very narrow evangelical faith”?⁴¹ And how has persecution among Chinese Christians trained themselves to wrestle with their government, even after Chinese attendants were prohibited from contesting the government’s lack of support for Christian activities and missionary zeal in the bygone eras now?⁴² One recent lack of support is seen in the Chinese government’s successful attempt in preventing a delegate of 230 Chinese believers from attending the Lausanne Conference on World Evangelization, scheduled for Cape Town on October 25, 2010.

Yet, amid all these tensions, and apart from the proliferation also of heterodox teachings, a moment has been stirred for nearly a decade now – for Chinese Christians to send “missionaries” to evangelize the world and especially to “return to Jerusalem,” such as represented by China-born revival group, The Born Again movement, leader Peter Xu (or Xu Yongzhe).⁴³ Another development in recent decade – is the rise of urban, affluent Christians, who are not part of the house church movement, and who are nonetheless “registered” with the Chinese Religious Bureau for their religious activities, but are not part of the official Three-Self Patriotic Movement. Some of these urban groups are more vocal, and have been “going public” in expressing themselves and participating in civic life of society in ways that have been foreign to the persecuted millions in prior

40 Kin-Kwong Chan, “A Chinese Perspective on the Interpretation of the Chinese Government’s Religious Policy,” *All Under Heaven: Chinese Tradition and Christian Life in the People’s Republic of China*, edited by Alan Hunter and Don Rimmington (Kampen: Uitgeversmaatschappij J.H. Kok, 1992), 38-44; Anthony C. Yu, *State and Religion in China: Historical and Textual Perspective* (Chicago: Open Court, 2004); Daniel H. Bays, “A Tradition of State Dominance,” *God and Caesar in China: Policy Implications of Church-State Tensions*, edited by J. Kindopp and Carol L. Hamrin (Washington DC.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 25-39.

41 Chlöe Starr, *Reading Christian Scriptures in China* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 6.

42 Kin-Kwong Chan, “The Christian Community in China: The Leaven Effect,” *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Asia*, edited by David H. Lumsdaine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 76-78, cf., full essay, 43-86.

43 For the Born-again movement’s network ideology and operations, see Yalin Xin, *Inside China’s House Church* (Lexington: Emeth Press, 2009)

decades who kept their faith from public observation.⁴⁴ Chan traces the passive-aggressive initiatives among the younger generations of urbanized Christians in Hebei, Jiangxi, Yunnan and Guangdong provinces, and so, confirms the rise of Chinese Christians in addressing social ills.⁴⁵ Might these examples illustrate that Chinese Christians today are more apt as intellectuals to engage with faith publicly for the course of the gospel?⁴⁶

IMPLICATIONS FOR MISSIONAL EVANGELISM

While much more can be said about the development of Christianity and Christian mission in response to the geopolitical and social infrastructural developments in these Southeast Asian and East Asian countries, I cannot narrate or analyze their missiological history indefinitely. The preliminary data furnished in this essay will hopefully provide some food for thought, and invite scholars, leaders, and lay-followers in each locale to tease out more fully your own reading of a history you are more familiar with, and to thereby construct your analysis for the rest of us to learn about God's work in your region. I will now explore some implications of the foregoing for missional evangelism, and for theological construction.

Missional Evangelism.

Some missional scholars propose that the term “missional evangelism” expresses more deeply and fully the purpose of the church to proclaim and embody Christ's reconciling work “for the salvation of a broken and alienated world.”⁴⁷ Typically in these models, Western churches

44 Mary Ma and Job Li, “Faith Going Public: Urban Christians and Civic Participation in China,” *ChinaSource*; <http://www.chsource.org/articles/17-church-in-china/12-faith-going-public> (accessed August 24th, 2016).

45 Chan, “The Christian Community in China,” 43-86.

46 *Chinese Intellectuals and the Gospel*, edited by Samuel Ling and Stacey Bieler (New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2000); Fredrik Fällman, *Salvation and Modernity: Intellectuals and Faith in Contemporary China* (Lanham: University Press of America, revised, ed., 2008; originally 2004).

47 Inagrace Dietterich and Lacey Warner, *Missional Evangelism* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf&Stock, 2002).

see themselves as benefactors, no less because their ancestors brought the gospel to Asian soil, but also because they see themselves as having more to give and to teach the Majority World Christians about the faith, the propagation, and cultururation of the faith. Voices from the margins have for the longest time been cast aside as peripheral at missiological and theological tables. Hill chided western missional conversations for impoverishing global thrust of missions when they marginalize Majority World contributors in Mission conference (p. 271).

Today, a reversal is gradually occurring. Phillip Jenkins and Timothy Tennent's plea for listening to communities represented by the emerging center of Christianity in the Global South have received more attention by Christians in the western hemisphere.⁴⁸ If Christians in the West have learnt anything at all about the modernist-post-modernist debates, all perspectives are subjective, and could benefit from the insights of others. For this and many more profound theological reasons, Pope Francis's Encyclical, *Evangelii Gaudium* (2010?), and the Busan Report of the World Council of Churches General Assembly (2015) have made similar observations. World Council of Churches' recent document, *Together Towards Life*, urges among other things that Christians in the West weigh more heavily on listening to Christian thinkers and practitioners from the previously marginalized, non-western world.

From my vantage point, churches in the Pacific Rim have to relearn our paradigms, much like how churches in the West are learning to receive the unparallel voices from the East. Churches in the Pacific Rim can benefit from the unparallel voices of those whom we have esteem less highly. How would the posture of esteeming the marginalized transform world mission and local mission, and bring new vitality to the thrust of missional evangelism? By the older paradigm, misisonal evangelism seeks

48 Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2007); Phillip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Phillip Jenkins, 'Believing in the Global South,' *First Things* (December 2006): <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2006/12/believing-in-the-global-south> (accessed September 17, 2016).

what we have to offer to save the unsaved, improve the quality of life of the down and trodden, and fight for justice especially for those who could not defend themselves. Yet, what if, through our conversation with religious neighbors, they see that we genuinely desire to learn from them reveals not just our openness to them, but a desire to connect more deeply? Could it be that as churches embrace and practice the spirit of mutual learning and reception of the other, we will discover how we are also helping each other to grow as we give and receive? Might the result correct older paradigm of missional evangelism so that missional evangelism broadens its scope, which is so much needed for an increasingly violent interreligious world?

More importantly, as the data in foregoing papers have pointed out, churches seeking to be effective as a witness in our milieu may have to lay aside what was once the predominant perspective of separating church and state (or religion and statecraft). To be clear, I am not suggesting that we blur the lines between religion/faith and politics. Rather, the reality of religious nurture is such that discipleship is not merely lived out in the seclusion of one's private piety. Faithful discipleship contains bearings not merely on ethical matters in one's daily decisions, but also faithful discipleship will shape one's vocation and work because all of life ought to be understood as a ministry in the praise and worship of God and a ministry of service unto others. The practice of discipleship then is to have major consequences on how one chooses to live, and its impact will be keenly felt in one's workplace, neighborhood, and when life's hurdles are thrown at us. There is no such thing as a private faith for the religiously faithful, for all things private for the faithful is and will be a witness in the public arena. What is unclear is the scope of privacy and public dimension of the faith, especially in today's postmodern world, which have succeeded in relegating religion to only the sphere of either the private or the sphere of one's conscience. Might it be that one implication of recovering Christian mission in the context of discipleship is to recover the extent of missional service in the widest possible and unfragmented sense, so that the church may slowly become God's instrument of healing and reconciliation to a

world that has become so fragmented and that has lost her bearings?

Theological Construction.

For the most part in this essay, I have not said much about theological construction, and this is not the place to provide an extensive methodological treatment. However, because I hold that there ought to be no dichotomy between missions and theology despite the divisions of disciplines and sub-fields in theological education, I would find it reasonable to make a sustained case for considering what shifts in mission may have for theological construction. Hwa Yung's *Mangoes or Bananas* (1997) though dated still reflects the preference many Asian churches seem to be bent on doing – preferring the pragmatic work of missions and evangelism over the deep and difficult work of theological retrieval and theological reflection for engaging the world of cultures in deep ways.⁴⁹ Without deep engagement with the culture we are trying to reach for Christ, we risk making mistakes of proffering shallow connections between the message of Christ and the needs of the world. Failing to consider deeply the interface of faith and culture will also mean that the theology we articulate could not really reach the intended audience, because without the resources of culture and without engaging with culture, one's theology will either be an abstraction or unable to connect with others. As Simon Chan reminds in his plea for nurturing *Grassroots Asian Theology*, genuine theology retrieves, draws on, and builds upon the cultural resources of one's audience. Deep faith, in missiological terms, seeks the transmission of faith. The transmission of faith requires one to ponder the relationship between faith and culture, the degree or extent of correspondence between faith and culture, and the necessary response that one would have to make in the quest for faithful witness and discipleship in culture. What aspects of culture may be redeemed, invigorated, and/or reconstructed for a theology of life and discipleship? The exercise of

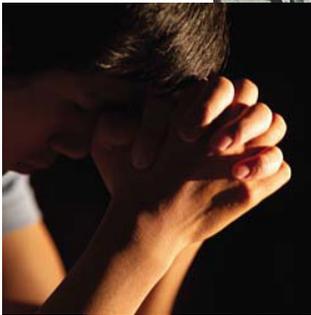
49 Hwa Yung, *Mangoes or Bananas? A Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology* (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1997).

deep listening, deep understanding, and thoughtful engagement, has to continue, because at no stage can anyone individual or entity (or even collaborative groups) claim to have arrived at a finality: Though a utopian is unrealizable in its full measure in this lifetime, as Christ's disciples, we are the Spirit of Christ's workmanship created for good works even as we bear the marks and calling as followers of Christ, the ministry of reconciliation till the eventual renewal of all creation to the doxological delight of Abba!

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One Super Typhoon, Two Sainly Women

by Yuxiao Su

This week is an eventful week for this city, for our local church, and for myself.

This city where I have lived for more than 30 years, a subtropical seaside resort well-known for its natural scenery and economic advancement received yesterday, the day of China's second most important festival, the full-moon Mid-autumn Festival, a Force 17 Typhoon attack, heaviest since the last mid-century. The whole city has turned into a huge garbage ground overnight. The carcasses of subtropical trees which used to contribute to the charm of this city bow or lean or lie in piles, broken, torn apart, up-rooted, blocking the poshest streets of the city, or moaning in the teasing sea gusts along the stretches of the beach which used to be the favorite spots for tourists' snapshots or young couple's expensive, fancier-than-life wedding photos.

Two of our dear sisters in the Lord, however, did not have to witness this most recent havoc Nature wreaked on our city.

The day before yesterday, while the Typhoon was starting to gain its force on the Pacific Ocean, the oldest sister of our local church, a childless widow, a mother and grandmother of numerous spiritual children, had run to her finish line of her fullest life of 103 years, exactly one day before her birthday.

On the first day of this week, two days before our elderly sister departed to her Lord from her bed at her simple home, a young sister aged 29 was taken up to her Lord after more than one year's battle with rectal cancer. A sweet mother of a lovely two-year-old babe, a beautiful wife and faithful co-worker of a young pastor with a childlike round face, a godly daughter from a long line of Christian family who have been among the leaders of the Chinese house church for five generations.

I attended the almost joyful funeral of our elder sister this morning. Nearly all the leading workers of the major house churches of our city came to see her off, sharing stories of her unique service to thousands of God's children in her long life simply as a woman staying at home, gifted with the skill of massaging, but no career, no family, no offspring. She served through her intimate daily communicating with her Lord at home as if they were closest friends, and sharing what she had received from the divine presence with those who came to her with their need: either for massaging their sprained muscles, or for intercession and spiritual support. Her days after her 89 years marked the most fruitful stage of her serving life, during which she went through four major operations, two for tongue cancer, and two for the broken hip bones on each side, the last one being done at the age of 100. The life-threatening disease and her survival of it, the broken limbs and the confinement thereof – all seemed to serve only to strengthen her fear of the Almighty in her daily walk on earth, and deepen her yearning to be unclothed of “this tabernacle”, to be translated to that realm above, and to unite for eternity with her Lord.

She lived and shared a life of dying to herself and living to Christ only. The unshakable stability, peace, joy and liveliness coming from such a life almost radiated to whoever came to see her, chat with her, sing hymns with her, or pray with her. For a number of years I suffered from a chronic disease, and had to take a medical check-up every two or three months at the hospital near her home. Every time when I had to go to the hospital to collect my test report, I found myself tempted to drop by her home first to see her and hear her before summoning up enough courage and peace to face the undesirable arrows on the report. It was Christ's life lived through her that escorted me to confront what I had to confront. It was after those days that I came to understand what for me was the most valuable, most desirable, most independent and most glorified life in this world: a self-denied, Christ-centered, Heaven-yearning life, entirely dependent on the incorruptible and unchangeable resources from above. When I was restlessly gnawed by the energy-sapping imagination and worries about

my life and death and health, it was not my respected professors nor my admired academically accomplished colleagues who could be of any help, but this jobless, childless, stay-at-home woman of the Lord, a previous cancer patient with 2/3 of her tongue off in her first two operations who offered me irresistible attraction and indispensable support in my time of crisis. What life can be more glorious and powerful than this one: a life which can pass life to you so that you may be quickened and resurrected, as the dry bones in Ezekiel's valley? This is the legacy this 103-year-old maid-servant of God has left to us, and to His Church – a life with the sureness of Christ incarnated in her daily walk, “as the shining light, going on and brightening until the day be fully come.”

Having missed the funeral of our 29-year-old sister, I watched the video of the ceremony and the sermon, the sermon given by her round-faced, young, newly widowed pastor husband. The message was entitled, “Thy loving-kindness is better than life”. As is customary in the evangelical house Church in China, Christians’ funerals are never just conducted as a ritual to pay respect to the deceased, but more often serve as a most open, most embracive and most secure occasion to proclaim the Gospel of redemption of sin and the gift of eternal life, the spirit of John Donne’s “For whom the bell tolls” being followed, though without their knowing it, faithfully and effectively on such occasions.

Gospel is good news, says the young pastor, and good news is mostly interpreted and received as being “good” for this life: power, fame, wealth, degrees, and what is more pertinent to their family – health, restoration of health from a fatal disease, good doctors and good medicines to cure the disease, to maintain life in this world ... No. He and his wife who has now passed into the glory have both come to the acute realization that, good news is “thy loving-kindness [which] is better than life,” the loving-kindness that costs the life of God’s only son, who shed blood on the cross for the sin of you and me, so that we can secure the hope of eternal life. Yes, hope! “Hope is the most costly and most precious thing in this world!” said the wife in her battle against her cancer. She knew

how costly hope was for a cancer patient! She finally came to see that all kinds of stunning advertisements for effective cancer killers sold hopes only, rather than medicines, and yet almost all those hopes vaporized in the end! Only the hope of eternal life that God has promised to those redeemed by Christ is real and much better than the limited span of this life! Once she had lost all her hopes in those advertisements and came to the reassurance of her eternal hope, she told her husband joyfully, "I am God's beloved!" In this assurance she breathed her last, and in this assurance she asked her husband to tell her brothers and sisters coming to attend her funeral to wear bright colors for her glorious return to her heavenly home. Of course not many of her church members were able to fully enter into such a victorious feeling and they still wore dark mourning colors to express their sorrow; however, her widowed husband knowing his beloved more deeply, did wear a bright-colored tie with his black suit at the funeral room's pulpit.

