

# Evangelical Review of Theology

A Global Forum

GENERAL EDITOR: THOMAS SCHIRRMACHER

Volume 41 · Number 2 · April 2017

Published by



for  
WORLD EVANGELICAL  
ALLIANCE  
Theological Commission

# Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology

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ON 29 JULY 1928, a young evangelical pastor began his sermon on Saint Paul's discourse on the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12 with these words:

There is a word that, when a Catholic hears it, kindles all his feeling of love and bliss; that stirs all the depths of his religious sensibility, from dread and awe of the Last Judgment to the sweetness of God's presence; and that certainly awakens in him the feeling of home; the feeling that only a child has in relation to its mother, made up of gratitude, reverence, and devoted love; the feeling that overcomes one when, after a long absence, one returns to one's home, the home of one's childhood.

And there is a word that to Protestants has the sound of something infinitely commonplace, more or less indifferent and superfluous, that does not make their heart beat faster; something with which a sense of boredom is so often associated, or which at any rate does not lend wings to our religious feelings—and yet our fate is sealed, if we are unable again to attach a new, or perhaps a very old, meaning to it. Woe

to us if that word does not become important to us soon again, does not become important in our lives.

Yes, the word to which I am referring is 'Church', the meaning of which we propose to look at today.<sup>1</sup>

These words were spoken by Dietrich Bonhoeffer to a small German-speaking congregation in Barcelona, Spain. They present both a diagnosis and a challenge for evangelicals today who are called upon to set forth a clear, compelling ecclesiology in the light of new conversations and developing relations with their Roman Catholic brothers and sisters.

As an international, trans-denominational fellowship of some one-half billion believers around the world, evangelicalism is in its very existence an amazing ecumenical fact. As a theological movement, however, evangelicalism has been slow to develop a distinctive ecclesiology, and that for

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 42. Cf. Bonhoeffer's doctoral dissertation, first published in 1930, on the doctrine of the church: *The Communion of Saints* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960).

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several reasons. First, evangelical scholars have been preoccupied with other theological themes, such as biblical revelation, religious epistemology, and apologetics. Second, as an activist movement committed to evangelism, missions, and church planting, evangelicalism has not made reflective ecclesiology a high priority. As some might choose to put it, 'We are too busy winning people to Christ to engage in something which seems too much like navel-gazing'.<sup>2</sup> This objection should not be gainsaid, especially when coupled with the warning by missiologist J. C. Hoekendijk, who once observed that 'in history a keen ecclesiological interest has, almost without exception, been a sign of spiritual decadence'.<sup>3</sup>

Third, evangelicalism is a fissiparous movement of bewildering diversity made up of congregations, denominations, and parachurch movements whose shared identity is not tied to a particular view of church polity or ministerial orders. Amidst such variety, is it even possible to describe one single, or even central, evangelical ecclesiology?

These objections sharpen the discussion, but they must not forestall our pressing forward with the kind of sustained ecclesial reflection called for not only by the present ecumenical moment but, more importantly, by biblical Christianity and Reformation theology, which are at the wellsprings

of the evangelical tradition. Our failure to do so in the past has resulted in both a loss of evangelical identity and a lingering perception of the church as trite, boring, and superfluous.

The evangelical witness emerged not only, and not primarily, as a protest against abuses in the church but rather as a protest for (*pro-testantes*) the truth of the gospel. How evangelicalism maintains the centrality of gospel truth within ostensibly weak structures of ecclesial authority is perhaps its greatest challenge today. However, within the evangelical tradition itself, in its confessions and hymns no less than its formal theological reflections, there is a rich reservoir for articulating a strong ecclesiology in the service of the Word of God.

If it seems to Roman Catholics and other observers that evangelicals are more concerned with individualistic therapeutic spirituality than with churchly Christianity, we must admit that there is warrant for such a view. A popular book on the church, though not written by a self-professed evangelical, reflects the kind of ecclesiology found in abundance on the shelves of many Christian bookstores. Some chapter titles are: 'The Church as a Helpful Service Organization', 'The Church as an Insurance Policy', 'The Church Serves My Special Interests', and 'The Church Rescues Me in Times of Crisis'.<sup>4</sup> More damning still is the wording posted on a sign beside an evangelical congregation: 'The church that asks nothing of you'!

It would be a great mistake, howev-

2 Donald A. Carson, 'Evangelicals, Ecumenism, and the Church', in *Evangelical Affirmations*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer and Carl F.H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1900), 355.

3 J. C. Hoekendijk, 'The Church in Missionary Thinking,' *The International Review of Missions* 41 (1952), 325.

4 Barbara Brown Zikmund, *Discovering the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983).

er, to gauge the rich tradition of evangelical ecclesiology by such trendy religious perversions. What are the lineaments of a consensual evangelical ecclesiology? We shall consider this theme under three general rubrics: the universality of the church, the priority of the gospel, and, finally, the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic.<sup>5</sup>

## I The Universality of the Church

Two classic texts from the evangelical tradition highlight the reality of the church universal. The first is question fifty-four in the Heidelberg Catechism (1563):

What doest thou believe concerning the holy Catholic church? Answer: That out of the whole human race, from the beginning to the end of the world, the Son of God, by his Spirit and Word, gathers, defends, and preserves for himself unto everlasting life, a chosen communion in the unity of the true faith; and that I am, and forever shall remain, a living member of the same.<sup>6</sup>

5 D. A. Carson has taken a complementary approach in defining evangelical ecclesiology in terms of seven basic theses: (1) The church is the community of the new covenant. (2) The church is the community empowered by the Holy Spirit. (3) The church is an eschatological community. (4) The church is the 'gathered' people of God. (5) The church is a worshipping community. (6) The church is the product of God's gracious self-disclosure in revelation and redemption. (7) The church is characterized by mission. See his 'Evangelicals, Ecumenism, and the Church', 358-71.

