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Practising Ministry in the Presence of God and in Partnership with God
The Ontology of Ministry and Pastoral Identity: a Trinitarian-Ecclesial Model

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS article is to argue the following thesis regarding the nature of Christian ministry: *Christian ministry is activity by baptized Christians done in the presence of God and in partnership with God, for the purpose of bringing the people of God into deepening communion with God and with one another, and into right relationship with God's creation.* The article will present a model of ministry that incorporates fundamental categories of biblical theology such as divine presence,[1] divine-human partnership, communion (*koinonia*), and Body of Christ, together with fundamental categories from systematic theology, particularly the Trinity and union with Christ.[2] It will argue for an *ontological* understanding of the nature of ministry and pastoral identity, in contrast to prevailing *functional* views.

I Historical Perspectives

In his widely influential critique of theological education in America, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education*, Edward Farley pointed to the thirteenth century as

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1 See my book *Worship and the Reality of God: An Evangelical Theology of Real Presence* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), where I argue that the Triune God is *really present* among his people, by Word, Spirit, and sacrament as they gather in his Name.

2 In his groundbreaking work, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology: A Christological Foundation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), Andrew Purves has argued for a reorientation for the discipline of pastoral theology in which the categories of Christology, union with Christ; the doctrine of God are at the core of the discipline, rather than categories drawn from the social sciences.

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a watershed in the way in which ministers were trained for service in the church. With the rediscovery of lost writings of Aristotle and their dissemination in the universities, theology was transformed into a university-based 'science' rather than the 'holy wisdom' of the church fathers and the monasteries.[3]

This introduction of Aristotelean logic and dialectics into the medieval universities as the basis for the study of theology by Aquinas and the schoolmen had the unintended effect of widening the gap between the church and the 'academy'—a gap which is very much in evidence in the modern period. Jaroslav Pelikan has noted that from AD 100 to 600, most theologians were bishops; from AD 600 to 1500 they were monks; and from AD 1500 to the present they have tended to be university professors![4]

The model of a university-based, rather than church-based context for the teaching of theology was given further impetus in the Enlightenment period, and especially by the German university system exemplified by the University of Berlin. It was in this context that Friedrich Schleiermacher's celebrated four-fold division of the theological curriculum was launched: ministerial training came to be defined as a course of study progressing through the exegetical, historical, systematic/philosophical and practical disciplines.[5] 'Practical theology' or 'pastoral theology' were understood primarily in functional terms, in relation to the tasks of parish ministry.

This understandable focus on the *practices* of ministry, however, was to increase the distance between the student's study of theology ('theory'; doctrine; specialized knowledge) and pastoral ministry ('practice'; professional skills), especially with the subsequent growth and specialization of university-based knowledge in the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The older patristic idea of theology as a *habitus* or way of spiritually forming the soul tended to be lost in the modern university setting.

Another obstacle to the integration of pastoral and systematic theology can be found in the internal history of theology as a discipline, namely, the fact that ecclesiology—the doctrine of the church—did not become a separate *loci* or topic of focused discussion for theologians until the fifteenth century.[6] Ecclesiology—the natural location for discussions of the nature of ministry—became more prominent as a theme in systematic theology as a result of

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3 Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 38.

4 Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition* (100-600) (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 5; cited in Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, xxix, n.27.

5 Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Brief Outline On The Study of Theology*, tr. Terrence N. Tice (Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1966; orig. 1830). Schleiermacher's own schematization explicitly mentions three divisions, but these emerged as a four-fold division of the curriculum in subsequent theological education in America.

6 This history is reviewed by Wolfhart Pannenberg, 'Excursus: The Place of Ecclesiology in the Structure of Dogmatics', *Systematic Theology*, v.3 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 21-27.

the sixteenth century Reformation controversies between Catholics and Protestants, but even here, the focus of attention was on such matters as the doctrine of the sacraments and the identity of the true church, and so forth, and not on the nature of ministry as such.

Modern systematic theology textbooks tend to follow in well-worn tracks laid down at that time—the nature and government of the church; discussions of baptism and the Lord's supper—but tend not to address a biblical and systematic understanding of the nature of ministry as such.[7] Consequently, modern books written for pastors in the area of pastoral ministry tend to be 'how-to' treatments that are usually not grounded in the fundamental categories of systematic theology.[8]

II Pastoral Theology

Since any project such as the present one that seeks fresh integration of the disciplines of pastoral and systematic theology needs to be informed by an awareness of the historical development of both disciplines, a very brief overview of the history of pastoral theology will be noted here.[9] During the patristic period works such as that of Gregory of Nazianzus, *In Defense of His Flight to Pontus*; John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood*, and the widely read *Pastoral Care* by Gregory the Great, set pastoral care and theology in a priestly, church-based, and confessional context.[10]

During the Reformation period, both Luther and Calvin addressed pastoral as well as theological questions, but the outstanding work of pastoral theology from this period is Martin Bucer's treatise, *Concerning the True Care of Souls* (1538), in which Bucer sought to place the ministerial tasks of the 'care of souls' within a biblical context of the doctrine of the church as the fellowship and body of Christ.[11]

In the post-Reformation period the work of the Puritan pastor Richard Baxter of Kidderminster, England, *The Reformed Pastor* (1659) is justly considered a classic in the field of pastoral theology and practice, and has been

7 See, for example the table of contents of widely used textbooks such as Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1987); Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); and from an earlier generation, Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1941).

8 Commenting on this 'gap' between systematic and practical theology, Ray Anderson observed that for typical seminary graduates, much theology is set on one side, and they are 'under pressure to be successful leaders of the organized church' and 'are easily attracted to pragmatic strategies for church growth, conflict management, and pastoral counseling'. (Ray S. Anderson, *The Shape of Practical Theology: Empowering Ministry with Theological Praxis* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2001), 318).

9 Helpful resources in this area are G.R. Evans, ed., *A History of Pastoral Care* (London: Cassell, 2000), and Thomas C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1982), 'Introduction: What Is Pastoral Theology?', x-xii.

10 For discussion of these patristic authors, see Andrew Purves, *Pastoral Theology in the Classical Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

11 Martin Bucer, *Concerning the True Care of Souls*, tr. Peter Beale (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 2009; orig. 1538).

widely read down to the present day.[12] Baxter was noted for his program of home visitation and catechizing of the families in his parish, reflecting his conviction that preaching alone was not sufficient to ensure Christian growth and discipleship.

The nineteenth century witnessed a flowering of substantial works in pastoral theology. Among the many works that could be mentioned, the following are perhaps among the most significant: A. Vinet, *Pastoral Theology: The Theory of the Evangelical Ministry* (1854); James M. Hoppin, *Pastoral Theology* (1884); Patrick Fairbairn, *Pastoral Theology: A Treatise on the Offices and Duties of the Christian Pastor* (1875); William G.T. Shedd, *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology* (1873); and Washington Gladden, *The Christian Pastor and the Working Church* (1898).[13] An examination of the tables of contents of these works reveals that the presentations tend to be structured around the functions of parish ministry, rather than an overall theological framework as such.