At the end of his sermon, the young pastor called on the audience who were mostly professed Christians but with a whole gamut of interpretation of "good news": While Tian (so is called his wife) is lying here, Church, wake up!

True. Nowadays in my home city, my home country and in the nations world wide there are indeed all modes of slumber from which the Church of God needs to be wakened up, even in those countries where the Seed of the Gospel was first sown, and reproduced hundredfold reaching the ends of the earth before the first half of the 20th century. The Church needs to be wakened up, as the young pastor phrased it, from the slumber of the pulpit's transmitting mere words rather than the Word, the slumber of pacifying massages rather than piercing messages, the slumber of success gospels, offering flimsy promises of happiness here and now, the slumber of the congregation's illusionary hopes of big houses, big cars, or big degrees as tokens of God's love, the slumber of engaging with the world's dazzling varieties of life-preserving regimens, the slumber of using church gatherings as arena for associating with the social elites, the slumber of

opting for politically correct obeisance in the multi-culture debates, and surprisingly, as what I found from my exposure to the academic circle of a world renown university, the slumber among Christian academics of justifying their professional ethics to refrain from discussing the Gospel with their students even outside their office hours and even when the students express their pertinent needs, relegating the duty to their local pastors, while evading New Testament's succinct doctrine of priesthood of all believers.

The newly widowed pastor's sermon was perhaps as much for his audience's sake as for his own. While his beloved has departed, he himself still needs to continue his battle, not only against the loss that he could not have endured outside his Redeemer's grace, but also against any future Castle Doubt or Giant Despair. He summoned the Church to fight, and to fight with him.

This past week, one super Typhoon descended upon this city, utterly unwelcome, unreasonably furious, entirely wasteful, demonstrating its devastating power to no purpose; two saintly women ascended from this earth to their eternal abode, to be with their loving Lord and Father in Heaven, where there is no more scorching sun nor beating storm, no more "mourning and crying and pain." Nevertheless, there are elements in all these three cases that transcend human comprehension, just as incomprehensible as Jahovah's questions to Job. Why has there been such a destructive Typhoon unprecedented in the last seven decades? Why did the fatal disease come to such a young, devout life? Why was miraculous healing given to our elderly lady but denied to the young mother?

The value of human dignity lies in that after waiting for the Nature to have fully unleashed its ravaging force upon the world, we do not busy ourselves cracking those unsolvable riddles; we rise up and work hard to put the world back to order. Yet there is a greater God-endowed dignity of our race: while admitting our life has been ravaged beyond repair by our own sin, for which death is the wage, be it paid at the age of 29 or 103, the timing being unknown to us, we are empowered to put our life back

to order again by the real "Good News", by casting our eyes upon the One on the Cross, by claiming the hope of eternal life at the redeeming price of Christ.

Evangelism and the Political in Southeast Asia: A Pentecostal Perspective

by Amos Yong

Whither evangelism in Southeast Asia? There is no space in this short piece to discuss all of the challenges from Myanmar through the Thai-Malay peninsula and the Indonesian islands to Borneo and the Filipino archipelago so I will focus very generally on Islamic Malaysia and Indonesia and Christian Philippines. The former two nations are different if only in that Malaysia is officially Islamic with an approximately 60% Muslim population, while Indonesia, the country with the largest number of Muslims in the world with about 220 million or about 87% of its inhabitants, is constitutionally a secular state but guided by the Pancasila doctrine of belief in one God. However, even if in the latter context it is not illegal for Christians to witness to Muslims and for the latter to convert to Christianity (or other religions) – as in Malaysia, where leaving Islam for Christianity or another religion is apostasy, a criminal offense punishable by imprisonment and forced re-conversion back to Islam – the social pressure against both are immense. How might evangelism proceed in such politicized environments?

On the one hand, one response might be for Christians to simply say that their allegiance is to God rather than to human rulers or even

governments, here following the earliest Messianic believers who persisted in giving witness despite prohibitions by the authorities (cf. Acts 4:18-21). On the other hand, there are also scriptural injunctions to obey the governing powers (Rom. 13:1-7). To be sure, Christians have been perennially divided over how to interpret both kinds of biblical texts in tandem and there are examples of those emphasizing either set over the other in Islamic contexts, not least in the Southeast Asian region. Nevertheless, most Christians will not engage in overt proselytizing activities in relationship to Muslims in these countries. If some do bear witness to the gospel, these most often unfold in intimate and interpersonal settings in which Christians share their testimonies with Muslims they have come to befriend.

On those occasions when Muslims turn to Christ, a variety of developments may ensue. On the one end, a very small majority begin to fellowship in Christian congregations, although rarely will they make public their commitments in definitive ways such as through undergoing Christian baptism in water. On the other end of the spectrum, Muslims have become disciples of Jesus without joining Christian churches, instead establishing among themselves what some missiologists call “insider movements,” whereby they remain within their Islamic communities, even participating in and practicing many of the regular activities within their mosques, but doing so as Jesus followers. The point is that it is extremely rare for there to be public declarations of Muslim conversion to Christian faith since there could be legal consequences not only for the individuals involved (not to mention ostracism from their families, etc.) but also for those Christians who facilitate such conversions and then receive such persons into faith and ecclesial life.

Otherwise, evangelism in Malaysia and Indonesia is directed toward non-Muslim non-Christians. Practically, that means that Malaysian evangelism is focused generally on Chinese and Indian (Tamil, particularly) ethnic groups, while Indonesian efforts are directed toward the Chinese and other minority ethnic groups. Christian churches are generally

multicultural, except with few Malays (who are usually Muslim). To be sure there is much work to be done even without intentional engagement with Muslims in these countries.

What about in the Philippines? Here we are talking about more than 85% of the 107+ million population being Christian, with the majority of these Roman Catholic, but there is a 5% minority Muslim population particularly in the southern Moro region islands. The challenge with this relatively small Muslim group is that they remain socially and economically marginalized from the mainstream of Filipino society, and this contributes to the pervasive unrest and insurgency that threaten the stability of this region and have fueled secession efforts over the decades directed toward establishment of an Islamic province. This means that there are less sustained evangelistic efforts directed toward Filipino Muslims, or these are kept "under the radar" in order not to exacerbate existing political, social, and religious turmoil.

In that case, Filipino evangelistic activity oftentimes is indistinguishable from proselytism. In its pejorative sense, proselytization is understood as targeting people who are part of another segment of one's religious tradition and convincing them to leave that community for that of the proselytizer's. Usually this involves evangelical or pentecostal Christians evangelizing Roman Catholics, particularly those who are nominally so and less active or completely inactive in their parishes. An interesting development in the Filipino context is the emergence of charismatic renewal streams within the Roman Catholic Church that have been embraced by the hierarchy precisely as a strategic means of retention so that the faithful are less compelled to join non-Catholic (read Protestant) congregations. The point is that evangelism remains fraught with complications in the Filipino context even when the Islamic elements are factored out.

How then to think about evangelism in these complex political environments? I suggest that a pentecostal approach would be instructive even for this Southeast Asian region. What I mean is less adopting models from the modern Pentecostal movement than revisiting apostolic

evangelistic efforts that flowed out of the Day of Pentecost outpouring of the Spirit recorded in the book of Acts. Three general comments can be highlighted from the Acts narrative as suggestive for a contemporary pentecostal approach to evangelism within these constraints and amidst these realities.

First, note that the earliest apostolic community shared their possessions mutually so that none had need (Acts 2:32-47, 4:32-37). Sometimes, the most effective modes of evangelism are those which are unintentional toward outsiders but which are attractive precisely because they build up community around shared messianic life. In the Southeast Asian situation, Christians might need to focused as much if not more on mutuality and reciprocity within the community and perhaps the evangelistic witness will take care of itself.

Second, observe the many different ways in which apostolic believers operated within the polis and interfaced with the authorities in the book of Acts. There were instances of civil disobedience, but there are also models of compliance. Peter befriended a Roman centurion while Paul exercised his rights as a Roman citizen even as he also took advantage of opportunities to bear witness to the governing officials. The point is that there is not just one way of evangelistic witness vis-à-vis the state and its mechanisms in the early Christian community. Contemporary believers need to be similarly discerning about evangelization amidst the varying political, social, and other circumstances of contemporary Southeast Asia.

Last but not least, note that the evangelization of the Maltese “barbarians” (from the Greek *barbaroi* in Acts 28:2) proceeded not via verbal witness but through the reception of hospitality from these religious others and then from praying for healing for them (and followed by God’s answering such prayers). This suggests that sometimes evangelistic efforts can proceed through other forms of witness than explicit kerygmatic proclamation. Such approaches may be key particularly to bearing witness to the living Christ to Muslim neighbors. What might Christians need to do to be invited as guests to Muslim homes? We probably don’t want

to seek intentional shipwrecks (which is what happened to Paul) but we might want to think creatively about how the Holy Spirit may otherwise open up opportunities for us to be guests of such religious others.

For further reading

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The Church in Singapore: An Ecclesiology on the Way

by Henry Kuo

Perhaps one of the most enduring ecclesiological metaphors is that of the church as a pilgrim community, one that is best associated with St. Augustine of Hippo, particularly in *De Civitate Dei*. The church peregrinates through the *civitas terrena* like a resident alien or perpetual foreigner, interacting, working, and living in the world as best as it could while continually sojourning together with fellow Christians to progress towards its final destination in God. The church in this sense is a community “on the way.” This metaphor is particularly appropriate when discussing the church in Asia, but given the diversity of “Asia,” it is important to limit our scope. In my short reflection, I wish to focus on the church in Singapore, making some observations and providing a short theological reflection with respect to the church in the United States.

Singapore often competes with Hong Kong in aiming to become Asia’s cosmopolitan “world city.” Originally part of the Sultanate of Johor (Malaysia), the British East India Company established Singapore as one of its trading ports along the Malacca Strait. The island-nation’s strategic location and business-friendly economic policies has led to the development of a multi-cultural and multi-religious society in which harmony is promoted (and, if necessary, enforced) by the Government. Like many East Asian countries, Christianity is a minority religion, and even though Christians do serve in Government – the current President is Anglican – churches rarely have the political sway that churches in the United States enjoy. For instance, when the Government paved the way for the construction of casinos (or, “integrated resorts”) in 2005, Christian and Muslim leaders spoke out vociferously against the legislation. The Government, while agreeing to include public programs dissuading gambling and addressing chronic gamblers to address the dissent,

nonetheless went ahead with their plans. Hence, assessing churches in Asia from the West requires us to place ourselves in a context where Christianity has almost never been a majority religion with close access to the halls of power, and where it is one of many different religions. Here in this short reflection on the church in Singapore, I make three observations.

First, the lack of significant ecclesial influence over political and economic structures does not mean that the church is inert. It is perhaps more accurate to say, following Augustine, that the church in Singapore is really *peregrinatur*, continually exploring and reflecting on how the gospel applies in a very dynamic country. A peregrinating church does not enjoy the privilege of imposing its vision of the City of God upon the nation. At best, and perhaps as it should be, the church explores continually how to bring the gospel to bear in such a way that it matters to the people in a local context with or without the use of the State. Such exploration often promotes a generous catholicity in which the gospel touches the hearts of various peoples in different ways, leading to a great diversity of ecclesial expressions. While many Anglican churches use the *Book of Common Prayer* and conduct "high church" worship styles, for example, there are other Anglican churches that are decidedly "low church" and do not use the *Book of Common Prayer*. Some could even be mistaken to be Pentecostal!

Second, the pilgrimage path occasionally leads to unexpected and even undesirable locations. Large megachurches teaching prosperity-driven or self-help messages each draw thousands of attendees every Sunday. (Ironically, one meets at the convention hall in one of the controversial integrated resorts.) It is, of course, easy to dismiss the megachurches as preaching a false gospel, and indeed, such doctrines are destructive to the church, but an overly-quick assessment prevents us from closer analysis and seeing how it is another example (however disagreeable) of one way some Christians have contextualized the gospel in an environment where health and wealth are very important. Singapore, after all, is a very expensive city that has to import much of the goods and services that it

provides. Additionally, in a hustling and bustling nation of immigrants, rigorous theological reflections do not always take priority over the meeting of immediate spiritual needs. Hence, analyses of the many diverse expressions, however legitimate or not, should be done within the framework of catholicity, or, how the gospel is inculturated locally.

This segues into my third point, which is that the Singaporean church is still a Christianity that is finding its way in terms of inhabiting its catholicity such that it really contributes significantly to what it means to be Singaporean. Part of the challenge lies in the uncertainty of Singaporean identity. What constitutes “Singaporean” is a very current question, and it mirrors a lot of similar discussions in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Because it is a young country of 51 years, Singapore hasn’t had the time to forge a unique indigenous ethnic, religious, or cultural identity. In that sense, it is literally a “world city” in that its identities come from all parts of the globe. The Government has been encouraging the development of various arts in an effort to increase cultural production that can assist in the formation of a uniquely Singaporean identity.

The same is true of Christianity in Singapore. In many respects, the church in Singapore mirrors many church dynamics in other parts of the world. The Presbyterian Church in Singapore was established by Scottish missionaries, but the Bible-Presbyterian Church was a branch of an American offshoot of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. But what makes the Reformed Presbyterian tradition in Singapore uniquely Singaporean is still uncertain. The same can be said, perhaps, of other ecclesial traditions as well. One avenue for the church to contribute both to the construction of a Singaporean and Singaporean-Christian identity is by bringing the gospel to bear, not merely on personal moral questions, but on social and cultural questions and challenges in Singapore. This may enable the church to be a more effective witness to the love and mercy of Jesus Christ while, at the same time, participate significantly in constructive and national conversations. The opposition to the 2005 legislation to legalize gambling is one such example.

I close my reflections by noting that there are lessons the church in Singapore can teach the church in the United States, of which I bring up one. Recent years in the United States have witnessed increasing anxiety among churches of evangelical and mainline stripes about the waning influence or even the “death” of the church in public life and discourse. But fortunately the church in America is *not* the church catholic. In much of the world, Christianity has always had little public influence. Like Singapore, America is a predominately immigrant nation with considerable diversity among its peoples. But in Singapore, its small landmass forces everybody to recognize and wrestle with changes happening in the country. On the other hand America’s large physical size can make it such that Christians in the Plains states are unaware of huge changes in other parts of the country. Such distance often serves as an obstacle to meaningful and compassionate dialogue in important matters such as racism, environmental degradation, the cheapening of peoples of all ages, etc. In fact, that churches can get away with being oblivious to difference is a privilege that churches in Singapore do not enjoy. It has no alternative but to practice a deep and generous catholicity that learns how to include various diversities within its communities if they wish to survive. The same may very well be true of many churches throughout different parts of Asia. Such a deep and wide catholicity is necessary for churches across the world to walk together and be one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church on the way.





The Church and Politics in the Philippines: Mindanao, the “Land of Promise” and the “Moro Problem”

by Pascal D. Bazzell

Filipino historian, Renator Constantino, has noted that the Philippines had the great misfortune of being ‘liberated’ a number of times during history.¹ The dehumanizing cultural invasion of the colonizer also brought Christianity. Whereas Filipinos spread out over thousands of islands have embraced Christianity as their religion, the Moro people (predominantly Muslim) of Mindanao have been fighting since the mid-16th century up for their homeland and religion. The Mindanao Muslim nationalists use “Moro” since the late 1960s as their description for themselves and “Bangsamoro” to identify with their homeland. Both are identifications of expressing discontinuity with a pre-colonial ethnic-religious identity. Mindanao is the second largest (approximately twenty-two million people) and southernmost island of the Philippines, which is known for their rich historical, social, and cultural heritage as the “The Land of Promise.” Due to the substantial resources, some estimate that Mindanao generates sixty percent of the Philippines economic revenue. However, persistence of violent conflicts, oppression, and injustice have contributed to unfulfilled promises and broken dreams of the Moro people of Mindanao.

