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difficult one, what is the meaning of ordination? And aren't all Christians ordained for service?

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Rev Richard B. Norton served as a missionary in Japan. p. 176

Evangelical Theology Today

Mark Noll, Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., and David Wells

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The first difficulty faced by anyone who assesses the state of evangelical theology today is that the combination of 'evangelical' with 'theology' provokes tolerant smiles among those casual religious spectators who conflate evangelicalism and fundamentalism. To these folk, if fundamentalist theology is an oxymoron—like elementary Greek, or student teacher, or Dutch treat—so is evangelical theology. Any discussion of evangelical theology must therefore help these spectators to get serious.

The second difficulty, more famous and more wearying, is trying to clear a little of the smog around the term 'evangelical'. Evangelicalism, like pornography and the political thought of Presidents of the United States, is easier to recognize than to define.

Accordingly, it is nowadays usual to find 'evangelical' used as a mute substantive that gains its voice only when coupled to another, and more clarifying, adjective. Accordingly, these days we have fewer and fewer plain garden-variety evangelicals. What we have instead is a lot of fancy evangelical hybrids: radical evangelicals, liberal evangelicals, liberals who are evangelical, charismatic evangelicals, Catholic evangelicals, evangelicals who are Catholic, evangelical liberationists, evangelical ecumenicalists, ecumenicalists who are evangelical, evangelical feminists, young evangelicals, and orthodox evangelicals. The concept *evangelical* has become so promiscuous, has enjoyed so many bedpersons, has been equally and unequally yoked so often, that its self-concept has broadened into that of a commune.

WHO IS AN EVANGELICAL?

To say that people are evangelicals, therefore, says little about what they P. 177 are likely to believe, although the tag says more if they are older and less if they are younger. But for those who find this assessment unduly agnostic, let us attempt a description. Suppose we call *evangelical* those Christians who possess at least two of the following seven characteristics, but in any case one of the first three:

(1) Members of a denomination that derives from the Protestant Reformation, these Christians heartily affirm the saving gospel of Christ, the authority of Scripture, and the priesthood of all believers.

(2) Members of a denomination that derives from eighteenth-century revival movements in England or America (the Wesleys, Whitefield, Edwards), they show zeal for conversion, piety of life, evangelism, and social reform.

(3) If Catholic, they are neo-Pentecostal and much concerned with the authority of Scripture, salvation by faith in Christ, holiness of life, and social justice.

(4) If intellectuals, they harbour antipathy to modernist naturalism, Kantian idealism, and secular humanism. If not intellectuals, they nonetheless harbour antipathy to the last of these.[1]

(5) Though members of no organized church, they display an impressive array of the other characteristics in (1)–(3) above.

(6) If they are Americans, they show signs of having been influenced by American popular democratic culture: they tend to be optimistic, populist, individualist, and inclined to like patriotic hymns. Moreover, in at least twenty per cent of their religious speech, half of these American evangelicals employ, separately or in combination, the diminutive 'just' and forms of the verb 'to share'.

(7) They are members or supporters of alliances, associations, mission societies, Bible schools, evangelistic ministries, or other agencies marked by what George Marsden calls 'a zeal to proclaim the biblically revealed gospel of salvation from sin through the atoning work of Christ'.[2]

As one can see, matters here are not simple. When we call a certain person *evangelical* it is possible, but not easy, to discover what we are claiming about the person in question. To assess the state of evangelical theology accordingly requires a certain amount of effort.

THE INTELLECTUAL FAILURE OF AMERICAN EVANGELICALS

Several years ago, the three of us proposed and received a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts to complete a three-year project called 'Constructive Steps Toward an Evangelical Theology'. The grant was sought and awarded to allow work on two related projects: (1) an interconnected set of books aimed at laying the groundwork for a more effective evangelical theology and (2) a series of colloquia and seminars, involving both evangelicals and non-evangelicals, aimed at furthering the learning process between evangelicals and the non-evangelical world—especially the Christian non-evangelical world.