This focus on the functional aspects of ministry has continued in the twentieth century works in pastoral theology.[14] In 1958 Seward Hiltner of Princeton University published *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, a landmark work that proved to be widely influential in the subsequent development of the fields of pastoral theology and pastoral counselling in the English speaking world.[15] Hiltner defined pastoral theology as a branch of theological inquiry '… that brings the shepherding perspective to bear on all the operations and functions of the church and minister, and then draws conclusions of a theological order from reflection on these observations'.[16] This definition, according to Hiltner, implied that pastoral theology was an 'operation-centered' or 'function-centered' branch of theology rather than a 'logic-centered' one.[17]

In a somewhat Tillichian vein, Hiltner could view pastoral theology as a 'method of correlation' in which reflection on the resources of the Christian tradition and reflection on the 'shepherding' situations of ministry were held in mutual relation, with theory and practice informing one another. While retaining the historic Christian

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12 Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974; orig.1659).

13 A. Vinet, *Pastoral Theology: The Theory of the Pastoral Ministry*, tr. Thomas Skinner (New York: Ivison and Phinney, 1854); William G.T. Shedd, *Homiletics and Pastoral Theology* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong & Co., 1873); Patrick Fairbairn, *Pastoral Theology: A Treatise on the Offices and Duties of the Christian Pastor* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1875); James M. Hoppin, *Pastoral Theology*, 5th ed. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1901; orig. 1884); Washington Gladden, *The Christian Pastor and the Working Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898).

14 Such a functional emphasis, with varying degrees of theological grounding and reflection can be seen in Martin Thornton, *Pastoral Theology: A Reorientation* (London: S.P.C.K., 1958); Lawrence O. Richards and Gib Martin, *A Theology of Personal Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981); Thomas F. O'Meara, *Theology of Ministry* (New York: Paulist Press, 1983); David Hansen, *The Art of Pastoring: Ministry without All the Answers* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994).

15 Seward Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958).

16 Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, 20.

17 Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology*.

and biblical metaphor of 'shepherding' as an organizing principle, Hiltner wished to integrate into pastoral practice the new knowledge coming from psychology, psychiatry, anthropology and other sources; these '… riches are such that no thoughtful person can set them aside.'[18]

Hiltner's paradigm for pastoral theology has been predominant in much Protestant pastoral theology and pastoral counselling for the last sixty years in the United States, but it has not been without its critics. Thomas Oden, for example, argued that approaches such as Hiltner's that borrow heavily from the social sciences are in danger of losing their biblical and theological foundations. An area of pastoral practice such as church administration, for example, that borrows heavily from pragmatic management procedures can become '… an orphan discipline wondering about its true parentage',[19] blurring the lines that distinguish a business enterprise from the church.

Andrew Purves has argued that the modern pastoral theology and pastoral counselling movement promoted by Hiltner has been, in practice, more influenced by psychological and social-science concerns than theological and doctrinal ones, with the result that secular goals and techniques of care have come to predominate in pastoral practice.[20] With the loss of Christology, soteriology, and the Christian doctrine of God, pastoral theology and practice have tended, according to Purves, to focus on 'acceptable functioning rather than discipleship', and on 'self-actualization and self-realization rather than salvation'.[21]

The churchly context of historic pastoral care and the ongoing ministries of Word, sacrament, fellowship, and discipline were in danger of being displaced by the *clinical* settings[22] of the secular disciplines of counselling and psychology. Purves has challenged the pastoral theology and counselling movement not to ignore the social sciences, but to re-orient these disciplines in such a way that the biblical and Christian confessional heritage and the doctrines of God and union with Christ are the integrative core of theory and practice.[23]

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18 Hiltner, *Preface to Pastoral Theology*, 25.

19 Oden, *Pastoral Theology*, 4. The plausibility of Oden's concerns could be supported by an examination of the table of contents of some current works in the area of church administration such as James D. Berkley, ed., *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007); Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser, *Managing the Congregation: Building Effective Systems to Serve People* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996); Gary L. McIntosh, *Church That Works: Your One-Stop Resource for Effective Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004).

20 Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, xiv.

21 Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, xiv, xix, xx.

22 Awareness of the tensions and ambiguities that obtain in modern pastoral counseling movement, as it attempts to straddle the worlds of clinical practice and the church are reflected, for example, in the work of Wayne E. Oates, *Pastoral Counseling* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 7.

23 This is likewise the perspective of this essay: not to ignore or reject valid insights from the social science, but to re-integrate them around a Christian doctrinal core.

III Individualism and Pastoral Theology

One of the motives for proposing a Trinitarian-ecclesial model for church ministry and pastoral identity is to provide a model for ministry that can address the *individualism* of American culture[24] at a fundamental level. The pervasiveness of individualism in American culture is widely recognized, and can be seen to have both its strengths and weaknesses. On the one hand, individualism can support concerns for human rights, rule of law, personal achievement, and the virtues of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship. On the other hand, it is generally recognized that individualism in its more exaggerated forms has contributed to the weakening of social bonds in marriage and other personal relationships, and has also contributed to the erosion of loyalty and commitment to churches, denominations, and other social institutions.

A significant element in the broader historical context of this discussion of pastoral theology and the nature of ministry is the growing separation between the clergy and the laity that began to develop from the third century onward, and which was only partially corrected in the Reformation and post-Reformation eras of church history. The development of the idea of the priest as one who was uniquely empowered and ordained by God to offer *sacrifices* for the people, on the analogy of the Old Testament priesthood, increasingly tended to marginalize the role of the laity in Christian worship and ministry.

These tendencies were strengthened by the development of the doctrine of substantiation, beginning in the ninth century, and culminating in its official promulgation at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215.[25] The role of the laity in the late medieval period was reduced largely to that of being passive spectators, watching the priest consecrate and elevate the elements, in the words of a liturgy in a language (Latin) not understood by the people. The Protestant reformers made the liturgy available in the languages of the people, and restored the Bible and the preaching of the gospel to a more central place in the life of the church, but Protestant church life and ministry still tended to be dominated and controlled by the clergy.

In the modern period a variety of developments have emerged that have tended to recover a more vital role for the laity in Christian ministry and worship. The Second Vatican Council (1963-65) introduced sweeping changes into the life of the Roman Catholic Church. Conciliar documents

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24 As used here, 'individualism' is taken to imply 'a focus on… personal autonomy and self-fulfillment… basing one's identity on one's personal accomplishments', and a view of the self that sees the self as more independent than interdependent in the context of the group or larger collective: Ronald Inglehart and Daphna Oyserman, 'Individualism, Autonomy, Self-Expression', in Hek Vinken, Joseph Soeters, and Peter Ester, eds., *Comparing Cultures: Dimensions of Culture in a Comparative Perspective* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2004), 74-96 at 11, 77.