I lived in Davao City, which is the largest city in Mindanao, for almost 15 years. I learned that in order to understand the Church and Politics in the Philippines today, one has to take into consideration how neo-colonial forces still influence independent Filipino institutions. The “Moro Problem” is one particular incident that sadly, not only reveals deep animosity between two religions, Islam and Christianity, but shows

1 Renator Constantino, *The Philippines: A Past Revisited* (Manila, Philippines: Renator Constantino, 1975), p. 15.

how underlying neo-colonial forces shape interreligious dialog and peace in the nations.

The main motivation of the colonizers was not to bring religion but more economic exploitation of the country. Yet, the century conflict is often played out in the media as being between two religious traditions. For the Moro people, their ancestral land (or traditional lands) were taken away from them and given over to Christian Filipinos and foreign-owned corporations. This meant that they not only experienced economical injustice but also touched their deep Moro Islamic belief about poverty, which upholds that ancestral domain is *waqaf* (property of trust). Lualhati Abreu explains that for the Moro people it was devastating to lose their ancestral land as their social existence directly revolves around those lands.²

I have often heard that the Moro people would not like to be called Filipinos, but rather, affirm their Moro identity. They see the Filipino identity associated with the colonizers producing a Christian nation, which opposes their ancestral claims of an Islamic (moro) country. Clearly, Christian belief and praxis have little to do with the early colonizing strategy. Yet, this association is deeply burned into the memory of the Moro people, and a simple theological disassociation would do little to the badly needed healing process – on both sides.

Any true peace and justice process in Mindanao would need to incorporate how the locals, in this case including the Moro people, can benefit from their resources. Although local Muslims occupied the land for generations, the colonizer gave the land in Mindanao to Christian settlers, government or military reservations. For the Church to have a creditably prophetic voice in Mindanao and address aspects of the Moro problem is to ensure to be on the side of the marginalized. To stand for the rights of those whose land were taken away, even if it would mean they share their own recourses and land. It is in this sacrificial giving that

2 Lualhati Abreu, 'Ancestral Domain – the Core Issue,' in *The Moro Reader: History and the Contemporary Struggles of the Bangsamoro People*, ed. Bobby M. Tuazon (Quezon City, Philippines: CenPEG, 2008), p. 51.

hopefully contributes to the healing of memories resulting to a peaceful and just land, truly being Mindanao – “The land of the promises.”

The “Moro Problem” in the Philippines is a story of deep historical injustice. Hence, it is important that the Church takes solidarity with those experiencing oppressions and injustice. The economical and political solitary of the Moro people may take various forms. For example, a beautiful example of economical solidarity with Muslims in Mindanao happened during the September 2013 siege of Zamboanga City. My good friend, a Filipino OMF missionary, was at the airport ready to fly to Davao to bury his brother as the Misuari Faction of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) laid siege of Zamboanga City, displacing thousands of Muslims, killing hundreds of Muslims and Christian alike, as well razing approximately a 10'000 houses, mostly Muslims communities. My friends' Muslim communities where he served was totally devastated, leaving all his Muslim friends losing all their belongings. With no possibility to leave the city anymore, he welcomed his Muslim friends into his house for the next months. He moved his family into a small room of the house and let the rest be used by his friends, which they remarked after months of exile that they have experienced more love and embrace from this Christian family than from their own families, relatives and Muslim friends. This Christian family has become truly a light as they gave up their rights; their right to bury a family member; their right of their own economical prosperity for the sake of the Bangsamoro people.

Filipino Church history reveals that there are circumstances that are of great importance for the Church to engage in providing the voices to the political climate. For example, when Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law in 1972, heralding a time of great suppression, murder and injustice, it was the Church's prophetic voices for a Revolution in 1986 that mobilized the masses to influence the elite and the political affair. At the same time, when the long issue of the problem of the landless exploitation in 1987, initially with the Church's leadership helping, nonetheless, they removed their support of advocacy that ended up in the failure of distribute justice.

Yet, as studies have shown, if the Church leadership would have continued to engage with the issue of justice for the landless, national legislature probably would have changed that would prohibit the elite and politician from exploiting the laws and oppressing the poor. It was a crucial moment in history for the Filipino Church to be a prophetic voice to give truly justice to the landless and contribute in changing the often corrupt and dysfunctional Philippines political systems. Nonetheless, it is widely known that not only the Political institutions are corrupt but many Church leaders have received personal contributions from the administration to uphold the elite political agenda.

Walden Bello has pointed out that one of the main issues of the social ill problems of the Philippines is because the leaders are corrupt. Even though the Philippines does not officially have a caste system, to ensure the colonizer's interest, the colonizer separated the Filipinos by empowering a few elites to run country. A hearsay one keeps hearing in the Philippines is that it is run and owned by five families. As kinship shapes the Filipino social world and order, the elite often still ensure that their family clan interest are secured, at least during their time of power at the expenses of the masses. There is a weaken democratic process in the Filipino political cultures, yet, the Church has yet to figure out how to speak to those gaps, or at least not what it has done to be enlarging them.³ Elsewhere I have argues that the Church as the family of God, if truly embraced, as an alternative kinship vision could provide crucial insights into more proper Filipino internal structures, governance, and ethos in a postcolonial Filipino context.⁴

For the first time in history the Filipino people elected a President

3 Aloysius Lopez Cartagenas, "Religion and Politics in the Philippines: The Public Role of the Roman Catholic Church in the Democratization of the Filipino Polity," in *Political Theology* 11.6 (2010): 863.

4 See Pascal D. Bazzell, 'A Postcolonial Theological Reading of the Philippines: Church-State Relation and a Familia Dei Response,' in *Religion, Authority and the State*, eds. L.D. Lefebure (Palgrave, 2016), pp. 55-73; and Pascal D. Bazzell, *Urban Ecclesiology: Gospel of Mark, Familia Dei and a Filipino Community facing Homelessness* (Ecclesiological Investigation Series, New York and London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015).

from Mindanao, Rordigue Duterte. It is easy to immediately judge Duterte's presidency. The western news has primarily focused on Duterte's coarse language and compulsive outburst directed at the Pope, the US ambassador, and the US president as well as on the spurge of extra-judicial killings. Having lived in Davao City under Duterte's rule for many years, I have experienced both the good and the dark side of his reign. In those times extra-judicial killings were a regular occurrence. I was there when several of the youth I disciplined were killed for petty thefts by the so-called Davao Death Squad. On the other hand, I have been astonished at the growth and overall good development of the city in the 15 years I lived there. Prior to Duterte's rule, I would not have been safe as a foreigner roaming the city. Duterte's strict rules made Davao city a prosperous place where he incorporated changes throughout different sectors. It is for this reason that I believe the political future of the Philippines looks brighter with having somebody in power who understands Mindanao and does not belong to the oligarchy families that have systematically exploited and oppressed the Filipino people. A man who has proven himself in how he cares for the people in Mindanao, including the Moro people and not merely his or his own family's interest. One who has pointed out the hypocrisy of the political institutions as well as the Church institutions, and rightly called forth for appropriate changes. He is not afraid to address the neo-colonial powers still operating within his own land and standing up against those powers like, for example seen in his demeaning remarks to Obama to look first at his own injustice with the police shooting of the blacks before judging the Philippines. It is easy to address injustice in the other, while blinded by injustices taking different shapes in our own nations. Like the human rights and dignities violated at the shores and lands of Europe through the refugee crisis or on the streets in America from law enforces. We could be quick to see the injustice in the other while paying no attention to our own contexts (Matthew 7:1-5). Human rights and dignity is always to be protected, yet, the process of justice might take different shapes in other contexts.

The church and politics are in a *kairos* moment in the Philippines. The church needs to continue to work closely with the new administration in addressing injustice, oppression and poverty in the nation. This not only being prophetic to the ill and corruption of the government, but also, being open to be transformed through repentance of their own ill, corruption, and selfishness. There might be new church buildings, prospering pastors, expensive short term trips abroad, membership retreats, etc. that have been more important than engaging with the grassroots issues of great injustice, oppression and poverty, especially also for the Moro people. This is a crucial moment for the church and the current political atmosphere to work towards the overall good of the Philippines. It seems to me that Duterte's presidency has so far brought many good impulses of justice for an overall corrupt and oppressive structure. Yet, the overall good of the Philippines is paid by a steep price of those living at the margins. The Filipino church should not forget that God is a God of the least. His heart is for marginalized, the rejected, the drug addicts, the prostitutes, the criminals. It is in this places where Duterte's presidency is harsh, demeaning and unjust that the Church of the Philippines is called to express compassion and justice. God's justice is imperative for every man, woman, and child because they are human, made in God's image.



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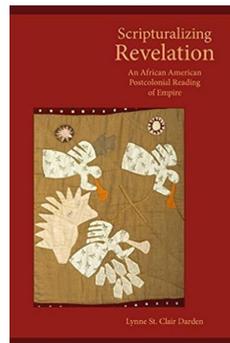
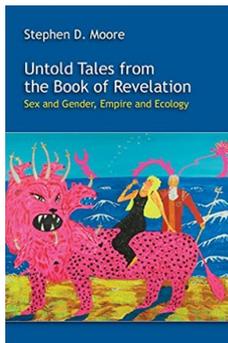
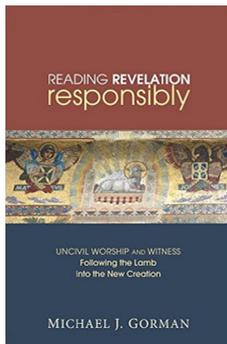
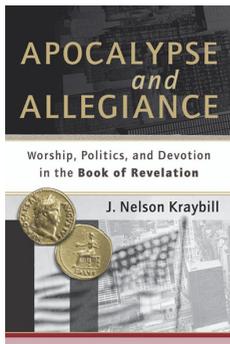


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Review Article

Revelation and the Political in the 21st Century: A Review Essay

Amos Yong



KEYWORDS:

| Political Theology | Revelation |
| Apocalypse | Biblical Hermeneutics | Postcolonial Studies |
| Evangelical Interpretation |

J. Nelson Kraybill, *Apocalypse & Allegiance: Worship, Politics & Devotion in the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010). 224 pp. 9781587432613.

Michael J. Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship & Witness Following the Lamb into the New Creation* (Eugene, Ore: Cascade Books, 2011). xvii + 211 pp. 9781606085608.

Ryan Leif Hansen, *Silence and Praise: Rhetorical Cosmology and Political Theology in the Book of Revelation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014). vii + 184 pp. 9781451470116.

Stephen D. Moore, *Untold Tales from the Book of Revelation: Sex and Gender, Empire and Ecology* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014). ix + 290 pp. 9781589839908.

Lynne St. Clair Darden, *Scripturalizing Revelation: An African American Postcolonial Reading of Empire* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015). xiii + 194 pp. 9781628370874.

INTRODUCTION

The book of Revelation has always been understood, at least in part, as a book about the political. What might recent interpreters of the *polis* in the Apocalypse have to contribute to the pages of this journal and to present evangelical thinking at the nexus where the Bible and the political intersect? The following, the main portion of this essay, focuses on five books – more or less in the order that they have been published over the span of the last half decade or so – in response to this question.¹ We will

1 There are other books that we could have included – e.g., Richard B. Hays and

follow this up with a few brief reflections about existing trajectories in political theology unleashed in and through this final canonical text.

CONTEMPORARY PROPOSALS ON THE POLITICAL VISION/ OF THE APOCALYPSE

Kraybill

By the time *Apocalypse and Allegiance* appeared in 2010, Kraybill had been thinking with and working on the book of Revelation for over almost three decades.² As a lifelong Mennonite pastor and church leader – including a stint in the presidency of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Indiana, from 1996 to 2008 and currently as president of the Mennonite World Conference – he would have been expected to give attention to the non-violence of the Jesus way in contrast with the violence strewn across the pages of the Apocalypse, and Kraybill does not disappoint in urging that the central figure of the Lamb slain, in effect from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8), invites a posture of “endurance” (*hypomonē*) in the midst of persecution and opposition (135). Yet in truth, this Mennonite biblical scholar’s aims are elsewhere and on broader horizons. His thesis is that Revelation’s symbols work to “build allegiance” (15), in this case, to both expose the commitments represented by and demanded of the ancient imperial cult of Rome, and to foster true gratitude to and worship of the slain Lamb in anticipation of the coming reign of God.

Stefan Alkier, eds., *Revelation and the Politics of Apocalyptic Interpretation* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2012), and others to be mentioned below – but I have opted to engage only monographs and these are the ones that we have been able to secure review copies of (thanks to *ERTP* book review editor, Timothy Lim).

2 Early fascination with the book as a missionary-pastor led to scholarly engagement and doctoral studies culminating in his dissertation, “Commerce and Cult in Revelation 18” (PhD thesis, Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Virginia, 1992); this was revised and published later as J. Nelson Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John’s Apocalypse*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement* 132 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996).

Kraybill's argument is unfolded through twelve chapters, starting with John of Patmos' immediate situation and wider context, traversing back and forth through his book, and concluding with a Christian vision of worship and discipleship imbued by long-term hope. Along the way, present-day readers are introduced to insights into the ancient world's socio-economic-and-political systems and values that illuminate how Roman colonialism and the cult of emperor worship went hand-in-hand. For instance, that emperor worship "pervades international commerce" (147-49) is reflected in the coins that carried the imprints of the reigning imperial faces (149-50). More palpably, the Roman state sponsored public rituals, ceremonies, and celebrations such as the gladiatorial games that demonstrated imperial command and power over life and death, and thereby inculcated public subordination under its regimes. The point made throughout is that Christian worship for John and his original audience enabled faithful discipleship *within* but resisted participation *of* these imperial systems (186-90). Translated for contemporary readers and Christ-followers, Kraybill recommends that worship "turns chaos into order" (185) and empowers Christians to live differently from and inhabit the margins of their imperial domains, here consistent with how Mennonites and others in the Radical Reformation tradition have always situated themselves as outliers, whether of Christendom or other dominant spheres of political power.

The Brazos imprint signals that while thoroughly undergirded by scholarship, including a glossary, bibliography of ancient and modern works, and subject index, *Apocalypse and Allegiance* is intended also for a lay audience. Toward that end, it is easily the most accessible of the books under review, including 81 illustrations – photos, maps and diagrams, figures and graphics, works of art, images of ancient artifacts, etc. – in the attempt to reproduce the imagistically and perceptually rich visions recounted by John the Seer. In addition, each of the chapters concludes with reflection questions and vignettes from today's world in which readers are invited to imagine "living the vision" amidst twenty-first century global realities.

Gorman

If those attracted to Kraybill's book might be first and foremost fellow Mennonite and Annabaptist types along with those in Free Church traditions, might others in more mainline Protestant and ecumenical churches be less favorably predisposed to his perspective? If so, then United Methodist scholar Michael Gorman – who cut his scholarly teeth on, and continues to publish in, Pauline studies,³ and also currently serves as the Raymond E. Brown Professor of Biblical Studies and Theology at the Roman Catholic St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore, Maryland – has written a parallel book for his colleagues and others in these ecclesial traditions. Gorman's version is similarly addressed to Christian laity, especially to those who may be overly enthused by current Left Behind scenarios on the one hand or those curtly dismissive of the Apocalypse's obscurities on the other hand, and thus also includes three dozen charts and illustrations (maps, boxes, graphs, photos). *Reading Revelation Responsibly* thus specifies arguments about why the Left Behind approaches to the book are “*dangerous theologically*” (73, emphasis Gorman's), recommending instead that we embrace John's “liturgical and missional spirituality (that is, a life of worship and witness)” antithetical to any – Roman or otherwise – civil “religion that idolizes secular power” (xv).