6 Philip Schaff, ed., *Creeds of Christendom* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), 3:324-25.

The second definition is from the Second London Confession (1677/1689), a Particular Baptist statement of faith, which echoes the language of the Westminster Confession:

The Catholic or universal Church, which with respect to the internal work of the Spirit, and truth of grace, may be called invisible, consists of the whole number of the elect, that have been, are, or shall be gathered into one, under Christ, the head thereof; and is the spouse, the body, the fullness of Him, that filleth all in all.<sup>7</sup>

Georges Florovsky (1893-1979), one of the most important Orthodox theologians of recent times, once said that the church is characterized by an ecumenicity in time as well as by an ecumenicity in space. This motif is deeply rooted in the patristic tradition, East and West, and was given classic expression by Saint Augustine, whom Luther referred to as 'that poor, insignificant pastor of Hippo'.<sup>8</sup>

This idea is well represented also in the first two chapters of *Lumen gentium* on 'The Mystery of the Church' and 'The People of God'. God the Father, says Vatican II,

determined to call together in a holy Church those who should believe in Christ. Already present in figure at

7 In 1742, this same confession was published in America, with slight alterations, as the Philadelphia Confession of Faith. Cf. Timothy and Denise George, eds., *Baptist Confessions, Covenants, and Catechisms* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 84-85.

8 Georges Florovsky, 'The Quest for Christian Unity and the Orthodox Church', *Theology and Life* 4 (1961), 201. WA 50, 615 (WML 5,252).

the beginning of the world,...it will be brought to glorious completion at the end of time. At that moment, all the just from the time of Adam, 'from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect' will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church (LG, 2).<sup>9</sup>

The church, then, is the body of Christ extended throughout time as well as space, consisting of all persons everywhere who have been, as the Puritans would have put it, 'savingly converted', that is, placed in vital union with Jesus Christ through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus!* Outside of this church, which is *the* church in the most comprehensive, all-encompassing sense, there is no salvation.

This ecclesial motif is crucial for Catholic-evangelical fellowship in that it enables members of both traditions to recognize in one another, 'when and where God so permits it' (*ubi et quando visum est Deo*), the evident reality of God's grace among those who have trusted Jesus himself as Lord, master, and divine Saviour.<sup>10</sup> To be sure, this kind of fellowship is still a long way from 'full visible unity', but it is equally distant from automatic mutual condemnation.

Pope St. John Paul II said of those Christians who are beyond the visible boundaries of the Catholic church, 'We can say that in some real way they are joined with us in the Holy Spirit'; evangelicals too can declare the same

concerning believing Catholics.<sup>11</sup> The recognition of a shared spiritual reality leads on to activities of cooperation and joint witness, the kind of things referred to in the encyclical as 'spiritual ecumenism', including the fellowship of prayer, the translation and dissemination of Holy Scripture, theological dialogues, and a common agenda of convictional (as opposed to merely prudential) co-belligerency against abortion, euthanasia, pornography, religious persecution, and the erosion of a moral base for politics, law, and culture.

But evangelicals also understand the universality of the church in ways that are not compatible, or at least are less compatible, with Catholic teaching. As Avery Dulles has shown, the concept of the church as the mystical body of Christ was brought into the mainstream of Catholic ecclesiology by the famous encyclical of Pope Pius XII in 1943, *Mystici corporis*.<sup>12</sup> Although *Lumen gentium* modifies the positions taken by Pius XII in several respects, it does not retract the language of *Mystici corporis*, which refers to the church *quasi altera Christi persona*, ('as if it were another person of Christ').<sup>13</sup>

11 *Ut unum sint*, 53.

12 Dulles, *Models*, 52.

13 Quoted, Schrotenboer, *Roman Catholicism*, 21. However, the following statement in *Lumen gentium* does not equate, but only compares, the church to the incarnation: 'For this reason the church is compared, not without significance, to the mystery of the incarnate Word. As the assumed nature, inseparably united to him, serves the divine Word as a living organ of salvation, so, in a somewhat similar way, does the social structure of the church serve the spirit of Christ who vivifies it, in the building up of the body (cf. Eph. 4:15)' (LG, 8). *Vatican II*, 357.

9 Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1975), 351.

10 *Augsburg Confession*, Art. V.

While some Protestant theologians have also spoken of the church as a continuation of the incarnation, most evangelicals recoil from such a direct identification lest the church itself be made into an object of faith alongside of Christ. Although Paul Tillich's theology can hardly be considered 'orthodox' by evangelical criteria, he speaks for most, if not all, Protestants when he warns against the idolatrous temptation to put the historical church in the place of God.<sup>14</sup> In the New Testament, the metaphor of the body of Christ describes the relationships of believers to one another (in 1 Corinthians) and to Christ (in Ephesians and Colossians, where the body is distinguished from Christ its head), but not to the enviroing world. In other words, 'the body image looks inwards and upwards but not outwards'.<sup>15</sup>

In the New Testament, the church universal is depicted as a heavenly and eschatological reality, not as an earthly institution to be governed and grasped by mere mortals. The only text in the New Testament which directly refers to the church as the mother of believers is Galatians 4:26, in which, in contrast to the earthly city in Judea, the church is called 'the Jerusalem that is above, the heavenly Jerusalem'. Another text of major importance which extends this idea is Hebrews 12:22-24:

But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come

to thousands upon thousands of angels of joyful assembly, to the church (*ekklesia*) of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the Judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Thus the church as a heavenly and eschatological entity includes the elect of all the ages: the saints of the old covenant as well as those of the new, the *ecclesia triumphans* and also the *ecclesia militans*. As a reality 'beyond our ken' (Calvin), this universal church is not at our disposal, and thus we can only believe it (*credo ecclesiam*)—not believe in it as we believe in God the Father Almighty, Jesus Christ his only Son, and the Holy Spirit. Rather, when we confess that we 'believe the church', we are bearing witness to its reality.

