Editorial

By the time the Autumn number of the *Bulletin* arrives, Scotland will have voted in its referendum, now known affectionately as '#indyref' thanks to the power of social media. Whatever the results may be, Scotland will be a different place.

As expected, the level of public interest and intensity of debate have both been escalating. It all felt more relaxed, somehow, back in April 2012 when the SETS annual conference anticipated the need for thoughtful, Christian contributions to the issues posed by the referendum.[1] It was already clear at that time—and indeed it was inevitable—that there would be faithful Christians taking up positions on either side of the question: some in favour of a politically independent Scotland, some in favour of remaining a constituent part of the United Kingdom.

Nonetheless, it still came as a surprise to me back in February to encounter the launch of 'Christians for Independence' as part of a network of those campaigning on the 'Yes' side. Of course there will be Christians responding to the referendum question with a 'yes' vote, and equally Christians responding to that question with a 'no' vote. What came to me—surely naïvely—as a surprise was that there should be an organization promoting independence as the Christian option.

Perhaps I have just misstated the situation with my use of the definite article. Christians for Independence only 'assert that the values of equality, fairness and justice associated with the gospel of Jesus Christ would be a firm foundation for a progressive Scotland'. Fair enough. My hunch is that such values would provide a welcome foundation not only for Scotland, but also for the UK, and indeed the whole family of nation states on earth. So it strikes me as odd that such a group should emerge under this banner: there is nothing particularly 'Christian', so far as I can see, about a 'yes' or a 'no' vote. That was already clear at the SETS conference in 2012. So I believe it is a good thing that a corresponding Christian organization on the other side of the question has not emerged—or at least, if it has, it has managed not to register on my radar!

Purely anecdotally and unscientifically, Christian voices on both side of the question tend gravitate towards a few themes, at least to judge from own encounters. These can of course be elaborated in quite a number of ways, and may be invoked no matter which way one leans on the question

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[1] SETS has mounted the audio resources from this conference together with the published versions of the papers from it as an online resource and contribution to the discussion in the run up to September 18th, available from <http://j.mp/SETSidentity>.

itself. I find myself wondering, though, how any of them give expression to the gospel.

One of the prominent themes considers the situation in which Scotland will be better off. Where's the wealth? Yet, as Peter said to the lame beggar at the temple gates, 'Silver and gold have I none, but what I have, that I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!' (Acts 3:6), not only relativizing wealth, but relocating power. And power itself is a second theme: in which political context will the church have the most influence? 'Do you seek great things for yourself?' the Lord enquired of Baruch. 'Seek them not, for I am about to bring disaster upon all flesh; but I will give you your life as a prize of war in all the places where you may go' (Jer. 45:5), a text which spoke deeply to an imprisoned Dietrich Bonhoeffer.[2] Similarly aspects of people and place feature at various points in the discussion: who best belongs where, and with whom? Yet people of faith know that they are 'strangers and exiles on earth', and 'make it clear that they are seeking a homeland … [and] desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one' (Heb. 11:13-16).

And there are more themes than these, of course. Even these few serve to demonstrate that while Christians need not always sing from the same hymn sheet, their songs should at least be those of Zion. The referendum debate will continue on its *crescendo poco a poco*, and will offer the opportunity of sounding many discordant notes. In whatever political context the church finds itself in come September 19th, Christ will still be its head, and its primary allegiance will be to that King and his kingdom. As the referendum debate generates 'heat', as it surely will, this gospel claim remains the 'light' for Christians participating in it.

[2] 'I can't get Jer. 45 out of my mind anymore.' *Letters and Papers from Prison*. Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, 8 (Minneapolis: Augsburg/Fortress, 2010), p. 306.

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The Trinity: The Secret to Joyful Christianity
Finlayson Memorial Lecture, 2013

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The Trinity as the secret to joyful Christianity? It hardly seems likely. Deep within the Christian psyche today seems to be the notion that the Trinity is an awkward and odd irrelevance, a wart on our knowledge of God. And so, when it comes to sharing our faith, we speak of God's offer of salvation, we speak of God's free grace, but we try not to let on that the God we are speaking of is a Trinity. We wax lyrical about the beauty of the gospel, but not so much about the beauty of the God whose gospel it is.

This should not be. It is the Trinity before all things that makes Christianity good. The Trinity is the source of everything that is good in the gospel. Without the Trinity, we have no good news. How so? Naturally we don't warm to the thought of 'God', and why should we? There's nothing particularly attractive about the idea of 'God' *per se*. If he can get us heaven, very well he can deliver a good deal; but we are not interested in God *himself*. But with the triune God we have a God of captivating beauty and loveliness.

THE FATHER'S LOVE

In John 20:31, the great summary of his Gospel's purpose, John speaks of Jesus as the Son of God. God has a Son; he is a Father. But what does it mean that God is a Father? The name itself is significant and, of course, not all names mean something. My dog is called Max, but that doesn't really tell you anything about him. The name doesn't tell you what he is or what he's like. But—if I can make the jump—the Father is called Father because he *is* a Father. And a father is a person who gives life, who begets children. That insight is like a stick of dynamite in all our thoughts about God, for if, before all things, God was eternally a Father, then this God is an inherently outgoing, life-giving God. He did not give life for the first time when he decided to create; from eternity he has been life-giving.

This is unpacked for us in 1 John 4:7-8:

> Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Have you ever known someone so magnetically kind and gracious, so warm and generous of spirit that just a little time spent with them affects how you think, feel and behave? Their very presence makes you better, even if only for a while, when you are with them. I know people like that, and they seem to be little pictures of how God is, according to John. This God, he says, is love in such a profound and potent way that you simply cannot know him without yourself becoming loving.

This is precisely what it means for God to be Father. For when John writes 'God is love' at the end of verse 8, he is clearly referring to the Father. His very next words, in verse 9, state, 'This is how God showed his love among us: *He sent his one and only Son*.' The God who is love *is* the Father who sends his Son. To be the Father, then, *means* to love, to give out life, to beget the Son. Before anything else, for all eternity, this God was loving, giving life to and delighting in his Son.

Seeing this, many theologians have liked to compare the Father to a fountain, ever bursting out with life and love. The Puritan theologian John Owen, for example, in *Communion with God*, circles around fountain imagery throughout his first section on the Father. Jesus Christ, is 'the beam, the stream,' he says, 'yet by him we are led to the fountain, the sun of eternal love itself', … 'the free fountain and spring of all … in the bosom of the Father'.[1] The Father is eternally characterised by pouring out love on his Son, by his Spirit.

Only of this God can you say 'God is love'. Only if this God is God can you say that love really is at the heartbeat, the centre of all reality. If this God is not God, love is an optional extra, a side dish.

What we see is that this God's innermost being is an outgoing, loving, life-giving being. The triune God is an *ecstatic* God: he is not a God who hoards his life, but one who gives it away, as he would show in that supreme moment of his self-revelation on the cross. The Father finds his very identity in giving his life and being to the Son; and the Son images his Father in sharing his life with us through the Spirit.

All this is to say that the very nature of the triune God is at complete odds with the nature of other gods. In *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis captured well the difference between the devil (who is the definitive needy and solitary god) and the living God of ecstatic, self-giving, overflowing love. Screwtape, a senior demon, writes:

> One must face the fact that all the talk about His love for men, and His service being perfect freedom, is not (as one would gladly believe) mere propaganda,

[1] John Owen, *The Works of John Owen. Volume 2: Communion with God*, ed. by W.H. Goold (1862; rpt London: Banner of Truth, 1965), pp. 23, 32.

but an appalling truth. He really *does* want to fill the universe with a lot of loathsome little replicas of Himself—creatures, whose life, on its miniature scale, will be qualitatively like His own, not because He has absorbed them but because their wills freely conform to His. We want cattle who can finally become food; He wants servants who can finally become sons. We want to suck in, He wants to give out. We are empty and would be filled; He is full and flows over.[2]

FROM HEAV'NLY HARMONY

One way to see the beauty and significance of all this is in music. Christianity has always had a special love affair with music; the Scriptures are shot through with music, as is life in the church. John Dryden, the seventeenth-century poet, tried to explain why it should be so in his 'A Song for St. Cecilia's Day' (Saint Cecilia is the patron saint of church music):

From Harmony, from heav'nly Harmony
This universal frame began.
When Nature underneath a heap
Of jarring Atomes lay,
And cou'd not heave her head,
The tuneful Voice was heard from high,
'Arise, ye more than dead!'
Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry,
In order to their stations leap,
And Musick's pow'r obey.
From Harmony, from heav'nly Harmony
This universal frame began:
From Harmony to Harmony
Through all the compass of the Notes it ran,
The Diapason[a] closing full in man.[3]

[a] octave

Dryden's words find echoes throughout the Christian world: C. S. Lewis had the Christ-like figure of Aslan sing Narnia into existence in *The Magician's Nephew*; his friend, J. R. R. Tolkein, imagined the creation of the cosmos as a musical event in *The Silmarillion*; and in the eighteenth century, George Frideric Handel set Dryden's ode to music so you can actu-

[2] C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (Glasgow: Collins, 1942), pp. 45-6.

[3] *The Works of John Dryden. Volume 3: Poems 1685-1692*, ed. by E. Miner and V.A. Dearing (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 201-4.

ally hear melodically how, after a dramatic silence and void that reminds one of Genesis 1, the overflowing joy of the heavenly harmony bursts out.

It is from the heavenly harmony of Father, Son, and Spirit that this universal frame of the cosmos—and all created harmony—comes. To hear a tuneful harmony can be one of the most intoxicatingly beautiful experiences. And no wonder: as in heaven, so on earth. The Father, Son, and Spirit have always been in delicious harmony, and thus they create a world where harmonies—distinct beings, persons or notes working in unity—are good, mirroring the very being of the triune God.

The eternal harmony of the Father, Son, and Spirit provides the logic for a world in which everything was created to exist in cheerful conviviality, and which still, despite the discord of sin and evil, is so essentially harmonious.

And such thoughts have inspired many a Christian musician. Johann Sebastian Bach, for instance, was deeply committed to the idea that the human musician could echo and sound out the cosmic harmony of the divine musician; the orderliness, the minor and the major keys, the shadows and the lights in the music all resonating the structure of the great symphony that is creation. In writing such music, Bach quite deliberately sought to provide fuel for both mind and heart, challenging the intellect and stirring the affections, for the ultimate reality that stands behind music is not only fascinating, but unutterably beautiful.

Bach's younger contemporary, Jonathan Edwards, was an ardent lover of music. One of his favourite words was 'harmony'. Declaring that the Father, Son, and Spirit constitute 'the supreme harmony of all', he believed, like Bach, that when we sing together in harmony (as he often did with his family) we do something that reflects God's own beauty.

> The best, most beautiful, and most perfect way that we have of expressing a sweet concord of mind to each other, is by music. When I would form in my mind an idea of a society in the highest degree happy, I think of them as expressing their love, their joy, and the inward concord and harmony and spiritual beauty of their souls by sweetly singing to each other.[4]

There is the deepest and most alluring beauty to be found in the heavenly harmony of the Trinity. Karl Barth said 'the triunity of God is the secret of His beauty'.[5] Of course. In the lively harmony of the three persons, the radiant love, the overflowing goodness of this God there is a

[4] *Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 26 vols. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1957-2008), vol. 13, pp. 329, 331.

[5] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. by G. W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, 4 vols in 13 parts (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956-1975), II/1, p. 661.

beauty entirely at odds with the self-serving monotony of single-person gods such as Screwtape described. And because this God has poured out his love and life, we can also say 'the triunity of God is the source of *all* beauty'.

SLAVES OR SONS?

With the Triune God we have a beautiful God. Yet there is another reason why the Trinity is the secret to joyful Christianity: with the Triune God we have a far sweeter salvation than any other god offers. The nature of God radically affects the shape of the salvation he would offer. If God is just a solitary individual who has decided he wants a creation to rule over, then salvation is simply about becoming a law-abiding citizen under his kingship. But if God is a Father, loving his Son by his Spirit, then the gospel is something sweeter. Salvation is about becoming the Spirit-anointed sons of God. More than just forgiven, more than righteous: adopted.

The eternally beloved Son comes to us to share with us the very love that the Father has always lavished on him. He comes to share with us and bring us into the life that is his, that we might be brought before the Most High, not just as forgiven sinners, but as dearly beloved children sharing by the Spirit the Son's own 'Abba!' cry. The Father's eternal love for the Son now encompasses us.

John's gospel is shot through with this. When the Word comes to us from God, becoming flesh, his light driving away the darkness, what salvation does he bring? John 1:12: 'to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.'

The Word, the Son is presented to us, John 1:18, as being eternally 'in the bosom [or lap] of the Father'. Jesus declares that his desire is that believers might be with him there (John 17:24). It's something modeled for us at the last supper, in John 13:23. 'One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table in the bosom of Jesus.' Yes, Jesus has been eternally in the bosom of the Father, and the 'Beloved Disciple' is now in the bosom of Jesus. This is why Jesus can say to the Father in John 17:23, 'you have loved them even as you have loved me', for he shares with us that intimate 'Abba' cry, and gives us his own Comforter, the Spirit, to be our Comforter as well. He shares with us all that he has. His own life.

If God were not a Father, he could never give us the right to be his children. If he did not enjoy eternal fellowship with his Son, one has to wonder if he has any fellowship to share with us, or if he even knows what fellowship looks like. If, for example, the Son was a creature and had not eternally been 'in the bosom of the Father', knowing him and being loved by him, then what sort of relationship with the Father could he share with

us? If the Son himself had never been close to the Father, how could he bring us close?

If God were a single person—if God had no Son—salvation would look entirely different. He might allow us to live under his rule and protection, but at an infinite distance—approached, perhaps, through intermediaries. He might even offer forgiveness, but he would not offer closeness. He simply couldn't do it. Added to this, since by definition he would not be eternally loving, would he deal with the price of sin himself and offer that forgiveness for free? It is most unlikely. Distant hirelings we would remain, never to hear the Son's golden words to his Father, 'you have loved them even as you have loved me' (John 17:23). Created to be slaves, we would be saved to be slaves.

But the gospel of this God gives us such intimacy and confidence before him. We are beloved children of the Most High! No other God could bring us so close and have us so loved; no other God could so win our hearts. With this God we can say with all sincerity, 'Our Father', knowing that we pray, as John Calvin put it, as it were 'through the mouth of Jesus'.[6] The Most High delights to hear us as his very children. How this enables a hearty prayer life! Prayer becomes inviting; a delightful privilege.

The Reformer Martin Luther knew well how much the Fatherhood of God changes the shape of salvation and all our thoughts about God. As a monk, his mind was filled with the knowledge that God is righteous and hates sin, but he failed to see any further into who God is. He could not see what God's righteousness is and *why* he hates sin. The result, he said, was that, 'I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God'.[7] Not knowing God as a kind and willing Father, a God who brings us close, Luther found he could not love him. He and his fellow monks transferred their affections to Mary and various other saints; it was them they would love and to them they would pray.

That changed when he began to see that God is a fatherly God who shares, who gives to us his righteousness, glory, and wisdom. Looking

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6 This wording is Karl Barth's (*Prayer* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002], p. 14). Barth has in mind Calvin's Genevan Catechism, Q.252; for translations of the 1541 French and 1545 Latin versions, respectively, see T.F. Torrance (ed.), *The School of Faith: The Catechisms of the Reformed Church* (London: James Clarke & Co, 1959), p. 44; J.K.S. Reid (ed.), *Calvin: Theological Treatises* (Library of Christian Classics, 22; London: SCM Press, 1959), p. 122.

7 *Luther's Works*, Volume 34: *Career of the Reformer*, IV, ed. by L.W. Spitz (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1960), pp. 336-7.

back later in life he reflected that, as a monk, he had not actually been worshipping the right God, for it is 'not enough', he then said, to know God as the creator and judge. Only when God is known as a loving Father is he known aright.

> For although the whole world has most carefully sought to understand the nature, mind and activity of God, it has had no success in this whatever. But… God Himself has revealed and disclosed the deepest profundity of his fatherly heart, His sheer inexpressible love.[8]

Through sending his Son to bring us back to himself, God has revealed himself to be inexpressibly loving and supremely fatherly. What Luther found was that, not only does that give great assurance and joy—it also wins our hearts to him, for 'we may look into His fatherly heart and sense how boundlessly He loves us. That would warm our hearts, setting them aglow with thankfulness'.[9] In the salvation of this God we see a God we can really love.

LIVING IN GOD'S LOVE

Luther's discovery says so much about the nature of this God. With this God of eternal relationship, of eternal, mutual delight, Christianity is *meant* to be joyful. For with this God, the Christian life is about so much more than 'getting heaven'. The Spirit is about drawing us into the divine life. The Father has eternally delighted in the Son through the Spirit, and the Son in the Father; the Spirit's work in giving us new life, then, is nothing less than bringing us to share in their mutual delight.

That's the new life of the Christian: my new life began when the Spirit first opened my eyes and won my heart to Christ. Then, for the first time, I began to enjoy and love Christ as the Father has always done. And through Christ, for the first time, I began to enjoy and love the Father as the Son has always done. That was how it started, and that is how the new life goes on: by revealing the beauty, love, glory and kindness of Christ to me, the Spirit kindles in me an ever deeper and more sincere love for God. As he stirs me to think ever more on Christ, he makes me more and more God-like: less self-obsessed and more Christ-obsessed.

Through the giving of the Spirit, God shares with us—and catches us up into—the life that is his. The Father has eternally known and loved his great Son, and through the Spirit he opens our eyes that we too might know him, and so he wins our hearts that we too might love him. Our

[8] Luther's *Large Catechism* (Saint Louis, MO.: Concordia, 1978), p. 77.

[9] Ibid., p. 70.

love for the Son, then, is an echo and an extension of the Father's eternal love. In other words, through the Spirit the Father allows us to share in the enjoyment of what most delights him: his Son. It was his overwhelming love for the Son that inspired him to create us in the first place, and all so that we might share in that highest pleasure of his.