Gorman's ten chapters unfold this “manifesto and summons to ‘uncivil’ religion” (5) via “an alternative, cruciform ... strategy” (77). All along the way, he is alert to how civil religion is and has always been coopted by formal religiosity, not only in John's time and place but in today's America for instance: “religious beliefs, language, and practices that are superficially Christian but infused with national myths and habits. Sadly, most of this civil religion's practitioners belong to Christian churches, which is exactly why Revelation is addressed to the

3 Most of Gorman's other dozen or so titles are focused on Paul; none touch substantially on the book of Revelation as does the one under review.

seven *churches* (not to Babylon), to all Christians tempted by the civil cult”; so beyond any critique of empire, more significant is the critique of the church, “specifically of its participation in the idolatry of the imperial cult, the civil or national religion” (56).

Unlike Kraybill, Gorman follows John sequentially through his 21 chapters, albeit thematically and sectionally rather than in typical commentary style. Further as one of the major contributors to the theological interpretation of scripture conversation that has been gaining increasing momentum in biblical studies in the last decade plus, Gorman is attentive to the theological messages encoded in Revelation’s cryptic rhetoric. Thus readers are treated regularly to insightful theological take-aways, for example, as when it is deduced from analysis of the Seer’s visions of violent judgment: “It is not, therefore, because imperial power and Lamb power co-exist in God that wrath descends from God’s throne, but because when humans reject Lamb power they experience it as imperial disaster – disordered desire, death, and destruction” (140). In other words, the violent deaths of the Apocalypse are less directly inflicted upon by the Lamb and the one that sits on the throne, and more the result of human and creaturely – beastly, even! – systems run amuck. This would be representative of Gorman’s *theological* interpretation of the Revelation text that in turn supports what Christian discipleship looks like that resists the civil religion of the present time.

Hansen

In contrast to the works of Kraybill and Gorman as more seasoned scholars, *Silence and Praxis* is a revised doctoral thesis forged recently under the mentorship of renowned New Testament exegete K. K. Yeo at Garratt-Evangelical Theological Seminary. Hansen works toward what he calls “an apocalyptic political theology” (the title of his final, seventh,

chapter)⁴ by way of engaging the three cycles of seven – seven seals, trumpets, and bowls – particularly their endings. He argues, persuasively in my opinion, for a recapitulative reading of the three cycles as providing different perspectives on the same themes or topics, specifically when considering how their three endings (8:1, 3-5; 11:15-19, 16:17-21, explicated in his chapters 4-6 respectively) unveil, via John's rhetoric of cosmological renewal, a coming restoration of the Noahic covenant (77-80).

More to the point, Hansen argues with impressive deftness that the postures of silence and praise, depicted in turn at the ends of the first and second cycles respectively, and then together at the conclusion of cycle three, invite a performative praxis of prayerful and worshipful endurance and of non-participation in the Roman imperial order. Hansen's praxis- and performative-oriented argument bursts the parameters wherein those deploying rhetorical criticism are usually constrained since the former connects symbolic and worldview construction (the domain of rhetoric) with practical ways of life and action. Hence, while comfortable with Gorman's theological claim that "when humans reject Lamb power they experience it as imperial disaster – disordered desire, death, and destruction," Hansen would also insist that the disaster experienced as divine judgment is brought about surely through the performative praxis of believers. Thus, "if John's communities refuse sacrifice, they will be seen as introducing anomie into the Roman social and cosmic order. Then John reports the breaking apart of the world through divine judgment, thus confirming this pagan suspicion. Once the world begins to come undone, the contract that the inhabitants of the earth have with the gods and with Caesar will have been understood to be broken as well, and true worship may occur throughout the world" (50), so that "God's

4 Here connecting thematically with but yet substantively distinct from that proposed by Nathan R. Kerr, *Christ, History and Apocalyptic: The Politics of Christian Mission, Theopolitical Visions 4* (Eugene, Ore.: Cascade Books, 2008), whose interlocutors are primarily theologians like Troeltsch, Barth, and Hauerwas, as well as Anabaptists like Yoder, the last thereby providing points of contact with Kraybill at the presuppositional level.

new creation does not emerge in judgment alone, but in justification – it puts the world back right” (67). Even if Hansen’s proposal appears as a Catch-22 from one angle– i.e., does Christian non-participatory silence (amidst the imperial regime) and worshipful praise induce the unraveling of the current world order and usher in the divine reign or does the divine reign not emerge and fully dawn until this world’s order is broken? – this would be consistent with the hermeneutical circle that enfolds beliefs and practices in mutual relation.

Although Kraybill and Gorman might embrace the evangelical label in qualified ways, Hansen is the only author of the five whose books we are reviewing who is sociologically and institutionally evangelical, being an ordained elder in the Church of the Nazarene that self-identifies with the modern movement. I would recommend that readers of this journal desiring more exegetically robust efforts in evangelical political theology attend to the intricacies of *Silence and Praise* and mine its approach toward such objectives. If Garrett-Evangelical’s more mainline Protestant ethos is open to more progressive interpretive and theological methods, Yeo’s recognized evangelical credentials have worked well here with Hansen’s ecclesial commitments to enable an identifiably ecumenical but yet solidly evangelical proposal with potential to bridge extant chasms.⁵

Moore

The shift from Hansen to Moore is, in terms of ideological perspectives for readers of *ERTS*, a drastic one considering the latter’s poststructuralist, postcolonial, affective, and queer interpretive theoretical frameworks. Yet as we shall see, evangelicals that ignore the Moores of the guild will be impoverished principally for political hermeneutics and political theological tasks. Almost as prolific as Gorman in terms of prior

5 Yeo is principally a Pauline scholar, although more recently he has collaborated with other evangelical biblical scholars on a multi-volume Majority World Theology project, the inaugural volume of which is Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo, eds., *The Trinity among the Nations: The Doctrine of God in the Majority World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

monographs, Moore is probably more influential given both his Edmund S. Janus Professorship in New Testament Studies at Drew University where he also supervises doctoral students (one of whose books we will turn to momentarily), and he is certainly more expansive in his reach in terms of his editorial efforts in mobilizing the scholarship of others in his edited book and peer reviewed journal collections.⁶

Moore's *Untold Tales* consists of nine other chapters that are reprinted from previous publication venues, a few stretching back about twenty years, plus a new introduction. Even if some potential readers may be uninterested in his ruminations on the gendered and sexual symbolism of Revelation, much of these have implications for understanding the Seer of Patmos's views about imperial Rome and hence also have application for current responses to empire. Three general summative remarks are all we have space for in this essay. First, while the gendered imagery of the Apocalypse, not least of the Great Whore of Babylon in chapters 17-18, is aptly illuminated according to ancient notions of the brothel slave and then exposed, yet the feminine symbol of the people of God as the bride of Christ is unveiled as no less infected, it would appear, from contaminating elements *within* the church such as Jezebel-like figures. More problematic is that as counter-narrative to Rome as is John's vision, yet the latter's mimicry of Roman imperial symbolism to construct the coming kingdom of God "ultimately reinscribes Rome into the heavenly kingdom (transcendentalizing Rome, so to speak)" (28). According to the postcolonial theoretical paradigm that Moore is working with, it is but impossible for those on the imperial margins to counter the dominant ethos except with "the master's tools," so in this respect, John is both resistant to but yet also collusive of the imperial order. Yet Moore is able to find threads for an eco-environmental theology in the apocalyptic vision, despite its conclusion that transforms the natural habitation into a mega-city (that dwarfs even the most colossal of fashionable megamalls

6 Moore began his career in the synoptic gospels but has since broadened to take up questions at the interface of biblical studies and postcritical scholarship.

across the global complexes and urbanopolises), in that in the end the one at the right hand of the one on the throne is ultimately not incarnated as a human but revealed as a lamb, and it is this theriomorphic and quadrupedal figure who receives the worship from the ends of the earth that “surely qualifies as an ecotheological image with legs, despite the contradictions that repeatedly trip it up” (243).

Those who read *Untold Tales* carefully will see that Moore, who himself has had some sort of experience of pentecostal Christianity (78), is as attentive to the biblical text as an evangelical reader. The latter will also learn much about the postcritical tools in Moore’s arsenal – since he takes care to unpack these notions and concepts rather than assuming all his readers are familiar with the latest theoretical developments – and how they can be effective in opening up new vistas on, and affective in nurturing perception of the desires and disgusts permeating, the Apocalypse’s “revelations.” If evangelicals approached Moore with their own hermeneutic of charity, they will appreciate that this postcolonial theorist is not oblivious to how this opaque scriptural book operates like a mirror on his own life, thereby in effect generating a self-critical posture, even piety, most acute in his honest confession that perhaps he remains attracted to Revelation remarkably because it shines a light on his own psychoses (66).

Darden

Scripturalizing Revelation was originally a Drew University PhD thesis completed under the tutelage of Moore in 2011. The practice of “scripturalizing” refers to an African American form of biblical interpretation emergent from out of a double-consciousness (being black in a white world) via “signifyin” (to use the African American colloquialism) or making meaning through reappropriation of collective but yet counter-cultural memories and resources in order to forge prophetically, in a contested present, a more hopeful future. Now Assistant Professor of

New Testament at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta, Georgia, the only consortium of schools committed to serving the black church, Darden's work, facilitated by postcolonial hermeneutical tools, is devoted to critical analysis of the North American colonial regime, albeit from sites of African American history, culture, and ecclesia.

At one level, Darden's concluding fifth chapter on the throne room of the Almighty in Revelation chapters 4-5 as a kind of "recycled imperialism" (138) – including the signs and wonders characteristic of imperial majesty, the council of regent (the 24 elders), the ritual performance of *proskynesis* or obeisance, the liturgical hymn-singing of the entire imperial domain, and the liturgical performance as a prelude to war – is a take off from Moore's work. The result is a message that "failed because John's mocking mimicked the *very process of re-presentation* that the various power systems in the ancient Mediterranean world employed to construct a sacralization of sociopolitical structures and systems" (139, italics Darden's). At a further level, however, Darden impressively demonstrates in her chapter 4 that the double or even multiple consciousness of the African American hermeneutic provides a helpful framework for accessing John's own double/multiple consciousness as signifyin(g) or writing from within, even if attempting to resist, the Pax Romana.⁷ In that respect, it is precisely what we might call Darden's "plantation hermeneutic" (my term) that shows how a doubly conscious practice of signification operates in the spirituals sounded out of the slave-owners' estates on the one hand, and through the Seer's intertextual (from various strands of prior discourses of resistance in the Old Testament for instance) and multiply redacted (thus preserving various discursive layers reflective of cultural memories forged under distinctive conditions, whether in the

7 In other words, Darden's point is that we ought not to essentialize "African-American" either since the point of the latter is to call attention to the differences that constitute the margins in relationship to the center of the dominant white culture; in this regard, see another Moore-directed thesis on the Apocalypse deploying in this case womanist perspectives on the Apocalypse: Shanell T. Smith, *The Woman Babylon and the Marks of Empire: Reading Revelation with a Postcolonial Womanist Hermeneutics of Ambivalence* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

wake of Nero or during the reign of Domitian, etc.) “revelations” on the other hand. Readers not familiar with African American history and theology ought to persevere carefully through the first three chapters in order to benefit fully from the “revelatory” payoff in the latter part of Darden’s book.

If the goal is to challenge the hegemonic binaries of the dominant culture from its pluralistic underside, Darden realizes that the resistance cannot but adopt and adapt the dominant culture’s tools. But, she maintains, embracing this ambivalence and “contradictoriness – the embrace and rejection, the mimicry and the mockery” – is the key to success: “the denial of ambivalence results either in an uncritical mimicry or an unproductive mockery” (99). Considered from such a *via media* standpoint, then, Darden concludes that John does not live into his doubly-conscious situation enough since he is finally coopted by the exclusive, binary, hierarchical absolutism of the empire he is attempting to resist. But hence his rhetorical strategy produces an “isolation policy [that is] unrealistic, ineffective, and detrimental” (123) as it collapses the hybridic tensions and contradictions needed to generate forward momentum. This is Darden’s admonition to the 21st century African American church: that its achievements of middle class success threaten to compromise its double-consciousness, which in the end means assimilation into, rather than the capacity to continually prophetically challenge, the status quo.

WHITHER EVANGELICAL POLITICAL THEOLOGY? CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

This is not the place to chart exhaustively next steps for evangelical political theology. Yet to the degree that evangelical theological efforts are normed by the scriptures, to the same degree then the books reviewed above are one platform from which endeavors in evangelical political

theology might spring.⁸ I limit my reflections to three sets of remarks.

First, I want to return to Darden's judgment about John's failure in order to reiterate another point that she herself would insist on. To what degree can we agree with her that John has failed in his efforts to enable resistance of empire? To turn the question around, though: are not Darden's own achievements facilitated by if not dependent upon John's own apocalyptic revelations? But now to expand on that point, and in a way consistent with Darden's own premises: do we not need African American readings of John from multiple sites and locations, particularly those from across the middle-class, and even from the spread of African American evangelical communities – the middle-class-evangelical combination of which Darden is most concerned about engaging in order to be alert to reinscribing the dominant society's values in the efforts of social transformation – so that their views of the Apocalypse and its successes, or lack thereof, can be adequately registered? Are not these extant receptions of Revelation from those whose identities are complicated beyond the binary of dominant-and-marginalized cultures all needed to fully unfold the book's prophetic achievements in the present historical circumstances? As the latter is left underdeveloped in *Scripturalizing Revelation*, it may be premature to conclude that John's is a failed project. Moore's own self-critical and self-confessional approach that sees himself implicated in, if not interrogated by, his own analyses is perhaps in this regard more suggestive for next steps. This willingly self-implicated consciousness may be reflective of the fact that Moore is much further long the path as tenured and endowed professor/teacher and therefore even more open to being vulnerable than is Darden as a junior scholar (at least by position and rank, if not by experience). But my point is one that Darden herself is urging: that the African American double consciousness actually opens up to the plurality of hybridized identities,

8 I come to this material having worked on Luke-Acts and the political – for instance in my *Who is the Holy Spirit? A Walk with the Apostles* (Brewster, Mass.: Paraclete Press, 2011) – even as I am shifting to extended, and extensive, work on this last book of the biblical canon.

and the witness and reading of the Apocalypse from across such a spectrum is essential for comprehending currently the book's normative accomplishments, or lack thereof, and thereby assessing and evaluating its revelatory potential.