Why does groundwork need to be laid for a more effective evangelical theology? The reason is that, for all their dynamism and success at a popular level, modern American evangelicals have largely failed in sustaining serious intellectual life. They have nourished millions of believers in the simple verities of the gospel, but have often abandoned the universities, the arts, and other realms of high culture. Active enterprises like feeding the hungry and living simply, sitting in at abortion clinics and promoting family values, launching coffee break ministries and televangelism projects—these are the sorts of tasks at which evangelicals expend great energy.

But these endeavours are seldom accompanied by first-level intellectual effort. Indeed, intellectually, evangelical theologians and ministers have only just begun to span the yawning chasm between modern modes of thinking and the traditionalistic worlds of their congregations, where forms of thought have changed little over the last century.

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[1] On these first four characteristics, see also *Christian Faith and Practice in the Modern World: Theology from an Evangelical Point of View*, edited by Mark Noll and David Wells (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), pp. 3, 6.

[2] The quote in (7) is from George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 2; characteristics (6) and (7) are from *Evangelicalism and Modern America*, edited by George Marsden (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), pp. xi–xii.

Let us add immediately that the traditionalism just mentioned is largely intellectual and theological. In many other respects, evangelicals have become remarkably worldly, accepting without debate, without question—often without notice—the assumptions, practices, and worldview of the larger American culture.

Examples abound. Evangelicals who attend the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California may be told that Lent is really only an acronym for 'Let's Eliminate Negative Thinking'. They may also hear the Los Angeles Dodgers' Tommy Lasorda, a celebrity guest, describe his wins and losses (that is, he wins games and loses weight) and attribute his successes on both scores to the one Lasorda calls 'The Great Dodger in the Sky'.

Evangelicals who visit the First Assembly of God in Phoenix find a church situated on seventy-two sunny acres. The campus resembles a golf club, and its church boasts a weekly Sunday attendance of about ten thousand. Everything is aimed at captivating people who apparently are otherwise happy only at amusement parks and variety shows. A reporter who visited First Assembly described its minister's plans to build a replica of Jerusalem nearby, 'with camels and everything', as well as an amphitheatre with 'prayer gardens and caves'. In this dramatic evangelical church, wondrous things happen. Its preacher punctuates his sermons with such eye-popping antics as sudden ascensions to the skylights via invisible wires. He once illustrated the prophecy of John the Baptist that the axe is now laid to the root of the tree by pulling a chain saw to life, walking over to a couple of potted trees on stage, and p. 179 buzzing his way through them as the congregation roared its delight.

In other evangelical churches, skydivers drop in during sermons, body-builders break boards at high moments in the service, and prayer warriors trot out in combat fatigues to do battle with the darker powers.

The confluence of traditional theology (the pastor of First Assembly would probably reject theistic evolution as worldly) with general Babylonian captivity to pop culture tends to drown aspiring evangelical theologians who are both serious and creative. This confluence drowns them for heresy in case they propose an unaccustomed thought and for old-fashioned irrelevance in case they propose any real thought at all—that is, any thought that cannot fit within two lines of overhead projection. And this is true no matter if we conclude that the regnant problem at First Assembly is better categorized as schlock addiction than as heresy.

In its hey-day, during the sixteenth-century Reformation and the pietistic revivals of the eighteenth century, evangelical theology was razor-sharp and genuinely profound. Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Thomas Cranmer in the sixteenth century; Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley in the eighteenth were genuinely effective theologians. They had a deep grasp of the Scriptures, they steeped themselves in the enduring traditions of the church, and they examined sensitively (sometimes exploiting, sometimes combating) the best thinking of their own day. The result was theology that communicated powerfully, theology that spoke with authority from the Scriptures to the world in which these theologians lived.

By contrast, evangelical theology today is much weaker. Evangelical commitments to Scripture have been troubled by decades of controversy—first with liberal Christians and the secular academy over the Bible's inspiration and, then, with other conservatives over the exact nature and scope of biblical authority.