This, in fact, is the heartbeat of what it means to be godly, to be like this God. It is why Jesus says, 'If God were your Father, you would love me' (John 8:42). The Father's very identity consists in his love for the Son, and so when we love the Son we reflect what is most characteristic about the Father. It is the prime reason the Spirit is given. John Owen wrote that '…therein consists the principal part of our renovation into his image. Nothing renders us so like unto God as our love unto Jesus Christ…'.[10] In our love and enjoyment of the Son we are like the Father; in our love and enjoyment of the Father we are like the Son. That is the happy life the Spirit calls us to.

Who, knowing this, could ever prefer the 'cleaner', leaner idea of a single-person God? For, strip down God and make him lean and you must strip down his salvation and make it mean. Instead of a life bursting with love, joy, and fellowship, all you will be left with is the watery gruel of religion. Instead of a loving Father, a distant potentate; instead of fellowship, a contract. No security in the beloved Son, no heart-change, no joy in God could that spirit bring.

Far, far from theological clutter, God's being Father, Son, and Spirit is just what makes the Christian life beautiful. Now wouldn't people rail less at the existence of God if they heard clearly that we believe in *this* God?

[10] Owen, *Works*, vol. 1 *The Glory of Christ*, p. 146.

Trinity and Creation

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INTRODUCTION

My thoughts on the relationship between the doctrines of the Trinity and of creation grew out of my doctoral research, which was essentially an attempt to develop a Christian perspective on the environmental crisis. Accusations of Christian culpability in that crisis[1] led me to look at the history of Christian attitudes to natural world. What I found was a long history of ambivalence towards the natural world: theologians and spiritual writers paying lip service to biblical affirmations of the goodness of the created order while denigrating its material and temporal aspects.[2] In the course of those investigations, I became convinced that the doctrines of creation and the Trinity are inseparable.

The doctrine of the Trinity is the end product of a long process of faith seeking understanding: seeking to articulate a coherent account of God that faithfully reflects God's self-revelation in Scripture as the One who becomes the man Jesus, who overcomes death and sin, and who saves a people for himself; as the One who called Israel out of Egypt and who created all things; as the One who indwells the Church and every Christian; and as the One who calls creation to perfection/fulfilment. And seeking to do this in face of competing views of God from classical philosophy (especially Neo-Platonism and Stoicism); from the mystery religions (notably Mithraism); from varieties of Gnosticism.

The Christian doctrine of creation is another product of this process. The early church fathers were faced with competing understandings of how the world arose and how it is related to God. Was it fashioned from pre-existing matter? By a demiurge? Is it the mutable, imperfect image of a perfect, rational archetype? And they had to hold together and make sense of a variety of scriptural assertions about the physical world: It is

[1] Famously those of L. White, e.g. 'The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis', *Science* 155 (1967), 1203–07.

[2] See my PhD thesis ('The Kingdom of Nature: God's Providential Care for the Nonhuman Creation', PhD thesis, University of London, 1989) but also H.P. Santmire, *The Travail of Nature: The Ambiguous Ecological Promise of Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985).

somehow an act of God (Genesis 1); it is proclaimed good (Genesis 1); God actively cares for the non-human as well as the human creation (Psalm 104; Job 38–41); Christ has a mediatorial role not just in salvation but in creation itself (Colossians 1). They also had to reconcile a number of apparent tensions within Scripture: Paul's talk of a natural body versus a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15); John's contrast between love of the world and love of the Father (1 John 2); the contrast between this world, which is passing way (1 John 2), and the vision of a new heaven and earth (Rev. 21). In short, they were seeking a coherent understanding of this world and its relationship to the God they were gradually coming to see as triune. So the distinctive Christian understanding of the world as creation emerged from a growing understanding of it as the handiwork of the triune creator. And at the same time, our understanding of God as triune emerged in part from understanding God as creator.[3]

But let's step back for a moment. Why is there something rather than nothing? All faiths attempt to answer that question. And, in part, the Christian doctrine is also an answer to that question (though it is much more besides). Setting aside for a moment the Christian answer, there are only three possible answers.

> **Option 1:** The universe accounts for itself in some way; it is in some sense continuous with its source. This is the answer of the many varieties of pantheism, emanationism, and panentheism, but also of the materialism and biological determinism of the new atheists.
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> **Option 2:** The universe is the product of an external agent. There is no continuity between the world and its source. This is the dualistic option, and it almost always presents this world negatively as a realm of time, change, decay, and matter in contrast to eternal reason, mind, or spirit.
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> **Option 3** is the mediating option. God and the world are utterly different but are somehow related by a hierarchy of being between this world and its source.

It is clear from this summary that different understandings of the God–world relationship produce very different answers to the question of origins and very different answers to the question of our relationship to God on the one hand and the natural world on the other.

[3] C. Gunton offers a useful overview of the Patristic development of the doctrine of creation in *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), chs 1–4, highlighting in particular the contributions of Irenaeus and Basil of Caesarea.

Something of that variety is also visible within the Christian traditions. There is a clear correlation between our understandings of the Trinity and our understanding of the created order, particularly our relationship to the natural world. A convincing demonstration of that correlation is beyond the scope of this article. Instead I will briefly point to two theologians whom one might have expected to display very similar attitudes to the natural world because they were both Franciscans: St Bonaventure and John Duns Scotus.

It is generally accepted that Francis of Assisi introduced (or perhaps reintroduced) the Western Church to a much more positive view of the created order. One has only to think of his *Canticle of the Creatures*. And in the decades following his death the Franciscan movement spearheaded a remarkable flowering of natural philosophy in the universities of Western Europe.[4]

Bonaventure was the seventh minister-general of the Franciscan Order and its first great theologian. While he was personally committed to the ideals of St Francis, his theological roots were firmly in the Augustinian tradition of the day. His approach to the doctrine of the Trinity was a conservative Augustinian one,[5] and this became the organizing principle not merely for his theological system but for his entire worldview. In spite of Francis's well-known love of nature and belief that other creatures are of interest to God in their own right, and of Bonaventure's commitment to the Franciscan way, he was quite clear that the rest of the created order exists only for the sake of humanity:

> all corporeal matter was made for human service so that by all these things mankind may ascend to loving and praising the Creator of the universe whose providence disposes of all. This sensible machine of corporeal things is finally a certain home built by the supreme Artificer for man until he comes to the home not made by hands, but in heaven.[6]

4 See e.g. L. Osborn, 'The Franciscans and Natural Philosophy in the Thirteenth Century', in *Augustine and Science*, ed. by J. Doody, A. Goldstein, & K. Paffenroth (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013), pp. 69–81.

5 E.g. All divine operations *ad extra* proceed from a single divine principle; use of the Anselmian logic of perfection to account for the necessity of a triune God (because of infinite self-diffusiveness); the Holy Spirit as the bond of love between Father and Son; and a striking reliance on the psychological analogy for Trinity.

6 Bonaventure, *Breviloquium*, trans. E.E. Nemmers (St Louis: Herder, 1947), 2.4.5.

Now contrast Duns Scotus. While he also stands within the Augustinian tradition, he makes some crucial modifications to that tradition, specifically he moves away from the Augustinian emphasis on God as supreme rationality to God as creating will. According to Antonie Vos, 'broadly Scotist means in particular Augustinian, in combination with a *will*-based doctrine of God, including *true contingency* and a central position for *will*, *individuality* and *freedom*'.[7] If the unifying theme of Bonaventure's work was the Trinity itself, that of Duns Scotus's work is the concept of creation with a particular emphasis on the question why God created.[8] The answer he offers to that question is simply because God loves.[9] And, for Scotus, with the shift in emphasis from divine intellect to will, it follows that a creation that flows from divine love must be contingent.[10] On the one hand, it must be God's free choice rather than something God was constrained to do by God's nature. On the other hand, every creature is the result of a particular divine decision to bring that aspect of creation into being. And that divine choice implies that every creature is of intrinsic value. Duns Scotus expresses this particular dignity of creation through the doctrine of *haecceitas*, the 'thisness' of every creature.[11] The concept of *haecceitas* has a dual function: it guards the uniqueness of each individual,[12] and it differentiates it radically from every other individual. A slight change in approach to the Trinity has resulted in a very different view of the natural world.

A RELATIONAL APPROACH TO THE TRINITY

In what follows I shall offer one particular approach to the doctrine of the Trinity and expound the doctrine of creation that flows from it.

My starting point is that Scripture reveals the man Jesus to be fully God. And Jesus is unequivocally a person in the same way that we are.[13] Then, in the Gospels we read of Jesus addressing another as Father. It follows from this that his source (and ours), the God of the Old Testament,

7 A. Vos, *The Philosophy of John Duns Scotus* (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 7.

8 D. Horan, OFM, 'Light and Love: Robert Grosseteste and John Duns Scotus on the How and Why of Creation', *The Cord* 57 (2007), 243–57 (p. 251).

9 Horan, 'Light and Love', p. 252.

10 Gunton, *The Triune Creator*, p. 118; Horan, 'Light and Love', p. 252.

11 Horan, 'Light and Love', p. 253.

12 Indeed, because of his doctrine of haecceity, Duns Scotus argued that even God could not duplicate an individual.

13 N.b. 'Person' must be interpreted in light of Christian anthropology rather than the modern sense of the term.

the creator of Israel and of all things, is a person in the same sense as the Son. And in John 14:16,[14] Jesus promises a third, another of the same kind; the Holy Spirit who comes upon the Church at Pentecost; another who is capable of being grieved; another who in the traditions of the Church has been regarded as one whom we may appropriately address;15 another who is a person in the same sense as Jesus.

So, as they reveal themselves to us, all the Persons of the Trinity are fully personal. They are not merely roles or modes of being of the one God. Nor are they merely identities of the one God.[16]

Further, this revelation of God as three Persons is a true and sufficient transcription of the immanent life of God. As God works, so he is.[17] God *is* these three Persons—coeternal and coequal. Thus in Scripture and Christian experience God reveals himself as the transcendent will that called creation out of nothing (God the Father); as the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth (God the Son); and as the personal power that, coming to the Church, enables us to participate in the future of the Father and the Son (God the Holy Spirit).

How then are these three one? Because Scripture is insistent that these three *are* one. Traditionally we speak of *one substance*. But what can this mean when we no longer see the world through Aristotelian lenses?

For the Cappadocian fathers, the basis of the Trinitarian unity is the Father: he is the fount of the Trinity. In a sense, the Father is the cause of the other Persons. But 'Father' is a relational term: it is defined by reference to Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore the causality of the Father cannot be understood apart from the simultaneous existence of the other Persons. The concept that most fully expresses this personal unity of interrelationship is that of *perichoresis*. This asserts the complete mutual interpenetration of the hypostases. They are distinguishable only by their relation to the others: they cannot be defined by their roles in the divine economy.[18] In other words, the hypostases are ontologically inseparable.[19]

[14] καὶ ἄλλον παράκλητον δώσει ὑμῖν.

[15] 'Come Holy Ghost, Our hearts inspire . . .'

[16] Cf. R. Jenson, *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).

[17] This is a necessary implication of the assertion that this God can be trusted unequivocally.

[18] Gregory of Nyssa, 'An Answer to Ablabius: That We Should not Think of Saying There Are Three Gods', in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. by E.R. Hardy, Library of Christian Classics, 3 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), pp. 256–67 (261f., 263).

[19] It should be stressed that ontological inseparability does not imply epistemological inseparability. The doctrine of perichoresis does not rule out a

How does this understanding of the hypostases and their unity affect the concept of the divine *ousia*? As Gregory of Nazianzus pointed out,[20] the coeternity of the hypostases implies that the divine substance has no existence apart from the Persons. Gregory of Nyssa reinforces this by asserting that *ousia* is not a name signifying divine nature.[21] On the contrary, it signifies a divine operation.[22] In effect, they reject the Hellenistic concept of *ousia*, insisting instead on God's unboundedness. There is no common substance underlying the three Persons. Rather, their relatedness is their being. And the divine unity must somehow be a function of the interrelationships between the Persons.

It follows that God can longer be seen as static divine substance. On the contrary, God is boundless life, activity, or event. And all the usual incommunicable attributes of God follow from this (though perhaps seen a slightly different light): The God who is boundless life is clearly infinite, incomprehensible, unlimited by time or space,[23] unlimited by other causes or agents (i.e. omnipotent), and inexhaustible.

This has important implications for the development of a Christian understanding of being in general, a Christian ontology. To begin with, it implies that enduring realities need not be substances. This contrasts with the major Hellenistic traditions that have informed Western thought.[24] Instead of rooting being in the past by seeing persistence as its inherent characteristic, we might instead (with Robert Jenson) understand being in terms of structural openness to the future. Thus the endurance of any entity is dependent upon the identity of the future. In other words, it is

Trinitarian analysis of the divine activity (J. Zizioulas, *Being As Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* [London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985], p. 129).

[20] Gregory of Nazianzus, 'The Fifth Theological Oration: On the Spirit', in *Christology of the Later Fathers*, ed. by E.R. Hardy, Library of Christian Classics, 3 (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), pp. 194–217 (§4).

[21] Gregory of Nyssa, 'Ablabius', p. 259.

[22] Gregory of Nyssa, 'Ablabius', p. 261.

[23] Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, p. 166. For example, God's eternity might be reinterpreted as follows: If God is boundless life, it is no longer appropriate to characterize divine eternity as timelessness. God is not sovereign over time because he himself is timeless, the very negation of life. On the contrary, his sovereignty is one of fullness and fulfilment. God is sovereign over temporal existence because he makes it possible, frees it from mere persistence, and brings it to its ultimate fulfilment.

[24] For any intellectual system with a cyclic view of time (or even a simple linear view), being entails persistence of the past. This is assured by equating being with substance.

determined by the character of the *eschaton*. For the purposes of creating the basis of such a Trinitarian ontology, Jenson defines future (or *eschaton*) as the inexhaustible act of interpreting all prior events in the light of the love of Jesus Christ. The future is divine activity. Flowing from this is his definition of time as 'a reaching back in anticipation'.[25] Finally, it allows him to offer a definition of being as interpretative relatedness across time.[26]

By way of summary, if the being of God is rooted in the relationships of the Persons, then quite generally to be is to be in relationship.[27] One might also say, to be is to be addressed.

CREATION AS SPEECH-ACT

And that's my cue for linking the doctrine of the Trinity explicitly to the doctrine of creation. What makes the biblical accounts of creation (both in Genesis and John) strikingly different from the origin myths of the ancient Near East (or Graeco-Roman culture or even of our own day) is the assertion that creation is a divine speech-act: all things have their being because of the divine address.

Because it is the result of a speech-act, the created order is external to God. But unlike deistic concepts of creation, there is a continuing positive relationship between creator and creature. Deism implies an essentially impersonal creation: the handiwork of a divine watchmaker who ceases to have any interest in the machine he has created as soon as it is complete. Unsurprisingly, such a deistic concept of God fits neatly with the Newtonian/Cartesian worldview of the early modern period: a dead, impersonal material cosmos operating by strictly deterministic physical laws and spirit as its polar opposite, the ghost in the machine.

'God said . . . and there was': the created order is the result of a speech-act, rather than of the shaping of pre-existing matter. And the uniquely Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is intended to highlight this. The triune God is the exclusive cause of all created being. God does not fashion pre-existing matter or primordial chaos into the cosmos. Nor, contra Moltmann, does he create a void within his own being as a kind of matrix or womb of creation.[28]

[25] Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, p. 177.

[26] Ibid.,, p. 182.

[27] Ibid., p., 182.

[28] E.g. he presents the creation of Nothingness as a preparatory work of deity brought about by 'a withdrawal by God into himself' (*God in Creation: An Ecological Doctrine of Creation*, The Gifford Lectures 1984–85 [London: SCM Press, 1985], p. 86).

Clearly the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* rules out a range of theories about world origins. Specifically, it contradicts the ever popular metaphors of diffusion, overflow, or emanation. Creation understood as emanation would no longer be a personal act; rather, it would be an uncontrolled and arbitrary event. If creation were the impersonal overflow of divine substance then God could not be in control of himself let alone be sovereign over that overflow. If so, the world would essentially be alienated deity and we would have to reinterpret redemption as the quest for victory over this alienation that is creatureliness. Pantheism and Gnostic hatred of matter are two sides of the same coin, and both are contradicted by the entirely personal Christian characterization of creation as a speech-act.

Again, creation understood as a divine speech-act underlines the sovereignty of God. Brueggemann says of the speech formulae in Genesis 1, 'God creates by speaking. Creation is to listen and answer. Language is decisive for the being of the world.'[29] The use of speech as a metaphor for the divine activity of creation suggests something voluntary, effortless, and rational. And it rules out any understanding of creation in terms of divine self-fulfilment.

Creation as a triune act. If creation is a personal, sovereign, and rational act of the God who has revealed himself in Christ Jesus, it is an act of the triune God. Creation, understood as a personal act, must be an act of the divine Persons rather than of the Being. The Father creates, the Son creates, and the Spirit creates: and this does not mean merely that the one God creates in a way that may be understood under three purely symbolic headings. There are three personal agents of the act of creation. And, since the Persons are inseparable, we may not ascribe creation exclusively to one of the Persons (contra Moltmann[30]). Thus, Gregory of Nyssa could say that,

> We do not learn that the Father does something on his own, in which the Son does not co-operate. Or again, that the Son acts on his own without the Spirit. Rather every operation which extends from God to creation and is designated according to our differing conceptions of it has its origin in the Father, proceeds through the Son, and reaches its completion by the Holy Spirit.[31]

[29] W. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1982), p. 18.

[30] J. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God: The Doctrine of God* (London: SCM Press, 1981), p. 112.

[31] Gregory of Nyssa, 'Ablabius', p. 261f.