25 On the history of this development, see James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, 3rd ed. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 248-259, 'Understanding the Eucharist'.

such as the 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church' (*Lumen Gentium*) and the 'Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity' (*Apostolicum Actuositatem*) emphasized an understanding of the church as the whole people of God, rather than the more juridical understanding of a hierarchical institution controlled by priests and bishops.[26]

The post-World War II period also witnessed the emergence of a 'theology of the laity' and 'workplace theology' that understood ministry as involving all the people of God, and not limited to the confines and activities of the institutional church.[27] The charismatic renewal movements that have impacted both the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches since the 1960s have heightened the awareness of the gifting of all the people of God for ministry, and promoted more participatory forms of ministry understood in terms of 'Body Life' (cf. 1 Cor.12, 14; Eph.4).

This modern recognition of the calling of all the people of God to be actively involved in the work of the ministry—both inside and outside the church—is to be welcomed and encouraged. The present essay is calling, in effect, for a further 'third moment' in the historical trends in Christian ministry, one in which the more active role of the laity will be preserved, but that in addition, the *divine agency* and divine presence in every act of ministry will be recognized: all the people of God, with their various charisms for ministry, are recognized to be acting both in the presence of God and in partnership with God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The God who is actively and really present in the midst of his people is recognized as the primary agent in all ministry.[28]

This 'third moment' is seen as a corrective to the 'turn to the (human) subject' that has characterized modern theology since Schleiermacher and much of modern evangelicalism since Finney. We now turn to the biblical and theological basis for this 'Trinitarian-ecclesial' model for ministry.

IV Divine Presence and Human-Divine Partnership[29]

The themes of the divine presence and

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26 Walter M. Abbot, ed., *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Corpus Books, 1966), 14-101, 489-521. Vatican II made famous a phrase calling for the 'full, conscious and active participation' of the people in worship.

27 For historical perspective on these developments, see Robert Banks, 'Appendix A: Lay Theology and Education since 1945', in Robert Banks, *Redeeming the Routines: Bringing Theology to Life* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1993), 153-174, and also Stephen C. Neill and Hans-Ruedi Weber, *The Layman in Christian History* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963).

28 Jerald C. Brauer, in his seminal essay, 'Conversion: From Puritanism to Revivalism', *Journal of Religion* 58:3 (1978): 227-243 has argued that in the historical trajectory from Puritanism to Finney and modern revivalism, with its focus on conversion, there was an (unintended) shift of focus away from God as objectively present and acting toward the human subject and private religious experience.

29 The current essay echoes and recalls, of course, the seventeenth-century devotional classic of Brother Lawrence, *The Practice of the Presence of God* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1982), who saw all Christian life and service as being done with an awareness of the presence of God. This essay is an attempt to generalize Brother Lawrence's insight for church ministry and to give it a more comprehensive biblical and systematic basis.

divine-human partnership in ministry are significant themes in both the Old and New Testaments, and can be illustrated in the lives of Moses, Joshua, Jesus, and the apostle Paul.

1 Old Testament

Moses is called by God to ministry at the burning bush ('I am sending you', Ex. 3:10), and at the same time, is promised that God will be with him as he fulfils his calling ('I will be with you', Ex. 3:12). God will make the Egyptians favourably disposed (Ex. 3:21), and will help Moses to speak (Ex. 4:12). Aaron will be Moses' partner in speaking, and God promises to help both Moses and Aaron to speak and to teach them what to do (Ex. 4:15).

Moses will see what God himself will do to the Egyptians in the plagues and confrontation with Pharaoh (Ex. 6:1); it is God, not Moses who is the primary agent in the deliverance of the Israelites. God will pass through Egypt (Ex. 12:12), will lead them toward the Red Sea (Ex. 13:18), going ahead of them and guiding them (Ex. 13:21), and it will be God himself, not merely Moses as the human servant, who will be actively fighting for them (Ex. 14:14). The Lord himself is present in the pillar of cloud as the 'commander-in-chief' of the people of God, and looks down as witness to the mighty deliverance at the Red Sea (Ex. 14:24).

After the crossing of the Red Sea and during the wilderness sojourning the Israelites engage in battle with the Amalekites, with Joshua leading the battle, and Moses directing the battle from the top of a hill with the staff of God and Aaron and Hur hold-ing up his hands (Ex. 17:8-16). The incident provides a memorable image of 'ministry in the presence of God and in partnership with God', since Joshua fights in the presence of God and with the empowerment of God, and Aaron and Hur partner with Moses as Moses intercedes for Joshua in the posture of prayer. Joshua, Moses, Aaron, and Hur are all 'partners with God' in the victory over the Amalekites.

In Exodus 18 Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses, gives Moses the wise counsel that his ministry of leading the people and judging all their disputes will inevitably lead to 'ministerial burnout', and that he needs to delegate and practise ministry in partnership with other gifted people in the community (Ex.18:21-24).

As the Ark of the Covenant, the Tabernacle, and the consecration of the priests are being prepared, the promise of God's continuing presence as the central reality in the life of the community is again emphasized: 'I will dwell among the Israelites and be their God. They will know that I am the Lord their God who brought them out of Egypt *so that I might dwell among them*' (Ex. 29:45,46; emphasis added). As Moses and the people anticipate the continuing journey and the entrance into the promised land, God again promises, 'My presence will go with you' (Ex. 33:14).

It is in fact the divine Presence that distinguishes the people of Israel from all the other peoples on the face of the earth (Ex. 33:16). Moses' ministry to the people is energized by the forty days and nights that he spends in the presence of God on top of Mount

Sinai (Ex.34:28); he descends from the mountain with his face shining with the glory of God, a glory that foreshadows the transformative glory that is to be shared by all the future ministers of the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:18). The narrative suggests that all truly transformative ministry, done to the glory of God, first begins with a minister who spends time contemplatively in the presence of God and himself is being transformed by the divine glory.

The themes of the divine presence and partnership in ministry that are central in the Moses narrative are continued in the life of Joshua, Moses' successor. Joshua, who must have had a great sense of personal inadequacy to fill the shoes of his enormously gifted predecessor is promised by God, 'As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you or forsake you' (Josh. 1:5). The promise and the reality of the continuing 'real presence' of the Almighty is far more weighty than the human presence of Moses. God says to Joshua, 'Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go' (Josh. 1:9).

As the people are led across the Jordan River—recalling the action of God at the crossing of the Red Sea—the people are to recognize that 'the living God is among you' (Josh. 3:10), for it is God, the commander of the Israelite armies, enthroned on the ark of the covenant, who is causing the water to cease from flowing (Josh. 3:15). In the conquest of Jericho, with the priests carrying the ark of God around the walls, it was in fact God himself present with the people (Josh. 6:27) who caused the walls to tumble down and give Joshua and the people victory. The fallen walls of Jericho were a vivid image of a divine-human partnership in achieving victory, with God as the primary agent, and the people as the secondary agents in partnership with the Lord.