In addition, evangelical willingness to enter the deep mines where the church's treasures have been stored across twenty centuries has been spotty. Here an interesting and recent corrective is the systematic theology of Thomas Oden, who works the border between mainline and evangelical Protestantism (he is perhaps an evangelical liberal or postliberal, or maybe an ecumenical evangelical—in any case another of those oxymorons

like jumbo shrimp, marital bliss, and airline food). Oden has been making it his business to seek among the church fathers and mothers the grand ecumenical tradition that can at once unite and educate us. In so doing, Oden offers an in-flight correction for much evangelical theology that has been in the habit of jetting nonstop from Scripture to the 1990s, as if we had no need, along the way, of struggling with Augustine, Ockham, Thomas, Calvin, Schleiermacher, or even Barth. So, beyond its troubled relation to Scripture, twentieth-century evangelical theology has often thinned itself down from lack of sustained attention to the grand theological tradition. Like much of the rest of American culture, Christian p. 180 evangelical culture has been excessively fascinated with the present.

Third, besides their troubled relation to Scripture and their neglectful relation to the grand theological tradition, evangelicals have engaged the intellectual world of the late twentieth century only sporadically. Too often, modern developments in philosophy, in the history and philosophy of science, in the social sciences, and even in theology from non-evangelical sources are either ignored, or else caricatured and rapidly dismissed. Sad to say, evangelicals sometimes achieve these last diminishments by publishing those theological and philosophical *charts* they are so fond of—the kind in which all atheists get slotted as naturalists and their worldview characterized as 'despairing'; in which humanists' view of humanity is that 'man is an empty bubble on the sea of nothingness'. And so on.

A THEOLOGICAL MALAISE

One result of contemporary American evangelicalism's troubled relation to Scripture, to the history of theology, and to modern intellectual history is theological malaise. Of course, where the general intellectual landscape is concerned, evangelicals can surely claim a number of tall trees. Many of the leading historians of American church history are evangelicals. Evangelical philosophers have risen mightily to world prominence: Two of them in recent years have been invited to give Scotland's Gifford Lectures. Evangelical social scientists and literary scholars often join these philosophers in doing some pretty fine theology. The point is that evangelical *theologians* have not been very conspicuously successful in providing powerfully biblical, historically learned, and culturally engaging theological works.

We say this despite the fact that right now the publishing of evangelical systematic theology is enjoying a bull market—a development that mirrors one in the larger Christian world. (In his 1991 presidential address for the American Theological Society in Princeton, Gabriel Fackre listed about forty recent systematic theology projects, of which perhaps half might be fairly identified as evangelical.) Some of the evangelical offerings are competent refurbishments of older theological formulas. Some are solid, workmanlike, plainly written textbooks for seminary use, such as Millard Erickson's widely adopted *Christian Theology*. Several contemporary evangelical theologies are, moreover, ecumenically sensitive. This is particularly true of Fackre's own *The Christian Story*, Thomas Oden's *Systematic Theology*, and Geoffrey Wainwright's *Doxology*, whose special interest in liturgy as a source and norm for theology takes us pretty deeply into the grand tradition from the fourth century, East and West, that all Christians share.

Among the recent evangelical theologies, we can find a good deal of intelligent work. It is no slur on the considerable accomplishments of these contemporary evangelical theological writers to say that what we are *not* getting these days is something of the stature of Karl Barth or Reinhold Niebuhr or Paul p. 181 Tillich—let alone of John Calvin

or Thomas Aquinas or St. Augustine. Indeed, we are not getting theology of final stature from *anyone*, evangelical or not, with the possible exception of Pannenberg.

In any case, whatever its merits, even the best of contemporary evangelical theology will go unnoticed by most of the culture—as Barth, Tillich, and Niebuhr did not. Worse, even the best of it will go largely unnoticed in evangelical churches. Evangelical lay people do read intellectually sophisticated religious writing, but typically by nontheologians. They are especially fond of occasional works by C. S. Lewis and G. K. Chesteron, an Anglican and a Catholic. Beyond them, they pick up recent titles in spirituality and (sometimes significantly theological) books on hot topics, such as gender issues.