Or again, dealing specifically with the notion of God's providential activity,

> the principle of the overseeing and beholding power is a unity in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It issues from the Father, as from a spring. It is actualised by the Son; and its grace is perfected by the power of the Holy Spirit. No activity is distinguished among the Persons, as if it were brought to completion individually by each of them or separately apart from their joint supervision. Rather all is providence, care and direction of everything, whether in the sensible creation or of heavenly nature, one and not three.[32]

Clearly the Cappadocian understanding of the Trinity rules out any understanding of creation that fails to distinguish the different roles of the three Persons in the one act of creation. Such failure would, of course, betray an indifference towards the inner-trinitarian distinctions. In summary, we may say that the work of creation is a single divine act that is the joint work of three agents whose roles in the one work are distinguished in a manner analogous to and deriving from the inner-trinitarian distinctions of the Persons.

Three agents, one act: a combination that critics of the social Trinity suspect of being inescapably tritheistic. And it is certainly true that our modern understanding of agency and individuality is such that we tend to see a multiplicity of agents as a multiplicity of individuals: three divine agents should imply three gods. But that criticism is rooted in the modern understanding of freedom as autonomy. Direct treatment of that criticism is beyond the scope of this article; instead, I will try to demonstrate how all three Persons of the Trinity are involved in every aspect of the act of creation.

What sort of speech-act is creation? First, I want to reiterate that precisely because it is a speech-act it entails a divine decision to be related to the created order in some way. It entails a divine commitment to creation and it implies a divine capacity for such relatedness (which suggests that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is already implicit in the Genesis account of creation).

So let's look more closely at what Genesis 1 tells us about the divine speech-act of creation. Westermann sees a clear command and fulfilment structure in Genesis 1: 'let there be . . . and there was'.[33] But I'm not so sure that we can simply characterize it as command and leave it at that. Walter Brueggemann points out that we can read the 'let there be' as a giving of permission: in his words, 'God gives permission for creation to be. The

[32] Ibid., p. 263.

[33] C. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary* (London: SPCK, 1984), p. 85.

appearance of creation is a glad act of embrace of this permit'.[34] At the same time, the divine word of command or permission offers the gift of being, being in relation to the triune God. Speaking is an act of self-giving (we cannot know another unless that other speaks to us), so the words 'let there be' contain within them the promise of God's very self.

The emergence of the created order in response to that word is the joyful acceptance of that gift and promise. In light of that acceptance, the created order is judged very good and blessed with fertility. This is a moral judgement,[35] an evaluation of the creatures' correspondence to the divine purpose.[36] However, it also carries the connotation 'beautiful'.[37] The creature is good and beautiful by virtue of its standing in appropriate relationship to its creator.

That divine assessment of the created order embraces aspects that have often been denigrated within Christian spirituality. Specifically, God judges both the materiality and the temporal structure of the created order and sees that they are very good. Existence in time is very good. Not only that, but the divine purpose for creation is worked out in time.[38] Furthermore change, decay, and death as a purely physical reality are integral to temporal existence: they are not the consequence of human disobedience.

So what does it mean to understand creation as the promise of the triune God? The Father is the source of the promise, the one who makes the primordial commitment to the creature, the creator of heaven and earth. The Son is the mediator of the promise, the one who, before time and in time, enables the promise to be fulfilled, the one through whom all things were created. The Holy Spirit is the fulfilment of the promise, the one for whom the Son makes straight a path, the Lord and giver of life.

(1) The created order has its source in the Father, but not as law, not as detailed blueprint set out from the beginning departure from which entails defection. Casting creation in terms of a promise – a commitment of oneself to a course of action intended to achieve some end on behalf of an other or others – it is first and foremost God's gracious giving of

[34] Brueggemann, *Genesis*, p. 30.

[35] B.W. Anderson, 'Creation and the Noahic Covenant', in *Cry of the Environment: Rebuilding the Christian Creation Tradition*, ed. by P.N. Joranson and K. Butigan (Santa Fe, NM: Bear & Co., 1984), pp. 19–44 (31).

[36] G. von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 52.

[37] C. Westermann, *Creation* (London: SPCK, 1974), p. 63.

[38] A transhistorical *eschaton* such as is looked for in the Augustinian tradition is fundamentally incommensurable with this hymn to the creator.

himself to his creation: it is a divine self-commitment.[39] Thus it involves God's acceptance of responsibility for his creation, and hence provides a basis for a doctrine of God's providential care for his creation.

In making the promise, God proposes created structures to which he may appropriately commit himself. And, characterizing creation as promise rather than command suggests that these structures are better thought of as open to the working out of God's purposes rather than originally posited in their final form. Indeed, since there is no preceding structure to be overcome, it suggests an entirely contentless initial state: the mere possibility of subsequent finite ordering.

The Father's promise is a divine commitment to this void: a commitment to the maintenance and fulfilment of its structures, and to the evocation of ever more complex sub-structures within it. This personal giving of himself to creation entails a commitment to guide the development of its structures so as to enable its appropriate response. But he makes the promise as the Father of the Son and Source of the Spirit, so they are implicated in the promise and committed with the Father to its fulfilment.

(2) The promise is mediated by the Son. The divine self-commitment to creation entails a commitment to maintain it. The God who has once acted to create a finite contingent order remains faithful to that order and the individuals therein. God maintains created being in and through time: sustenance is the continuation of creation.[40] Negatively, it is the maintenance of creation against the threat of dissolution into non-existence. Positively, it is maintenance towards a specific end: there is a dynamic, developmental (even, progressive) element within the doctrine. Sustenance is not a mere continuation, not a mere maintenance of the status quo but a nurturing, a bringing to maturity.

In the beginning, the promise. At the end, the fulfilment. And in between, an active mediation between origin and *eschaton*. Christ is the

[39] L. Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, Acta seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis XXV (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1965), p. 86.

[40] I use the term 'sustenance' (G.C. Berkouwer, *The Providence of God* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952], pp. 50–82) to maintain the dynamic dimension of the doctrine while avoiding the dangers implicit in *creatio continua*. It also avoids the negative connotations of preservation and conservation (see J. Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions* [London: Duckworth, 1980], p. 73). This organic metaphor maintains the dynamic nature of conservation without suggesting that the end in view is external to the object of sustenance.

one who shapes creaturely existence.[41] He it is who preserves what has been originated, maintaining it against the threat of dissolution. However, there is also a positive aspect to this creative work of Christ. His shaping of existence is no mere preservation of past structures. On the contrary, an essential dimension of sustenance is the evocation of new dimensions, new levels, of order and complexity. Thus with Paul we can speak of Christ as the one who overcomes the futility to which creation has been subjected (Rom. 8:20, 21).

Sustenance may not be *mere* continuation, but it is also a continuation of original creation. Therefore it must be understood in the light of that act of origination. Creation is an act of loving communication based upon a divine decision: 'To be is to be addressed' by the Father.[42] But this address did not occur once and for all. We cannot accept the deistic notion of creaturely persistence as merely the immanent unfolding of a past divine act. On the contrary, the Father continues to address his creation.

The content of that address is the history of Jesus. The Son is the Word of God addressed to all creatures and not merely humanity. Thus it is that, through Jesus the Son, 'all things hold together' (Col. 1:17). This implies a striking affirmation of the biophysical universe. God addresses his creatures by entering into creation.[43] Creation itself and not some transcendent realm of ideas is the divinely appointed locus for the encounter between God and the creature.

Implicit in this view of sustenance is a denial of contemporary secular eschatologies based on the indefinite extrapolation of our present understanding of the physical universe. Instead, divine sustenance constitutes an affirmation of genuine creaturely freedom and implies divine resistance to any tendency for the universe to degenerate into a deterministic state. Hence Pannenberg's insistence that Christ's work in relation to creation should be seen as reconciliation rather than determination.[44] Just as in overcoming sin, he reconciles us to himself, so in overcoming the futility to which all things have been subjected (Rom. 8: 20, 21), he reconciles all things to himself (Col. 1:20). Thus Christ shapes creaturely existence but not as an archetype. Creation is set free to be a unique contingent and historical reality.

[41] D.W. Hardy and D.F. Ford, *Jubilate: Theology in Praise* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1984), p. 119.

[42] R. Jenson, *Story and Promise: A Brief Theology of the Gospel about Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), p. 134.

[43] E. Jüngel, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: God's Being is in Becoming* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976), pp. 2–3.

[44] W. Pannenberg, *Jesus: God and Man* (London: SCM Press, 1968), p. 395.

What of the eschatological aspect: the cooperation between the Son and the Holy Spirit in the activity of sustaining created being? Without this, sustenance would degenerate into preservation; the history of creation would be become a mere maintenance of the status quo laid down in the act of origination. It is the eschatological call of the Holy Spirit that distinguishes creation from the static harmony of the Hellenistic cosmos. He is the perfecting cause of creation; the agent of its consummation.

One aspect of sustenance is the movement towards this consummation. The pneumatological aspect is to be found in the liberation of the creature from bondage to history; from the persistence of the past. As Robert Jenson puts it, 'To be, says the gospel, is not to persist; it is rather to be surprised, to be called out of what I have and might persist in, to what I do not have'.[45] This is basic to Jenson's anthropology, but, in the present context, it may be extended to cover the novelty that is observed to be a real part of creation history. To the extent that sustenance is the maintenance of a history that is progressing in this way, it is an activity of the Holy Spirit. It follows that the Spirit's activity of consummation is not restricted to an absolute future beyond the bounds of history. On the contrary, moments of partial consummation (steps towards the *eschaton*) are to be found within creation history.

Looked at in this light, the incarnation is a prefiguring of the *telos* of creation. The historical localized embodiment of God in creation points towards the eschatological universal embodiment of God.[46] In other words, the hypostatic union of God and creature in Jesus of Nazareth both prefigures and evokes an eschatological hypostatic union between the triune God and creation.[47]

God is thus the ground of novelty: continually evoking new structures in a manner that 'diverges' towards the *eschaton*.[48] Ultimately such a God is not limited by the limitations of his creation at any historical epoch. On the contrary, the God who revealed himself in the histories of Israel and of Jesus has revealed himself to be essentially one who is able to create new possibilities in every situation.

(3) The created order is brought to its eschatological fulfilment by the Spirit. He is the one who stands at the end of history and calls creation

45 Jenson, *Story and Promise*, p. 138.

46 Moltmann, *God in Creation*, p. 244.

47 J. Meyendorff, 'Creation in the History of Orthodox Theology', *St Vladimir Theological Quarterly* 27 (1983), 27–37 (36).

48 I might have used 'converges', but this could suggest a determinate end-state towards which God is manipulating all things.

through the near infinite maze of possibilities to the *telos* for which God purposed it.

And what can we say of the eschaton? First, it is the unbounded fulfilment of all things. It is the ultimate and inexhaustible interrelating of all events with each other and with God. Alternatively, it is the complete relating of all events to the history of Jesus.[49] In other words, all events will participate in the life of God.[50]

That Jesus is God imposes a particular character on this temporal infinity. It implies that the *eschaton* must be characterized by the love that has been enacted in the history of Jesus.

That the Father is God also imposes a particular character upon the *eschaton*. It indicates that the *eschaton* must be thought of in personal terms.

Second, we can deduce something about the *telos* of creatures. It is not rational contemplation of God as in Plotinus, Augustine, etc. Rather, it is active participation in the unbounded life of God (*theiosis* to use the Eastern Orthodox term).

According to the Nicene Creed, the most fundamental title of the Holy Spirit, the role that determines all his other roles, is *zoopoioun*: the Giver of life. For twentieth-century thought, this title conveys an irreducible mystery since life, in spite of the importance of the concept, has never been adequately defined.[51]

Although many Christians have understood this role of life giver in purely soteriological terms, the New Testament itself is not so restrictive. For example, Paul clearly relates life-giving spirit to the breath of life (1 Cor. 15:45). In so doing, he makes a clear connection between spirit as the new existence in humankind and the Hebrew (and Greek) conception of spirit as the universal source of life. While, in Genesis 1, the gift of life is presented as the adornment of the orders of creation. Both presentations point to the responsiveness of creation towards the creator. Thus the gift of life is intimately related to the *telos* of creation.

What understanding of consummation do we arrive at if we revert to a Hebrew view of life? In Hebrew thought, the chief characteristic of life is activity. For example, the activity of running water is sufficient to warrant the description 'living' (Gen. 26:19). The vivification of the cosmos is also its activation: its transformation from passivity and inertia to responsive-

49 Jenson, *The Triune Identity*, p. 177.

50 This says nothing about *how* events participate in the divine life. It certainly does not entail the adoption of universalism.

51 J. Lovelock, *The Ages of Gaia: A Biography of Our Living Earth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 16–18.

ness. This is not to be understood in terms of a simple linear progression. Since its origin, the cosmos has harboured elements of both passivity and activity. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate (or final) source of all created activity and life (understood as that which tends towards the eschatological activity of the cosmos).

There is a clear connection between the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the giver of life and the doctrine of the Son of God as the one who reconciles the cosmos to himself. We have already seen how the Christological dimension of creation may be developed in terms of resistance to entropy (i.e. static equilibrium) and evocation of novelty (which implies ever increasing complexity). The creative activity of the Holy Spirit may be seen in precisely parallel terms. Just as in traditional soteriology, the Son reconciles and the Spirit redeems. The work of the Holy Spirit is the necessary consequence of the Son's reconciliation of all things to himself. With the Son, the Spirit is the agent of novelty. Specifically, he is the beautifier of creation[52] and the agent of fulfilment.

And how does vivification relate to the image of *eschaton* as ultimate Sabbath? Moltmann has done much to develop the doctrine of the Sabbath in the context of an ecological doctrine of creation.[53] He claims that rest is the fulfilment of activity, being is the completion of doing. However, in the process he has succeeded in presenting rest as opposed to activity. The general impression that one is left with is that rest fulfils activity by being its negation (just as in much classical thought eternity is the fulfilment of time by virtue of being its negation).

In contrast to that, I would suggest that activity and rest are not direct opposites. The Sabbath rest is an active rest typified by the Temple worship. Other biblical metaphors for the *eschaton* also bring out this emphasis on an active rest. Among these the most notable is perhaps the vision of the Kingdom as a place of feasting and enjoyment. The Sabbath rest is the active enjoyment of God and his blessings. In other words, the rest that characterizes the *eschaton* is not passivity but the active rest in which all creation joins together in the praise of God. It is thus the unbounded fulfilment of the partial jubilation already audible in creation.[54] This is the vision behind the final stanza of the Philippian hymn:

[52] J. Edwards, *Observations Concerning the Trinity and the Covenant of Redemption, Treatise on Grace and other posthumously published writings*, ed. P. Helm (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1971), pp. 108ff.

[53] See e.g. Moltmann, *God in Creation*, pp. 278–87.

[54] A possible physical metaphor would be that of sympathetic vibration and resonance. God has called creation into being—not an arbitrary chaos or a static cosmos but a world with the potential to respond to the divine call. Subsequently God has spoken his Word to creation with a view to evoking the appropriate response. The first stumbling responses are met with renewed divine address encouraging a stronger response and so on ad infinitum. The *eschaton* corresponds to the to-us-incomprehensible state of completely unbounded divine address and creaturely response: an infinite spiral of blessing and praise.

> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9–11)

And this again reminds us of the essential Christological dimension that is not lost even in the ultimate fulfilment of all things. If the Holy Spirit is the one who empowers this eschatological song of creation, the Son is its theme, and the Father its original composer.

And to return finally to *theiosis*, the eschatological Sabbath is a time when God is able to give himself fully to creation, and creation is able to respond fully. It represents the complete participation of creation in the triune life of God.

One Eternal God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

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1. BEGINNING IN WORSHIP

If we are going to make sense of the doctrine of the Trinity, we need to begin—and end—in worship. [1]

We begin with Israel's worship, and the particular form of Israel's monotheism. You will know of the variant translations of the *Shema*, the famous confession of faith from Deuteronomy 6:4, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God' or 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord is God, the Lord alone'.[2] We do not need to decide between these translations: the Hebrew is ambiguous, and the evidence from ancient versions seems to suggest a gradual shift in understanding; the very fact of ambiguity is enough to make the point.[3] Ancient Israel, at least in its Scriptures, was actually rather uninterested in counting deities. We certainly do find powerful assertions that the Lord alone is God, and that the 'gods' of the nations are idols, but we also find—sometimes in contiguous chapters—language about the Lord being 'enthroned above all other gods', which at least implies their real existence.[4]

Back to the Shema: the commitment demanded here appears to be fragile and in need of constant reinforcement: 'write these commands on the frames of your doors; bind them to your foreheads...'. If what is being demanded is a philosophical conception that the number of deities who exist is an integer between zero and two, then this seems bizarre: the point

[1] This paper was prepared for the SETS 2013 annual conference, and is largely a summary of themes I treat in more detail in my *The Holy Trinity: Understanding God's Life* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012).

[2] On this, and the broader claim that 'monolatry' is a better category than 'monotheism', see Nathan MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of 'Monotheism'* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001).

[3] For a succinct statement of the issues for translation and a pointer to further discussion, see R.W.L. Moberly, *Old Testament Theology: Reading the Hebrew Bible as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), pp. 9-10.

[4] So, e.g., Psalm 96:5 'All the gods of the nations are but idols', and Psalm 97:7 'All gods bow down before [YHWH]'

may be believed or doubted, but, once believed, it is not a fragile or easily-lost confession.