2 New Testament

In the New Testament Jesus can be seen as a 'second Moses' and 'second Joshua' who also exemplifies ministry in the presence of God and in partnership with God. Jesus never acts independently; he constantly and consistently acts in partnership with God his heavenly Father. 'The Son can do nothing by himself; he can only do what he sees the Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does' (Jn. 5:19). Jesus does not seek to be 'original' or 'creative', but rather takes his cues from the Father's actions and presence in the world. 'By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear… I seek not to please myself but him who sent me' (Jn. 5:30).

Jesus tells his disciples that apart from him they can do nothing (Jn. 15:5b) that will produce lasting fruit in the ministry; he himself practises what he preaches by listening to the Father before speaking to others. Jesus is consciously aware of the Father's presence in his own ministry and seeks to follow the Father's initiative: 'I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me *is with me and has not left me alone*' (Jn. 8:28,29; emphasis added).

The gospel narratives, especially those of Luke and John, also make it clear that Jesus' ministry is done with an awareness of the presence and em-

powerment of the Holy Spirit.[30] As he is praying during the baptismal scene in the Jordan River (Lk. 3:21)—prayer as an act of communion with the Father—the Spirit descends upon him, signifying the reality of the Father's love and the peace that characterizes the relationship between the Father and the Son. Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit (Lk.4:1), is led by the Spirit to be tested in the desert, and then returns to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (Lk. 4:14) to begin his ministry.

As he reads from the scroll of Isaiah (Is. 61:1,2) in the synagogue at Nazareth, his reading of scripture is anointed by the Holy Spirit (Lk. 4:18). When his disciples return from a preaching and healing mission, Jesus exults in praise to the Father, full of joy in the Holy Spirit (Lk. 10:21). All of Jesus' ministry, in fact, flows from the reality that the Father has anointed the Son with power and the Holy Spirit (Acts. 10:38).

Jesus goes to the cross in obedience to the Father, offering himself by the strength of the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14), and is raised from the dead through the Holy Spirit, to 'the glory of the Father' (Rom. 6:4). Exalted to the right hand of God, Jesus receives a fresh effusion of the Holy Spirit from the Father, and then shares this anointing with his disciples on earth, that they might be empowered to continue the ministry that Jesus began on earth (Acts 2:33).

The implication of these texts is clear: the ministry of Jesus is Trinitarian in nature, in that he, as the eternal Son of God, does ministry in partnership with and in the presence of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. The ministry of Jesus is the action of the Triune God in human history, and provides the paradigm for all ministry in the New Covenant.

Jesus, in commissioning his disciples for ministry, commands them to continue ministry in his own way of communion with God and in partnership with God. They are to abide in communion with him (Jn. 15:5), for apart from this communion with him, mediated by the Holy Spirit, their ministry cannot bear lasting fruit. As the Father sent Jesus into ministry by anointing him with the Spirit (Lk. 3:21; 4:1,14), so Jesus imparts the Holy Spirit to the disciples (Jn. 20:21,22; Acts 2:4: 'they were *all* filled with the Holy Spirit') before sending them out into the world to be his witnesses and to proclaim the message of forgiveness of sins. As the Father was present with Jesus his Son in ministry (Jn. 8:28,29), Jesus promises that he will be with them as they seek to make disciples and to fulfil the Great Commission (Mt. 28:20: 'Surely I am *with you* always, to the very end of the age').

The ministry of the apostle Paul, as it is reflected in his epistles and the book of Acts, gives clear evidence of a style of ministry that could be characterized as 'ministry in the presence of

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30 An insightful study of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts is found in Roger Stronstad, *The Charismatic Theology of St. Luke* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1984), especially chap. 3, 'The Holy Spirit in the Gospel of Luke: The Charismatic Christ', 33-48. See also James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975).

God and in partnership with God'—and in partnership with other members of the Body of Christ. Paul's sense of self-identity and his life and ministry are grounded foundationally in his union with Christ: 'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me' (Gal.2:20). The old self, the old Saul of Tarsus is dead; the new Paul the apostle lives and ministers in union with and in partnership with Christ, who supplies the new life and energy and direction for ministry.

Paul's sense of apostolic authority, his awareness that Christ is speaking through him (2 Cor. 13:3), is grounded in this awareness of union with Christ. The word of the gospel that the Thessalonians received was not just Paul's human word, but indeed the word of God spoken by God himself through Paul (1 Thess. 2:13). He is conscious that the words that he is writing to the Corinthians are not merely his words; these words are the instruments of the risen Christ who gives his commands to the church through Paul (1 Cor. 14:37, 'what I am writing to you is the Lord's command').

The gifts of the Holy Spirit that are being manifested in the Corinthian congregation are in fact the actions of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—that are acting through the various members of the body for the good of the whole: 'There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service [*diakonioon*, 'ministries'], but the same Lord [Christ] There are different kinds of working [*energeimatoon*, 'operations'], but the same God [Father] works all of them in all men' (1 Cor. 12:4-6).[31] The individual Christian in Corinth who is exercising a particular charism should be aware of the fact that he or she is actually acting *in partnership* with the Holy Spirit and is *participating* in the action and ministry of the three persons of the Trinity as *they* act in partnership for the purpose of building up the whole Body.[32]

The reality of Paul's ministry as one done in the presence of God and in partnership with God is attested in the book of Acts. Paul and Barnabas are in the presence of God, worshipping with the community in Antioch, when the Holy Spirit, present to the assembly, says, 'Set apart for *me* Barnabas and Saul for the work to which *I* have called them' (Acts 13:2). The Holy Spirit, a co-equal person of the Trinity, is the primary agent in the calling and commissioning of those who are to be the agents of the Spirit in the mission to the Gentiles.

Paul and Barnabas are 'sent on their way by the Holy Spirit' (Act 13:4), as Jesus had been sent by the Spirit into the desert (Lk. 4:1) and empowered by the Spirit for ministry in Galilee (Lk.4:14). When they return to Jerusalem, the church meeting in council is aware that its deliberations are done in

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31 According to Thiselton, the 'Trinitarian ground plan constitutes an outstanding feature of 12:4-6': Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 934.

32 To state the same point in a slightly different way, the one who is exercising a particular charism should see the Triune God as the primary active agent in the manifestation and exercise of the gift, and himself or herself as the secondary agent or instrument.

the presence of the Spirit ('it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us,' Acts 15:28).

In the second missionary journey, the Holy Spirit deflects Paul and Silas from preaching in the provinces of Asia and Bithynia (Acts 16:6,7), calling them, through a vision, to preach the gospel in Macedonia (Acts 16:8-10). Upon arriving in Philippi, the risen Christ, and the Holy Spirit who is accompanying Paul and his companions, open Lydia's heart to respond to the message ('The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message', Acts 16:14).