We mean to say that we believe it exists; that we ourselves by God's grace have been placed within it, along with all others who 'bow their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ' (Belgic Confession); and that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it.

There is indeed a sure and direct connection between this holy company of the redeemed in heaven and the pilgrim church which struggles for its footing in the awful swellings of the Jordan here below. It is precisely in this eschatological setting that we find the most compelling New Testament proof text for regular church attendance: 'Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching' (Heb 10:25).

<sup>14</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 3:162-82.

<sup>15</sup> P. T. O'Brien, 'The Church as a Heavenly and Eschatological Entity', Carson, ed., *The Church in the Bible*, 113-14.

In Christian worship, our hearts are lifted into the heavenly sanctuary as we share together the bread and cup of the Lord's Table in anticipation of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. 'Let us lift up our hearts...We lift them up to the Lord!' This *sursum corda* moves us forward in history even as it lifts us upward into heaven. There, Calvin says, Christ has ascended, 'not to possess it by himself, but to gather you and all godly people with him'.<sup>16</sup>

## II The Priority of the Gospel

The concept of the invisible church has fallen onto hard times in recent years, not only among Catholic interpreters but also among Protestant exegetes as diverse as Karl Barth and D. A. Carson, who think it best not to apply the idea of invisibility to the church.<sup>17</sup> It is easy to see why this expression gives so much offence. The church 'invisible' sounds too much like Casper the friendly ghost—so ethereal, so docetic, so detached from the flow and flux of the real stuff of ordinary life.

At the time of the Reformation, certain spiritualist reformers seemed to give credibility to the charge which the Catholic polemicist Thomas Murner

early on brought against Luther, namely, that he wanted 'to build a church as Plato wants to build a state, which would be nowhere'.<sup>18</sup> Thus Sebastian Franck declared: 'I believe that the outward church of Christ, including all its gifts and sacraments, because of the breaking in and laying waste by Antichrist right after the death of the apostles, went up into heaven and lies concealed in the Spirit and in truth.'<sup>19</sup>

Other radical reformers, such as Casper Schwenckfeld, declared a moratorium (*Stillstand*) on the Lord's Supper, emphasizing instead the inward feeding upon the 'celestial flesh' of Christ, a non-material Eucharist transacted in the heart by faith (*alone!*).

Over against these spiritualizing trends, however, Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Bucer, Cranmer, and indeed most of the evangelical Anabaptists too stressed the importance of the local visible congregation where, in the famous words of the Augsburg Confession, 'the Word is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly administered'.<sup>20</sup> At the Leipzig Debate with John Eck in 1519, Luther firmly

<sup>16</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 4.17.29.

<sup>17</sup> Richard John Neuhaus wrote about the importance of ecclesiology in evangelical-Catholic dialogue: 'It is a question of *the* Church as such. Not an invisible church or a church of true believers that is conceptually removed from the ambiguities and tragedies of history, but the Church that is this identifiable people through time, a people as vulnerable to the real world of historical change as was, and is, their crucified Lord.' *Evangelicals and Catholics Together*, 1-92.

<sup>18</sup> WA 7, 683, 11. Cited in Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962), 261.

<sup>19</sup> George H. Williams, ed., *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957), 149.

<sup>20</sup> 'The church is the assembly of saints in which the Gospel is taught purely and the sacraments are administered rightly.' *The Book of Concord*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 32. On the Anabaptist view of the church, see Franklin H. Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism* (New York: Macmillan, 1964), and Arnold Snyder, *The Life and Thought of Michael Sattler* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1984).



embraced the Augustinian concept of the church, reiterated in the late middle ages by John Wyclif and John Hus, as 'the whole body of the elect (*praedestinatorum universitas*)'.<sup>21</sup> But this concept did not prevent him from also exclaiming, 'Thank God, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd'.<sup>22</sup>

For Luther, the gospel, which he defined as the good news of salvation by grace alone through faith alone because of Jesus Christ alone, was constitutive for the church, not the church for the gospel. As he wrote in the sixty-second of the Ninety-five Theses, 'The true treasure of the church is the holy Gospel of the glory and the grace of God.' As a doctor of Holy Scripture and as a pastor of souls, Luther revolted against the church for the sake of the church, that is, against a corrupt church for the sake of the 'true, ancient church, one body and one communion of saints with the holy, universal, Christian church'.<sup>23</sup>

The idea that Luther embodied 'the introspective conscience of the West' and that his lonely quest for truth propelled him into the abyss of subjectivism owes more to the romanticism of the nineteenth century and the individualism of the twentieth than to the reformer's own self-consciousness.<sup>24</sup>

Luther's commitment to the gospel

led him to describe justification by faith alone as 'the summary of all Christian doctrine'. In 1537, he wrote, 'Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised, even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed.'<sup>25</sup> This message, far from being the result of privatized religious experience or rebellious individualism, delivered the soul precisely from such preoccupations by pointing to the finished work of Christ on the cross.

As Luther put it in his lectures on Galatians in 1535: 'This is the reason why our theology is certain: it snatches us away from ourselves, so that we do not depend on our own strength, conscience, experience, person, or works, but depend on that which is outside ourselves, that is, on the promise and truth of God, which cannot deceive.'<sup>26</sup>

Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone was not a novel teaching but one which he found scattered throughout the writings of the early church, especially in the prayers of the saints, and, above all, in the letters of Saint Paul. (Melancthon traced the expression *sola fide* to Saint Ambrose.)<sup>27</sup> But clearly this teaching had become obscured in the intervening centuries. Luther's 'discovery of the Gospel' made justification by faith alone the centerpiece of Reformation ecclesiology.

21 WA 2, 287, 35.

22 *Book of Concord*, 315.