For reasons like this, it seems appropriate to suggest that Israel's 'monotheism' is more properly classed as 'monolatry': it does not actually matter very much whether other deities exist, Israel's worship and loyalty is to be offered to the Lord alone. We know, as they knew, that such loyalty is far more fragile than a philosophical position. There is a constant temptation to idolatry, and it is there whether the idol is a real and powerful being, or something we have carved out of a piece of firewood. Israel is to worship, adore, serve, and seek help from one God alone, the Lord.[5]

When we come to the New Testament, worship is again—unsurprisingly given this construction—the crucial concept. Hebrews 1 does give us a theological account of the Son's superiority to the angels, but the really decisive point is that the Son is properly worshipped (Rev. 1:17-18; John 20:28), whereas angels and apostles refuse worship (Rev. 19:10; Acts 14:14-15), protesting that worship should be reserved for God alone. Larry Hurtado's compelling defence of the universal early ascription of deity to Jesus in the proto-Christian movement turns largely on this fact of worship.[6]

The same point is there in the earliest extra-Biblical records we have of the Christian church: Jesus is worshipped. Consider the famous letter of Pliny the Younger to Trajan, where he recounts what he has discovered of the Christians: 'They asserted, however, that the sum and substance of their fault or error had been that they were accustomed to meet on a fixed day before dawn and sing responsively a hymn to Christ as to a god…'.[7] Worship of Jesus is the distinctive mark of Christianity.

Somehow, right at the beginning of the church, the exclusive loyalty and worship demanded by God alone in the Old Testament is assumed to be upheld and not violated by worship offered to Jesus. For all the diversity we can discover in early Christian communities—and it is great—on this point they are remarkably united. And this is present and fully-formed from the beginning, or at least from as early as we can know: the church knows from its birth, it seems, that offering worship to Jesus is not incompatible with exclusive loyalty to God. At the risk of oversimplifying, the church always knew how to speak *to* God; it took four centuries or so

[5] This is essentially the argument of MacDonald's monograph, cited in note 2.

[6] Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

[7] Book X, Letter 96; *The Letters of Pliny the Younger*, trans. and intro. by Betty Radice (London: Penguin Books, 1963; rpt 2003), p. 294.

to work out how to speak *about* God in ways that were compatible with its speaking to God.

So, the doctrine of the Trinity is an attempt to speak about the relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit that makes sense of the church's worship. Basil of Caesarea somewhere makes an argument that runs, roughly, 'If the Spirit were not truly God, those who worship the Spirit would be idolators; in my church we worship the Spirit; I am not an idolator; therefore the Spirit must be truly God.' Thus stated, it is amusing, but spread wide over the history of the Christian church, this describes fairly accurately the process of development of the doctrine of the Trinity.

2. THE BIBLE

The description above might be heard by a Reformed or Evangelical polemicist as being uncomfortably Catholic, in the sense that it relies on tradition—the liturgical practices of the church—far more than on an appeal to Scripture. The church fathers can often look uncomfortably Catholic, of course, but let me turn to the question, 'is the doctrine of the Trinity biblical?'

Several things need to be said. First, worship which is exclusively loyal to the Lord alone, and which is able to include the Son and the Spirit in that exclusive loyalty, is biblical, as I have indicated in passing. Second, the crucial fourth-century debates which settled the doctrine of the Trinity were almost entirely exegetical; the Fathers debated over the interpretations of texts. One of the reasons, indeed, it is so hard for us to understand some of the Patristic writings—for example, Augustine's *De Trinitate*—is that much of the first half of that book is a series of interventions in long-running exegetical debates with which we are not familiar.

That said, and famously, the crucial terms used in the orthodox formulations of the doctrine are not biblical terms, and the nature of the fourth-century exegetical debates is worthy of examination. Fairly quickly as the debate developed, each side had its set of proof-texts which seemed to support its view; after that, the major developments in debate tended to come as someone stepped back from the texts a little, and offered a piece of theological conceptuality that allowed some texts to be read in a different way. To take an easy example, the pro-Nicene theologians fairly quickly developed what we might call a 'two state hermeneutic'. Their description tended to draw on the language of Philippians 2 to insist that some texts spoke of the Son in the form of God, whilst others spoke of him in the form a servant. This allowed the most obviously apparently-subordinationist texts to be read without compromising the equality of

Father and Son. Jesus indeed said 'The Father is greater than I,' but he said this 'in the form of a servant'.[8]

What we call 'the doctrine of the Trinity' is, I suggest, a formal set of conceptualities developed like this, a set of conceptualities which finally allowed every text to be read adequately. As such, it is not a 'biblical doctrine' in the sense of being the result of exegesis, rather it is a set of things that need to be believed if we are to be able to hold to the truth of every text of Scripture. Or, rather—and here I display my less-than-Catholic sensibilities—the ecumenical doctrine of the Trinity is *one example of* a set of things that need to be believed if we are to be able to hold to the truth of every text of Scripture. Could an equally effective set of conceptualities based, not on late-antique Greek categories, but on Vedic or Hegelian or Xhosa categories be developed? I suppose it could, but it might well take four centuries of extensive argument by brilliant minds to do adequately, which makes holding on to the late-antique Greek form look attractive to me.

(This supposes that the fourth-century settlement was in fact adequate. This is something I do suppose, not because it must be because of the indefectibility of the church, but because it seems to have been found adequate by a very wide set of believers in different times and cultures[9] and because I think that the arguments for their inadequacy can generally be shown fairly easily to be based on misunderstandings.)

3. THE DOCTRINE

In a recent book, I attempted to sum up the doctrine of the Trinity as it was developed in the patristic period under seven heads;[10] I will repeat these heads here, and offer some exposition of each in order to give you an account of the doctrine as I understand it:

1. The divine nature is simple, incomposite, and ineffable. It is also unrepeatable, and so, in crude and inexact terms, 'one'.

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8 This exegetical move was fairly common amongst pro-Nicene theologians, but for a series of examples of its use see Hilary of Poitiers, *De Trinitate*, IX, conveniently available in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, ed. by P. Schaff and H. Wace (1890; rpt. Edinburgh & Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), vol. 9, pp. 155-81.

9 Drawing here on an argument for the authority of tradition I develop in my *Listening to the Past: On the Place of Tradition in Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), pp. 156-64.

10 Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*, p. 146.

2. Language referring to the divine nature is always inexact and trophic; nonetheless, if formulated with much care and more prayer, it might adequately, if not fully, refer.

3. There are three divine hypostases that are instantiations of the divine nature: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

4. The three divine hypostases exist really, eternally, and necessarily, and there is nothing divine that exists beyond or outside their existence.

5. The three divine hypostases are distinguished by eternal relations of origin—begetting and proceeding—and not otherwise.

6. All that is spoken of God, with the single and very limited exception of that language which refers to the relations of origin of the three hypostases, is spoken of the one life the three share, and so is indivisibly spoken of all three.

7. The relationships of origin express/establish relational distinctions between the three existent hypostases; no other distinctions are permissible.

I will examine these one by one.

3.1 The divine nature is simple, incomposite, and ineffable. It is also unrepeatable, and so, in crude and inexact terms, 'one'. We need, of course, to distinguish *ousia* and *hypostasis*. Here we deal with *ousia*, which I have translated 'nature' in the heading. Why assert that the divine nature is incomposite? There is an old bit of Greek logic that runs, roughly, anything composite must have been composed by an agent, so to describe God as incomposite is merely to insist that God was not made by any more basic agent.

If God is incomposite, however, God is necessarily simple—the two words are not quite synonyms, but they are certainly mutually entailed. There is no complexity in the divine nature; God is not separable into this bit and that bit. This is not primarily a claim about Father, Son, and Spirit—we will get there—but a claim about God's life. In classical doctrine, we are talking about divine perfections: our narration of the divine life is inevitably partial and multiple: we say God is loving, just, merciful, omnipotent, and so on; but we need to recognise that such descriptions are ours, and do not relate to any divisions in God's life. The divine mercy

is strictly identical with the divine justice; that we cannot narrate how this makes sense is a limitation of our language, not a problem for God's existence.

Repeatedly, the classical concern here was a desire to avoid putting God into any class. Again, the logic is easily described: if God is one example of a class of things—say, one merciful thing amongst many other merciful things—then the class as a whole is larger than God, and so God is not the most ultimate being.

Can we say God is 'one'? This, also, is an attribute of God, and so subject to the same logical limitations. The divine nature is necessarily beyond number; number is just another human classification. We can, however, say that the divine nature is unrepeatable—in this sense, to say 'God is one' makes sense.

3.2 Language referring to the divine nature is always inexact and trophic; nonetheless, if formulated with much care and more prayer, it might adequately, if not fully, refer. I have already begun to stray into this area. When we say 'God is love' we are not claiming a strict logical identity. The reason for this is rather obvious, and worked out with more patience than it deserves by, say, Thomas Aquinas,[11] although this has not stopped various modern writers who seem not to have read Thomas making the basic error. If such claims were strict logical identity claims, then saying 'God is love,' and 'God is eternal' would lead easily to the conclusion that 'love is eternity' which seems nonsensical. So we have to assert that our language about the divine nature is sufficiently loose—Thomas used the term 'analogical'—that it does not require or even permit such identity-relations.

This point was at the very heart of the fourth-century doctrinal development. Eunomius had advanced an argument that ran along these lines: to be God is necessarily to be unoriginate; the Father is unoriginate, but the Son has his origin in the Father. Therefore the Father is truly God, whereas the Son is not.[12] This was combined with a distinctively platonic theory of language in which words corresponded to things in a one-to-

[11] Classically in *Summa Theologiæ*, 1a q. 13.

[12] Eunomius's extant works are collected, together with an excellent introduction to his thought, in R.P. Vaggione, *Eunomius: The Extant Works* (Oxford: Clarendon: 1987); this argument is developed most clearly in *Liber Apologeticus*, §7.

one mapping.[13] 'Unoriginateness' was the proper name, the true definition, of the divine *ousia*.[14]

The Cappadocian achievement, properly read, is nothing to do with redefining ontology in personal terms; rather, it is the development of a theory of language which allows this problem concerning the divine names to be solved. The negative point was easy: as Gregory of Nyssa pointed out, Eunomius said the divine nature was simple, as well as saying it was unoriginate; on his own doctrine, either there are two divine natures, or his theory of language must be wrong.[15]

What of the positive, however? Basil argues that our words only inexactly refer to the divine; our language about God is an example of *epinoia*, a Greek word meaning something like 'mental construction'. Eunomius mocks this—is Basil saying that his own theology is mere imagination? Eunomius will cheerfully agree to that! Basil's point, however, is subtle and curiously modern: there is, necessarily, a gap between what we can say about a thing and what it is *in se*; in the case of the ineffable divine nature, this gap is yawning; our language has only very weak purchase. In particular, we can only speak of the divine nature by piling up multiple inexact terms: it is simple, ineffable, eternal, unoriginate,.... But if the divine nature is simple—something all agreed on—then it is not, in principle, divisible into these various different attributes. Eunomius's strict logical formulations are inadequate because they presume too much about the ability of our language to refer to God; he was right to assert that there is one single perfect divine life, but wrong to think he could name it exhaustively, and reason on the basis of the name he had given.[16]

3.3 There are three divine hypostases that are instantiations of the divine nature: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We turn now from the unrepeatable divine ousia to the divine hypostases. The relation of hypostasis

[13] On this, see Jean Daniélou, 'Eunome l'Arien et l'exégèse néo-platonicienne du Cratyle', *Revue des Études Grecques* 69 (1956), pp. 412-32; and Lenka Karfíková, 'Der Ursprung der Sprache nach Eunomius und Gregor vor dem Hintergrund der antiken Sprachtheorien (*CE* II 387-444; 543-553)', in *Gregory of Nyssa Contra Eunomium II: An English Version with Supporting Studies*, ed. by L. Karfíková, S. Douglass, and J. Zachhuber (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 279-305.

[14] *Lib. Apol*., §§23-4.

[15] Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium 1*; see W. Jaeger (ed.), *Contra Euonium Libri* (Leiden: Brill, 1960), p. 233.

[16] Mark DelCogliano, *Basil of Caesarea's Anti-Eunomian Theology of Names: Christian Theology and Late-Antique Philosophy in the Fourth Century Trinitarian Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 2010) discusses this point helpfully.

to *ousia* is, as Basil famously put it, the relation of the particular to the common. More precisely, it is the relation of the existence of a thing to its essence, its 'whatness'. The simple life of God exists three times over.

Two comments need to be made here: first, why three? The primary answer must be, because that is what we find in the New Testament: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each properly named to be God, and no other thing is. The history of the doctrine of the Trinity is full of attempts to make this something more than this, a necessary logical proposition. So Richard of St Victor argues that there is one divine person who originates but is not originated—the Father; one who both originates and is originated—the Son; and one who is originated but does not originate—the Holy Spirit, and that there is completeness here.[17] I see no great harm in such speculations, but nor do I find them particularly convincing: I cannot help feeling that if Scripture had spoken to us of four divine persons, we would have found it just as easy to discover reasons why it must have been four.

Second, my definition above echoes (deliberately) a common scholastic slogan. To define hypostasis as existence, and *ousia* as essence, might seem to stand in opposition to the maxim that God's essence is his existence—a medieval definition of the crucial idea of divine simplicity. In fact, however, this is almost precisely the point of the slogan: God's existence is his eternal life as Father, Son, and Spirit—and this is, precisely, his essence. The eternal, simple, ineffable life of God is, just, being Father, Son, and Spirit. The best definition we can give of God's eternal being is, in fact, 'Trinity'.

3.4 The three divine hypostases exist really, eternally, and necessarily, and there is nothing divine that exists beyond or outside their existence. This is an elaboration and consequence of the previous point. If God's essence, his *ousia*, is his triune life, then the existence of the three hypostases is necessary and eternal: this is what it is to be God. And this—being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is all that it is to be God. There is no residue, no divine nature behind the three persons. The eternal life of the three persons just is the divine nature.

In so saying, of course, we hit the crucial problem that fourth-century trinitarianism addressed: can we really say this sort of divine essence is simple and incomposite? It gives every appearance of being made up of three parts, after all. (This, of course, is a heavily schematised account of the fourth-century question, which was never phrased in such terms,

[17] *De Trintate* Bk. III.

but the various debates around modalism and subordinationism turn on essentially this point.)

Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and the others never doubted divine simplicity—indeed, from their time down to the eighteenth century pretty much everyone assumed that the doctrine of the Trinity entailed simplicity—if you believed in simplicity, you were a trinitarian; if you didn't you weren't—but they still had to explain the point. This takes us to the next point of my summary, and the concept they introduced of 'relation'.

3.5 The three divine hypostases are distinguished by eternal relations of origin – begetting and proceeding – and not otherwise. The term 'relation' is introduced by the Cappadocian Fathers and by Augustine in exactly the same way, and for exactly the same reason.[18] They are faced with a philosophical dilemma based around the old Aristotelian categories of substance and accident. If the Son is substantially God, then, either, Father and Son are the same thing—modalism, one way or another—or the divine nature is divided and there are two gods. If the Son is only accidentally God, then divine simplicity is compromised, because everyone agrees that simplicity entails possession of no accidental properties. So how do we speak of Father and Son in a simple divine nature? The answer, Geek and Latin, is to invoke a third term—not substance, not accident, but relation. (I assume that Augustine knew of the prior Cappadocian use, either directly or mediately, and was consciously borrowing from them, but the genealogy is not important here.) Essentially, we are offered a philosophical claim: the category of relation establishes a real distinction in a substance that is not accidental, and that does not damage that substance's simplicity.

3.6 All that is spoken of God, with the single and very limited exception of that language which refers to the relations of origin of the three hypostases, is spoken of the one life the three share, and so is indivisibly spoken of all three. Because God's essence is his existence, all language that refers to God's life necessarily refers to Father, Son, and Spirit together as well as severally. As the so-called Athanasian Creed has it, 'the Father is eternal, the Son is eternal, and the Spirit is eternal, yet there are not three that are eternal, but one who is eternal.' This is, as can be seen, a necessary consequence of the logic we have been developing thus far. God's life is simple; and God's life is to be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

[18] I argue this at length in an essay in Jason S. Sexton (ed.), *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014, *forthcoming*).

The most profound, and most extensive, working out of this logic in contemporary theology is Barth's treatment of the divine perfections in *Church Dogmatics* II/1. Barth locates all the perfections under the rubric of God as 'the One who loves in freedom' (pp. 322-677), but this formula itself has been carefully developed as a Trinitarian formula. Barth makes this absolutely clear at the very beginning of §29: '[s]ince God is Father, Son and Holy Ghost, i.e., loves in freedom, every perfection exists essentially in Him.'[19] The point, however, has been carefully developed through the sections that lead up to the confession of God as 'the One who loves in freedom'. In developing the account of God as the One who loves, Barth repeatedly returns to the love shared by Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as his primary determinant of what this means (whilst carefully guarding against any suggestion of a 'social' doctrine of the Trinity');[20] similarly, if less pervasively, the account of the divine freedom is presented as an outworking of the doctrine of the Trinity.[21]

It is important to stress at this point that Barth's insistence—rightly—is not that the divine love and freedom (and all the perfections which he will group under each) are shaped in Trinitarian ways, but that the statements 'God loves,' 'God is free,' and 'God loves in freedom' are each to be read as specifications of the claim 'God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit'. The same is true of every divine perfection: inasmuch as words like 'goodness,' 'eternity,' omnipresence,' and the like work (in a limited and analogical way) to describe the perfect life of God, their referent is the divine life, which is the shared existence of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

3.7 The relationships of origin express/establish relational distinctions between the three existent hypostases; no other distinctions are permissible. There are two relations of origin in the eternal life of God: the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Spirit proceeds from the Father

[19] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. by G. W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance, 4 vols in 13 parts (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956-1975), II/1, p. 323 (hereafter CD); the German is 'Indem Gott der Vater, der Sohn und der Heilige Geist ist und das heißt: liebt in der Freiheit, ist ihm jede Vollkommenheit wesentlich zu eigen' (*Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II/1 p. 363).

[20] See *CD* II/1, pp. 272-97; with particular summary passages on p. 279 and p. 297. The rejection of (what we would now call) social Trinitarianism is on pp. 287-97, leading to the comment 'Being in Himself Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, God is in Himself the One who lives and loves…' (p. 297).

[21] See *CD* II/1, pp. 297-321, particularly the small-print section on p. 317, beginning: '[w]e have seen that freedom of God, as His freedom in Himself, His primary absoluteness, has its truth and reality in the inner Trinitarian life of the Father with the Son by the Holy Spirit.'