Lydia's conversion is a result of the divine agency of Christ and the Spirit working through the human agency of Paul. When Paul arrives in Corinth, the risen Christ speaks to Paul in a vision, and encourages him to continue speaking, because '*I am with you* and *I* have many people in this city', Acts 18:9,10). Christ is present with Paul as he preaches and teaches in Corinth.

After his arrest and during his defence before King Agrippa (Acts 26) Paul, in recounting his conversion experience and the essentials of the gospel kerygma, states that in fulfilment of the scriptures the Messiah would suffer, and '… as the first to rise from the dead, *would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles* [emphasis added]' (Acts 26:23). Paul is saying here that the risen Christ continues to act in redemptive history as the gospel is proclaimed; Christ's priestly work of atonement is finished, but his kerygmatic ministry continues as he continues to preach through his chosen apostles, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Paul is a 'junior partner' in the Gentile mission; the Risen Christ and the Holy Spirit are the 'senior partners', so to speak.

Not only is it the case that the apostle Paul works in partnership with Christ and the Spirit; his ministry is notably one of partnership with various members of the Body of Christ. A striking example is provided by the term *synergos*, 'fellow-worker', characteristic of Paul.[33] This appellation is applied to Priscilla and Aquila, Urbanus, Timothy, Titus, Epaphroditus, Clement, Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus Justus, Demas, Luke and others not explicitly named.

Terms such as 'fellow-partner' (Phil. 1:7, of the Philippians), 'fellow-slaves' (Col. 1:7; 4:7, of Epaphroditus and Tychicus), 'fellow-soldier' (Phil. 2:25; Philemon 2, of Epaphroditus and Archippus), and 'fellow-prisoner' (Col. 4:10, Aristarchus, and Philemon 23, Epaphras) also express Paul's sense of solidarity with his fellow Christians in the ministry of the gospel. Paul's sense of working in partnership with Christ and the Spirit and with his fellow believers arises naturally out of his sense of the reality of his union with Christ and solidarity with the Body of Christ; his actions in ministry were a manifestation of his deepest dogmatic and doctrinal convictions.

V Systematic Foundations for Ministry in Partnership

Having in the previous section surveyed the biblical themes of divine presence and divine-human partnership in ministry, we will now turn to

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33 Of the 13 instances of *synergos* in the New Testament, 12 are found in Paul.

reflection on three fundamental topics in systematic theology—the doctrine of the Trinity, union with Christ (Christology), and the Body of Christ (ecclesiology)—with a view toward showing how they are foundational for the theology and practices of ministry. Here it is being proposed that the doctrines of the Trinity, union with Christ, and the ecclesiological notion of the church as the Body of Christ should be at the core of a biblical theology of ministry.

At the outset we can notice the fundamental nature of the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christology (of which union with Christ is an implication) in the fabric of the Christian faith. The doctrine of the Trinity is the basis of the distinctively Christian answer to the question, 'Who is God?', and the doctrines of Christology give the distinctively *Christian* answer to the questions, 'Who is Jesus Christ?' and 'How does God save?' A foundationally *Christian* understanding of the nature and practices of church ministry would, consequently, be explicitly and self-consciously formulated with these foundational truths in view.

1 Trinity

In the last several generations there has been a remarkable renaissance of interest in Trinitarian theology, reflecting the influence of Karl Barth in Protestant theological circles and of Karl Rahner in the Roman Catholic world.[34] This growing recognition of

the centrality of Trinitarian theology for all Christian faith and life has yet to be adequately integrated into pastoral theologies and practices of ministry.

The proposition being argued in this section of the essay in regard to the doctrine of the Trinity is as follows:

Christian ministry is done in the presence of the Triune God and in partnership with the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—with the Triune God being recognized as the Primary, Active Agent in every ministerial act.

This proposition further implies that the doctrine of the Trinity provides the irreducible and essential foundation for a proper New Testament understanding of ministry at three basic levels of theory and practice: the ontological, the methodological, and the teleological (purposive). That is to say, the doctrine of the Trinity is recognized as the ultimate Christian reality (divine persons in communion) and hence, the ultimate grounding of the Christian faith, the Christian church, and Christian ministry. Methodologically, the Trinitarian pattern of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit acting in concert and collaboration provides the methodological paradigm and model for all Christian ministry. Teleologically, bringing persons into ever-deepening communion with God the Father, through Jesus Christ the Son, in the communion of the Holy Spirit, is recognized as the ultimate purpose and goal of all church ministry (worship, discipleship, mission).

In the previous section we saw that the disciples were sent out by Jesus the risen Son to disciple the nations and were to do so with a consciousness of the accompanying presence of Christ (Matt. 28:20); Christ is truly present

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34 For a review of recent scholarship in Trinitarian theology, see Fred Sanders, 'The Trinity', 35-53, in John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Ian Torrance, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 2007).

wherever two or three of his disciples gather in conscious intent to invoke his name (Matt. 18:20). Repentance and forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus is to be proclaimed in the power and in the presence of the Holy Spirit (Jn. 20:21,22). Since Jesus is in the Father and the Father in Jesus (Jn.17:21; cf. Jn.14:9, 'He who has seen me has seen the Father'), [35] where Jesus is, by virtue of the Spirit, his name, and his word, so there the Father is also. All three persons of the Trinity—the Spirit (Jn. 14:16) and the Father and the Son abide with the church forever (Jn. 14:23) and are present with the church in its worship and ministry.

New Testament ministry is performed in partnership with God as the Father's will is done on earth (Matt. 6:10). The apostle Paul is conscious of the fact that he 'partners' with the risen Christ in ministry who proclaims light to the Gentiles through his missionary preaching (Acts 26:23), and that the life he now lives he lives in union with the Christ who lives in him (Gal. 2:20). The Pauline Gentile mission is characterized by partnership with the Holy Spirit who calls (Acts 13:2), sends (Acts 13:4), counsels (Acts 15:28), directs (Acts 16:6,7), and illuminates the gospel message to effect conversion (Acts 16:14).

This human partnership *with* the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is a reflection of the partnership in ministry *of* the Triune God and a participation in it. We have previously noted a text such as 1 Cor. 12:4-6, where the cooperative, co-active ministry of Father, Son, and Spirit ('different gifts, but the same Spirit… different service, but the same Lord… different operations, but the same God) is seen. Likewise, we have noted texts such as John 5:19 and John 8:28,29 that witness to Jesus' cooperation and partnership with the Father in ministry.

These texts and others like them are examples of the Trinitarian principles articulated in various ways by the church fathers: *Opera Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa:* that is, 'The works of the Trinity in the world are indivisible'. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit work not independently of one another, but always work in partnership and collaboration. As St. Athanasius stated, 'The Father does all things through the Word in the Holy Spirit; and thus the unity of the Holy Trinity is preserved.'[36] This model of the partnership and collaboration of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in ministry provides the foundational model for effective ministry in and by the church.