But who reads evangelical theology written by evangelical theologians? Seminary students and other theologians. With few exceptions, that is the whole audience, even in churches where real attention is paid to traditional forms of worship and serious efforts are made to catechize and teach.

At the sump level of the evangelical church, where wild eschatological speculation, wooden proof-texting, and anti-intellectual sermonizing reign; where worship has degenerated into a religious variety show hosted by some gleaming evangelist in a sequinned dinner jacket and patent leather dancing slippers who introduces as special music a trio of middle-aged women in pastel evening gowns with matching muffs for their microphones—at this sump level, things are, of course, much worse. This is the level at which, Richard Lovelace once remarked, we need to tell some people who think they've been saved to get lost.

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

What accounts for the loss of audience, forcefulness, and impact of much evangelical theology? Here a definite diagnosis may be presumptuous. So we content ourselves with making some observations, thinning out in a few cases to speculations. These will be relevant especially to evangelicalism, but several have broader application as well.

Among those factors that have contributed to evangelical theological malaise is an institutional one. Evangelical higher education has made rapid strides since World War II. Yet it is still an immensely fragmented enterprise. Independent colleges, seminaries, and Bible schools all compete on their own for students, financial support, and a place in the sun. Some of these institutions appear to be in perpetual transition. Many are poorly funded or under unusually strong pressure from constituencies and are, hence, unable to offer the longterm stability that disciplined learning requires.

A second, and related, feature of evangelical life that retards scholarship has to do with the movement's intellectuals. In recent decades a small, but steadily growing, number of intellectuals has answered the call to scholarship. These scholars have devoted themselves to evangelical truths and to serving the evangelical p. 182 community, but they have also grown increasingly appreciative of Christian influences from beyond evangelicalism and increasingly open to helpful insights from the general university world. Unfortunately, because they are heirs of the activist evangelical traditions, because they may be attached to institutions under heavy pressure from constituencies, these scholars often find their work divided between academic engagement with their intellectual peers and heavy demands in popular journalism and itinerant speaking.

This diffusion of energies is especially noticeable at evangelical seminaries where theologians are much tempted and, in some cases, nearly coerced to devote a disproportionate amount of their energies to filling pulpits or publishing popular religious materials. Such assignments do help the church, but pursuit of them takes time and energy and reduces the likelihood that these theologians will also write a first-rate

scholarly book of theology. As a consequence, the realm of first-order thinking, which can exert a tremendous, albeit indirect, influence on modern life remains largely untouched by evangelical insight.

We believe, however, that reasons for the contemporary malaise in evangelical theology are much wider than these. We noted above that evangelicalism sometimes displays an odd combination of tepid theological traditionalism with aggressive embrace of certain forms of popular culture. Few contemporary Christian groups, as Martin Marty observed a few years ago, have become more worldly than fundamentalists. If fundamentalists count as a subset of evangelicals and if certain nonfundamentalist evangelicals get contaminated by such worldliness, not surprisingly one can find in conservative Protestant settings altogether too much by way of what Marty calls 'Christian bodybuilding and beautyqueening', rock music 'with a Jesus gloss on it', and entrepreneurs 'hawking a complete line of Christian celebrity cosmetics and panty-hose'—all this in combination with considerable suspicion of the Synoptic problem.

The spectacle is one in which the powers that might maintain integrity against all the corrupting influences of modernity—namely, the serious appropriation of Scripture, the intelligent study of great ecumenical and then Reformational confessions, and the blending of these together with other intellectual sources into vigorous contemporary theology—these powers often get marginalized in evangelicalism today while TV culture, entertainment culture, the cult of self-absorption, and various other anti-intellectualist forces cut their great swathes through the church, mowing down the small prophetic protests raised against them. This is, perhaps, the heart of the contemporary evangelical tragedy.