(and the Son? The point is not very important in Trinitarian terms, although I think that probably dual procession makes more sense once the question is asked). [22] These relations are eternal[23] and are the content of God's life, insofar as we can speak that phrase with any meaning at all. The Father is eternally begetting the Son; the Father is (or the Father and the Son together are) eternally spirating the Spirit. That, according to doctrine, is what it is to be the God of the gospel.

4. ENDING IN WORSHIP

What use is the doctrine of the Trinity? Well, first why does it need to be of any use? It is an account—a careful and spare account, paying as much or more attention to what cannot adequately be said as to what might, hesitantly, be said. To know God is our highest end, and it is of the essence of highest ends that they have no utility beyond their own existence.[24] To know God, that is to say, is not a step along a road to somewhere else, but our final destination; and so the doctrine of the Trinity is not to be found useful or generative for ethics.

We might push this a little further, however: the knowledge of God, specifically the 'beatific vision,' the sight of God, is the final end of humanity in medieval tradition, but medieval tradition is not beyond criticism; in particular, speaking of vision or knowledge as our final end might be considered a little passive. Now, this does not work as a criticism of sophisticated medieval accounts, but my purpose is not to defend them, but to reflect on the Trinity. Suppose we insist instead that our final end is active, worship? Does the doctrine of the Trinity have a use here?

[22] See Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*, pp. 147-64, esp. pp. 163-4.

[23] There has been a recent fashion in certain traditions of evangelicalism to deny the doctrine of eternal generation of the Son, on the grounds that it is not explicitly affirmed in Scripture. This seems a very odd position: the generation of the Son from the Father, and the eternity of the divine life, are both clearly affirmed in Scripture, and eternal generation is a very straightforward deduction from those two points. I understand that the denial of eternal generation is in some way bound up with an attempt to read 'eternal functional subordination' into the Trinity, and so to find a defence in theology proper for a particular vision of gender roles in the church, the family, and the world; whatever the merits of that ethical position, this line of defence must fail, as a moment attempting to fit 'eternal functional subordination' with the (central) doctrine of the inseparability of divine operations will demonstrate.

[24] The point should be clear enough, but see the extensive analysis in Jonathan Edwards, *Dissertation Concerning the End for Which God created the World* (in Jonathan Edwards, (ed. Paul Ramsey) *Works* vol. 8, *Ethical Writings* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989); see on this pp. 405-15.

To answer this, we might consider Lindbeck's account of what doctrine does.[25] The basic function of doctrine, he argues, is to regulate Christian speech: on such an account, the doctrine of the Trinity teaches us how to speak well when we speak of God (and indeed when we speak to God, notwithstanding the comments with which I began; Christian liturgical language is not indefectible). The doctrine as outlined above presents rules for speech which, if followed, will mean our doctrinal formulations, our instruction, and our worship and petition will not be utterly inadequate of the God we profess to name, invoke, teach about, or praise.

Our end is to worship. The doctrine of the Trinity teaches us how to speak adequately as we worship. That is its highest use, and there can, for us, be none higher.

[25] George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-liberal Age* (London: SPCK, 1984).

The Trinity and Public Worship

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Trinity and Public Worship is one of those generously vague titles which gives speakers great liberty to take the paper in any direction and can often leave conference attenders surprised at the outcome. The overall conference title, 'Holy Trinity…Holy Living' points us towards some real life application of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and I hope that this will be worked out in this paper as we put together the Trinity and public worship.

Before we proceed, let me offer some brief definitions of the key terms in the title.

The Trinity. The Trinity… I do not intend in this paper either to seek to prove or to offer a defence of the traditional doctrine of the Trinity. The understanding of what we mean when we affirm our faith in the revelation of God as Trinity that was worked out in the Councils of Nicaea and Constantinople is the understanding of the Trinity that I will assume for this paper. In his careful tracing of the history of the doctrine of the Trinity, Bavinck writes,

> Nicaea proclaimed the existence of distinctions in God and taught that the Father and the Son (and the Spirit) together were God. From now on, the challenge was to uphold the unity underlying the distinctions.[1]

Bavinck continues writing of Athanasius,

> He [Athanasius] was not fighting for a philosophical problem, but for the Christian religion itself, for the revelation of God, the teaching of the apostles, the faith of the church. The Trinity is the heart and centre of Christianity, differentiating it in principle from Judaism, which denies the distinctions within the divine being, and from paganism, which rejects the oneness of God.[2]

Identifying distinction within God and presenting this as a major, perhaps the major, differentiation between Christianity and other religions is a helpful point when we come to worship. I also find the note of upholding the unity underlying the distinctions important when we reflect upon the Trinity and public worship.

Public Worship. 'Let us worship God': this phrase must be used by thousands of ministers, vicars, priests, worship leaders at services all over the world. I can remember a time when an understanding of a 'whole life of discipleship' being worship led to challenging the use of this phrase at the opening of a service of worship. Since the apostle Paul had written in Romans 12:1 ("I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship"),[3] the case was made that to limit worship to what the church did together on a Sunday was to limit worship to the harm of our discipleship. While there may be some merit in this, such a wide view of worship is not our concern in this paper.

Eric Alexander contributed a wonderful chapter entitled, 'Let us worship God', to the 2002 volume *Serving the Word of God: Celebrating the Life and Ministry of James Philip*. In it he writes, of James Philip,

> He began every service with the words, 'Let us worship God', and throughout the service there could be no doubt in anyone's mind that God was at the centre of everything we were engaged in. The immensity and glory of God in the Trinity of his Persons was the great distinctive of worship led by James Philip.[4]

For the purposes of this paper, it is disappointing that Alexander does not demonstrate what he means by the reference to the Trinity here. However, Alexander proceeds to work out a definition of worship which may serve our needs in this paper:

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1 H. Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics. Volume 2: God and Creation*, ed. by J. Bolt, tr. by J. Vriend, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), p. 285.

2 Ibid., p. 285.

3 All quotations from Scripture are from the English Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

4 E. Alexander, 'Let us worship God', in *Serving the Word of God: Celebrating the Life and Ministry of James Philip*, ed. by David F. Wright and David Stay (Fearn, Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), p. 159.

> To worship God is to humble ourselves before his great majesty and, in spirit and truth, to bring him, in and through Jesus Christ and according to Scripture, the honour and praise which are his alone.[5]

The object of Christian worship is God as revealed in Trinity. The public worship of God is that element in the life of the disciple of the Lord Jesus, that coming together of the body of Christ in the Church of Jesus Christ, that humbling of ourselves for the honour and glory of God alone, which is commanded in Scripture and enabled in us by the work of the Holy Spirit. Hughes Oliphant Old writes,

> In worship we hear the good news of our salvation and are saved from our sins and transformed into the image of Christ. God has commanded us not to worship him by creating images of our own art and imagination because he wants us to be his image. Worship is the workshop where we are transformed into his image. When we are thus transformed into his image, we reflect his glory. Through the ministry of praise and prayer, the ministry of word and sacrament we are transformed to offer that spiritual worship that the apostle Paul tells us is acceptable to God (Rom. 12:1-2). This is what we mean when we say that worship is the work of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ to the glory of the Father.[6]

And so our public worship of God feeds into, transforms our life of discipleship into the image of God. By public worship we mean that activity of the people of God when we gather together to offer our God the honour and praise which he is worthy to receive from us. We do not limit the use of the term 'worship' to the activity of public worship and we acknowledge that our activity of public worship informs and shapes our lives of worship. In this paper we will examine the public worship of God as that relates to the Trinity.

2. LET US WORSHIP GOD

'Let us worship God'. We can well imagine that there was a time, in our nation, when on hearing these words there would be a shared understanding of what was meant by the term 'God'. If there were atheists or agnostics present they would recognise the God they did not believe in, or were not certain about. I think this shared understanding of what is meant by the term 'God' is largely absent in our nation today. Sadly, I suspect it is also absent in our congregations where many now consider what a minister may have to say about God merely one opinion among many, and one with which they have liberty to disagree. It is important then when we engage in public worship to be clear about who it is that we have gathered to worship. In this the doctrine of the Trinity may be our greatest ally. In our worship of God as Trinity we distinguish the God whom we worship from all other gods. The biblical record bears witness to the inclusion of distinction within God in the worship of the people of God which it will be helpful to trace here.

[5] Ibid., p. 168.

[6] Hughes Oliphant Old, *Worship: Reformed According to Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002), p. 6.

Yahweh is one. The second commandment prohibits the worship of idols (Exod. 20:4-6). The first commandment, 'You shall have no other gods before me' (Exod. 20:3), may command no more than what might be called a practical monotheism, something like, 'There are or may be other gods, but you shall not worship them but shall worship me alone'. And so the heart of a rigorous monotheism in Scripture is located in Deuteronomy 6:4, 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one'. Nathan MacDonald writes of the *Shema*,

> The Shema has played, and continues to play, an important, even central, role within the Jewish and Christian traditions. In Judaism it is a confession of faith and is the prayer recited at the beginning and end of every day, and the first and last prayer recited in life. In Christianity it has been received as the 'greatest commandment'.[7]

There is a well-known difficulty in this phrase caused by the absence of an explicit Hebrew verb. We can read *ʾeḥād* as an adjective, 'one' or as an adverb 'alone'. There is much in Deuteronomy to commend both readings, and in the absence of other factors an intentional ambiguity could be intended. When, however, we consider the emphatic position of this *ʾeḥād* at the end of the phrase we note with McConville,

> It [Deut. 6:4] differs from the First Commandment (Deut. 5:7) in that the emphasis falls heavily on the word 'one', in its final climactic position…The effect of this is to suggest that 'oneness' is in some sense part of Yahweh's nature. The nuance shifts therefore from 'uniqueness' to 'unity', or integrity. Yahweh is one and indivisible.[8]

[7] N. MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of 'Monotheism'*, FAT 2/1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), p. 60.

[8] J. G. McConville, *Deuteronomy* (Leicester: Apollos; Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), p. 141.

This text was and is used in daily worship by Jewish peoples. It can be located at the centre of what the Old Testament reveals about Yahweh, emphasising the unity of God, that God is one. There is no hint in the Old Testament that there is any distinction within the being or person of God, rather there is a simplicity and integrity, God is one. Where a plural is used for God, as in the term *ʾĕlōhîm* or in plural references, such as Genesis 1:26,

> Then God said, 'Let *us* make [*naʿăśeh*] man in *our* image [*bĕṣalmēnû*], after *our* likeness [*kidmûtēnû*]…'

the most likely explanation is that these are plurals of majesty applied to the Divine person. While theologically it may be possible to offer a reading of such plurals as tending towards a revelation of God as Trinity, it is exegetically weak with no good historical grammatical foundation.[9]

The worship of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we turn to the pages of the New Testament we find there a very clear indication that the Lord Jesus Christ is to be included in the person of God and is included within the object of proper human worship. Of great help in this area is the work of Larry Hurtado, his 1999 Didsbury Lectures, published as *At the Origins of Christian Worship*, and his major contribution from 2003, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity.*[10]

Hurtado convincingly locates the beginnings of devotion to Jesus very early in the life of the Church, certainly before the writing of the first New Testament texts. In his work, Hurtado uses the phrase 'binitarian' to describe Christian worship as he observes it in the pages of the New Testament writing:

[9] See *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, ed. by E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910), § 124g (p. 398-9): 'Of (c): the *pluralis excellentiae* or *maiestatis* … is properly a variety of the abstract plural, since it sums up the several characteristics belonging to the idea, besides possessing the secondary sense of an *intensification* of the original idea. It is thus closely related to the plurals of amplification … which are mostly found in poetry. So especially אֱלֹהִים *Godhead*, *God* (to be distinguished from the numerical plural *gods*, Ex 12:12, &c.). … That the language has entirely rejected the idea of numerical plurality in אֱלֹהִים (whenever it denotes *one* God), is proved especially by its being almost invariably joined with a singular attribute, e.g. אֱלֹהִים צַדִּיק Ps 7:10, &c.'

[10] L. W. Hurtado, *At the Origins of Christian Worship* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999); *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

> …at its earliest observable stage Christian worship was more 'binitarian' with devotion directed to God and Christ. Earliest Christian religious experience involved God, Christ and the Spirit; but the devotional pattern was more 'binitarian' as to the divine recipients of worship.[11]

Here we note that the term 'God' is used of one person of the Trinity, or 'binity' in distinction to Christ and Spirit. How easily the term 'God'—that could, perhaps should, describe the unity of the divine—is used to describe one person, the Father, in the distinction within God.[12] Hurtado describes the worship of Christ as 'a "mutation" in monotheistic devotion in the earliest observable literary remains of first-century Christianity'.[13] We can assume with some confidence that he does not use the word 'mutation' in any derogatory or pejorative way. 'Mutation' rather describes a process of change or growth with continuity before and after the mutation. N. T. Wright, in an essay entitled 'Monotheism, Christology and Ethics: 1 Corinthians 8', offers comment on Paul's use of *Shema* in 1 Corinthians 8:4 and 6. On v. 6, ('yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist'), Wright comments,

> What Paul seems to have done is as follows. He has expanded the formula [Shema] in a way quite unprecedented in any other texts known to us, so as to include a gloss on θεὸς and another on κύριος:…
> Paul, in other words, has glossed 'God' with 'the Father', and 'Lord' with 'Jesus Christ', adding in each case an explanatory phrase: 'God' is the Father, 'from whom are all things and we to him', and the 'Lord' is Jesus the Messiah, 'through whom are all things and we through him'. There can be no mistake:…Paul has placed Jesus within an explicit statement, drawn from the Old Testament's quarry of emphatically monotheistic texts, of the doctrine that Israel's God is the one and only God, the creator of the world.[14]

The evidence of the New Testament in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ suggests that the earliest Christians did not consider themselves to be worshipping a new God, different from the God of the Old Testament covenant, but in their experiences of Jesus as Messiah and Lord they came to understand that Jesus was included in the person of God, without com-

[11] Hurtado, *At the Origins*, p. 64.

[12] The use of this language is further explored by Hurtado in *God in New Testament Theology* (Abingdon: Nashville, 2010), esp. pp. 28–30, 95-99.

[13] Hurtado, *At the Origins*, p. 71.

[14] N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), p. 129.

plicating the simplicity and unity of the one God, and they accorded him the honour and glory due to God in their worship. This worship of the Lord Jesus Christ is presented as beginning during his life and ministry recorded in the gospels, see Lk 24:52, Jn 9:39 and others. In all parts of the New Testament the Lord Jesus Christ is worshipped as God, most gloriously in the book of Revelation from beginning to end. Without abandoning monotheism as a foundation of their understanding of God the earliest Christians came to include Jesus within their understanding of God and worshipped him.

The Holy Spirit. When we turn to the Holy Spirit the evidence of the New Testament is in a different direction. Hurtado writes,

> In the New Testament, worship is offered in the Holy Spirit, but it is not so clear that the Spirit is seen as the recipient of worship.[15]

In the New Testament we do have doxological phrases, such as 2 Corinthians 13:14 and baptismal formulae such as Matthew 28:19 which indicate early inclusion of the name of the Spirit and the use of trinitarian formulae in the worship practices of the earliest Christians. This is far short of the inclusion of the Spirit within the person of God such as we find in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. The absence of any explicit inclusion of the Holy Spirit as the object of worship in the New Testament does not seriously challenge the presentation of the Holy Spirit in both Testaments as divine, but does give us pause when we consider appropriate worship practices for the church.

3. THE TRINITY AND PUBLIC WORSHIP – SOME QUESTIONS

This brief review of the biblical record demonstrates that for the earliest Christian community belief in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ led them to include Jesus within the monotheistic understanding of God. Having an understanding of God which includes distinction implies growing into new forms and expressions of public worship of God. We may say that God having revealed himself as Trinity proves a challenge to public worship.

The Holy Spirit and public worship? By the 1980s it had become wearisome to hear Pentecostal and Charismatic friends speak about the Holy Spirit as 'the forgotten member of the Trinity'. As the Charismatic renewal

[15] Hurtado, *At the Origins*, pp. 63–4.

began to have an impact on traditional churches, and the so-called 'worship wars' began, one element in these disagreements and disputes was the place and role of the Holy Spirit within worship. In large part this focused upon the exercise of the *charismata*, the Spiritual gifts, within public worship. However, a renewed interest in worship and in the person and work of the Holy Spirit did result in some renewed reflection upon the offering of worship to the Holy Spirit.

In 2006, Graham Cole delivered the Annual School of Theology lectures at Oak Hall College which have been published as *Engaging With the Holy Spirit: Six Crucial Questions*. One of these questions is 'Ought we to pray to the Holy Spirit?' Cole writes of prayer being offered to the Holy Spirit,

> I cannot offer a biblical theology of prayer to the Spirit, as there are no texts that can be used in evidence…there are no examples of biblical characters praying to the Holy Spirit and there are no commands to pray to the Holy Spirit.[16]

This may appear to close the door to evangelical prayer to the Holy Spirit, and if prayer to the Spirit is not biblical, worship offered to the Spirit cannot be far behind. Cole, however, notes in his chapter that prayer to the Holy Spirit is ancient and finds a place in Reformed worship, as in the Book of Common Prayer, 1662, in the Litany, 'O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father, and the Son, have mercy upon us miserable sinners'. Cole also records John Owen, Karl Barth, and J. I. Packer as teaching that prayer should be offered to the Holy Spirit.[17] Nevertheless Cole concludes,

> Christians *may* indeed pray to the Spirit. Our God *is* triune. But without biblical precedents and explicit biblical warrants, there is no obligation that the Christian pray to the Spirit.[18]

If we never pray to the Spirit, for example, *Veni creator spiritus*, in what sense are we truly trinitarian in our worship practice? If our hymns and songs of praise never give the opportunity to offer honour and glory to the Spirit, are we not robbing him of something of his deity? The incorporation of the Lord Jesus within the worship and devotional practices of the earliest Christians happened without explicit biblical warrant: they

[16] G. A. Cole, *Engaging With the Holy Spirit: Six Crucial Questions* (Nottingham: Apollos/IVP, 2007), pp. 61f.