2 Union with Christ

The category of *union with Christ* is another central concept for the Trinitarian-ecclesial model of ministry, and is a fundamental basis for the pastor's self-identity. Union with Christ, referring to the intimate, personal bond between the believer and the risen Christ,[37] me-

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35 The mutual indwelling and interpenetration of the persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is known as *perichoresis* in the theological tradition.

36 Athanasius, *Ad Serapion*, I, 28.

37 The Christian concept of union with Christ or mystical union does not involve the destruction of human individuality, but its transformation and renewal in the context of a new relationship lived in interdependence with Christ; union with Christ is not the end of *individuality* per se, but rather the end of an atomistic and autonomous individuality.

diated by the Holy Spirit, is prominent in New Testament theology, especially in the Pauline and Johannine writings. Jesus tells his disciples that he is the vine and they are the branches, drawing their life fruitfulness from him (Jn. 15:5). As Jesus is in the Father, so is Jesus in the disciples and they in him (Jn. 14:20); the Father and the Son will come to the believers and make their home with them (Jn. 14:23). Jesus will continue to make the Father's love known to the disciples in order that the Father's love might be deepened in them and that Jesus himself may dwell more deeply within them (Jn. 17:26).

Union with Christ is a central category in Pauline theology, frequently signified by the terminology of 'with' or 'in' Christ. For Paul, Christian baptism is baptism into the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3); the old self or identity was crucified with him (Rom. 6:6). We died with Christ and were buried with him (Rom. 6:4,8). Paul has been crucified with Christ, and the life he now lives he lives by faith in the Son of God and in living union with him (Gal. 2:20). Anyone who is in Christ is a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). We were all baptized by the Spirit into one body of which the risen Christ is the living head (1 Cor. 12:13). Christian marriage is a spiritual image of the intimate union between Christ and his bride, the church (Eph. 5:25-32). God has raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms (Eph. 2:6).

Just as a man who unites himself to a prostitute is one with her in body (*hen soma estin*), so the one who unites himself with Christ the Lord is one with him in spirit (*hen pneuma estin*) (1 Cor. 6:17).[38] Just as union with a prostitute involves body-to-body contact between a man and the prostitute, so union with Christ involves a real spirit-to-spirit contact between Christ and the believer. As the New Testament scholar Alfred Wikenhauser has rightly insisted, this Pauline and Johannine language of union with Christ is not to be taken as only 'metaphorical' or as only a figure of speech, but with its real ontological force, as a 'real, objective state' that is 'true of all [Christians] without exception'.[39]

Despite the prominence of union with Christ in the New Testament and in the histories of both Catholic and Protestant theology, this key concept has, for the most part, not been sufficiently integrated into modern theologies of ministry.[40] Part of the problem may be that modern New Testament scholars and theologians, influenced by the materialistic and naturalistic categories of the Enlightenment and modern science, find it difficult to relate the 'mystical' dimensions of union with Christ to the categories of modern life. A case in point is provided by E.P. Sanders, who recognizes the centrality of union with Christ in Paul, yet has difficulty in conceptualizing it:

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38 George T. Montague, commenting on this text (1 Cor. 6:17), has observed that 'Christian life is a union with the Lord so real that Paul can use the very same verb (*kollomenos*) for union with the prostitute and union with the Lord': Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 45.

39 Alfred Wikenhauser, *Pauline Mysticism: Christ in the Mystical Teaching of St. Paul* (Edinburgh-London: Nelson, 1960), 93.

40 Andrew Purves, *Reconstructing Pastoral Theology*, is a notable exception in this regard.

It seems to me best to understand Paul as saying what he meant and meaning what he said: Christians really are one body and Spirit with Christ, the form of the present really is passing away, Christians really are being changed from one stage of glory to another, the end really will come and those who are in Christ will really be transformed.

But then Sanders goes on to ask:

But what does this mean? How are we to understand it? We seem to lack a concept of 'reality'—a real participation in Christ, real possession of the Spirit—which lies between naïve cosmological speculation and belief in magical transference on the one hand [e.g., Gnosticism or Hellenistic mystery religions: JD] and a revised self-understanding [e.g., Bultmann: JD] on the other. *I confess that I do not have a new category of perception to propose here*.[41]

In order to meet this difficulty in relating the biblical concept of union with Christ to the categories of post-Enlightenment modern thought, we introduce at this point the concepts of the *extended Self* and of a *coupled system*, adapting these concepts from ideas articulated in an article by Clark and Chalmers, 'The Extended Mind'.[42]

The notion of an 'extended Self' is based on the observation that a personal agent can extend himself or herself into the surrounding environment, beyond the bounds of the agent's physical body (the 'empirical Self') through the use of an instrument or tool under the agent's control. The instrument in question can be either physical or electronic in nature. For example, a blind person can extend his sense of touch into the environment through the use of a cane held in his hand; the cane becomes an extension of his body. The blind person and the cane under his control form a 'coupled system'.

A coupled system and an extended Self may be formed also through an electronic instrument such as Skype software and an internet connection. If I am communicating with my daughter in California with a Skype connection, my daughter and her Skype icon that appears on my laptop screen form a coupled system; her empirical/molecular self is extended into my physical location, and my physical presence is extended electronically into her physical space by the Skype software and internet connection. Our Skype icons are instruments of our extended Selves. My icon is 'in' her laptop screen and her icon is 'in' mine. The connection is a real one because the internet connection is real and the Skype icon and software are real.[43]

The 'mutual indwelling' ('perichoresis') of Skype icons in a coupled internet system reminds us that a *molecular* form of presence can be distinguished from a *digital* or *informational* form of

41 Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 520, 522-23, cited by John Ashton, *The Religion of Paul the Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 150.

42 Andy Clark and David J. Chalmers, 'The Extended Mind', *Analysis* 58 (1998):10-23, accessed at http://consc.net/papers/extended. html

43 Material objects are only one form of the 'real'; reality also includes entities that are virtual/electronic/digital in nature, and ones that are *spiritual* in nature as well (e.g., God, angels, demons).

presence. Two molecular objects—such as two bowling balls—cannot be 'in' the same space, but various forms of digital information can be 'in' the same computer hard drive, or in the same wireless internet broadcast space at the same time: a Google home page, the data available in Facebook or YouTube or Twitter or Wikipedia can all be in the 'cloud' in the room around me, simultaneously, available to me if I have the proper receiving device.

To complete this implied analogy between the digital and the spiritual worlds, we can say that in union with Christ, Christ and the believer are a 'coupled system'; the Holy Spirit is the real, continuous, 'high-speed, broadband "internet" connection' between heaven and earth, between Christ and the believer. 'If anyone is joined to the Lord, he is one spirit with him' (1 Cor. 6:17). We are more deeply and really connected to Christ by the Holy Spirit than we are connected electronically on Facebook to our Facebook 'friends'. Indeed, what a 'Friend' we really have in Jesus!