Vignettes may be helpful to gain purchase on it. Take the case of a confessionally rooted theological seminary. (We have a particular one in mind, but the following description will be more widely familiar.) This seminary maintains a fairly classical curriculum. To secure the M.Div. degree, students must p. 183 demonstrate knowledge of Greek and Hebrew plus one modern foreign language. Admission prerequisites include substantial numbers of courses across the humanities and social sciences, and, in particular, hefty doses of philosophy and literature. The seminary's graduation requirements for the M.Div. degree stipulate substantial numbers of courses in systematic theology, historical theology, philosophical theology, as well as in Old and New Testament—all this besides the courses in church and missions and besides student forays into field work. In short, this seminary prescribes lots of core courses and allows comparatively few electives and almost no lollipops.

For decades, students at this seminary accepted requirements like these as proper training for ministry. But in the last fifteen years or so, the seminary began to get students who would listen to a lecture on the doctrine of God, look around curiously during student discussion of it, and then turn to the professor and say seriously, 'Look, why do we have to study any of this stuff in order to be ministers?' Further discussion of this student's question (rarer, by the way, among second career students than among those born during the Vietnam War) would then yield a distressing conclusion: Some evangelical seminary students really believe that they can minister the riches of the faith for years without having to think hard about the doctrine of the Trinity, or the meaning of providence, or the claim that God is both immanent and transcendent. Such students do not object particularly to the way a professor teaches the doctrine of God; they object to the whole project of learning the doctrine of God. They really see no link between thinking about its topics, on the one hand, and readiness for ministry, on the other. Surely they can think of no reason why any lay person would need a deeply formed view of God.

Further, as observers sometimes remark, in confessional subcultures two generations ago lay people read theology. If they were Christian Reformed, for instance, they might have read such Dutch Calvinist theologians as Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. They read them sufficiently well that a minister in, say, the 1930s did well not to confuse the logical order of the divine decrees, or stray anywhere near what sounded like Arminian works' righteousness. If a minister did this, or was guilty of what was called in those days 'a wrong emphasis', a farmer or butcher would undertake to correct him and might do a pretty good job of it, too.

Those days have gone. The grandchildren of our butcher or farmer appear to be largely innocent of theology. It's not quite that, theologically speaking, they confuse Monteverdi with Montovanni, but few—including leaders of the church—read and think about theological matters beyond the most elementary, except when these bear explicitly on some blood-warming practical issue like the ordination of women.

The sad fact is that much evangelicalism, in James Hunter's characterization of it, has been cognitively bartering with modernity and has come away impoverished— p. 184 in fact, has been taken to the cleaners. Voyages of self-discovery, the desire to get rich or get happy, the neglect of old arts like reading and thinking, the professionalization of the clergy so that they are no longer ardent students of Scripture and its interpretation but rather ersatz managers and therapists—all of these moves garnished with a D.Min. degree, so that, as a minister's social prestige drops, the number and kind of his advanced degrees rises to compensate; the loss of appetite for great, stately hymns and their replacement by pop songs from the Christian Billboard's Top Ten Singles; the democratizing of the church to such a degree that learned opinion is immediately suspect as an elitist putdown—these and similar unhappinesses make serious theology in the church uphill work. We evangelicals have to face the fact that we are going through a time when we are suffering a serious trivializing of the Christian faith and a serious diminishment of interest in its theological expression. To paraphrase Carl F. H. Henry, we are going through a time in which, in too many settings, 'a high five for Jesus' has taken the place of the Apostles' Creed and 'Five Ways To Pump Up Your Ego Whenever It Loses Pressure' has supplanted reflection on the nature of God.