[17] Ibid., pp. 62f.

[18] Ibid., p. 71.

encountered the Lord Jesus and, finding him revealed as God, they worshipped him, before any biblical warrant for this practice was written. Should we not, encountering the Holy Spirit and finding him revealed as God, worship him? We do well to acknowledge that the Lord Jesus spoke of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, John 16:14, 'He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you'. If our worship of God became wholly or in a majority of its expression focused upon the Holy Spirit rather than the Lord Jesus or God the Father of the Lord Jesus, then our worship would be unbalanced. But not to pray to or worship as God the Holy Spirit is equally unbalanced and will grow unbalanced and non-Trinitarian Christians.

Worshipping the distinction within God? It seems from our Scriptural review that the early Christians grew into worship practices of the Lord Jesus Christ before they had any theological categories adequate to explain their actions in worship. It is not too far a step to suggest that their worship of God in his revealed distinction gave shape to their theological formulations when they eventually got round to forming them.

We are right to attempt to worship the three persons of the Trinity, but I find as soon as we set out upon this, the road narrows before us and deep chasms open on either side. Consider the hymn of Isaac Watts, 'We give immortal praise'. In the first verse we give praise, 'to God the Father's love | for all our comforts here', in the second to God the Son, 'who bought us with his blood | from everlasting woe' and in the third to the Spirit, 'whose new-creating power | makes the dead sinner live'.[19] Are we not worshipping the persons of the Trinity in the distinction of their actions towards us? What happened to *opera Trinitatis ad extra indivisia sunt*? It is not within the bounds of trinitarian orthodoxy to think of the persons of God as modes or expressions of God, especially in relation to their works. It is not only the Father who creates, but the Father, the Son, and the Spirit share in the work of creation, or else why do we pray *Veni creator spiritus*? Now the works of God may be discussed in relation to the persons of the Trinity as by attraction, thus it is more common to speak of the Son as Redeemer, while not denying that the Father and the Spirit share in this external work of God. And so here our language in public worship becomes important. If in addressing God we were to use a trinitarian formula, such as 'Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer', are we not deep into the territory of Sabellianism where the distinctions between the persons of God are diminished or emphasised to the harm of the unity of God? Encouraged by a particular evangelical reformed tradition evangelical worship

[19] From the version in *Praise!* (Darlington: Praise Trust, 2000), no. 164.

leaders by comparison with the care shown in the choice of words in sermons give almost no thought to particular words and expressions used in prayer, in the introducing of hymns and the wording of benedictions. Badly chosen wording in these areas will over time have a cumulative effective upon those who regularly listen to such worship leaders.

To push on this point a little further. In our culture it has been common to identify one another by describing our function. 'What do you do?' is a key question in describing ourselves and others. In this we depersonalise one another celebrating only our utility value. We should be horrified at the possibility that our language about the persons of God depersonalises them by focusing upon their utility value. Yes, we do know God in and through his works, but not only in and through his works. Difficult as it may be we need to find language to celebrate the mystery of the *pericoresis*, the inter-relatedness of the persons of God within the unity of the Trinity. The Father, the Son and the Spirit reveal God in their relating to one another. Our doctrine of the Trinity often comes under pressure here in part because we so seldom, if at all seek out language with which to worship the persons of God in the perfect love and communion shared together in being God.

Worshipping the unity that is God? We do not worship God because it makes us happy, because it has positive psychological effects upon us, because the music is good and the seats are comfortable. We worship God because all that he has created, he created to glorify himself. In the gospel, when we are turned out from ourselves towards this God, we join with all creation giving voice to the honour and praise which is due to this great God.

Although much abused we cannot in our worship abandon the term 'God'. We must rather so worship him as to fill this term with the content he gives to his name. In this the distinctions within God give a unique focus to our understanding of God and thus unique content to our worship of God. But how do we worship the unity that remains God? What language can we use to speak of the work of God being the work of all the persons of God? It is easier for us to tend towards tritheism in our worship practices, no wonder then that the people of God consider the Trinity to be not so much a holy mystery as a theological sleight of hand and fall easy prey to Unitarians or Sabellianists who come knocking at our doors. Earlier I noted Hurtado using the term 'God' in contrast to 'Christ' and 'Spirit'. While he was careful to do this in describing patterns in the New Testament, used sloppily this language risks collapsing all that we would say about 'the Father' into the term 'God'. This would be unhelpful. There

is much work to be done in finding language to worship the unity that is God and the Trinity that is God.

Our desire for precision in worship may remove the element of mystery, of awe. After all, if a mere human can explain it all in one hour each Sunday how difficult can it really be? And yet to enter into the presence of the living God, as he is one and three, this and nothing less is the goal of public worship. Having taken a gentle swipe at Watts above, let me finish with these words of his with which he concludes that same hymn:

> To God the Trinity
> be endless honours done,
> the undivided Three,
> and the mysterious One:
> where reason fails with all her powers,
> there faith prevails, and love adores.

The Holy Spirit, Holy Scripture, and the Holy Reader: The Moral Dimension of the Spirit's 'Secret Testimony'

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INTRODUCTION

For many Christians, reading Holy Scripture assumes an involvement of the Holy Spirit in some capacity. However, in the 'act' of engaging Holy Scripture, whether in preparation for ecclesial worship, private devotional reflection, or academic study, the moral dimension of the Holy Spirit's involvement is seldom considered. Too often, the hermeneutical concerns revolve around the reader's capacity to discern rationally the meaning of the text with the assumed *cognitive assistance* of the Spirit. However in embracing this approach, the technical considerations of the exegetical task can subsume a consideration of other factors. Hence the question arises, Is the Christian reader too readily predisposed toward a certain detachment from the *divine* text and by extension its *divine* originator—a personal, relational, and moral being? Does this approach to Holy Scripture actually hinder its purpose: to facilitate the reception of Holy Scripture as God's Word?

These questions indicate that a wider understanding of the Holy Spirit's role in the interpretation of Holy Scripture is required. Evangelical Christians readily affirm the Bible's Spirit-derivation, they also acknowledge the work of the Spirit animating their Christian lives, and theoretically acknowledge that there is an existential transaction between the text of Scripture and the reader that involves the Holy Spirit. But in reading Holy Scripture, what consideration is given to the Holy Spirit as a moral agent; and what place given to the reader's morality; and, significantly, what of their relationship as it relates to this engagement? In the matter of understanding the Spirit's *secret testimony* as it relates to the act of reading Holy Scripture, the moral dimension warrants further reflection.

A HOLY INQUIRY

Many Christian scholars (especially those operating within the field of biblical studies) tend to read the Scriptures through the lens of a historical-critical method. Taken from this perspective, the interpretative endeavour is generally governed by a Cartesian approach, where the reader (as subject) analyses the text (as object) and then seeks critically to apply a method of interpretation that seeks a historically situated, culturally conditioned, and theologically governed meaning—a rationally cogent understanding of the text. Although technically informative, the historical-critical approach seldom makes allowance for the reader's personal engagement with the Spirit in regard to the 'real' exigencies of the Christian life, and as such makes little or no provision for the *moral self* in the act of reading. Conversely, Christian readers may enter into a transaction with the text of Scripture from a Reader-Response perspective, seeking to extract a highly personal, practically relevant, non-methodical, and uncritical interpretation. Indeed, this form of reading may appear to be personally engaging, but the *prophetic power* of God's Word and the Spirit's role within it can be too readily subsumed beneath the reader's own emotions, concerns, and life experiences. Although both of these approaches 'appear' significantly different, they share one key thing in common: a substantive reliance of the human subject to formulate the text's meaning.

As an alternative to these former approaches, the Reformed tradition's acknowledgment of the Holy Spirit within the hermeneutical process assumes the necessary involvement of an 'objective' third party in the process of engaging the divine text—the Holy Spirit. John Calvin alludes to the *secret testimony* of the Spirit in a divine transaction between reader and text.[1] Whilst Calvin's consideration of this *secret testimony* of the Holy Spirit has been, and may be, conceptualized as nothing more than an epistemic exercise in laying claim to a higher authority above and beyond human experience, religious reason, or ecclesiastical tradition, I believe there is more to be considered—a moral dimension to the Spirit's secret testimony.

Within the Reformed system of belief, the Christian reader approaches the text of Holy Scripture in a way that he or she might approach no other text (religious or otherwise)—an engagement with Scripture is an engagement with God. From this perspective, the process of both authorship and interpretation of Holy Scripture (which assume the Holy Spirit's primary involvement), ensures that Holy Scripture remains the authoritative Word of God. Moreover, since both the reader of Scripture and its divine originator are moral beings in the process of this 'secret' engagement, it is difficult to avoid a moral dimension. Further to this, given that from Holy Scripture's internal testimony we infer that this engagement is a morally conditioned, living engagement, a deeper examination is necessary: 'For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart' (Heb. 4:12).[2]

[1] 'Thus the highest proof of scripture derives in general from the fact that God in person speaks in it … we ought to seek our conviction in a higher place than human reasons, judgments, or conjectures that is in the secret testimony of the Spirit.' John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 1, p. 78 = I.vii.4.

A REAL-WORLD INQUIRY

Immanuel Kant claims that all our knowledge begins with experience.[3] Empirical experience adds a rich dimension to theological reflection that purely deductive analysis lacks. The previous questions, inquiring into the nature of the relationship between the Holy Spirit, Holy Scripture, and Christian morality are *grounded questions*; that is to say they are questions that arise from the concerns within the concrete experience of the Christian life. Any explication of the content arising from grounded questions inevitably enters into the domain of personal story.[4] In this regard this theoretical reflection is predicated on my own practically grounded theological story.

In early 2003 I was personally wrestling with the notion of obedience in the Christian life. Questions such as, 'what would an obedient Christian life, really entail?', dominated my personal reflection. I consequently decided to conduct an empirical experiment based on the following question: 'What would happen if I practiced obedience to God—in every area of my life?' In the ensuing months of the experiment's initiation, I subsequently found myself attuned to an increasing personal awareness of my own moral deficiency before God. This growing awareness culminated one night when, in preparing Sunday's sermon, and reading from the text of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, I was overwhelmed with a profound sense of awareness of God's holy presence and my unworthiness within it. In

[2] Scripture citations are from the NIV unless otherwise noted.

[3] Placing this in context he also goes on to say, 'But, though all our knowledge begins with experience, it by no means follows that all arises out of experience.' Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 1990), p. 1.

[4] Mark Strom, 'Grounded Questions. Rich Stories. Deep Change', (TEDx Geneva, 2013) <http://youtu.be/tEISLatc57I>.

my understanding, there was no doubt this was a sovereign act of God's Spirit convicting me.[5] Furthermore, and most significantly, it was in this state of God-initiated moral self awareness that the Holy Scriptures (in the act of reading) 'seemed' to take on an unprecedented *three-dimensional* lucidity.

In my own perception, it was as if a veil had been removed from my eyes and I now viewed the truth set forth in Holy Scripture with supreme clarity.[6] Being a Christian for some years (who had experienced prior workings of God's Spirit) I was convinced this was not an initial conversion experience. However, in this phenomenon, something had precipitated a marked change in my capacity to grasp the truth of God in the act of reading Scripture—something that transcended a natural enhancement of the cognitive process. Simply categorizing this event as a subjective or self-generated reader-response phenomenon does not do justice to it; this was no self-initiated mystical experience—God's Spirit had engaged me in a real and meaningful way.

Significantly, this 'experience' was predicated on an intentional desire to understand the Christian life through relational morality. From my perspective, a willingness to draw near to God in holy obedience had produced a divine response, in which God's Spirit powerfully engaged me through the medium of God's Word. Like Saul's Damascus Road experience, this phenomenon proved to be more than a mere fleeting experience that could easily be discarded as an emotional whim; its effects were profound and have been long-lasting. In fact, this singular event has been the animating force behind an ongoing ten-year quest to understand the role of the Holy Spirit in the moral lives of Christians. Thus arises the concrete concern of the relationship between Christian morality and biblical hermeneutics which forms the conceptual point of departure for this study.

HOLY HERMENEUTICS: MORAL, PERSONAL, RELATIONAL

Empirically it would appear that the *secret testimony* of the Spirit may well be morally conditioned. However, in considering this matter it is fitting that the endeavour begin at the locus for the Spirit's *secret testimony*—the Holy Scriptures. Is the Spirit of God a moral being? [7] In 2 Peter 1:21 the apostle refers to the 'Holy' Spirit as the divine source of the prophetic word; Romans 5:5 reminds us that believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit; and in John 14:26 we see that the Holy Spirit acts in the process of inter-

5 1 John 3:24; 4:13.

6 Beyond this, the resultant sermon had a profound effect on its hearers.

7 I am using Spirit of God and Holy Spirit interchangeably in this study, though I am aware that a functional difference between the two might be discerned.

preting divine truth. With respect to the concept of holiness, the term 'Holy' is not simply a designator of things *divine or special*, but incorporates a moral quality.

God, as Spirit, is a moral being, and involvement with him is morally conditioned. Isaiah's encounter with God (Isa. 6:1-7) reveals that the concept of holiness as inherently moral.8 The Lord is enthroned in the temple and exalted as being holy by the seraphim. Isaiah's reaction, by highlighting moral deficiency, supports this: 'Woe to me… For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips...' (Isa. 6:5). Further on in this prophetic book, the prophet outlines how the moral rebellion of God's people is deemed to have 'grieved' God's Holy Spirit (Isa. 63:10). Similarly in Psalm 51, as a consequence of David's moral deviation, he fears the removal of God's Holy Spirit (Ps. 51:11).

As clear as the connection is in Old Testament accounts, the relationship of the 'Holy' Spirit with morality is even more explicit in the New Testament. This is clearly seen in Paul's reference to 'Spirit of holiness' in Romans 1:4. Gordon Fee convincingly argues that holiness, in this instance, is *qualitative* rather than *descriptive*. This infers the Spirit is characterized by holiness (both in essence and affect), a fact later confirmed by the Spirit's designation as the agent of holiness (Rom. 7:6ff).[9] If the Spirit is truly a 'holy' agent (as he is), then it must logically follow that engaging the 'Holy' Spirit must involve a moral dimension, a dimension that necessarily impacts anyone who meaningfully engages God's Spirit—in whatever capacity.[10]

If the Spirit of God is a moral being, then surely it must follow that this being is personal, and this necessarily must impinge on the act of reading Scripture. In my previously outlined empirical understanding, the act of reading mentioned transcended a mere mechanical or cognitive process—it imbibed a real sense of God's personal presence. This idea of an engagement with God's personal presence through the reading of Holy Scripture, does not simply imply an engagement with an inanimate book,

8 Otto Procksch, 'ἅγιος', in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. by G. Kittel (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964), vol. 1, pp. 88-110, quote on p. 93.

9 Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), p. 483.

10 Such an engagement assumes a largely New Covenant perception of the Holy Spirit; this may stand in contra-distinction to the way the Spirit of God operated (in many instances) in the Old Covenant in a more functional manner e.g. gifting of Samson for a specific task of retribution (e.g. Judg. 14:19; 15:14). Thus the Spirit of God may not always be set forth in Scripture as a morally-conditioned or conditioning agent.

but, as previously discussed, an engagement with God himself, though the medium of Holy Scripture—an engagement animated by the power of the Holy Spirit. Of course, this notion of a personal engagement with the divine being as the *revealer of truth* through Scripture is not an idea alien to previous theological reflection. For Reformation theologians, such as Calvin, the Bible is indeed an infallible book of truth when it is read under the direction of the Spirit, and this engagement is personal in as much as it 'seriously affects' the reader.11 For Calvin, the Spirit-generated transaction between text and reader is a real encounter. It could well be conceptualized as an encounter where the Spirit (within the text) meets the Spirit (within the reader) in this divine transaction of holy reading, and the truth of God personally becomes *self-evident* or *self-authenticated*.

Furthermore, a moral engagement and personal engagement also implies relationship. It is possible, as has been previously alluded to, that this *secret testimony* may be considered purely epistemologically. Taken as a quest for logical certitude and orientated principally toward the arguments relating to the *authority* of scripture, it can readily supplant a focus on the *relational engagement* of the truth with the reader.

The Dutch theologians, G.C. Berkouwer, Herman Bavinck, and Abraham Kuyper believed that Calvin and later Reformed thinkers may have weighted the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti* too one-sidedly, placing a strong emphasis on the authoritative proof of Scripture, at the expense of its personal engagement with the life of faith as it related to an engagement with the text.[12] Whilst I consider such a claim against Calvin lacks consistency (with a strong emphasis on heart-religion throughout his writings), there may well be a more consistent case against post-Reformation orthodoxy

[11] 'Let this point therefore stand; that those whom the Holy Spirit has inwardly taught truly rest upon Scripture, and that Scripture indeed is self-authenticated; hence, it is not right to subject it to proof and reasoning. And the certainty it deserves with us, it attains by the testimony of the Spirit. For even if it wins reverence for itself by its own majesty, it seriously affects us only when it is sealed upon our hearts through the Spirit.' Calvin, *Institutes*, I.vii.5.