This leads to my second point for evangelical political theology in the current climate: that it ought to be attentive to a broader range of sites of hermeneutical and theological reflection representative of Evangelicalism as a global movement than it usually or currently is. What I mean here is that if world Christianity is vital and explosive primarily because of evangelicalizing, pentecostalizing, and charismatizing trends and developments in the majority world, then evangelical theology in general and evangelical political theology in particular ought to be more engaged in reflection and dialogue with global South and non-Western viewpoints than it has been.⁹ Moore and especially Darden here are helpful in reminding evangelicals it is important to foreground their multiply situated perspectives in any interpretive, theological endeavor, rather than to minimize or neglect such, as is most often the case. Such perspectivalism, however, ought not to be limited to racial, ethnic, or gendered poststructuralist axes, but should include the specificities of confessional traditions, for instance that inhabited by Mennonites like Kraybill. To be sure he could have been more explicit about the difference that such Anabaptistic approaches may have made for retrieving Revelation for political theological purposes today, even as Hanson might have been more specific about how Nazarene and Wesleyan commitments could have impacted his project. As these were neither what Kraybill nor Hansen attempted, I am not finding fault with their actual efforts. My point is that these confessional spheres ought not to be ignored, and that evangelical political theology is most robust precisely when these are accounted for up front, rather than swept under the rug of the dominant

⁹ I expand on this point in my review essay, "Restoring, Reforming, Renewing: Accompaniments to *The Cambridge Companion to Evangelical Theology*," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 33:2 (2009): 179-83.

tradition.¹⁰ Toward such a telos, then, the five voices reviewed herein are each important for insights they contribute, but these invite, rather than put an end to, further and diverse consideration of the import of John's Apocalypse for evangelical thinking in political theology today.

Last but not least, if nothing else, this review essay highlights the need for multiple hermeneutical frames of reference as each one involves distinctive insights while occluding other possible interpretive possibilities. Reading Revelation in light of today's global political theological situation therefore not only alerts us to the incredibly pluralistic contexts within which evangelicals live presently and the varieties of uses readers today can derive from the book but also helps us to recognize the plurality of authorial perspectives generative of Revelation's apocalyptic visions (as denoted by Darden), the diversity of ecclesial locations to which such were originally directed (noted by Gorman but also others), and the multiplicity of performative actions relevant to the polis then and now (Hansen's thesis).¹¹ Thus our guides have prompted fresh sensitivity to the heterogeneity *within* the revelatory text, even as they have precipitated new appreciation for the breadth of its political applicability, and all of this in and through rather than notwithstanding Revelation's arguably totalizing apocalypticism. This is as it should be since political theology is not merely an abstract and speculative enterprise at the level of theory but always connects with how the people of God ought to feel (recall Moore on this point), live, and act in the public square. And if there is not just one way to be faithful but many forms of truthful resistance to the imperialisms of this world, then we need political theological thinking and formulation that articulate and exemplify such flexibility, nuance, and

10 My own efforts to think theologically and politically through marginalized and confessional (pent-evangelical – combining pentecostal and evangelical – in my case) sites of ethnicity, migration, and transnationalism are in Yong, *The Future of Evangelical Theology: Soundings from the Asian American Diaspora* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014).

11 In other work, I have also noted the epistemological pluralism embedded in Revelation; see *Renewing Christian Theology: Systematics for a Global Christianity*, images and commentary by Jonathan A. Anderson (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2014), ch. 12.

dynamism.¹² Our conversation partners in this review essay have been helpfully catalytic toward such ends.

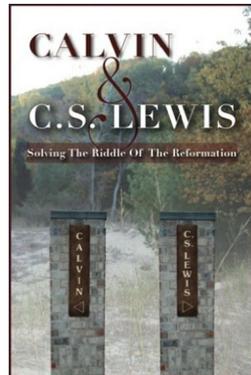
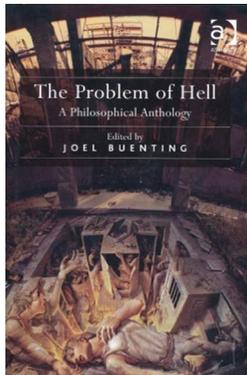
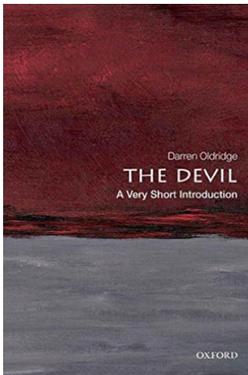
12 For more on this point of pluralism and political theology that I unpack in terms of “many tongues many political practices,” see Amos Yong, *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology – The Cadbury Lectures 2009*, Sacra Doctrina: Christian Theology for a Postmodern Age series (Grand Rapids and Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010).

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Review Article

C.S. Lewis and John Calvin: Heaven and Hell, Choice and Damnation, Freedom and Responsibility

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KEYWORDS:

John Calvin	C.S. Lewis	Salvation-Damnation
Individual Responsibility	Paradox-Dialectic	
Reformation Soteriology	Hell	

Darren Oldridge, *The Devil: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2012). ISBN: 0199580995.

Joel Buenting (ed.), *The Problem of Hell: A Philosophical Anthology* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010). ISBN: 9780754667636.

Jordan C. Ferrier, *Calvin and C.S. Lewis: Solving the Riddle of the Reformation* (Allendale, MI: Jordan Ferrier, 2010). ISBN: 1479101281

Throughout the twentieth century some theologians and philosophers under the influence of so-called Modernism and Western liberalism tried to solve what was considered to be the problem of hell by removing hell, by denying its existence whether as a geographical place or an ontological entity: the eschaton then became death and heaven (gone was judgement and hell). But the actual God-given eschatological reality would not go away. The problem of hell remained, and was tied in with what some perceived as of God's *aseity*: human freedom in relation to God's freedom. Therefore the link between these three books is the *aseity* of God: the right and freedom of God *to be*, and to decide the responsibility of humanity in accordance with the created order of things: Darren Oldridge examines a basic first principle underpinning orthodox theology, that is the existence of personified evil and its self-generated abode: hell; for the authors of the essays in Joel Buenting's volume hell is considered as a problem for a small group of people – not the condemned – but for particular philosophers; and for Jordan C. Ferrier, the question is about why two groups of Christians (represented by the eschatology read from the works of C.S. Lewis and John Calvin) read the same verses of scripture and reach radically different views on the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of the human creature.

The question of responsibility relates to judgement and hell: while a particular group of philosophers who puzzle over how a perfectly good God can justifiably condemn anyone to hell, to eternal damnation, the freedom and responsibility of human decision-making has become a

widely discussed topic in philosophical circles leading to, as we shall see, an unresolved dialectical paradox (unresolvable? – is resolution for the saved; hell by its very ontology is riven with contradiction and confusion, suffocatingly cramed with unresolved lives?). In addition, C.S. Lewis's understanding of atonement in relation to the judgement of God (fashionably ignored by the theological academy), is now receiving considerable interest and examination by philosophers of many persuasions. Therefore who is responsible for the *Fall*, and for the death that follows on from original sin, and for the ontology of hell: God, or humanity? For some – indeed for many philosophers (operating from a theoretical position, not one of faith) – this antinomy is resolved through the theoretical eschatology of C.S. Lewis. Underpinned by the insights of late-nineteenth century Scottish theologian George MacDonald – whom Lewis readily acknowledged as his teacher – Lewis's eschatology is being invoked as a solution to the so-called problem of hell and the question of responsibility and human decision making. Indeed in recent years analytic philosophers of religion have given extensive consideration to a number of Lewis's arguments, particularly his atonement theory, that is, how Christ's death on the cross might bring salvation to humanity, but also the implications of the utter responsibility that the human has taken on to itself (i.e. through the *Fall* into original sin) with regard to its future, temporal and *post mortem*. Lewis's eschatological structure (Satan, the *Fall*, the necessity of atonement, the freedom for the human to believe, or not), then makes sense in a way that the average stripped-down eschatology of a Western liberal theology does not. Lewis's eschatology is Patristic, reflecting both a broadly c/Catholic and e/Evangelical position.

The aim of this essay is therefore to assess and compare Oldridge, Bunting, and Ferrier and consider how they deal with this paradox, that is, the problem of heaven and hell, choice and damnation, freedom and responsibility. This question relates to human *teleology* in relation to C.S. Lewis's writings, as all three writers draw on and ground their arguments in Lewis's writings.

THE PROBLEM OF HELL, I: PERSONIFIED EVIL

First principles: humanity is not as it should be; we are not as created: we have *fallen* from grace due to original sin (Gen 3 and Rom 7). The *Fall* for Lewis was generated by intelligent and sentient personified evil – Lucifer, the *fallen* angel – who tempted humanity, who courted and invited, who seduced proto-humanity to metaphorically pluck and taste of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This brings us to Oldridge’s neat introduction to the devil which for anyone is a salutary reading of something that many simply dismiss, or try to repackage to take the sting out of the reality of their personal cultural rebellion against the triune God. Contrary to the assertion of many self-confessed Moderns and Liberals since the Enlightenment (in particular in certain quarters of the Church of England in the late twentieth century, issuing from so called ‘1970s Liberal Anglicanism’) this does not postulate a dualistic universe. God and the devil are not eternally conflicting powers, Lucifer is a creature, therefore created good, who elects to challenge God, to be like God – *eritis sicut Deus* – to attempt to surpass God, and, as a result, be exiled by God, Lucifer is a person subsisting as personified evil in *its* own self-generated hell, drawing like to *itself*. This is not dualism, but rebellion: an uprising that is echoed in the subsequent and consequent history of humanity: mankind’s rebellion does not postulate dualism, merely revolt, upheaval, with the consequent destructive tendencies of its hellish existence. Lewis comments:

Now, if by ‘the Devil’ you mean a power opposite to God and, like God, self-existent from all eternity, the answer is certainly No. There is no uncreated being except God. God has no opposite. No being could attain a ‘perfect badness’ opposite to the perfect goodness of God; for when you have taken away every kind of good thing (intelligence, will, memory, energy, and existence itself) there would be none of him left. The proper question is whether I believe

in devils. I do. That is to say, I believe in angels, and I believe that some of these, by the abuse of their free will, have become enemies to God and, as a corollary, to us. These we may call devils. They do not differ in nature from good angels, but their nature is depraved. Devil is the opposite of angel only as Bad Man is the opposite of Good Man. Satan, the leader or dictator of devils, is the opposite, not of God, but of Michael.¹

Ownership, after the Cross and Resurrection is therefore defined by this rebellion: humanity – here Lewis concurs with the Classic, Patristic, Model of Atonement – is either for God, or for personified evil. The judgment of God on Lucifer was that the *fallen* angel's arrogance was incompatible with the bliss of heaven, the arrogance of attempting to be God excluded Lucifer from heaven (Is 14:12 (KJV), Rev 12; see also the Book of Enoch). The necessity to exclude is represented by Lewis in the demonic ramblings of Screwtape when he tries to explain to the junior tempter how Lucifer left heaven, unable to live with God.² Oldridge therefore presents a sound understanding of this biblical history.

The religio-pantomime figure of the devil/Satan, along with much folklore that has been generated in Western Europe over the last millennia, tends to reduce the reality of intelligent and sentient personified evil to a joke, something sophisticated and enlightened people do not believe in.³ But herein lies a danger: such evil generates unbelief as a lure. However, the devil is an answer to a host of theodical questions, which Darren Oldridge addresses in *A Very Short Introduction to the devil*: why do the innocent suffer in a world created by a loving God? – does this mean that God cannot prevent this suffering, despite *His* supposed omnipotence? – or is God not loving after all? This, for Oldridge, is the problem of evil, caused by the personality (some might say, celebrity) of the devil: rebellion

1 C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters and Screwtape Proposes a Toast* (London: Fontana, 1965), p. 6.

2 C.S. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters* (1st ed., London: Bles, 1942), Chp. 8.

3 See, for instance, P.G. Maxwell-Stuart, *Satan: A Biography* (Stroud, UK: Amberley Publishing, 2012), also, Peter Stanford, *The Devil: A Biography* (London: Arrow Publishing: Penguin, 2003).

creates evil in all its manifold manifestations. Oldridge provides a succinct and comprehensive way into understanding the tradition, and does deal with the central role personified evil has in the Judeo-Christian tradition: remove the devil and hell (the self-generated abode of ‘Old Nick’) and the question remains, Why the Crucifixion, Why atonement? Therefore — from an academically neutral position — Oldridge examines the place of the devil, theologically, succinctly, and accurately (which brings in the place of such evil personification in relation to the world, to worldliness). Oldridge’s cultural history of Satan (the devil in art, literature, music) provides an amusing yet deeply disturbing glimpse into the surreptitious and clandestine, furtive and covert, way such evil will court and seduce, enthrall and capture the human imagination, always attempting to convince that, of course, such personified evil does not exist, could not exist, cannot exist (the seduction is rarely as explicit, formal, and open, as Faust’s, or as attractive an anti-hero as Milton’s ‘celebrity’ Satan!). Oldridge writes as an historian, as an academic, remaining neutral and impartial, open-minded, non-partisan, without disclosing any personal belief (or is such a neutral position another of old-Nick’s tricks?); *A Very Short Introduction to the devil*, is salutary reading.

THE PROBLEM OF HELL, II: JUSTICE

Joel Buenting’s *The Problem of Hell: A Philosophical Anthology* is a volume of essays clearly addressed to the philosophical community rather than to believers (if such a distinction is viable). As such it is a salutary attempt to refute the philosophical scepticism that asserts that even if the person somehow continues alive in some form after death, there is no ‘god’, no judgement, no heaven, and certainly no hell (such philosophical ontic agnosticism is more akin to Buddhism than the Judaeo-Christian tradition). Are these essays successful in refuting this scepticism?—generally, yes. Most of these essays are from a broadly orthodox and



Kurt Wenner, 'The Ghetto' (2009),
detail from the cover of Joel Buenting's *The Problem of Hell*.

traditional Christian perspective and tackle the fashionably liberal dialectical questions relating to inclusivity-exclusivity, finality-escapism, and punishment-responsibility. While some of the essays focus on the question of predestination (Thomas Talbott), or the idea of annihilationism (Charlie Brown and Jerry L. Walls) as a way of squaring the theodical circle (that is, a vindication of God's goodness and justice in the face of the existence of evil, whereby the pains of hell are not eternal, and lead to a doctrine of nothingness for those outside the grace of God), there is a sound historical basis to this volume of essays. For example, Gordon Knight's, 'Molinism and Hell' (named after the sixteenth century Jesuit theologian Luis de Molina, as an attempt to reconcile human free will with providence of God). However, there is plenty of good philosophy to keep the orthodox on their toes (for example, James Cain, 'Why I am unconvinced by Arguments against the Existence of Hell': freedom of the will, logic, and philosophy of religion). A persistent theme, implicit

in most of these essays, but made explicit in Bradley L. Sickler's essay, is the proposition of Infernal Voluntarism, a doctrine thus named by Sickler but which is acknowledged as coming from the writings of C.S. Lewis. Sickler in 'Infernal Voluntarism and "The Deep Courtesy of Heaven",' presents Lewis's doctrine that the existence of hell issues from creaturely self-choice. Contrary to many self-confessed modernist/liberal theologians in the mid-twentieth century Lewis asserted the reality of hell and damnation, that is, those who reside for eternity in hell do so of their own volition, they choose hell rather than heaven. Lewis did not use the term infernal voluntarism, but what he outlines in *The Problem of Pain*, *The Screwtape Letters*, *The Great Divorce*, and many other works, is a form of infernal voluntarism. Central to this is Lewis's dictum whereby each and every human achieves its dearest wish, all receive their heart's desire, all receive what their life led to. In eternity all are what they had become in life, but they may not like the end result of their actions and beliefs. Lewis notes in *The Magician's Nephew*, 'All get what they want; they do not always like it;⁴ Lewis likewise asserts, 'For all find what they truly seek.'⁵ Bradley L. Sickler notes a common assumption among the majority of theologians and philosophers: they claim no one would choose to go to hell, or elect to stay there. The shared assumption is that people go to hell against their will (but when the will has become so corrupted does such an individual really know what it is doing, and does such an individual understand what it is seeking when it has ruined the God-given creation?). Sickler, drawing on Lewis's works, notes—

But what if the occupants of hell are not thrown there by God, but, as it were, they freely jump? That view . . . can be called 'infernal voluntarism'. Instead of assuming that everyone will want to be in heaven, infernal voluntarism takes the position that there are very many people who would sacrifice the joys of a life lived in submission to God in exchange for something else. Odd as it may sound, infernal voluntarism acknowledges that there is something

4 C.S. Lewis, *The Magician's Nephew* (London: Bles, 1955), p. 162.

5 C.S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (London: Bles, 1956), p. 165.

that people may prefer over true flourishing and happiness—namely, rebellion. If the infernal voluntarist position is right, then hell is chosen by its occupants, not foisted on them against their will. Conversely, heaven would be entered by choice too: no one who seriously desires heaven will be denied it. As we shall see, a corollary to at least one famous infernal voluntarist's position is that Christ has made the way to heaven, and it is only through him that anyone enters—but that does not entail that conscious belief in the person and work of Jesus Christ is a necessary condition for being saved by and through him.⁶

Sickler is paraphrasing Lewis when he states 'one famous infernal voluntarist's position.' Furthermore, Sickler comments, 'It is critical to Lewis's soteriology that hell is a place people choose to go [to] . . . without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it.'⁷ Lewis excelled at presenting this doctrine though story in *The Great Divorce*: many are inquisitive about heaven but cannot let go of their own self-willed, self-generated, hell; something will always hold them back. Sickler, and the other essayists in this book, also presents the contrary: those late twentieth century liberal theologians and philosophers who seek to deny the reality of hell.