23 LW 41, 119.

24 See Timothy George, 'Modernizing Luther, Domesticating Paul: Another Perspective' in *Justification and Variegated Nomism: Volume II The Paradoxes of Paul*, eds. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 437-463.

25 WA 25, 357; 50, 119. See Timothy George, *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1988), 62-79.

26 LW 26, 387.

27 *Book of Concord*, 31-32. Hans Küng notes many other citations of *fides sola* in pre-Reformation writings. See his *Justification: The Doctrine of Karl Barth and a Catholic Reflection* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1964), 249-63.



In recent years, justification by faith has been the subject of extensive dialogue between Lutheran and Catholic scholars.<sup>28</sup> In Europe some years ago, Karl Lehmann, Catholic bishop of Mainz, and Lutheran theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg led discussions on the condemnations of the Reformation era with respect to justification. Out of these discussions came a question which could not have been asked even a generation earlier: Do the condemnations set forth in the *Decrees of the Council of Trent* and in the *Book of Concord* still apply today?<sup>29</sup> It is not surprising that proposals to reexamine the historic differences over justification have met with stern resistance from various quarters within both the Catholic and Protestant worlds.<sup>30</sup>

An evangelical commitment to the priority of the gospel means that justification by faith alone should remain the kerygmatic centre of our proclamation and common witness, even though we also affirm with Calvin that 'while we are justified by faith alone, the faith that justifies is not alone' (*fides ergo sola est quae justificat; fides tamen quae justificat, non est sola*).<sup>31</sup> While good works are never the *condition*, they are indeed the *consequence* of our being de-

clared righteous before our heavenly Father. Albert Outler once summarized the theology of John Wesley in a way that might capture the heart of the evangelical tradition at its best: faith alone, working by love, leading to holiness.<sup>32</sup>

While the biblical doctrine of justification remains the evangelical centre of the visible church, we must guard against making shibboleths out of the precise formulations of Luther, Calvin, or any other human teacher. To turn justification by faith alone into justification by doctrinal precision alone is to lapse into a subtle but insidious form of justification by works. In this regard we do well to heed the words of Jonathan Edwards in his treatise on justification:

How far a wonderful and mysterious agency of God's Spirit may so influence some men's hearts, that their practice in this regard may be contrary to their own principles, so that they shall not trust in their own righteousness, though they profess that men are justified by their own righteousness—or how far they may believe the doctrine of justification by men's own righteousness in general, and yet not believe it in a particular application of it to themselves—or how far that error which they may have been led into by education, or cunning sophistry of others, may yet be indeed contrary to the prevailing disposition of their hearts, and contrary to their prac-

28 See H. George Anderson, et al., eds., *Justification By Faith: Lutherans and Catholics in Dialogue VII* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1985).

29 Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg, eds., *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990).

30 See Lutheran World Federation and Roman Catholic Church, *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

31 CO 8:488.

32 Cf. Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 28: 'The faith that justifies bears its fruits in the faith that works by love.'

tice—or how far some may seem to maintain a doctrine contrary to this gospel-doctrine of justification, that really do not, but only express themselves differently from others; or seem to oppose it through their misunderstanding of our expressions, or we of theirs, when indeed our real sentiments are the same in the main—or may seem to differ more than they do, by using terms that are without a precisely fixed and determinant meaning—or to be wide in their sentiments from this doctrine, for want of a distinct understanding of it; whose hearts, at the same time, entirely agree with it, and if once it was clearly explained to their understandings, would immediately close with it and embrace it:—how far these things may be, I will not determine; but am fully persuaded that great allowances are to be made on these and such like accounts, in innumerable instances.<sup>33</sup>

### III One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic

The invisible or universal church emerges into visibility in the form of local congregations gathered around the faithful preaching of the Word of God: a community (*Gemeine* was Luther's word) or called-out assembly of the people of God, the fellowship of believers, or, as the Apostles' Creed has it, the communion of saints. Thus, evangelicals can agree wholeheartedly with the statement of *Lumen gentium* that in local churches

the faithful are gathered together through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ, and the mystery of the Lord's Supper is celebrated.... In these communities, though they may often be small and poor, or existing in the diaspora, Christ is present, through whose power and influence the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church is constituted (LG, 26).<sup>34</sup>

The church universal and the church local are related not as two species of the same genus but rather as two predicates of the same subject. Gregory the Great declared that: 'The holy church has two lives: one in time and the other in eternity.'<sup>35</sup> The connection between the one church in its two successive states is the Holy Spirit.

#### 1. The Church is one

The New Testament speaks of 'churches' in the plural, particular congregations of baptized believers united in a common confession, sharing a mutual love for one another across the barriers of race and class, nation and 'denomination' ('I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, etc.'). In his letter to the Ephesians, the Magna Carta of New Testament ecclesiology, Paul makes this urgent plea: 'Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father

<sup>34</sup> *Vatican II*, 381.

<sup>35</sup> Gregory the Great, *In Ezech.* 2, 10 (PL 76, 1060). Cited in Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1956), 78.

<sup>33</sup> *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974) 1:654.

of all, who is over all and through all and in all' (Eph 4:3-5).

Thus the unity of the church is based on the fact that we worship one God. As Edmund Clowney has observed, 'If we served many gods—Isis, Apollo, Dionysos, Demeter—then we might form different cults, for there were "gods many and lords many." But we serve the one true God, who is also the heavenly Father of his one family' (Eph 3:14).<sup>36</sup>

Heiko A. Oberman has claimed that schism was not the result of the Reformation but instead its genesis and point of departure.<sup>37</sup> It is clear that neither Luther nor Calvin had any idea of starting new churches; they aimed instead to reform the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. As Calvin put it, 'To leave the church is nothing less than a denial of God and Christ' (*Dei et Christi abnegatio*).<sup>38</sup>

Continental Anabaptists, English Separatists, and biblical restorationists pursued a different ideal of reform, seeking not so much to purify the church as to restore it to its original, New Testament condition. Thus, by gathering new congregations of 'visible saints', organized according to the blueprint of church order in the New Testament, these radical reformers believed that they could restore, as one of them put it, 'the old glorious face of primitive Christianity'.<sup>39</sup> The end result

of this process was the proliferation of numerous denominations and competing sects, 'separated brethren' who were often more separated than brotherly in their relations with one another!