[12] 'It is important that both Bavinck and Kuyper reject the idea that Scripture is the object of the *testimonium* apart from its message, for as Kuyper points out, such a view is contrary to the way in which faith works, which excludes such formalization. … Whoever envisions the Spirit's testimony as an independent, isolated witness affording *a priori* certainty about the quality of Scripture, cannot escape voiding the words of Holy Scripture itself.' G. C. Berkouwer, *Holy Scripture*, ed. by Jack B. Rogers (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), p. 45.

in this regard.[13] Notwithstanding this, the proclivity of the post-Cartesian theological endeavour to objectify Scripture has nevertheless affected a perception of the *secret testimony's* relational dimension, by significantly minimizing it. However, beyond Scripture as an authoritative document, and given our previous discussion on the nature of God's holiness, as it pertains to the Holy Spirit, there must be a sense in which God is relationally speaking in and through Scripture, as Bavinck states, '…but in religion we must know that Scripture is the word and truth of God [the person].'[14] Further to this, Kuyper makes a deeper personal assessment: 'To have faith in the Word, Scripture must not grasp us in our *critical thought*, but in the life of the *soul*.'[15] Indeed, an engagement with Scripture is not simply a rational engagement with concepts from an ancient text, or even personal engagement with the Word of God by way of deep personal self-reflection, but a relational engagement with the God of the Word—evident as Spirit.[16]

The Holy Spirit endowed encounter with the Spirit inspired Scripture is an encounter with a *living* word (Heb. 4:12), and by extension a relational encounter with the *living* God. Whilst God's Spirit may not be 'actually' infused into the material pages of Scripture, a genuine engagement with Scripture may be considered a relational engagement with God (as Spirit) through the medium of the material text. Although no analogy is perfectly consistent, perhaps a way of conceptualizing the relationship of the material text of Scripture with the Word of God (as a relational word) is to illustrate it by considering the corresponding relationship between the human brain with the rational mind. The brain is the living material organism that enables the incorporeal reasoning mind to function. Thus by extension, from this illustration it is possible to posit that in the act of reading Holy Scripture, the Christian relationally encounters the *mind of God* (Word of God) through the material organism of Holy Scripture; and this made possible by a dynamic and relational engagement with the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, if it stands true that God is a relational/moral being, then this engagement with God, through the medium

[13] In addressing this subject, Henk van den Belt refers to Francis Turretin's contribution: 'For Turretin believers accept Scripture because it proves itself to be divine by its own *notae* and the Spirit is the efficient cause of this faith that rests upon the marks of Scripture.' Henk van denBelt, *The Authority of Scripture in Reformed Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 158.

[14] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*. Volume 1: *Prolegomena*, ed. by J. Bolt (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), p. 461.

[15] Abraham Kuyper, *The Work of the Holy Spirit* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1900; rpt Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1941), p. 78 [italics in original].

[16] Calvin, *Institutes*, I.vii.4.

of Scripture, must have some kind of a real and transformative effect on the reader. Just as Moses approached the burning bush, knowing he was standing on holy ground, an encounter with the presence of God through the Scriptures cannot be considered relationally—and by extension morally—ineffectual.

In arguing for a relational model to Paul's Spirit-ethics, Volker Rabens observes, 'it is primarily through deeper knowledge of, and an intimate relationship with, God, Jesus Christ and with the community of faith that people are transformed by the Spirit for religious-ethical life'.[17] Rabens contends that the Spirit continually transforms and empowers believers for ethical conduct by enlivening and even intensifying these intimate relationships.[18] Whilst Rabens is referring directly to personal beings, it can be extrapolated that these relational encounters do not occur in abstraction and are (at least in part) mediated via the Word of God in the Scriptures. In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul (in contrasting Moses' veiled face) portrays the believer as beholding the Lord and being transformed; a transformation that is attributed to the Lord, who is the Spirit (whom, similarly, may be encountered through the Word). Rabens further argues that this is one of Paul's central themes, and that the Spirit's transforming work is relational and by extension has ethical implications: 'On the basis of this Spirit-created intimate relationship to God in Christ, believers are transformed "into the same image", and that is, their lives portray more of the characteristics of Christ.'[19]

A relational encounter with God in Scripture is transformative; a notion further explicated by Gordon Oliver's assessment: 'Reading Scripture will lead directly to a renewed call to walk in the ways of God. The connection between encountering Holy Scripture and engaging holy living is assumed.'[20] Therefore in the 'Holy' Spirit's relational encounter with the reader, through the Word, a moral dimension (evidenced by substantive transformation) cannot be avoided.

REVISITING HOLINESS IN HERMENEUTICS

Subsequent reflection on the events preceding the aforementioned *epiphany*, revealed that I had allowed a subtle moral complacency to influence my life; *grieving* the Holy Spirit (Isa. 63:10; Eph. 4:30), and hindering my

[17] Volker Rabens, *The Holy Spirit and Ethics in Paul: Transformation and Empowering for Religious-Ethical Life* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), p. 124.
[18] Ibid., p. 173.
[19] Ibid., pp. 202-3.
[20] Gordon Oliver, *Holy Bible, Human Bible* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 2006), p. 11.

capacity to engage Holy Scripture with clarity. Moreover, I consider that this was further compounded by an over-reliance on critical methods of reading, methods which tended to objectify the Spirit's testimony rationally through Scripture—viewing it as an authentic religious text and nothing more. These factors combined to result in a diminished relational awareness of God and a sensitivity to His truth as revealed through the medium of Holy Scripture. Scripture became something I studied, not a medium through which I expected God to engage me, and I him. Certainly, in my case, Oliver's evaluation proved true: 'Whilst historical-critical studies can recognize and illuminate the literary genres of parts of the Bible as religious literature, they are not so capable of evaluating the genre of the Bible as "Holy Scripture"'.[21] Indeed, failure to take seriously relational holiness with God the Spirit, limits one's capacity to engage Scripture as 'Holy' Scripture. Although critical reading of the text does have a valid place in the scholarly endeavour, without a genuine consideration of the moral/existential dimension of the reader's engagement with the divine text, the Spirit's testimony may be drowned out in the hermeneutical engagement (1 Tim. 4:1; Heb. 3:7; 4:12; 10:15; and Revelation 2).

The challenge of relational holiness in hermeneutics is perennial. The people of God in Isaiah's day had become complacent about their living relationship with God, as the prophet writes, 'They have chosen their own ways, and their souls delight in their abominations; so I also will choose harsh treatment for them and will bring upon them what they dread. For when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, no one listened' (Isa. 66:3, 4). Like Isaiah's hearers, a form of religion which is personally distasteful to God can insidiously arise; a form that gives legitimacy to a formal engagement with the text of Scripture without a genuine relational response to its message. Further to this, the Pharisees—who in Jesus' time held a *high view* of Scripture—theoretically endorsed the authority of Scripture, but failed to comprehend the *message* of Scripture even when Jesus (the fulfilment of messianic prophecy) stood right before them (John 5:29).

The challenge of the Holy Spirit through God's word is moral, personal, and relational; as such it is imperative that the Scriptures be approached with deep sense of hermeneutical humility predicated on personal holiness. Isaiah's exhortation remains as valid today as it did then: 'But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.' (Isa. 66:2 ESV) Unless the Holy Scriptures are embraced with a humble and holy disposition, I believe that the Spirit of God will not allow a *dynamic living engagement* with God's Word—

[21] Ibid., p. 13.

thus hindering its inherent truth from being clearly revealed. Therefore it could be argued that the reader, who walks consistently in step with the Spirit in the sense of relational holiness, is more readily predisposed and able to comprehend the Spirit's testimony in Holy Scripture with clarity (1Cor. 2:9-10).

A SPIRIT-ORIGINATED FOUNDATION

Presenting the argument of this thesis from an empirical perspective potentially exposes it to allegations of semi-Pelagianism. Against this potential allegation, it is necessary to ask: 'Should moral humility be considered a "necessary" precondition for a "clear" understanding of Scripture?' The answer is both, no and yes! In the first instance *no*, because all genuine knowledge of God's special revelation is ultimately predicated on the prevenient work of God's Spirit, which operates independently of the human subject, whilst acting on the human subject. Only the Holy Spirit is able to produce the faith that enables an acceptance of God's Word and the salvific message that comes through it: 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast' (Eph. 2:8, 9). In Paul's understanding the very faith that enables salvation is a gift from God given on the grounds of God's independent initiative. Furthermore, Paul would certainly understand that this kind of faith is a product of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Thus, it must logically follow that the human moral will prior to the prevenient ministration of the Spirit, is such that there is no capacity to develop a moral proclivity toward any spiritual discernment. However, it must also be affirmed that the Spirit's ubiquity ensures that the capacity for this prevenient operation of the Spirit is always available to the Christian.

With respect to moral humility as a prerequisite to hermeneutical clarity, on a secondary level the answer is *yes*. Because the prevenient *quickening* action of the Spirit toward the Christian[22] enables a genuine human response, the process toward clearer discernment of Holy Scripture is now possible. Once the process of *drawing near* to God is initiated by the Spirit, the believer is able to participate in it: 'Come near to God and he will come near to you.… Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up' (Jas 4:8-10). Furthermore, this process of *drawing near* is augmented and animated by intercessory prayer: 'I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your

[22] Although a Christian subject is in view, this could equally apply to a non-Christian on whom the Holy Spirit is acting, in a salvific capacity, for the first time.

inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.' (Eph. 3:16-17) Thus, we may conclude that it does not follow that human morality *necessarily* precedes Spiritual understanding (in an absolute sense), but it does follow that the Christian interpreter —as he/she responds to the prevenient operation of the Spirit—is relationally predisposed toward the Spirit in a state of moral humility, and thus more adequately qualified to discern the dynamic interaction of Spirit and Word in the 'act' of interpretation. Therefore, under the rubric of the *secret testimony* of the Spirit, a genuine understanding divine truth is augmented by Spirit-generated morality; furthermore this truth works itself through to influence the Christian life in a morally transformative way.

THE PATHWAY OF A HOLY HERMENEUTIC

In the capacity of Christian understanding, as it relates to a genuine knowledge of God and his will (especially understanding through the Holy Scriptures) the Holy Spirit always plays a preeminent role, as the apostle Paul implies, 'I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better' (Eph. 1:17). Furthermore, in the explication of the hermeneutical endeavour of *knowing God better* through an engagement with Scripture, it may be possible and indeed immensely helpful to outline the dynamic hermeneutical process in which the Holy Spirit, the morally obedient reader, and the Holy Scriptures, are engaged in: acting in response to the prevenient prompting of the Holy Spirit, the Christian reader is drawn to a pre-critical, Spirit-mediated transaction with Holy Scripture. The Spirit not only enables a perspicuous cognitive understanding of the text, but commensurate with it, a *moral* prompting to act in responsive obedience. In 'acting' in obedience the Christian gains a richer 'empirical understanding' of the truth initially revealed. Thus we might deem them to understand or know God better (as alluded to in Eph. 1:17).

Now in a more mature *state of being*, the Christian is even more favourably pre-disposed to the promptings of the Spirit and thus drawn afresh to a Spirit-engendered transaction with Holy Scripture to gain even greater insight. It is as Augustine identified, 'it is surely true that as the child grows these books grow with him.'[23] Therefore the 'secret testimony' of the Spirit is at work in the dynamic engagement between person and text, engendering a morally obedient disposition which leads them toward a clearer, richer, and deeper knowledge of God; a knowledge

[23] Augustine, *Confessions* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961). III:5.

verified by the Spirit's inner testimony and validated by an obedient life: 'Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us' (1 John 3:24). Granted that this representation of the hermeneutical process may not be precisely accurate for every Christian reader in every case, it does provide a helpful framework though which the subject of the moral dimension of the Holy Spirit's secret testimony might be conceptualized and as such provides a general guide for further discussion and development of the subject.

CONCLUSION

The scholarly world endorses an approach to Scripture which effectively allows the interpreter's method to frame the meaning. It is a hermeneutical system, as Francis Watson states, which 'licenses a single, restricted interpretative paradigm within which one must operate if one wishes to enjoy the rewards that are on offer.'[24] Yet Holy Scripture is more than an object for 'scientific examination', it is a living text, a sacred text, a holy text, through which God speaks into varying situations with equal validity.[25] In the act of interpretation, the value the Scriptures as 'holy' should be received as a given, the authoritative presence of the 'Holy' Spirit is a necessity, and the value of a 'holy' life of the reader should not be underestimated.

Any authentic engagement with Scripture must acknowledge the *atmosphere of holiness* in which the act of authentic interpretation takes place. Christians who take seriously their own moral condition before God, will not only reverence the Scriptures, but realize that a Spirit-initiated *holy disposition* is a valued and necessary pre-condition for a *relational engagement* with God's Spirit through God's Word, and leading to a deeper understanding of God through it. If considered in this manner, an engagement with Scripture will be understood as tangibly transformative, as Calvin explains, 'If we approach Scripture with pure eyes and honest senses, the majesty of God will immediately meet us, subdue our bold opposition and force us to obey.'[26] Thus, when reassessing the 'Holy' Spirit's *secret testimony* in relationship to 'Holy' Scripture, it would be remiss not to reflect on the 'Holy' Spirit's relationship to the 'Holy' reader.

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[24] Francis Watson, 'The Open Text: Introduction', in *The Open Text: New Directions for Biblical Studies*, ed. by Francis Watson (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1993), pp. 1-12, quotation on p. 3.

[25] Ibid., p. 3.

[26] *Joannis Calvini Opera selecta*, 3, 69; cited in van denBelt, *Authority of Scripture*, p. 62.

The Apologetic Distinctives of Thomas Chalmers

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INTRODUCTION

On the morning of 31 May 1847, Dr. Thomas Chalmers, 'the greatest of living Scotchmen' was found to have passed peacefully in his sleep.[1] The public outpouring at his funeral was something seldom seen in Edinburgh, as the procession of mourners stretched for mile after mile, and as one chronicler said, it was 'amid the tears of a nation, and with more than kingly honours' that this Scottish divine was laid to rest.[2]

This humble minister of the word of God left behind a wealth of written works covering a diverse range of subjects from pauperism, education, church government, evangelism, and missions, to philosophy, theology, and apologetics. At times, he even waded into the arenas of public policy, economics, and natural science. He has been referred to as the 'mainspring of the whole evangelical movement in the Scottish church',[3] and 'the greatest spiritual force Scotland saw in the nineteenth century'.[4] His contributions to Scottish Protestantism cannot be understated, and it is reasonable to rank him second only to John Knox in religious importance.

For all his dedication to the ministry and years of theological effort, Dr Chalmers is primarily remembered for two things: being the man at the centre of the 1843 disruption of the Church of Scotland culminating in the establishment of the Scottish Free Church, and his pastoral work on missions and social issues like pauperism and education. However, Chalmers was more than a church organizer and champion for the needs of the poor. He was an active apologist of formidable intellect with an evangelical zeal that motivated him to spread the Gospel.

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1 Thomas McCrie, *The Story of the Scottish Church. From the Reformation to the Disruption* (Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, 1988), p. 527.

2 William Hanna, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Thomas Chalmers, D.D., LL.D.*, IV vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1852), vol. IV, p. 593.

3 McCrie, p. 526.

4 Iain H. Murray, *A Scottish Christian Heritage* (Edinburgh and Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 2006), p. 75.

His apologetic works profoundly influenced the students who sat under him at St Andrews and Edinburgh Universities, and were often praised by his contemporaries for being of the highest calibre.[5] Yet, even with this praise, Chalmers' status as an apologist was short lived, for in a little more than ten years after his death, his writings were rarely read.[6] Today, few of his works are in publication, with little written of his apologetic endeavours, and even fewer references to the arguments or recognition of their similarity to modern apologists.[7] These days, it is safe to say that Chalmers' apologetic prowess and apologetic distinctives are essentially forgotten.

REASONS FOR CHALMERS' APOLOGETIC ANONYMITY

At the core, there are essentially three reasons for the limited duration and understanding of Chalmers' apologetics. The first reason for Chalmers' apologetic anonymity was his style of writing.[8]

Chalmers rarely wrote simply to convey some fact or piece of information. His desire was to stir, motivate, and awaken the emotion. When reading Chalmers' apologetic works, this objective becomes obvious. His writings, which have the aim of defending Christianity, are excessively verbose and too repetitive for the academic apologist. A reviewer of his writings in 1842 says, 'his style is often incorrect, and almost always verbose and tumid, and, amidst a wilderness of words, the reader is sometimes at a loss how to find any meaning whatever'.[9] The result of this excessive wordiness is that the reader of Chalmers' works can become lost. At times, his writings read as though they are dictated and in need of editing. They often lack a coherent or recognizable structure, and are seemingly contradictory amidst his extended efforts to explain.

The second limitation, to the wider acceptance of Chalmers' apologetic works, grew out of the tendency in his personality to be more receptive than critical in his research.[10] Though he was ahead of his time in the pastoral application of his theology toward the needy, intellectually

5 Murray, *Scottish Christian Heritage*, pp. 76–9.

6 Murray, *Scottish Christian Heritage*, p. 77.

7 Steven Adamson, 'The Apologetics of Thomas Chalmers: The Influences, Methods, and Effects of Chalmers' Rebuttals to Objections to Christianity' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Aberdeen, Highland Theological College, 2013).

8 Adamson, 'The Apologetics of Thomas Chalmers', p. 26.

9 'Chalmers' Natural Theology', in *The North American Review* (Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1842), p. 357.

10 Adamson, 'The Apologetics of Thomas Chalmers', p. 30.

he was regulated by contemporary thought. He did not question the generally accepted Newtonian mechanical view of the universe, and readily incorporated preliminary and sometimes false findings of modern geology, especially if they aided his gap theory view of Genesis.[11]

Third, Chalmers' apologetic writings came at a time when natural theology was increasingly challenged by scientific discoveries. By the time the eight *Bridgewater treatises*, were published, of which Chalmers was one of its authors, the ideas of Paley, Reid, Butler, Buckland, and other natural theologians, of the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, had been recycled so often that scholars and scientists paid them little attention.[12]

These factors contributed to Chalmers' technical works languishing on library shelves for over one hundred years. However, with renewed interest in arguments for Christianity resulting from contemporary research in natural theology and intelligent design Chalmers' apologetics and distinctives as an original thinker are beginning to be realised.

CHALMERS' PHILOSOPHICAL DISTINCTIVE

As an apologist, Chalmers possessed great interest in mathematics and the sciences, had thoroughly imbibed Scottish common sense philosophy, natural theology, and preferred the scientific method of argument via induction to deductive arguments. This aspect, his philosophical foundation, forms the first of two distinctives in Chalmers' apologetics.