THE PROBLEM OF HELL, III: JUDGEMENT AND FORGIVENESS

Does this deny the judgement of God? Does Infernal Voluntarism seek to deny the *aseity* of God? A key text in *The Great Divorce* is the conversation Lewis scripts between himself and his mentor, George MacDonald, which identifies how the judgement of God could work:

6 Bradley L. Sickler, 'Infernal Voluntarism and "The Deep Courtesy of Heaven",' in, Joel Bunting, *The Problem of Hell: A Philosophical Anthology* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010), p. 164. Sickler appears to be invoking Matt. 25, the parable of the sheep and the goats in the final clause.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 172, paraphrasing C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (London: Bles, 1945), p. 58.

There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’ All that are in Hell choose it. Without that self-choice there could be no Hell. No soul that seriously and constantly desires joy will ever miss it. Those who seek find. To those who knock it is opened.⁸

Forgiveness is available to those who in repentance submit to the will of God. The will of God is then in judgement to forgive them, which may, for Lewis, involve a degree of *purgation*, cleansing, purifying, a *change* (for example, 1 Cor. 15:51–53.) to welcome them into the new life: but, for Lewis, the tree lies where it falls,⁹ so to speak. If they do not submit, and truly submit in repentance, if they do not unconditionally submit to the will of God, then God’s judgement on them is to condemn them to suffer the fate of their own wilfulness: thus Lewis’s Doctrine of Infernal Voluntarism. If God’s judgement is to say to the human upon death ‘Thy will be done, thy will, oh human, Thy will be done,’ this constitutes a banishment, exiled from the joy and ecstasy of heaven, as Lucifer, the *fallen* angel, was.¹⁰ The wilfulness of the human has befitted it for nothing more than hell, its own self-generated hell: it is like God saying, you have refused to submit to my will, you are the un-reformed rebel, you are fit for nothing more than the invention of your own wilfulness, which may mean suffering in a burning lake for eternity for that is what you have become: your will be done. God warns us of this reality (Mark 9:41-48; c.f. Matt 7:21-23).¹¹

8 Lewis, *The Great Divorce*, 58.

9 Ecclesiastes 11:3 (KJV); sometimes translated, “As the tree falls, so shall it lie.” Often quoted during the Reformation to contradict the perceived Roman Catholic position of transit from hell to heaven, through purgatory.

10 C.S. Lewis’s colleague at Oxford and fellow Inkling, J.R.R. Tolkien’s word-picture of Sméagol/Gollum is apposite here: banished for his crimes, for what he has become, Sméagol was cast out never to return, he was to live on his own, by his wits, but he was not alone, he was preyed upon and—like Lucifer—drew evil to himself. See, J.R.R. Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings: The Shadow of the Past* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1954–55), pp. 53, 55 and 56, also, Appendix F, p. 1136.

11 Discussing Lewis’s doctrine of heaven and hell raises questions about how the atonement works, how we are reconciled (or not) to God. Lewis asserts the total act

For Joel Buenting, Sickler, and the authors here, it is modernists and philosophers who postulate that hell is a problem.¹² A constant criticism is, how can humanity be held responsible for decisions made in life, decisions humanity did not realize the full consequences of while alive. *Eternal* punishment therefore seems a bit harsh. But this criticism refuses to acknowledge the state the person has developed into: if the truly evil are punished for eternity, this is in direct accordance with what they have become, which will have been a near total denial of their humanity. Lewis commented, 'So much mercy, yet still there is hell.'¹³

Lewis does not have a problem with hell. Philosophers postulate that hell is a problem. We need to consider the background to this position so as to understand what Lewis asserted. The problem of hell is no problem for the saved, and in many cases it is not a problem for the damned – it is

of forgiveness, in potential, of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, yet we are still mired in sin and subject to God's judgment. What is happening here? Lewis subscribed, from his reading of Gustav Aulén's work on the atonement, *Christus Victor* (1931) to the 'classic' atonement theory. (See Lewis writing to Corbin Scott Carnell, Oct. 13, 1958, in, C.S. Lewis, *Collected Letters, Vol. III—Narnia, Cambridge and Joy 1950–1963* (ed., by Walter Hooper. San Francisco: Harper, 2007), pp. 978–98) In this context Lewis advocates a 'debt' model in his apologetics, and a 'ransom' model in his analogical narratives. These two models combine for Lewis in the 'classic' model: humanity is in bondage to the devil through original sin. According to the 'classic' model of atonement Christ's sacrifice releases humanity from its bondage to the devil, Satan, to the dark evil forces. In a sense this resets the human condition to its *prelapsarian* state. It frees humanity to be for God, or against God, our beliefs and actions, our faith, ethics and morals, give away our loyalty and allegiance: the Last Judgment decides who we are for. See, P. H. Brazier, *C.S. Lewis—On the Christ of a Religious Economy II. Knowing Salvation* (series: C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ, Bk. 3.2; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock), 2014, Pt. 3, Chps 9–12, pp. 165–283.

12 A key work to consider in these criticisms is John Hick's, *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Collins, 1970). In a similar vein, see, Brian Davies, *Reality of God and the Problem of Evil* (London: Continuum, 2006). From both sides of the debate, the following are crucial in understanding these issues: Jonathan L. Kvanvig, *Destiny and Deliberation: Essays in Philosophical Theology*. Oxford: OUP, 2011), see specifically, Ch. 1 'Autonomy, Finality, and the Choice Model of Hell,' 5–20, Chp. 2 'Losing Your Soul,' pp. 21–40, and, Chp. 3 'Universalism and the Problem of Hell,' pp. 41–61; also, John M.E. McTaggart, *Some Dogmas of Religion* (London: Edward Arnold Press, 1906), see, Chp. VI, 'God as Omnipotent,' pp. 186–220, specifically §. 177, 215–16 (pub., 1906, see, <http://archive.org/details/somedogmasrelig00mctagooog>). See also, *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (online), Jonathan L. Kvanvig, 'Heaven and Hell,' <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heaven-hell/>. See also, Peter Geach, *Providence and Evil: The Stanton Lectures 1971–72* (Cambridge: CUP, 1977).

13 C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (London: Bles, 1940), p. 98.

a problem for the “god” of the philosophers. Ethical concerns are raised about the eternal cruelty of hell, that it is inconsistent with the concept of a God of love defined by justice, the moral good, and benevolence. The philosopher’s problem of hell can be summarized in four key points:

- that it exists
- that humans are sent there *post mortem*
- that there is no escape
- that hell is defined by eternal punishment for sins – actions and inactions – committed in life.

By contrast Liberal opponents to a doctrine of hell argue from one or both of two positions: first, *universalism* (universal reconciliation) that proclaims and judges that all will be saved; or, second, *annihilationism*, whereby they adopt an annihilationist position—sinners are destroyed rather than punished eternally (this is often referred to as “conditional immortality”). Is the concept of eternal punishment in keeping with the God of love who seeks everyone’s salvation? Where is God’s benevolence? Where is human free will? Do we not control our own destiny? Hell may not be an eternal form of retributive punishment, but merely the result of free will—those who do not wish to spend eternity with God do not have to, they are not *forced* so to do. But even this does not satisfy the religious professionals and secular philosophers who argue that even as a choice hell is unreasonable because we do not always understand the full implications of our choices, our decisions. Marilyn McCord Adams argued in the 1970s that humanity is characterized by diminished responsibility and psychological flaws, therefore it would be cruel and wrong to send some, condemned, to hell.¹⁴ But this argument is based on the assumption that the human does not understand itself and cannot make sound decisions for its own benefit. Although the inability

14 See, Marilyn McCord Adams, ‘The Problem of Hell: A Problem of Evil for Christians,’ in, *Reasoned Faith* (ed. by Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann; Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), pp. 313-24, see specifically pp. 313-14. See also, Adams, ‘Hell and the God of Justice,’ in, *Religious Studies* 11.4 (1975) pp. 433-47.

to make right choices (Rom 7:14–19, also, 7:20–25) can be described as a result of original sin (due to the *Fall* the human can no longer make right choices), this also undermines the criticism of religious professionals and secular philosophers who criticize God for allowing such individuals to choose hell: these secular criticisms also issue from this inability to make sound judgments. Therefore, if the human does not understand the full implications of its choices and judgments and decisions, then the human does not understand what it is talking about when it chooses, therefore we may posit that these religious professionals and secular philosophers do understand what they are talking about when they criticize God's loving mercy and judgment in allowing the creature to elect hell. But do not these critics also suffer from the same diminished responsibility that they invoke as a defence for hell-bound unrepentant sinners, and does not this same diminished responsibility invalidate any cogency or truth in their criticisms and judgements?). Does not their criticism turn back on to themselves? In placing themselves *in judgment* over God are they not merely doing exactly what Adam and Eve did – the sin of Lucifer – and exhibiting the inability to make right and proper, sound and valid, judgments?

It is important to remember how in *The Last Battle*, Lewis presents this in a Narnian Last Judgement: all come before Aslan, they either love him or loathe him – the basis of judgement is not religious knowledge, but on submission to the will of the Christ (Matt. 7:21-23), a submission that then generates love (*agape*). Here we can see this choice of response in the creatures that pass before Aslan in the Last Judgement: some look at him in love and thanks, and are saved; others loathe and hate Aslan, and are condemned.¹⁵ There is no grey middle area, no compromise, and no confusion of response. It is one or the other: love or hate—

As they came right up to Aslan one or other of two things happened to each of them. They all looked straight in His face, I don't think

15 Lewis, *Last Battle*, 175–76.

they had any choice about that. And when some looked, the expression of their faces changed terribly—it was fear and hatred: except that, on the faces of talking beasts, the fear and hatred lasted only for a fraction of a second. You could see that they suddenly ceased to be talking beasts. They were just ordinary animals. And all the creatures who looked at Aslan in that way swerved to their right, his left, and disappeared into his huge black shadow, which (as you have heard) streamed away to the left of the doorway. The children never saw them again. I don't know what became of them. But the others looked in the face of Aslan and loved him, though some of them were very frightened at the same time. And all these came in at the Door, in on Aslan's right.¹⁶

But who is responsible? Is God ultimately responsible for the failure of the creation—the creature—to be saved? Or does responsibility lie with the human who was given free will, and rebelled? Does responsibility lie with the human creature that refuses to turn? Certain theological traditions, it is asserted, rightly or wrongly, will deny the human ability of self-choice: does all come down to predestination through a rigid doctrine of election?

THE PROBLEM OF HELL, IV: RESPONSIBILITY – C.S. LEWIS AND JOHN CALVIN

A pertinent theological question that has gathered pace in the West in recent decades is that of responsibility and intention: God, or humanity; individual or collective, (implicitly relating to the question of whether or not humans really have free will any longer after the *Fall*). C.S. Lewis knew this and devoted much of his *corpus* to considering these questions, indeed, judging by the correspondence at the time of his conversion,¹⁷ it

16 Ibid, 175–76.

17 Lewis writing to Arthur Greeves, Oct. 18, 1931. C.S. Lewis, *Collected Letters, Vol. I: Family Letters 1905-1931* (edited by Walter Hooper. San Francisco: Harper, 2004), pp. 975–77.

had a formed a paradox and an obstacle to conversion and faith (related as it does to atonement and guilt – and of necessity – election and penal substitution). For Jordan C. Ferrier, in *Calvin and C.S. Lewis: Solving the Riddle of the Reformation*, the central question relating to eschatology and teleology is one of responsibility: human or divine; but – for Ferrier – why do two groups of Christians (represented by John Calvin and C.S. Lewis, both traditional and Biblical) read the same verses of scripture and reach radically different views on the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of the creature.

Jordan Ferrier has analysed some of the complex issues involved in comparing Lewis with a more traditional Calvinistic position.¹⁸ Essentially Lewis represents a position that can be deemed Western mainstream Protestant (also Roman Catholic, likewise Greco-Russian-Eastern



John Calvin & C.S. Lewis

18 Jordan C. Ferrier, *Calvin and C.S. Lewis: Solving the Riddle of the Reformation* (Allendale, MI: Jordan Ferrier, 2010).