THE REJUVENATION OF EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

What to do? In the face of these developments, what kind of theology now needs to be written? Which procedures for teaching theology need to be tried? What general religious practices seem likely to aid theological rejuvenation? Of course, answers to such questions depend in part on factors over which none of us exercises control. New appropriations of theology by lay people, for example, await success in getting people to read and think again, getting people to walk over to their TV set and pull an enormous condom over it. Getting people to read and think again and to practise safe TV will take a much broader cultural offensive than can be mounted by all the theologians and seminaries put together. Still, several observations and proposals seem to us apt:

(1) The first observation is that the rejuvenation of evangelical and, indeed, all grand tradition theology is, frankly, a huge task that will require tough-minded engagement with modern intellectual culture, fresh study of Scripture that proceeds somewhat independently of the guild of biblical scholarship, open and faithful discussions across denominational boundaries with other serious-minded and traditionally oriented Christians, and rededication to harvesting the fruits of church history and then pressing them into the varietal that is theology. This rejuvenation, in other words, must proceed on many fronts. It is far too large to be accomplished through just a few grants or a few

teams of scholars. It will rather need the disciplined energy of a great number of serious Christian thinkers for decades.

'Tough-minded engagement with modern intellectual culture' means abandoning a practice of all too many evangelicals in the past—namely, that of characterizing the p. 185 intellectual enemy in a few largely unfair descriptive sentences and then presuming to blow him away with a few equally inadequate attack sentences. God, said C. S. Lewis, 'pays us the intolerable compliment' of taking us seriously. Those of us who claim God's image need to follow suit. We have to love our intellectual enemies enough so that we can state their positions better than they can—with the possible exception of Richard Rorty.

Fresh study of Scripture to fuel and curb our theology ought to proceed 'in some measure independently of the guild of biblical scholarship'. Obviously, all traditional systematic theology is dependent on biblical theology that is dependent on raw biblical scholarship. Systematic theologians must be students of the likes of Gerhard yon Rad on wisdom in Israel, Stephen Westerholm on *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*, and of Terence Fretheim on how Exodus theology is really creation theology at least as much as redemption theology.

Scripture scholarship often yields important and redolent fruit, and evangelical theologians must harvest it. But Scripture scholarship, like theology, also succumbs at times to the repetition of certain fashionable anti-traditional cliches. When biblical scholars tell us that the Gospel of Mark is myth; or that, since he does not mention it, Paul clearly knew nothing of the empty tomb tradition; or that the adoptionist-tending christology of Luke-Acts is clearly inconsistent with the pre-existence christology of John, Hebrews, and parts of Paul; or that after all the Gospels say, we really know very little about Jesus of Nazareth—when Scripture scholars talk like this, evangelical theologians will have to demur, question the working principles that produce such conclusions, and then undertake fresh biblical work of their own.

Future evangelical theology will also need to be much more aggressive and persistent in gathering fruit from the history of doctrine. Again, wherever Thomas Oden fits in the galaxy of types of Christians, his work is a fine example of meeting at least this requirement. His systematic theology seeks to be centrist Christian—irenic, massively traditional, ecumenically attractive, spiritually vital. By writing theology that displays the patristic consensus on the big questions of theology—letting us see not only its intellectual sophistication but also its religious beauty—Oden confirms in many of us the heretical suspicion that it is service that divides and doctrine that unites. What most deeply unites us in the grand tradition of mere Christianity is our common rootage in patristic exegesis and its flowering in the theology of Augustine and the Cappadocians. Here is a garden that evangelicals have to cultivate.

(2) Rejuvenated evangelical and grand tradition theologies will now have to take more than one form. We need Thomas Oden's sort of theology, though it will often be used more as a resource for seminarians and professors than as a weapon to invade contemporary culture. We need Millard Erickson's sort of theology—plainly written, readable, consensual, fair. Surely we need theology that has fresh and p. 186 tough-minded biblical scholarship behind it and that fairly and critically engages—really engages—contemporary intellectual culture.

All fair enough. But who is going to *read* this theology? Of course we hope other theologians read it and then use it to teach seminarians and, in certain settings, college students. But how do we get lay people to read theology again—lay people like some of our grandparents? How do we get theology into the hands of the devout and literate—or even into the hands of the non-devout and literate?