The Holy Spirit extends my empirical/molecular self into the presence of the risen Christ; we are seated with him (by extension) in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). The Spirit extends the presence of the risen Christ into my space/soul: we are truly connected in a 'digital'/spiritual connection and embrace. The risen Christ uses a variety of instruments—his Word in the scriptures, his name (cf. 1 Cor. 5:4: 'when you come together in the name of Jesus and the power of the Lord is present'), the sacraments, and his called and gifted disciples to extend himself from heaven to earth; by these instruments, and by the energizing connectivity of the Holy Spirit, the risen Christ is both in us (Jn. 14:20) and among us (Matt. 18:20) and with us (Matt. 28:20). Because I am in union with Christ the Son, I am also in living communion with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, for the three persons of the Trinity indwell one another, and indwell us.

3 Body of Christ

Union with Christ is also the basis of the category of the *Body of Christ* that is so significant for biblical ecclesiology. Because we are really united to Christ as the head, we are also really united to one another as the living members of his body. 'By one Spirit we have all been baptized into one Body' (1 Cor. 12:13). Union with Christ, then, is the core of our new Trinitarian-ecclesial identity as Christians and pastors: I *really am* in communion with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and I *really am* in communion with my brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ: this is who I *really am*, and I need to constantly recognize this 'new creation' identity, and act accordingly.

The old autonomous, independent Self is gone; the new *interdependent*, Trinitarian-ecclesial Self has arrived. Our ministry is to flow from the presence of God and to be done in partnership with God and the people of God, because this is the true account of the ways things really are and of who we really are. My self-concept and actions need to be in alignment with the fundamental being of God, Christ, the Spirit, the church, and my deep, continuing bonds with these interconnected and interdependent persons, human and divine.

VI Practical Suggestions

This essay began by stating the following general proposition: *Christian ministry is activity by baptized Christians done in the presence of God and in partnership with God, for the purpose of bringing the people of God into deepening communion with God and with one another, and into right relationship with God's creation*. It was argued that this awareness of doing ministry in the presence of God and in partnership with God had its fundamental grounding in the doctrines of the Trinity and of union with Christ.

To conclude this essay, I will offer a number of practical observations and suggestions as to how these theological insights could be translated into the specific tasks of ministry

1 Reframing the Great Commission

The first suggestion regards a 'reframing' of the way in which the 'Great Commission' (Matt. 28:18-20) is generally read in the evangelical community. Since the publication in 1792 of William Carey's seminal essay, *An Enquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*, the 'Great Commission' has generally been read through the lens of *foreign missions*. The command in v.19 to 'go and make disciples of all nations' has been understood in terms of crossing national boundaries for the purpose of evangelizing and planting new churches. This is indeed a proper implication from the text, but as various commentators have pointed out, the main verb in the text is *make disciples* (*matheteusate*), and 'going… baptizing… teach-

ing' are all dependent participles.[44]

The proposal here is to read the 'Great Commission' in a new way: while not ignoring the missiological and 'boundary-crossing' implications of the text, the Great Commission should be seen as a mandate for how *ministry*—especially discipleship, viewed as a life-long task—should be done in the context of the *local church*. The focus should be on *making disciples*—not on making 'converts' or on 'going'—and the *risen Christ present in the church* ('I am *with you* always to the end of the age,' v.20) should be recognized as the primary, active Agent in the ministry of discipleship, in partnership with whom pastors and laity in the local church are working as a team in partnership with Christ and with one another.

The primary agency of Christ is emphatically asserted in the declarative statement, 'All authority in heaven and earth has been given to *me*' (v.18)—not to human agents; the authority and efficacy of the ministry of human agents is derived from the risen Christ who is the Primary Agent and who is really present with and partnering with the church in its ministries, both locally and globally. The paradigm shift that is needed is a shift from a primary focus on 'going' and *foreign* mission to a re-cognition of the real presence of Christ the Almighty Lord in the midst of the community as it ministers to

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44 For an excellent exegetical study of the Great Commission, and the command to 'make disciples,' see David Bosch, 'The Structure of Mission: An Exposition of Matthew 28:16-20', in Wilbert R. Shenk, ed., *Exploring Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 218-248, especially 230-233, 'Making Disciples'.

make disciples.[45] Every particular act of ministry—whether preaching a sermon, leading worship, teaching a Bible or membership class, leading a youth group, doing pastoral counselling, or leading a church committee meeting[46]—should be done with the consciousness that *Christ is present with us*—as the Primary Agent of ministry, and that he is the One who really 'makes it happen'.

2 Spurgeon and Calvin

Second, by way of illustration of the principles of ministry done in the presence of God and in partnership with God, I mention two examples from church history, one from the ministry of Calvin, and the other from the ministry of Spurgeon.

When Charles Haddon Spurgeon ascended the stairs of the pulpit to preach in the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London, he would say to himself, repeatedly, 'I believe in the Holy Spirit… I believe in the Holy Spirit… I believe in the Holy Spirit'.[47] Spurgeon was

not doing this to allay any doubts in his mind concerning the doctrines of the Holy Spirit or the Trinity; he was rather, in his personal confession and prayer prior to preaching recognizing that the Holy Spirit was indeed the Primary Agent in making the sermon fruitful and effective in the lives of his hearers, and that he, Spurgeon, was merely the secondary human agent and messenger. Spurgeon was partnering with the Holy Spirit and invoking the presence of the Spirit for his preaching.

John Calvin urged the ministers in Geneva to work in partnership, meeting weekly to study and discuss the scriptures. In his *Draft Ecclesiastical Ordinances* of 1551 he stated, 'First it will be expedient that all ministers, for conserving purity and concord of doctrine among themselves, meet together one certain day each week, for discussion of the scriptures; and none are to be exempt from this without legitimate excuse.'[48] Calvin did not want his fellow-pastors in Geneva to operate as 'Lone Rangers'. Today, in a multiple-staff church setting, the pastoral staff would do well to discuss the weekly sermon text and topic among themselves, sharing exegetical insights and points of practical application.

3 Bridging Acts to Ministry

Third, I mention three 'bridging concepts' from the first chapter of the book of Acts that can help to link the

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45 This 'reframing' of the Great Commission is consistent with the modern recognition in missiological circles that the foundation of the church's mission is the *missio Dei*, the 'mission of God'; David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 389-392.

46 My article, 'How To Get More Out of Committee Meetings in Your Church', that applies some of the principles of practising ministry in the presence of God and in partnership with God and God's people can be accessed at http://bit.ly/kpvc2M.

47 Cited in Douglas Wilson, 'The Sacred Script in the Theater of God', 2009 Desiring God National Conference, accessed at http://www.passionforpreaching.net/?tag-spurgeon.