Orthodox). This is a position grounded in faith, *as distinct from*, what is construed by some to be a Calvinistic position (though whether this is a position attributable to John Calvin, or to all Calvinistic groups, or sub-denominations, is a serious and pertinent question to consider). This contrary position is seen to be grounded in predestination and election. Ferrier highlights and attempts to resolve the differences between C.S. Lewis and John Calvin on issues of omnipotence and responsibility, and how the conclusions relate to election and the will of God.¹⁹ Acknowledging that there are major differences, despite the fact that both Lewis and Calvin start from the same biblically informed position (God's freedom and the *Fall* of humanity), and although Ferrier is relatively unique in comparing the two, the solution to the riddle of the Reformation, as he terms it, appears to be left hanging. Many Calvinists will disagree with Ferrier, and at times Ferrier appears to be reluctant to own that perhaps Calvin was simply wrong (if what is presented is an accurate depiction of John Calvin's beliefs on this matter). The problem is essentially that for C.S. Lewis God willed that humanity knew the risks (Gen 2:16–17) and was free to choose;²⁰ humanity was not coerced into choosing one way or the other, therefore God did not author evil, or the *Fall*: for Lewis, humanity before the *Fall* had unconditional freedom to choose, unbiased and dispassionate, a freedom that was lost after the *Fall* once humanity was in bondage to personified evil.²¹ Also, for Lewis, God did author the creation, which had free will to choose, and God took the responsibility for the *Fall* onto God (on the Cross). Reading Ferrier one is left with a sound understanding of the traditional – some might say stereotypical – position attributed to Calvinists whereby God knew all of this and *willed* the *Fall* to happen therefore all is predestined.²² If Calvinists believe that everything that happens is the will of God, then the *Fall* can, for some Calvinists, be attributed to the will of God. Lewis

19 Ibid, Chp. 3, p. 20f.

20 Ibid, p. 26f.

21 Ibid, pp. 30-35.

22 Ibid; For a summary of the 'problem', see, p. 39.

would say not. Here Ferrier is sound in his assessment: God created the conditions of freedom that characterized the creature, and waited for the creature turn to God in freedom and in love. (Lewis exemplifies this in *Perelandra* where the Green Lady is free to obey or not to obey, God does not influence her but waits for her, and observes her response, which for Lewis's is paradise retained). Some Calvinists deny that humanity can know any good; others regard humanity as capable of perceiving, accurately, something of the good. Here Ferrier's position is both sound and original. Is there one unique position to Calvinism?—probably not. If God could have prevented the *Fall*, but chose not to, is God responsible? Ferrier does acknowledge that this is often seen as the extra-Calvinistic position identifiable across many denominations, a position some Calvinists will raise, others not. However, most Catholics, Anglican, and many Protestants see the question as irrelevant: we simply know no longer the conditions of our original creation. Yet God is the creator, and God created good and evil (or allowed evil to create itself?), God created the moral conditions of the creation, imbued with natural law, and God is therefore obedient to this natural – ontological – law, a commandment, edict and rule, that undergirds creation and is woven into the creature: God *elects* to be governed in God's relations with the creation by this law, but God is not *bound* by this law; Lewis represents this pertinently in *The Chronicles of Narnia*, in the divine person of Aslan the lion). Lewis consistently asserted natural law. Is he asserting that there is something outside of God that stands in judgment over God? Jordan Ferrier notes this puzzlement:

Is something correct, therefore God wills it, or: does God will something, therefore it is correct. Calvin takes the second option and voluntarism. C.S. Lewis takes the first option and what is called 'intellectualism.'²³

Ferrier rightly categorizes Lewis as, in effect, a classical theist:

23 Ibid, 42.

Classical theists are also proponents of natural law. Calvinists are opponents to a natural law because it prescribes a law for the actions of God. Lewis will argue that God will be obedient to the natural law simply because it is ‘just’ to do so in terms of God’s relations with humanity: God expects obedience from humanity towards natural law; thereby God’s actions will reflect the same compliance: ... [Natural law] is the doctrine of objective value, the belief that certain attitudes are really true, and others really false, to the kind of things the universe is and the kind of things we are.²⁴

Ferrier does try to balance at this point. As Lewis would concur – God can see that bringing good out of the evil of the *Fall* is worth the effort and worth the final result. Perhaps the answer to the riddle of the Reformation, as Ferrier terms it, is in the very nature of humanity and what we were created for, the answer to the riddle is ontological and not doctrinal. Lewis has the senior demon Screwtape comment on the puzzle, where God is to be perceived, inadvertently, as the ‘enemy’:

He really does want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself—creatures whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His. We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in, He wants to give out. We are empty and would be filled; He is full and flows over. Our war aim is a world in which our father below has drawn all other beings into Himself: the Enemy wants a world full of beings united to Him but still distinct . . .

Merely to override a human will (as His felt presence in any but the faintest and most mitigated degree would certainly do) would be for Him useless. He cannot ravish. He can only woo. For His ignoble idea is to eat the cake and have it; the creatures are to be one with Him, but yet themselves; merely to cancel them, or assimilate them, will not serve.²⁵

24 Ibid, p. 39.

25 C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (1st ed.), pp. 30 & 31

So are the Calvinists right, is all is predestined? Or is Lewis right, that the creaturely freedom given to the human absolves God of the responsibility? Can the protestations of some Calvinists appear, at times, like the convoluted and inverted thinking of Screwtape?

Ferrier's work is important because comparing Calvin and Lewis on this crucially important subject is rare and relatively unique. Lewis, it must be admitted, is Arminian (though he does not own or use the term): grace is resistible, judgement is final – there is no election outside of faith. It is faith that destines us, not the decision of God through a pre-destined elect. Does Ferrier resolve the riddle of the Reformation? The jury is still out. The position that Ferrier attributes to Calvinists (as compared with, or distinct —to a cautious degree— from the position we attribute to Calvin himself) is recognisable by some Calvinists, but not by others. It is also relatively unclear as to what definition Ferrier is using when attributing a 'voluntarist' position to Calvin. (Ferrier's use of 'voluntarist' appears distinct, to a degree, from that used by Bradley L. Sickler in his proposition, 'Infernal Voluntarism'.) Ferrier's work is important because comparing Calvin and Lewis on this crucially important subject is rare and relatively unique. This is a tightly argued and evidenced book, and although the jury is still out, it is debateable whether the riddle of the Reformation can be resolved this side of the eschaton.

CONCLUSION

Oldridge, Bunting and Ferrier do a stalwart job in tackling these issues and presenting the complexity of Lewis's consideration; they are constructive reading and cover the expanse of discipline in theology, philosophy, and in theologically related biblical studies. But do they answer the question? They point towards Lewis's solution, which was in turn Patristic, and therefore repudiate much modern and liberal eschatology (which for decades has tried to marginalize an Evangelical perspective).

So is Lewis correct: many will simply create the reality, *post mortem*, that they are condemned to exist in for eternity, not realizing they are in hell, perhaps not even perceiving that they are dead: ‘All get what they want, they do not always like it.’²⁶ Yes, Lewis did assert the traditional, biblical, model of hell defined by fire and pain and eternal punishment, but this is at a deeper level than the nihilistic, unchanging, diminished existence represented by the humans in *The Great Divorce*. The condemned in the upper levels of hell are held above the deeper violent, painful fires of hell, by the grace of God. Does this (for traditional Calvinists) absolve God of the responsibility? Does this refute the problem of hell for the philosophers? Hell is not a problem for the redeemed (Rev 14:9-12 and Luke 16:19–31); hell is not a problem for Satan, or for the demons of hell, they love the *inferno*. However, the jury is still out—but not forever! Whatever decision we make, we will be in heaven or in hell eternally: what we do in the here-and-now echoes through eternity. Perhaps the final word should be with Lewis:

Some will not be redeemed. There is no doctrine which I would more willingly remove from Christianity than this, if it lay in my power. But it has the full support of Scripture and, specially, of Our Lord’s own words; it has always been held by Christendom; and it has the support of reason. If a game is played, it must be possible to lose it. If the happiness of a creature lies in self-surrender, no one can make that surrender but himself (though many can help him to make it) and he may refuse. I would pay any price to be able to say truthfully ‘All will be saved.’ But my reason retorts ‘Without their will, or with it?’ If I say ‘Without their will’ I at once perceive a contradiction; how can the supreme voluntary act of self-surrender be involuntary? If I say ‘With their will’, my reason replies ‘How if they will not give in?’²⁷

26 Lewis, *Magician’s Nephew*, p. 162.

27 Lewis, *Problem of Pain*, pp. 96–7.

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Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics
Book Reviews



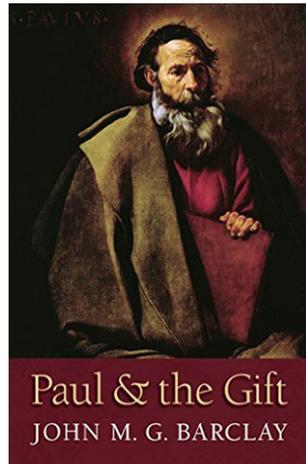
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Book Reviews

John M.G. Barclay.
Paul & the Gift
Grand Rapids, MI:
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.,
2015. xvi, 672 pp., hardback &
kindle. ISBN: 978-0-8028-6889-3

One might well wonder if there remains anything significant to be said about so central a topic as grace in the writings of Paul, however, in his latest work, *Paul and the Gift*, professor Barclay's holds up a magnifying glass to this topic and produces a study that is potentially quite revolutionary.

Barclay situates his study in the broader framework of the anthropology of 'gift' and begins by surveying and highlighting the insights of modern treatments on the topic in which the diversity of notions of 'gift' and 'gift-giving' across time and culture have been demonstrated. Barclay shows that "Gift" is neither a single phenomenon nor a stable category' (11) – an



insight particularly evident when modern and Greco-Roman conceptions of 'gift' are contrasted. Barclay demonstrates how, in the latter, gift-giving (including Greek 'euergetism' and Roman patronage) is inherently reciprocal, entailing obligation and the expectation of return in some form while the modern Western notion of gift is of that which is entirely 'free', in which no return is expected and no obligation conferred. This latter notion of 'gift', he concludes, is 'a historically and culturally specific Western invention' (64).

While scholars have viewed the concept of 'grace' in largely monolithic ways, Barclay argues that 'grace' is polyvalent, that it is essential to determine what covert presuppositions influence our definitions of grace and to 'disaggregate' the various 'perfections' that may accompany it. By 'perfections' Barclay means the process whereby we 'draw out' a concept to its 'logical conclusion' or 'ultimate reductions' (67). Barclay offers six such perfections which serve as an analytical tool for the remainder of the book: *superabundance*, *singularity*, *priority*, *incongruity*, *efficacy*, and *non-circularity*.

This taxonomy is then applied, illuminatingly, to various prominent interpreters of Paul both pre-modern and modern. Of the latter, Barclay demonstrates the helpfulness of such a semantic disaggregation with particular reference to E.P. Sanders and the discussion surrounding the New Perspective on Paul (NPP). As groundbreaking as was Sanders' 1977 volume, according to Barclay, it suffered from covert suppositions regarding the nature of grace. While Sanders perfected the priority of grace ('getting in' and staying in') he incorporated, unawares, additional perfections viz. incongruity: 'There seems to be a hidden assumption that if grace were shown to be congruous with the worth of its recipients, it would not be considered grace at all' (155). This failure to distinguish between the differing perfections of grace has muddied the waters and has had significant consequences for the discussion moving forward.

Plagued by similar terminological and conceptual imprecision regarding grace, neither NPP proponents nor their detractors have allowed

Paul and Judaism to have differing conceptions of grace; a position which has all too often lead either to exegetical stalemates or heated skirmishes. For the former, if Judaism is a gracious religion after all then it must be a grace identical to Paul's, while for the latter if Judaism does not exhibit Paul's grace then it is not grace at all. Barclay essentially cuts the Gordian knot by subjecting this key term to renewed scrutiny. The upshot is that both Judaism and Paul are allowed to have an essential place for grace in their soteriological frameworks while acknowledging that the grace in question is perfected differently in each case.

In part 2 Barclay applies this taxonomy to five Second Temple Jewish texts in which he moves beyond Sanders' 'covenantal nomism' which he refers to as 'the analytical frame that has dominated the last forty years of scholarship on the Soteriology of Second Temple Judaism' (309) and which he argues had a homogenizing effect on these texts: 'Finding grace everywhere, [Sanders] gave the impression that grace is everywhere the same' (158). This conviction lead Sanders to speak merely of different *emphases* of an essentially uniform concept of grace. Instead, argues Barclay, these texts differ not primarily in degrees of emphasis of grace but in the '*forms of perfection* with which they articulate it' (319). The analysis is then enhanced still further by contrasting these perfections with those found in Paul.

In part 3 Barclay relates these insights to Galatians and Romans offering fresh readings of old problems and advancing a view that is ultimately at odds with the views of both 'old' and 'new' perspective interpreters. Though Barclay's earlier writings undoubtedly belong in the camp of the latter, and though he still agrees that the context of Paul's theology of justification by faith is the gentile mission, he now differs by arguing that 'Paul's ecclesiology has its roots in his soteriology of grace' (573). It is this paradigm altering nature of the Christ-gift that shapes Paul's appeal to the Abrahamic promises.

This book represents a watershed in Pauline studies and one that will reframe the debate for years to come. Moving forward scholars must first

come to terms with the added precision afforded by Barclay's taxonomy before arguments can transcend the well-worn paths along which they have proceeded for entirely too long.

Reviewed by, Walter Lamberti. King's Evangelical Divinity School

Timothy Sherratt.
Power Made Perfect?
Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2016
ISBN: 9781498225946

Timothy Sherratt is a professor of Political Science at Gordon College in Wenham, MA. His book engages one of the most pressing issues facing American Christians today, "How can Christians engage in the political process that is both faithful to Christ and respectful of pluralism?" Stated another way, "How can Christians influence the political process without selling out their values or seeking to impose theocratic rule?"



Sherratt does not answer these big questions directly. Instead, he takes a heuristic approach to encourage his readers to think more deeply about the complexity of the questions. Then, on occasion, he provides some personal some personal opinions, In the end, the overall thrust of the book is to illuminate rather than resolve.

Sherratt begins helping his readers reflect on interaction between faith and politics by describing how the Christian Right in the United States and the Christian Democratic Union in Germany integrated politics and

faith. He explains how these contemporary political movements were influenced by their historical setting and social values as they sought to embody Christian principles in the political arena. Sherratt does not argue that these two movements are the best examples of Christian political activity. He simply believes, and I think correctly, that they are illustrative and therefore heuristically useful in helping readers think about how faith and politics should interact.

With readers struggling to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of the political movements mentioned above, Sherratt turns to Christian theology for principles to guide Christian political activity. He argues that two concepts provide the bedrock for our behavior. First, since Christ is risen, Christian ethics are tied to the realm of the miraculous. Sherratt writes, “Christ is risen, so, love your enemies (p. 29 italics his).” The corollary of the resurrection is that power is made perfect in weakness. Christian power comes from service, just as Christ ruled by serving. The second element, Christ is king, requires Christians to believe and act as if God is ruler over all. Sherratt contends that the Christian’s ultimate allegiance is to Christ and that Christ’s authority governs all our actions, not just those tied to our spiritual life and evangelism.

With this theological framework in hand, Sherratt outlines the principles of how faith impacts politics using the framework of Abraham Kuyper’s “sphere sovereignty.” Sherratt argues that individual and social virtues are essential to the smooth workings of the institutions of family, Church, and state. But Christians must also recognize that all our institutions are fallen and under the curse of sin. So like Reinhold Niebuhr, Christians must use the idealism of the Church to critique the political status quo and its institutions, but by the same token Christians must recognize that sin pervades all and thus we can never achieve perfect politics until Christ comes. The beauty of this section lies in the way Sherratt explains how elements of the American political system thwart or resist discussion and implementation of activities that benefit the common good.

But how should a Christian apply sphere sovereignty principles in the

modern age? Sherratt takes up four controversial topics, immigration, education, abortion, and gay marriage, to illustrate how Christians can implement faith and politics in a responsible manner. Unfortunately, Sherratt's comments often are more probative than directive, more explanatory than declarative. When he does recommend a specific political policy (e.g. conceding gay marriage p. 87), he seems to fall more in line with political expediency than with biblical teaching. I think he is correct to admonish readers (presumably Christian readers) that recent legal decisions shouldn't be seen as the sky is falling as often there is a backlash or a correction against major legal or legislative decisions. But I found his comments to be a bit tone deaf concerning the significance of gay marriage being another landmark in America's continued slide toward Gomorrah.

Sherratt concludes with a call to optimism. He predicts that Christians will take advantage of the opportunities provided by non-governmental organizations to impact their world. In this way, they can act for the public good without the baggage of American hegemony. Likewise, Christians can use their efforts in social justice and education as a pathway to dialogue with and influence government. I think he is correct on both accounts and Christians should strongly consider this approach. He exhorts Christians to actively participate in the church and avoid, what the sectarian impulse that can divide us in arbitrary ways. He calls readers to embody the faith in practice and lifestyle.

EVALUATION

American Christians interested in integrating their faith with politics will benefit from reading this book. Sherratt's summary of the history of religion and politics in the United States is worth the price of the book on its own. In addition, I think his discussion of the complexities of the issues rightly encourages humility amongst readers particularly when thinking about those who proffer policies with which they disagree. I appreciated Sherratt's desire to be faithful to the biblical witness in wanting to live out his political activities under the Lordship of Christ.