Evangelicals today are heirs of both reformational and restitutionist models of ecclesiology, and their approach to controverted questions of church order, ministry, and ecumenism often depends on which of these two paradigms is more prevalent. The fact that most evangelicals are less than enthusiastic about the modern ecumenical movement in its liberal Protestant modality does not mean that they have no concern for the unity of the church. It does mean, however, that the question of the church's unity cannot be divorced from that of its integrity.

The call to be one in Christ rings hollow when it comes from church leaders who either themselves deny, or wink at others who do, the most basic Christological affirmations of the Christian faith, including the virgin birth, bodily resurrection, and actual return of Christ himself. Thomas Oden speaks for many evangelicals when he declares:

Too many pretentious pseudoecumenical efforts have been themselves divisive, intolerant, ultra-political, misconceived, utopian, abusive, nationalistic, and culturally imperialistic....Hence modern ecumenical movements are themselves called to repentance on behalf of the unity of the Church. Without true repentance, it is doubtful that the varied houses of Protestantism can

36 Clowney, *The Church*, 79.

37 Heiko A. Oberman, *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 249.

38 *Institutes*, 4.3.2.

39 See Timothy George, 'The Spirituality of the Radical Reformation,' *Christian Spirituality: High Middle Ages in Reformation*, ed. Jill

Raitt (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 334-71.

speaking confidently of the one body of Christ.<sup>40</sup>

But evangelicals too are called to repentance. We too have sinned against the body of Christ by confusing loyalty to the truth with party spirit and kingdom advance with petty self-aggrandizement. We need the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to know when, like the Confessing Church in Nazi Germany, it is necessary to stand against schemes of false church unity and compromised theology to declare, 'Jesus Christ, as he is testified to us in the Holy Scripture, is the one Word of God, whom we are to hear, whom we are to trust and obey in life and in death.'<sup>41</sup>

## 2. The Church is holy

Of the four classic attributes of the church, holiness is the one best attested to in the most primitive versions of the baptismal creed: 'I believe in the *hagian ekklesian*', or, according to a variant tradition, 'I believe *through* the holy church (*per sanctam ecclesiam*).'<sup>42</sup> The church is a 'called-out assembly'; it is *sancta*, 'holy', in so far as it exists over against the enviroing culture which surrounds it.

The apostle Peter addressed his first epistle to 'God's elect, strangers in the world...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through the sanctifying work of the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ'. To these gentile churches

scattered throughout the Roman Empire, he said, 'Do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy because I am holy"' (1 Pet 1:1-2, 14-16).

The church on earth is holy not by virtue of its being set apart from every other institution and community in its external organization, as though it were some kind of *cordon sanitaire* in the midst of the contagion all around it, but only because it is animated by the Holy Spirit and joined in vital union with its heavenly head, Jesus Christ himself. Thus Zacharias Ursinus in his *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* said the church

is called holy because it is sanctified of God by the blood and Spirit of Christ, that it may be conformable to him, not in perfection, but by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, or obedience; and by having the principle of holiness; because the Holy Spirit renews and delivers the church from the dregs of sins by degrees, in order that all who belong to it may commence and practice all the parts of obedience.<sup>43</sup>

Evangelicals insist, however, that the holiness of God be clearly distinguished from the holiness of the church. The holiness of the church on earth is entirely derived, emergent, and incomplete; that of God is eternal, substantial, and unbroken by the vicissitudes of imperfection and finitude.

40 Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit* (San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1992), 309.

41 'The Barmen Declaration', in *Creeds of the Churches*, ed. John H. Leith (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 520.

42 Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, 316.

43 Zacharias Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1992), 289.

Thus we take exception to the statement of Yves Congar that 'there is no more sin in the church than in Christ, of whom she is the body; and she is his mystical personality.'<sup>44</sup>

In an early draft of the section of *Lumen gentium* describing the church as the people of God, there was an acknowledgment of the sin to which the church is susceptible in its earthly pilgrimage. In the official text, however, the putative sinfulness of the church was qualified by adding the words 'in its members'. However, as Hans Küng has said, 'There is no such thing as a church without members...it is human beings, not God, not the Lord, not the Spirit, who make up the church.'<sup>45</sup> The justified believer is always *simul iustus et peccator*, 'at the same time righteous and sinful', and, consequently, the visible church must be at the same time a *communio peccatorum* as well as a *communio sanctorum*.

Did Luther's univocal insistence upon justification by faith alone as the centre of evangelical proclamation leave no room for sanctification, good works, or growth in grace and holiness? The Catholic prince Duke George of Saxony thought so: 'Luther's doctrine is good for the dying, but it is no good for the living.' Erasmus was less kind: 'Lutherans seek only two things—wealth and wives...to them the Gospel means the right to live as they please.'<sup>46</sup>

While it is true that for Luther the sole, uninterrupted, and infallible mark of the church was and remained the gospel—*ubi evangelium, ibi ecclesia*—he has also much to say about good works and growth in holiness as the fruit of having been declared righteous by God through faith alone. Later reformers placed more emphasis on the 'marks of the true church' (word and sacrament for Luther and Calvin, discipline as well for later Reformed confessions, English Separatists, and Anabaptists). Calvin in particular is clear about the function of the marks: 'For, in order that the title "church" may not deceive us, every congregation that claims the name "church" must be tested by this standard as by a touchstone.'<sup>47</sup>

The evangelical marks—proclamation, worship, and discipline—are thus distinguished from the traditional Nicene attributes precisely because they are not merely descriptive but dynamic. They call into question the unity, catholicity, apostolicity, and holiness of every congregation which claims to be a church. In this way, as Calvin says, 'the face of the church' emerges into visibility before our eyes.<sup>48</sup>

By elevating discipline to the status of a distinguishing mark of the church, Puritans, Pietists, and the early Methodists defined the true visible church as a covenanted company of gathered saints, *separated from* the world in its organization and autonomy and *separating back to* the world through congregational discipline those members whose lives betrayed their profession.