48 In J.K.S. Reid, ed., *Calvin: Theological Treatises* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 60. See also Joseph D. Small, 'A Company of Pastors', in David Foxgrover, ed., *Calvin and the Company of Pastors* (Grand Rapids: Calvin Studies Society, 2004), 9-15.

principles of divine presence and divine-human partnership to the specific functions of ministry.

Luke states that during the forty day period between the resurrection and the ascension, Jesus spoke to the disciples about the Kingdom of God (1:3) and gave instructions 'through the Holy Spirit' (1:2). Jesus' teaching ministry was 'through the Holy Spirit': even before Pentecost, the Spirit that had anointed him and empowered him throughout his ministry (Acts 10:38, 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power') continued to be present with him.

The presence of the Spirit in this teaching by Jesus (Acts 1:2) was not accompanied by any extraordinary manifestations (e.g., tongues, prophecies, miracles), but the Holy Spirit made the teaching effective and fruitful. Ministry involves both the 'natural' (e.g., turning on the lights when entering the pastor's study), and at times, can involve the 'extraordinary supernatural' (e.g., praying for the healing of end-stage cancer—and the person being dramatically healed), but most ministry is done in the 'natural' and in the 'ordinary supernatural'[49]—and it is this latter category that is likely to be missed. The point is that the Holy Spirit is present even when there are no visible signs (tongues of fire; a heavenly dove; miracles) or dramatic manifestations; the 'ordinary supernatural' ministry can always be done with a consciousness of the presence and partnership of the Holy Spirit.

Luke's account of the period leading up to Pentecost also embodies the principle of 'doing church in the second-person plural'. Jesus gave *them* this command: Do not leave (2p.pl) Jerusalem, but (you, 2p.pl) wait for the gift.. you (2p.pl) will be baptized with the Holy Spirit… you (2p.pl) will receive power… you (2p.pl)… you (2p.pl) will be my witnesses' (Acts 1:4,5,8). All too often, the words of Acts 1 are read as promises and commands to *me*, as though Jesus was primarily concerned about giving me gifts as an individual; the point is that the text is directed to 'all of you'; it is about 'we', not 'me', because the purpose of Jesus is to build a church, a Body, and a team. 'Doing church in the second-person plural' is consistent with the theme of doing ministry in partnership with God and with the people of God.

In Acts 1:14 we find the crucial ministry principle of *spiritual alignment*: 'They all joined together constantly in prayer.' Luke uses the relatively rare word *homothumadon* (see also Acts 2:46 and 4:24), 'of one mind' to describe the mind set of the disciples, achieved through persistent, united prayer, that prepared these disciples to receive the Spirit and be empowered for ministry—in a way that *united* the community rather than dividing it.

The term *homothumadon*, 'of one mind', signifies a 'togetherness' that means not merely being in the same

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49 In regard to what is here termed the 'ordinary supernatural' ministry of the Holy Spirit, Morgan-Wynne notes that in both Luke and Paul, the action of the Holy Spirit is seen not only in the more dramatic manifestations such as tongues, prophecy, miracles, and exorcism, but also in the 'non-ecstatic' manifestations of ethical growth, maturity of character, administration, and practical service: John Eifion Morgan-Wynne, *Holy Spirit and Religious Experience in Christian Literature ca. AD 90-200* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 14,15.

place physically or geographically, but, as we would say, 'being on the same page', having a common focus of attention and shared purpose. The connection between Acts 1:14 ('they were all together… praying') and Acts 2:4 ('they *all* were filled') and Acts 2:41 ('about 3000 were added') is not accidental. The sequence for effective ministry indicated in these seminal texts is clear: first, *alignment* (listening for God's voice in united prayer; aligning our wills to God's will; agreeing together to obey God's will); second, receiving *empowerment* for ministry through the presence of the Holy Spirit to the community (Acts 2:4); third, *active ministry* and witness in partnership with God and the church (Acts 2:14, Peter stood up *with the Eleven*… 3000 were added; 2:41).

The principle of spiritual alignment is so powerful because it is, in effect, an answer to Jesus' high priestly prayer (Jn.17) that his disciples manifest unity, a unity that in itself gives credibility to the claim that Jesus was indeed sent by the Father and that the Father indeed loves the church as he has loved his Son (Jn. 17:23). Jesus himself practised the principle of spiritual alignment, aligning his will with that of the Father before he spoke or acted (Jn. 5:19; 8:26,28,29; 14:10,31). Because Jesus' will as the Son is in alignment with the will of the Father, the Spirit can flow freely through him and from him in ministry to the world. A church 'in alignment' (Acts 1:14) is effective in ministry, because this alignment is a reflection of the life of the Triune God, acting in unity and partnership.

4 Four benefits

Fourthly, and finally, I will mention four benefits that can result from a practice of ministry reflecting a consciousness of the presence of God and partnership with God, grounded in the doctrines of the Trinity, union with Christ, and the Body of Christ. The first benefit is that such a practice of ministry can lessen the danger of ministerial *burnout* that seems endemic to so much ministry in the modern church. The Trinitarian-ecclesial model of ministry being proposed here encourages a slower, more contemplative approach to ministry, one that recognizes that before the outward act, the pastor should be grounded internally, prayerfully and contemplatively, in the experience of the love of God known through union with Christ, and then empowered to execute that ministry outwardly in partnership with other gifted members of the Body of Christ.[50]

Avoiding ministerial 'burnout' is also, in effect, a matter of rooting out three 'heresies' of ministry: 'Deism'; 'Pelagianism'; and 'Individualism'.[51]

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[50] The excellent book by Peter Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2006), skillfully blending biblical theology and insights from psychology, calls for just such a more contemplative approach to ministry.

[51] The notion of these three in-practice 'heresies' of ministry is drawn from James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community & The Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), especially 19-41, 'Worship—Unitarian or Trinitarian?' 'What is needed today is a better understanding of the person not just as an individual but as someone who finds his or her true being in communion with God and others, the counterpart of a Trinitarian doctrine of God': 39, 38.

'Deism' signifies the working assumption that 'God is really far away' when I am preaching and ministering. 'Pelagianism' is the working assumption that 'I can do this ministry in my own human power and ability'. 'Individualism' is the 'heresy' that 'I can do this ministry myself'. All three heresies are a sure recipe for ministerial burnout, and all three heresies can be rooted out by a theory and practice of ministry done consciously in the presence of God and in partnership with God and God's gifted people.

This essay has been an attempt to continue, from the vantage point of a systematic theologian, a conversation on the nature of ministry initiated from the perspective of pastoral theology by Andrew Purves. It is my hope that some of my fellow systematic theologians might join this attempt to build more bridges between pastoral and systematic theology by critiquing my analysis and by extending it in various ways.

Holy Spirit and Religious Experience in Christian Writings, c.AD 90–200

John Eifion Morgan-Wynne

This study examines how far Christians in the third to fifth generations (c.AD 90–200) attributed their sense of encounter with the divine presence, their sense of illumination in the truth or guidance in decision-making, and their sense of ethical empowerment to the activity of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

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