We may need at least some theology to be written by the theological equivalents of Garry Wills and William Manchester. Some of the theology that traditionalists bring to the contemporary culture wars must be written with the verve, deceptive simplicity, and sheer sparkle that make non-politicians read Wills on politics and non-militarists read Manchester on Douglas MacArthur. These are writers who have an almost unerring sense of what is both objectively important and also truly interesting to other human beings—even to human beings who ordinarily possess no interest in the topic at hand. We need theologians who, as audaciously as Wills does it, use Augustine to criticize Robert Mapplethorpe (of the notorious Mapplethorpe art exhibit) and who make Augustine not only the more plausible but also the more interesting!

We need theology, in other words, that can skilfully work the border between religious and general interests. This will be theology that is solidly rooted in Bible and tradition, that knows contemporary habits of mind (the sundering of public and private spheres of life, the tendency to take refuge in the self, the sheer impermanence of so many attachments, the relentless democratizing of not only persons but also of thought and opinion). We need theology that can skilfully work the border between the grand tradition on the one hand and the contemporary mind on the other and do it in a style that literate nontheologians find appealing.

(3) In seminaries and denominational colleges we need to assign less and less by way of general, bland, acceptable secondary sources and more and more by way of intensive study of classic confessions and creeds—which are in any case congealed theology, theology in distillate. We also need to assign more short theological classics so that students read not forty pages about Augustine by some secondary source trying to balance its trade deficit with other secondary sources, but Augustine's *Enchiridion* itself; not forty pages on Calvin by a devout Calvinist, but judiciously selected sections of the *Institutes*. We need to do this because wellchosen original sources have character and angularities that stay with students long after hundreds of pages of secondary sources have dissolved in the mind. We need to do it also because students who reject the classical tradition should never be allowed to do it in innocence.

(4) We need to keep pressing forward in the quest for doctrinal and theological unity among Christians of all kinds who claim the apostolic p. 187 heritage and the patristic consensus. As Thomas Ryan observed a few years ago in an acute essay, the slow going in ecumenical relations often stems in part from an empathy power shortage.[3] We dwell on differences. Religiously, we have been in the habit of defining, distinguishing, and defending ourselves as different from other Christians. The ordination of women, the baptism of children, the celibacy of clergy, the presence of the Lord in the Lord's Supper, and, amazingly to most lay people, the question whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father only, or from the Father and the Son, or from the Father through the Son, or from the Father of the Son—these things, especially the last, divide millions and millions of Christians from each other.

We keep forgetting, as Ryan says, that these differences, though familiar, are not normal and not acceptable. We have become either rivals or strangers, and neither is acceptable.

That is because, as Ryan puts it, 'the Gospel of Jesus Christ asserts that our real identity is not at the edges of our Christian existence where we can brag about our specialties, but

[3] Thomas Ryan, 'Ecumenism and Compassion', *Mid-stream* 25 (1986): 184–89.

at the center where we are rooted in Christ and where the bond of the Spirit gives us our essential Christian sameness'.[4]

(5) We need to pray for theology. Every serious Christian prays. Usually we praise and thank God in our prayers, intercede for others, and offer petitions. Some of these intercessions and petitions are going to have to start focusing on theology. When we mention the needy of the world, we are going to have to include poorly educated ministers and their congregations who are, theologically, sheep without a shepherd. When we confess our sins, we must include our theological sins—our inattentiveness, our boredom with the deep things of faith, our readiness to make intellectual concessions for trivial or merely fashionable reasons.

And when we pray 'thy kingdom come' and look to the future, we must do it with faith and hope that, in God's good time, there shall be not only the bowing of the head and the bending of the knee to Jesus Christ, not only the feeding of the hungry and the sharpening of the hunger for justice, but also the sharpening of intellects and the clatter of keyboards as young William Manchesters try to write theology as crisp and flavourful as an apple. The challenge, as Charles Malik said to evangelicals at the Billy Graham Center in Wheaton, is not only to save souls but also to win minds. If you save the whole world, but lose the *mind* of the world, you will soon discover that you have never won the world at all.

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Book Reviews

BOOK REVIEW LIST

THE PURPOSE DRIVEN CHURCH

by Rick Warren
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995 ISBN 0 310 20106 3 Hb 399pp)

[4] Ibid, p. 184.