Such procedures were meant to be

<sup>44</sup> Yves Congar, *Sainte Eglise* (1963), 144ff. Cited in G. C. Berkouwer, *The Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 341.

<sup>45</sup> Küng, *The Church*, 415-16; Clowney, *The Church*, 86.

<sup>46</sup> P. S. Allen and H. M. Allen, eds., *Opus Epistolarum Des Erasmi Roterodami* (Oxford:

Oxford University Press, 1928), 7, 366.

<sup>47</sup> *Institutes* 4.1.11.

<sup>48</sup> *Institutes* 4.1.9.

remedial rather than punitive; they were intended to underscore the imperatives of life and growth within the church, understood as an intentional community of mutual service and mutual obligation by which 'the whole body, bonded and knit together by every constituent joint...grows through the due activity of each part, and builds itself up' (Eph 4:16).

### 3. The Church is catholic

Most evangelicals are happy to confess that the church is one, holy, and apostolic. These are, after all, not only biblical concepts but also New Testament terms. But in what sense can evangelicals affirm *credimus catholicam ecclesiam*?

Many contemporary evangelical churches have long abandoned the word 'Catholic', and would even consider it an insult to be called such, and have gone so far as to alter the traditional wording of the Apostles' Creed to avoid the duty of pronouncing it. But none of this changes the fact that evangelicals are indeed catholics in so far as they believe that in its essence the Christian community is one and the same in all places and in all ages—the one, holy, universal church which embraces true believers in all sectors of human society and in all epochs of human history.<sup>49</sup> The reformers of the sixteenth century and the Puritans of the seventeenth, not excluding Baptists, were happy for their churches to be called catholic (cf. Richard Baxter,

*The True Catholick*, 1660).

Indeed, it is not too much to say that these evangelical forebears opposed the Church of Rome not because it was too Catholic but because it was not Catholic enough. They spoke of the evidence for catholicity in three respects: its geographical extent, the church as spread over the whole world, not restricted to any particular place, kingdom, or nation; its inclusive membership, gathered from all classes and ranks of human society; and its indefectibility, based on the promise of the risen Christ: 'I will be with you always even to the end of the world' (Mt 28:20).<sup>50</sup>

Evangelical expositors, however, were careful not to define true catholicity in terms of quantifiable, empirical evidence alone. Ecclesiastical longevity can be deceptive, for, as the Scots Confession of 1560 points out, Cain with respect to age and title was preferred to both Abel and Seth.<sup>51</sup> So too, historical continuity, numerical quantity, and cultural variety do not themselves constitute true catholicity.

The true church might be quite small: 'Where two or three of you are gathered together in my name', Jesus said, 'there I am in your midst.' This 'I' is the only basis of true catholicity. As Barth puts it, 'The Real Church is the assembly which is called, united, held together and governed by the Word of her Lord, or she is not the Real Church.'<sup>52</sup>

In contemporary evangelical life,

<sup>49</sup> This point is elaborated most effectively in Oden, *Life in the Spirit*, 337-49. See also Küng, *The Church*, 383-411; Clowney, *The Church*, 90-98.

<sup>50</sup> Ursinus, *Commentary on the Heidelberg Catechism*, 289-90.

<sup>51</sup> Schaff, *Creeds of Christendom* 3:461.

<sup>52</sup> Karl Barth, 'The Real Church', *Scottish Journal of Theology* (1950), 337-51.



perhaps the most notable aspect of catholicity is the worldwide missionary vision which is the heart and soul of the evangelical movement. Indeed, what ecumenism is to post-Vatican II Catholicism, missions and world evangelization are for evangelicalism: not an appendix added to church activity but an organic part of its life and work. The importance of declaring the gospel to those who have never heard was at the heart of William Carey's mission to India in 1793, an event which launched what Kenneth Scott Latourette called 'the great century' of Protestant missionary advance.<sup>53</sup>

This witness continues today through the many mission efforts of evangelical denominations and a vast network of international parachurch ministries, such as the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Campus Crusade for Christ, WorldVision, and Prison Fellowship. The evangelical understanding of catholicity is nowhere better seen than in this world-Christian movement through which redeemed saints 'from every tribe and language and people and nation' are being gathered by God's grace into that heavenly chorus to sing with the angels, martyrs, and all the saints: 'The Lamb is worthy—the Lamb who was slain. He is worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing' (Rev 5:9, 12).

#### 4. The Church is apostolic

Because the church is one, holy and catholic, it is also apostolic, a word added to the Nicene description of the church in 381 but clearly expressed already in Paul's metaphor of the church as 'God's house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, and the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself' (Eph 2:20). That church is apostolic which stands under the direction and normative authority of the apostles, whom Jesus chose and sent forth in his name. Evangelicals, no less than Roman Catholics, claim to be apostolic in this sense, but the two traditions differ sharply in the way in which they understand the transmission of the apostolic witness from the first century until now.

Catholics believe that the church continues to be 'taught, sanctified, and guided by the apostles...through their successors in pastoral office: the college of bishops, assisted by priests, in union with the successor of Peter, the church's supreme pastor'. As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* puts it, 'The bishops have by divine institution taken the place of the apostles as pastors of the Church, in such wise that whoever listens to them is listening to Christ and whoever despises them despises Christ and Him who sent Christ.'<sup>54</sup>

As heirs of the Reformation, evangelicals do not define the apostolicity of the church in terms of a literal, linear succession of duly ordained bishops. They point instead to the primordial

<sup>53</sup> Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1953). See also Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Birmingham: New Hope Press, 1991).