Unfortunately, I think Sherratt did not think deeply enough about what the Bible teaches. For example on page 33, he describes God's work in the world as being characterized by service, suffering, sacrifice, humility, hospitality,... While true, it is also an unfortunate simplification of the biblical testimony. For example, would the Pharaoh of the Exodus have agreed to this characterization of God? Likewise I think he fell for the common error of confusing ethics within the Church (sacrificial giving to each other) with those ethics Christians are to use in the world (Luke 3:14; Rom 13). For example, his argument that Christians should lobby for welfare assistance for single mothers with the same energy as they do against abortion fails to account for this distinction (cf. p. 84). Such suggestions, to me, suggests a sort of saccharin Samaritanism where instead of paying the inn keeper to care for the robbed man, the Good Samaritan orders the inn keeper to spend his own money (cf. Luke 10). Shouldn't the church be helping the single mother? It seems to me that the role of the state should be to compel families to care for their own families rather than requiring other families to care for them. The state is under no obligation to parent its citizens but it is required to protect the lives of its citizens from being killed unjustly as is done in abortion.

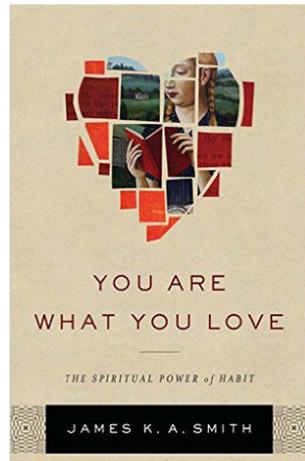
From a political perspective, I think Sherratt gave lip service to the notion that Scripture can countenance a range of political frameworks because he not only kept suggesting for policies reminiscent of the welfare state of western Europe but also argued for changing our election process from winner take all to proportional representation. It would have been more helpful to discuss how Christians can influence our politics in the present system rather than suggesting it be reconfigured in such a dramatic way. I would argue that the present gridlock in the U.S. government is a good thing, not the best thing but certainly better than where the "progressives" wish to take us. Gridlock means that our country has not reached sufficient unity to move legislation. One could also argue that there is too much agreement in government to spend wantonly given our present deficit and national debt.

Despite these weaknesses, I think the book is helpful in laying out the issues and difficulties facing the integration of faith and politics for the American Christian. Readers seeking to have their prejudices rattled will find much to jostle them in this book. Unfortunately, if you are looking for answers, you will have to look elsewhere.

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James K. A. Smith.
*You Are What You Love: The
Spiritual Power of Habit*
Grand Rapids, MI: BrazosPress,
Baker Publishing Group, 2016.
ISBN 978-1-58743-380-1. 210 pp.

In James K. A. Smith's *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, habits unveil what people subconsciously value. Once a value has been identified, a person may be able to conclude whether the value derived from a Christian culture or a secular culture. Just to clarify, this book is not about cultural wars or the negative tensions between cultures; rather, it encourages readers to conduct an introspective assessment of how discipleship needs to reformulate our intellectual and habitual actions so they match our end goal, to be more like Christ. In essence, this is Smith's model of discipleship.



Smith guides his readers to understand that human beings are creatures of desire, mostly to be loved and to love others. He chooses to avoid confronting love as a “feeling” and focus on love as an action or a verb, something one does. In this case, those actions can become habits; but, more importantly, are the habits that have been made, consciously and subconsciously, truly reflective of a Christian lifestyle or have those habits been infiltrated by culture? By recognizing love as an action instead of a feeling, Smith then travels down the road of cultural habits known as ‘cultural liturgies’—things like going to the mall, coffee shops, football games, and so on. Rather, engaging in cultural liturgies translates to defining a person by an action, by what he or she does. These habitual actions become a form of worship.

Christian worship, however, provides a tangible solution to help realign one’s actions into habits of a healthy heart. Here, worship functions as participation in and with God, by revisiting the story of the Gospel in light of a liturgical tradition. Participation in the sacraments provides an opportunity for God to meet humanity in its broken condition. Additionally, Smith continues by identifying ways that households can create their own liturgies that complement those of the body of Christ—this can be as simple and having a family dinner that could resemble ‘the last super,’ praying before a meal, breaking bread together, or fellowshiping. In this way, households and youth ministries provide an optimal opportunity of aligning habits of desire so those habits remain true to the calling of the body of Christ.

As helpful as Smith’s assessment is in approaching human beings as more than just intellectual creatures, he does a huge disservice to his audience by leaving out a key ingredient for a holistic approach: the emotions.

Society has done an incredible job at minimizing the emotive aspect of being human because emotions can be easily influenced and unpredictable. Men often recognize “emotions” or “being emotional” as a weakness, something to hid and suppress. If this is the case, then we need to ask

why. If culture is so bent on manipulating our emotions and distorting them, then maybe this part of humanity needs to be re-evaluated and re-imagined in light of what Smith proposes—for what it should be and how God sees it. Instead, it seems as though Smith’s approach leaves humanity in more of a robotic condition that just scratches the surface rather than a holistic one.

For instance, most people who struggle with addiction have created unhealthy habits that were informed by a life event that was attached to an emotion. A friend of my husband used to do drugs. He signed up for a rehab program and came to an interesting realization. His elementary school teacher used to belittle him in class and lock him in a closet as punishment. As a child, he did not know how to communicate to his parents what happened, how the teacher was treating him, let alone process his feelings. He felt like his parents never defended him or even tried to be objective when engaging his teacher. So, those repeated events triggered a feeling that produced a lashing out at his parents in the form of drug abuse. For him, no amount of information dumping, liturgical process, or confession could change his habit. Why? Because the habit was attached to a negative feeling that was attached to an event. He had to deal with the feelings and create a different life event (re-imagining his parents defending him) with a different feeling (forgiveness), and ultimately a new habit.

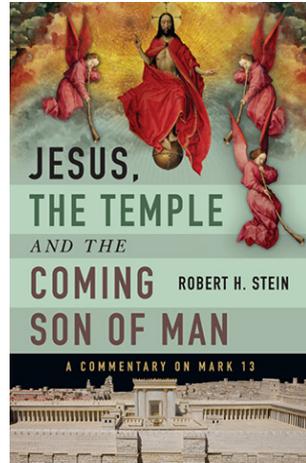
If discipleship is truly the goal, then Smith’s model needs to re-imagine emotions intelligently, and the re-imagination may be pursued in light of how God has designed them rather than following how society has manipulated them. For example, instead of turning off the news when I start to “feel” hopeless, afraid, overwhelmed, or angry, those emotions could constructively tend to the body of Christ, whether that be volunteering at the Dream Center, serving meals for the homeless, creating a not-for-profit that gives back to a community (in the form of donating shoes, rebuilding houses, repairing broken fences), or buying supplies for a family who lost their belongings in a fire. Rather than

turn a blind eye to a broken world, we can use our emotions to inform how we respond. We also need to look at examples of where God shows “emotions” (or showing emotions) in scripture. What must Christ have been feeling when he was on the cross, “*crying out* Father, Father, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34) or when Lazarus’ family told Christ, “If you had been here, my brother would not have died”—what was Christ feeling? “. . . He was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved (John 11:33). Then it says, “Jesus began to weep” (John 11:35). Is it possible that mourning with people who lost a loved one would be more appropriate than trying to be “strong” for them? If Smith proposes a method to create healthy habits that reflect a Christian lifestyle, then there may be a need for creating healthy, emotional habits that reflect the heart of God. The outcome will produce a balance of emotional intelligence and awareness that complements the intellect and habitual responses.

Basically, Smith does a wonderful job at making his argument very simple and understandable. If people truly want to understand what they love, then there has to be a point of introspection that highlights the shadows of the heart. Smith’s method of introspection is especially useful for children’s ministry, youth groups, and adults in any stage of life. Smith’s discipleship model also allows people to decide how and for whom they want to be shaped and whether the impact will be for those outside the church or for themselves as well. His model has prompted an introspective search of the heart with hopes to align the deepest desires with that of the Creator so that our habits are healthy ones that build up ourselves, each other, and ultimately influence our culture in a positive way.

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Robert H. Stein.
*Jesus, The Temple, and the Coming
Son of Man: A Commentary on
Mark 13*
Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP
Academic, 2014



Robert Stein is a veteran scholar and college professor who has written extensively on the gospel of Mark, including a commentary for the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament series (2008). In *Jesus, The Temple, and the Coming Son of Man*, Stein provides background to the hermeneutical studies on the historical Jesus and also form critical studies of the gospel of Mark (chapters one and two). Chapters three-seven are a commentary of Mark chapter 13, detailed in understanding Jesus' answer to His disciples' questions, and concluding each chapter with a summary. Chapter eight is an interpretative translation.

The first two chapters deal with preliminary interpretative issues. In chapter one, 'Determining Our Goal,' Stein provides a history of the historical Jesus research through the three quests. Stein concludes at the end of his survey that the primitive forms of the Jesus tradition are found in earliest gospel tradition of Mark and therefore bring us closer to the *ipissima verba* and *vox* of Jesus (p. 36). Mark 13 is almost all discourse material and is the longest teaching of Jesus in Mark, proving an important speech-act for the gospel. Stein highlights the third quest's influence in reading Jesus in his Jewish and eschatological milieu (p. 29). Even though it is important to understanding Jesus in his *Sitz im Leben*, Stein emphasises that we must keep in mind Mark's Greek audience. In distinguishing between the original hearers of Jesus' words, His Jewish

disciples, and the original recipients of the gospel, Stein seeks to determine what was relevant for 70AD and what is relevant for future eschatological purposes. This provides the reader with a partial Preterist reading of the text. Stein concludes in chapter two that his hermeneutical approach to this commentary is to understand the authorial intention of Mark (p. 49).

Stein structures Mark 13 into five sections, which he divides into chapters three-seven. The first section he titles *Jesus' Prediction of the Destruction of the Temple (and Jerusalem)*, which covers the disciples two-part question (Mark 13:1-4). Stein argues that the disciples' questions are key to understanding Mark 13 (p. 61). The reader's view of the relationship between the two questions determines the interpretation that follows. There is a debate between the referents of the two questions regarding whether they both refer to the same event (the destruction of the temple) or two different events (the destruction of the temple and the coming of the Son of Man). Stein argues with nine points that the two part question have the same referent (destruction of the temple) and the distinction is that the first part concerns when they will take place and the second part concerns the signs preceding the event (p. 69).

The next chapter, *The Coming Destruction of the Temple (and Jerusalem) and the Sign Preceding It*, is Stein's longest and most revealing chapter. This chapter explores the "non-signs" and the sign before the end. The non-signs are tribulations that will happen but do not necessarily indicate the end is near; however, they are signs to encourage believers to endure. Stein notes that this means there will not be an escape from tribulation via a rapture (p. 81). These none signs are placed into the context of the first century church where believers were arrested in synagogues and there were many messianic claimants. Stein also argues that "nation against nation" and "the gospel preached in every nation" were fulfilled in the first century as it is likely Jesus was referring to the known world of the time (p. 83). Stein makes several polemical statements towards traditional futurist interpretations of Mark 13.

Stein's arguments concerning the first century non-signs are

convincing; however placing the sign preceding the destruction of the temple, the “abomination of desolation”, with a corresponding historical event matching the criteria, is a difficult task. Stein explores eight possibilities from historical events before the destruction of the Temple that could be the abomination Jesus is referring to (pp. 90-91). Part of the criteria Stein deduces is that the abomination is a person (because of the masculine participle “standing”) and that there must be adequate time between the sign and the destruction of the temple for people to escape (p. 91). From this criteria Stein argues that the abomination is the investiture of Phanni as High Priest by the Zealots (p. 93). Not only was Phanni not of priestly descent and mentally defective, but he had committed sacrilegious acts within the temple in AD 67. Although Stein stresses that the abomination is a singular sign, rather than the plural term ‘signs’ (p. 60), his arguments for Phanni fulfilling the abomination is based on the multiple abominations of the Zealots and no singular event of sacrifice by Phanni. Therefore, Stein fails to pin point what the abomination of desolation (a singular event involving a person).

Stein also argues that tradition, rather than Scripture, influences the original readers understanding of the abomination of Desolation (p. 89). In other words, the readers were more familiar with Hanukah than Daniel 9:27. He likens it to the social memory of the Nativity today, where people are more familiar with the Christmas story than the narratives from Matthew and Luke (p. 89). To some degree this may be the case as the plural abominations of Daniel 9:27 are now a singular abomination in Mark 13:14. Considering the use of Scripture in Mark, and other New Testament writings, it is unlikely that the abomination of desolation would not evoke a referent to the Scripture, hence Mark’s addition to Jesus’ words, “Let the reader understand”. This was certainly the case with Matthew, as Matthew mentions the writings of Daniel (Matt 24:15), which Mark felt no need to include. Stein’s hermeneutical principle of understanding the text from the original reader’s perspective is too wooden as Stein negates to look at Jesus’ words in Mark from a biblical theological perspective. It

would be beneficial to look at how the words of Jesus in Mark 13 work intertextually with texts from the Jewish Scriptures and the latter writings of the NT.

In chapter five Stein looks at the second part of Jesus' answer regarding the Son of Man. So far Stein has sought to place Jesus' prophecy in the first century context, but in the case of the coming Son of Man, Stein argues there is a gap between the period of the destruction of the Temple and His appearing on the clouds of heaven. This is in agreement with the traditional view that this prophecy is about the future return of Jesus (p. 118). Interestingly in contrast to the previous chapter, Stein argues this from biblical theology, noting texts from the Jewish Scriptures and related texts in the NT, rather than from the text Mark and His readers own limited understanding.

Chapters six and seven are expositions of the two parables following Jesus' answers and how they relate to the two part prophecy. The first parable is the parable of the Fig tree. Stein highlights how the destruction of the temple is like leaves from a fig tree, which give a sign that summer is near and that fruit will be produced. Jesus follows this parable by saying this generation will not pass away until these things take place. Stein understands "this generation" to mean those living and hearing the words of Jesus during this period (pp. 125-127); however Stein does not give any attention to other interpretations of what the term "generation" could mean.

The second parable is the parable of the Watchman, which relates to the coming of the Son of Man. The Son of Man can come at any hour and is illustrated in the parable where a man returns to his property he has left in the charge of his servants. Stein provides some sound advice in reading parables differently to allegories, reading them as a story that makes a point rather than a set of ambiguous symbols (p. 133). The point is the Son of Man will return when no one is expecting and to be ready.

Stein's final chapter is an interpretive translation of Mark 13. This is riddled with the author's interpretations in brackets within the text and

various phrases emphasised with italics to push the readers towards Stein's interpretation of the text that have been viewed in the previous seven chapters.

This book is written at an academic level and is useful to scholars and students. Pastors and preachers may find this book useful in dealing with difficult passages and the eschatological issues of the text. For a short book (155 pages) Stein offers a thorough grounding in the text of Mark 13, as well as addressing various interpretive issues. The hermeneutical approach to Mark 13 is sensible exegesis, which respects authorial intention and the original audience; however, it is at the expense of reading the text from a biblical theological perspective. Although Stein notes the eschatological importance of the text, he does not look at the writings of the Second Temple Period nor the eschatological beliefs we can deduce from these writings to gain any understanding of how the readers would have read Mark. This limits the reading of Mark to the words Mark records from Jesus, through the prism of Stein's eschatological views, rather than the *ipissima verba* and *vox* of Jesus .

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Notes



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