<sup>54</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Washington: United States Catholic Conference, 1994), 227-9.



character of the gospel, the inscripturated witness of the apostles, and the succession of apostolic proclamation.

While the church is indeed built on the foundation of the holy apostles and their predecessors, the prophets, there is something more basic and more important than even these worthy servants, namely, the message they proclaimed: Jesus Christ and him crucified. This is a constant note throughout the ministry of Paul, who wrote to the Corinthians, 'For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake' (2 Cor 4:5).

Again, in writing to the Galatians when his own apostolic authority was under severe attack, Paul appeals to an authority beyond himself—the gospel. 'But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preach to you, let him be eternally condemned!' (Gal 1:8). Paul brought himself under his own curse: 'But even if we....' Paul did not ask the Galatians to be loyal to him but rather to the unchanging message of Christ, Christ alone, that he had preached to them.

In a different form, this same issue would surface again during the Donatist controversy. The question was whether religious rites such as baptism, the Lord's Supper, and ordination could be valid and effective when performed by a minister who was morally impure. Augustine argued that the sacraments were effective by virtue of the power invested in them by Christ himself and the promise of his Word.

At the time of the Reformation, this issue came under review again, and the essential point of the Augustinian position was recognized as valid: The

true touchstone of doctrinal and spiritual authenticity is God himself, what he has irrevocably done in Christ and vouchsafed to us in Holy Scripture, not the qualifications, charisma, or even theology of any human leader.<sup>55</sup> As the authorized representatives of Jesus Christ, the apostles have faithfully and accurately transmitted their authoritative witness to their Lord in the divinely inspired writings of Holy Scripture.

The teaching authority of the apostles thus resides in the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the self-authenticating Word of God, the truth of which is confirmed in the believer by the illuminating witness of the Holy Spirit.

For evangelicals, the principle of *sola Scriptura* means that all the teachings, interpretations, and traditions of the church must be subjected to the divine touchstone of Holy Scripture itself. But *sola Scriptura* is not *nuda Scriptura*. Evangelicals cannot accept the idea of tradition as a coequal or supplementary source of revelation, but neither can we ignore the rich exegetical tradition of the early Christian writers whose wisdom and insight is vastly superior to the latest word from today's 'gilded' scholars.

The consensus of thoughtful Christian interpretation of the Word down through the ages—and on most matters of importance there is such a thing—is not likely to be wrong, and

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55 On the significance of the Donatist controversy in the history of Christian thought, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 307-18. See also Timothy George, *Galatians* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 96-8.

evangelicals, no less than other Christians, have much to learn from the church fathers, schoolmen, and theologians of ages past.<sup>56</sup>

Even before their inspired message was committed to writing, the apostles were effectively proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ throughout the Roman Empire. Thus, Paul said to the Ephesians, 'Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears' (Acts 20:31). To the Thessalonians he recalled how 'our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction' (1 Thess 1:5).

For evangelicals, public preaching of the Word of God is a sure sign of apostolicity, for through the words of the preacher the living voice of the gospel (*viva vox evangelii*) is heard. The church, Luther said, is not a 'pen house' but a 'mouth house'. The Second Helvetic Confession (1566) goes so far as to say that 'the preaching of the Word of God is the Word of God'.

The almost sacramental quality of preaching in the evangelical tradition has sometimes obscured the importance of the 'visible words' of God in baptism and the Lord's Supper. 'The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy' from Vatican II recognizes, according to *Inter oecumenici*, that 'it is especially necessary that there be close links between liturgy, catechesis, religious in-

struction and preaching' (IO, 7).<sup>57</sup>

Evangelicals, no less than Catholics, should strive for a proper balance among these constituent acts of worship. In doing so, however, evangelicals must not compromise the priority of proclamation, for today, as in the time of the apostles, 'God is pleased through the foolishness of what is preached to save those who believe' (1 Cor 1:21).<sup>58</sup>

#### IV Ecclesia In Via Crucis

'I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church', Archbishop William Temple once remarked, 'but regret that it doesn't exist.'<sup>59</sup> To which the evangelical responds: If by 'exist' we mean perfect, complete, unbroken, infallibly secure, verifiably visible in its external structures and temporal resources, then it is clear that such a church does not exist in this world. Furthermore, if,

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<sup>57</sup> *Vatican II*, 46.

<sup>58</sup> In what is quite a remarkable statement from an evangelical theologian, Wayne Grudem concedes that on the basis of pure preaching of the Word of God and an acceptable sacramental practice, true churches may be found within the established structures of Roman Catholicism. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 866. On the possibility of true churches in Roman obedience, Grudem, it seems, has Calvin on his side. 'Therefore', wrote the Genevan reformer, 'while we are unwilling simply to concede the name of Church to the papists, we do not deny that there are churches among them' (*Institutes* 4.2.12). See Alexandre Ganoczy, *The Young Calvin* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987), 266-86.

<sup>59</sup> Cited in George Carey, *A Tale of Two Churches* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 147.

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<sup>56</sup> In writing against the Anabaptists in 1528, Luther said: 'We do not reject everything that is under the dominion of the Pope. For in that event we should also reject the Christian church. Much Christian good is found in the papacy and from there it descended to us.' LW 40, 231.

after a thorough investigation, a panel of ecumenical experts, well trained in the latest techniques of sociological research, were to announce at a press conference that they had at long last found such a church, then nothing in heaven and earth would be more certain than that *that* church could not be the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church founded by Jesus Christ.

In this life the true church is always *ecclesia in via* (*Kirche im Werden*), the church in a state of becoming, buffeted by struggles, beset by the eschatological 'groanings' which mark those 'upon whom the ends of the world have come' (Rom 8:18-25; 1 Cor 10:11).

In 1525 Luther wrote a lyrical hymn praising the church:

To me she's dear, the worthy maid,  
and I cannot forget her;  
Praise, honor, virtue of her are said;  
then all I love her better.  
On earth, all mad with murder, the  
mother now alone is she,  
But God will watchful guard her,  
and the right Father be.<sup>60</sup>

To the eyes of faith the church is a 'worthy maid', the bride of Christ, but by the standards of the world she is a poor Cinderella surrounded by numerous dangerous foes:

If, then, a person desires to draw the church as he sees her, he will picture her as a deformed and poor girl sitting in an unsafe forest in the midst of hungry lions, bears, wolves, and boars, nay, deadly serpents; in

the midst of infuriated men who set sword, fire, and water in motion in order to kill her and wipe her from the face of the earth.<sup>61</sup>

In God's sight the church is pure, holy, unspotted, the dove of God; but in the eyes of the world, it bears the form of a servant. It is like its bridegroom, Christ: 'hacked to pieces, marked with scratches, despised, crucified, mocked' (Is 53:2-3).<sup>62</sup>

It is only from a posture of ecclesial vulnerability that evangelicals and Catholics will be able to reach out to one another across the great divide which still separates us. Only in this way can we, believing Catholics and confessional evangelicals, reach out to one another in openness and love, the kind of love which is not puffed up, seeketh not its own; the kind of love which rejoices not in iniquity but rejoices in the truth and, for this very reason, is able then to bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things.

Only in this way will we be able really to hear one another and thus to avoid what Edward Idris Cardinal Cassidy has aptly called 'the dialogue of the deaf'. For evangelicals to imagine that nothing has changed in Catholicism since the Council of Trent, and for Catholics to see evangelicals as rebellious sects who must return, like prodigal sons, to the haven of Rome, is to engage in a dialogue of the deaf. We will not break down the walls of division and distrust in this way.

As evangelicals and Catholics pursue theological dialogue, moved by our

60 LW 53, 293. This hymn is based on the text in Revelation 12:1-2 which describes a woman suffering in childbirth, which Luther interpreted as the church under assault by Satan.

61 WA 40/3, 315.

62 LW 54, 262.

love for the truth and our love for one another, we must not let our discussions degenerate into a kind of arm-chair ecumenism, heady, aloof, and divorced from an awareness of 'the pestilence that walks in darkness, and the destruction that wastes at noonday' (Ps 91:6). We have been brought together by what I have called elsewhere 'an ecumenism of the trenches'.<sup>63</sup>

We are comrades in a struggle, not a struggle against one another, and not a struggle against men and women outside the Christian faith who reject the light of divine grace because they have fallen in love with the darkness which surrounds them; no, our conflict is against the prince of evil himself, against the cosmic powers and potentates of this dark world. For the church, much more is at stake than who comes out on top in the current 'culture wars'.

All of our programs and plans will ring hollow unless we stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Christ, evangelicals and Catholics alike, who live under the shadow of the cross and whose faithful witness is even now leading many of them to the shedding of their blood. Throughout *Ut unum sint*, Pope St. John Paul II calls us to remember 'the courageous witness of so many martyrs of our century, including members of churches and ecclesial communities not in full communion with the Catholic church'.<sup>64</sup>

More than a decade before the convening of Vatican II, a Southern Baptist medical missionary, Dr. Bill Wal-

lace, along with two Roman Catholic missionaries, Bishop Donaghy and Sister Rosalia of the Maryknolls, were arrested by Communist thugs and brutally mistreated because of their Christian faith. Dr. Wallace was eventually killed by his captors. Following his death, Thomas Brack, leader of the Maryknoll Mission, sent the following letter to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board):

The Maryknoll fathers of the Wuchow Diocese mourn the loss of Dr. Wallace whose friendship they esteem. He healed our malaria, our skin ulcers, and the other illnesses that missionaries manage to pick up. He will be mourned by thousands of Chinese, at whose bedside he sat and in whose eyes his name will always bring a light of gratitude, though governments may come and go.<sup>65</sup>

On another continent, in a different war, the cost of discipleship was no less dear. Several years ago on a visit to Germany, I was taken to what remains of the concentration camp at Buchenwald near Weimar. Here, more than sixty-five thousand people were put to death by a totalitarian regime which saw in the Christian faith, in both its Catholic and Protestant expressions, a threat to the ideology of death.

At Buchenwald, there was one block of cells reserved for prisoners deemed especially dangerous or notable. In cell 27 they placed Paul Schneider, a Lutheran pastor, who was

<sup>63</sup> See Timothy George, 'Catholics and Evangelicals in the Trenches', *Christianity Today* 38/6 (May 1994) 16.

<sup>64</sup> *Ut unum sint*, 49.

<sup>65</sup> Jesse C. Fletcher, *Bill Wallace of China* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 241.

called 'the Preacher of Buchenwald' because, even from the small window in his cell, he loudly proclaimed the gospel of Jesus Christ in defiance of the orders of the Gestapo guards. In cell 23, they placed Otto Neururer, a Catholic priest, whose work on behalf of the Jews and other so-called 'undesirables' had made him a threat to the Nazi warlords. He too ministered in Jesus' name to his fellow inmates in the concentration camp.

In Buchenwald, a son of Rome and a son of the Reformation, separated no longer by four centuries but only

by four cells, walked the *via crucis* and bore witness together to their common Lord, Jesus Christ, the sole and sufficient redeemer. As evangelicals and Catholics together, we remember them and give thanks to God for them and for countless others like them, who share a *koinonia* in the sufferings of Jesus, for today, as in ages past, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church—the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church.

Ipsi Gloria In Ecclesia.  
Amen.

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