The philosophic foundation in Chalmers' apologetic arguments for the existence of God, creation, inspiration, and miracles arises out of his common sense belief in the human mind's innate tendency to expect constancy in nature, a tendency he believes is always matched by nature's harmonious Newtonian constancy.[13] As an example of this presupposition, consider Chalmers' proof for the existence of God, which follows the traditional teleological design analogy, generally associated with William Paley. He employs his foundational presupposition to argue that humanity expects constancy in nature; hence, when presented with objects that are contrived for a purpose, they are warranted in presuming upon an antecedent designer. As such, Chalmers argues that the analogy is valid as it is merely an application of the expectation of nature's constancy to presume upon a designer of the world. His argument does not overcome the formidable theistic objections of David Hume as he had intended.

11 Wade Huie, 'The Theology of Thomas Chalmers' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh: New College, 1949).

12 Adamson, 'The Apologetics of Thomas Chalmers', p. 31.

13 Ibid., pp. 66–85.

Nonetheless, Chalmers presents a noteworthy attempt by reducing one's gaze to the essential attributes of a generic designer and any artefact contrived for a purpose. In so doing, he exposes a flaw in Hume's argument (i.e., that all effects are singularities, thus knowledge is impossible if the accessory components of the cause are included) and develops a line of reasoning previously unrecognized in reviews of his works, a line of reasoning that displays nearly identical statements as the concept of irreducible complexity put forward in the latter half of the twentieth century by intelligent design advocates.[14]

CHALMERS' EVANGELICAL DISTINCTIVE

While Chalmers had the intellect of a scientist and philosopher, his desire was for the gospel. He was schooled in Scottish philosophy; however, he did not allow it to dictate his theology. He was a believer in the value and necessity of natural theology, but his evangelical orientation would not allow it to replace God's revelation found in Scripture. He had seen and tasted moderatism, but was awakened after a long near death illness, to the necessity to preach and teach the gospel as a full-fledged evangelical.[15]

It is this picture of Chalmers, which is often overlooked. True, his theological writings do not meet the expectations of academic rigour. That is because his motivation is always evangelical; his goal is to lift and stir the soul. His methods of argumentation are dominated by his love for science, and devotion to natural theology and common sense philosophy. Yet his concern for evangelism is constantly evident in his illustrative style of presentation, a style that has unfortunately removed his works from the arena of serious academics.

Often the aspects of Chalmers' works that outline the need for schools, and serve as the motivation for people to enter the missionary field, are labelled 'social work'. In some respects this is a correct characterization, but it should not be overlooked that at the core they are an outgrowth of his apologetics. And these apologetics had a warm and life-changing

[14] Ibid., pp. 89–127.

[15] The religious moderatism of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Scotland can be said to be somewhat unconcerned with the drama of redemption. Instead, it focused on affirming the reasonableness of religion and morality from a rationalistic and humanistic perspective. It was predominantly an anthropocentric religion that found common ground with natural theology, being heavily influenced by Scottish Common Sense Philosophy; it was less theological than it was philosophical. Daniel Rice, 'Natural Theology and the Scottish Philosophy in the Thought of Thomas Chalmers', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 24 (1971), 23–46 (p. 33).

appeal on people, and demonstrate his evangelical distinctive to apologetics.

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND ON CHALMERS' APOLOGETIC DISTINCTIVES

In many respects, Chalmers is representative of the typical apologetics of natural theologians prevalent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Yet, there are, as has been demonstrated, aspects of Chalmers' apologetics that are unique. These distinctives combine into what can be termed a 'Chalmerian' uniqueness to his apologetics.

Daniel Rice writes that eighteenth- and nineteenth-century natural theology, in both England and Scotland, were heavily synthesized with religious moderatism.[16] Many of the apologetic works of this era were noticeably lacking in orthodox doctrine or evangelical sentiment. Instead, they were endowed, as George Trevelyan writes, with 'a cauld clatter of morality'.[17] The overwhelming objective of these works was not for the evangelical promulgation of Christianity, but merely the reasoned demonstration of the existence and character of God, and reliability of Scripture via appeals to nature.[18]

This attitude is understandable, for outright atheism or anti-Christian beliefs in nineteenth-century western society was a social taboo. Consequently, Christianity was assumed true without exception, and all that was required was to demonstrate the underpinnings of faith (i.e., the existence and character of God and the credibility of the Bible). Doctrine was left to the ministry, and evangelism in this time of Britain's history was frowned upon as being too closely related to religious fanaticism.[19]

Chalmers' works have the same basic contents as the works of his contemporaries. His efforts in natural theology reflect what had been produced by Butler, Paley, Reid, and a host of others: focusing on demonstrating the existence and character of God via appeals to creation, and the ordered working of the world and humanity. Many of his other treatises are oriented toward demonstrating the veracity and authority of Scripture, and reflect the same ideas of Butler's eighteenth century *Analogies*.

[16] Daniel Rice, 'The Theology of Thomas Chalmers' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Drew University, 1966), p. 33.

[17] George Trevelyan, *Illustrated English Social History* (London: Longmans, 1944), p. 459.

[18] Rice, 'The Theology of Thomas Chalmers', pp. 111–55.

[19] Rice, 'Natural Theology and the Scottish Philosophy', *passim*.

In general, Chalmers' apologetics contain the traditional subjects of natural theology.[20]

Even so, James McCosh, who considers Chalmers to be essentially a synthesizer of moderate religion with philosophy, also says that the tenor of Chalmers' apologetics reflected a great uniqueness in his time.

> Hitherto there has been a severance, at times an opposition if not avowed yet felt, between the Scottish philosophy and the Scottish theology. The one had magnified human nature, and tended to produce a legal, self-righteous spirit; whereas the other humbled man and exalted God, enjoining such graces as faith, humility and penitence. But there never was any real opposition between the facts gathered by the one and the truths taken out of God's Word by the other. The metaphysicians had shown that there is such a faculty in man as the conscience; and the conscience proclaims that man is a sinner, while the Bible provides a forgiveness for the sinner in a way which honours the moral law. The reconciliation between the philosophy and the religion was effected by Thomas Chalmers, who has had greater influence moulding the religious belief and character of his countrymen than any one since the greatest Scotchman, John Knox.[21]

Considering this statement, it is possible to distinguish Chalmers from his natural theological contemporaries. In short, the apologetics of Chalmers are differentiated by their practical evangelical nature and reliance on innate tendencies. This then is the 'Chalmerian' difference attested to earlier. This I have defined as 'the apologetics of natural theology with an anthropological evangelical emphasis on humanity's disease of sin remedied by Christ's atonement'.[22]

When reading Chalmers' works, the practical nature and the evangelical sentiment of his inductive apologetics becomes obvious. Chalmers writes not just to prove a point, but also to motivate his readers to pick up and read their Bibles. 'It will be a great satisfaction to the writer of the following pages, if any shall rise from the perusal of them, with a stronger determination than before to take his Christianity exclusively from the Bible.'[23] In this, Chalmers' apologetics are unique, being more evangelical, while still inductively rooted in common sense, than the typical works of his day.

[20] Huie, 'The Theology of Thomas Chalmers'.

[21] James McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy, Biographical, Expository, Critical, from Hutcheson to Hamilton* (New York: R. Carter, 1875), p. 393.

[22] Adamson, 'The Apologetics of Thomas Chalmers', pp. 274–5.

[23] Thomas Chalmers, *The Evidence and Authority of the Christian Revelation* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood, 1817), pp. vii–viii.

Even Chalmers himself identifies this apologetic uniqueness. He believes the approach he, and for that matter his evangelical contemporaries in Scotland were taking, reflects something different, something he considers more Scottish than English. Of this, he writes:

> The treatment which Mr. Hume's argument has met with in the two countries of England and Scotland is strikingly in unison with the genius of the respective people. The savants of our nation have certainly a greater taste and inclination for the reflex process, while it is more properly of our southern neighbours to enter, vigorously and immediately and with all that instinctive confidence wherewith nature has endowed us, on the business of the direct one. Our general tendency is to date our arguments from a higher point than the English do to reason for example about reasoning, before we proceed to reason about the matter on hand . . . The English again, to borrow another phrase from their own parliamentary language, are for proceeding to the order of the day.[24]

Chalmers identifies this English-Scottish difference when commenting on Paley's work on Christian evidences. He indicates that the Scottish theologian, trained in common sense philosophy, first thinks upon the metaphysical underpinnings to the question, before embarking on proofs. He comments:

> This is what our friends in the south seem to have no patience for. Their characteristic is not subtlety of discrimination on the powers and principles of the mind, but often admirable soundness and sagacity in the direct application of their powers to the practical object coming to a right judgment on all important questions. Dr. Paley stands forth in full dimension as an exemplar of this class.[25]

Chalmers considers the English approach to apologetics to be characterized by this more direct attack. Metaphysical reasonings do not take such a central focus in the recognized works of English theologians. Scottish apologists, on the other hand, according to Chalmers, place significant emphasis on philosophical thinking. A survey of the Scottish works of Reid, Stewart, and Brown, for example, are replete with metaphysical preliminaries. In all of Chalmers' technical works, metaphysical preliminaries occupy the first several chapters of the writings.

McCosh considers the influence of Scottish philosophy on the religious and theological expression of the nation as the primary reason for

[24] Thomas Chalmers, *On the Miraculous and Internal Evidences of the Christian Revelation* (Glasgow: W. Collins, 1836), pp. 42–3.

[25] Chalmers, *Miraculous and Internal Evidences*, pp. 42–4.

a unique form of apologetics found not only within Chalmers, but also within Scotland as a whole. McCosh points out that the reason for this uniqueness is that the Scottish church exerted power and influence over the people, in the absence of a political structure, long since removed to Westminster.[26] James Buchan gives the same reason for the distinctiveness found in Scottish theology in general, claiming throughout his work, *Crowded with Genius*, that without the presence of political or aristocratic elites, the church and university professors assumed the role of the formulators of society.[27]

With this pivotal role in Scottish society occupied by the clergy, the general make-up of Scottish thinking, according to McCosh, became more reflective, bearing the hallmarks subscribed to by common sense philosophy. In general, Scottish apologetics, of which Chalmers is an excellent example, have a tendency to use inductive pursuits, to be distinguished from apologetics of other writers who use more *a priori* metaphysical thinking. While still focused on natural theology, Chalmers considers the intellectual processes behind human nature, the mind, and epistemology, to be in essence a blending of philosophy and religion.[28]

Based on this analysis, Chalmers' own assessment, and the views of other researchers, it is safe to say that Chalmers' apologetics were unique for his time. They reflect the general contents of natural theology, but were controlled by the empirical demands of common sense induction and were written for an evangelical not academic purpose. It is the evangelical purpose that Chalmers focused on later in life, believing that future ministers should be instructed with the same evangelical zeal that his parishioners observed from the pulpit.

CHALMERS' INFLUENCE ON EVANGELICAL APOLOGETICS

In addition to his writings, Chalmers' evangelical orientation came forth in his sermons and lectures. He constantly encouraged his congregations and students to live out their faith in a very active manner. The response given by the public to his sermons brought him many laudatory descriptions, of which these are typical: 'as a preacher, the foremost of his age ...

[26] McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy*, p. 16.

[27] James Buchan, *Crowded with Genius. The Scottish Enlightenment: Edinburgh's Moment of the Mind* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), pp. 4–23, 56–118.

[28] McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy.*

no living rival',[29] 'the greatest preacher which Scotland has produced',[30] possibly 'the greatest pulpit orator of modern times'.[31] Anthologies of great sermons and great preachers would be inclined to include one of Chalmers' sermons, usually the *Expulsive Power of a New Affection*. That the reputation of this master preacher of nearly two hundred years ago has not been forgotten is indicated by the description given him by a contemporary professor of homiletics, who called Chalmers 'the ablest preacher that the Presbyterian Church has produced'.[32]

In Chalmers' sermons, there is recognition for an enlarged view of relating Christian truths to everyday life. This recognition was the impelling force behind his beliefs on such subjects as pauperism and missions. According to one church historian, Chalmers was the first churchman to see the significance of the industrial revolution in the church's life, and his *Commercial Discourses* certainly exemplified his keenness to see a broader application of Christian teaching than had previously been expected.[33] William Blaikie recognized Chalmers to be the first to apprehend the capabilities and obligations of the pulpit. Indicating that a minister's job is 'to educate character, to establish right relations with nature and humanity, to improve all that was improveable in man, to saturate the social and national life of the country with the spirit of Christ'.[34]

'The king of practical theologians' was Peter Bayne's description of Chalmers, observing that he 'wrote with the sound of the world in his ears; every one of his books seems anchored to earth'.[35] This testimony is supported by many other writers who recognize Chalmers' contribution to the practical side of apologetics, to that of an enlarged view of Christian truths toward the demands of everyday life.[36] Blaikie sums it up this way:

[29] D.S. Williamson, *The Homage of the Wise Men of Christ* (Edinburgh: Myles Macphail, 1847), p. 23.

[30] McCosh, *The Scottish Philosophy*, p. 397.

[31] D. Macmillan, *Representative Men of the Scottish Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark), p. 146.

[32] Huie, 'The Theology of Thomas Chalmers', p. 263.

[33] Ibid., p. 272.

[34] W. G. Blaikie, *The Preachers of Scotland: From the Sixth to the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1888), p. 8.

[35] Peter Bayne, *Six Christian Biographies. John Howard. William Wilberforce. Thomas Chalmers. Thomas Arnold. Samuel Budgett. John Foster* (London: D. Bayne & Co., 1887), p. 167.

[36] N. L. Walker, *Thomas Chalmers: His Life and Its Lessons* (London: Nelson & Sons, 1880), pp. 91, 123.

> Thoroughly Calvinistic in his theology, he was yet full of humanity, and breathed only love and kindness to his race; and the bones of Calvinism were so covered with flesh and skin and life-like colour, that, in his hands, it became a thing of beauty and joy forever.[37]

By approaching theology from the bottom of the heart as well as from the top of the head, Chalmers' apologetics are noticeably evangelical, especially in the spoken word. Their impact on his congregations and the entire Free Church of Scotland cannot be underestimated.

One of the things that Chalmers noticed when he left Kilmany for Tron Church in Glasgow was the incredibly impoverished conditions of a large proportion of the city. The people lived in abject squalor and rarely attended church. According to Charles Walker, there had been a general tendency on the part of moderate ministers to consider the problem of the poor as one that was without a solution even though they might not express these sentiments.[38] From the beginning of his time in Glasgow, Chalmers viewed things differently. With more than ten thousand people living in his parish, Chalmers, with his evangelical orientation, established a pattern of visitation for himself and his elders. His program was so successful that every person in the parish was visited at least once a year. Out of necessity, his visits were short, but long enough to enable him to make an accurate assessment of the congregations most urgent needs. He soon discovered that providing an education to the impoverished was high on the list of issues facing his charge. To rectify this situation, he divided the parish into smaller districts and arranged for Sunday Schools, to provide some level of education, in each district. It became evident that this was not enough, and Chalmers set about the task of raising money from the congregation to start day schools.

Even with all his dedication to the ministry and hard work, Chalmers alone could not have carried out his pastoral work in Glasgow. In this, numerous individuals aided, and it was his extraordinary gift for awakening spiritual convictions that garnered him tremendous support. He gathered a group of committed Christians, many of whom had come to faith under his preaching. He turned the detailed work over to the office of Church deacon, a position that had for many years fallen into general disuse.

When he left Glasgow in 1823, his work in pastoral apologetics did not end. During the remaining twenty-four years of his life, he was dedicated to the teaching and training of men who would carry the mantle of his

[37] Blaikie, *The Preachers of Scotland*, p. 288.

[38] Charles Walker, 'Thomas Chalmers (I)', *The Gospel Magazine* 1351 n.s. (April, 1965), 161-66 (pp. 164-5).

efforts into the future. When it came to the classroom, he was equally effective, as in the pulpit, instilling deep convictions and desire by his students to become ministers, teachers, and missionaries.

His impact on students during his five years at St Andrews is marked by the missionary enthusiasm he instilled in six students. John Urquhart, Robert Nesbit, Alexander Duff, John Adam, David Ewart, and William Sinclair Mackay were all stirred to take up the missionary task. These students were so moved by Chalmers' practical teachings that they all became involved in Scottish missionary work to India. Working in India for the balance of the nineteenth century, these six students began schools, hospitals, and cared and tended the needs of the church, preaching the gospel to both upper and lower classes in India's society.[39]

After removing to Edinburgh University in 1828, Chalmers focused on teaching systematic theology. His students went on to represent the evangelical movement fifteen years later, when the Free Church started. All told, Chalmers' students rank as a 'who's who' of mid-nineteenth-century Scottish theologians, including such names as Robert Candlish and William Cunningham.

After becoming Professor of Divinity at Edinburgh University in 1827, it was Chalmers' custom to allow interested residents and passers-by attend his lectures. Even with a class filled with divinity students, Chalmers was never overly technical. He constantly strove to resurrect a dead creed and enliven a formalistic theology to the eternal benefit of both the highly educated and working class people.

CONCLUSION

When assessing Chalmers' apologetics, it is clear that his written works had minimal impact on academia; they are difficult to read, lacking rigour, order, and readability. However, his practical apologetics left their mark on Scotland, and are still noticeable today. One needs only attend a presbytery or general assembly meeting of the Free Church and hear Chalmers' words quoted, followed by the obligatory foot stomping of approval by the members in attendance.

It is the practical part of Chalmers' apologetics, the evangelical nature of his works and demeanour that is most remembered. Often the aspects of these writings that outline the need for schools, and serve as the motivation for people to enter the missionary field are labelled social work. Yet, they are an outgrowth of his apologetics that had a warm and

[39] S. Piggin and J. Roxborogh, *The St. Andrews Seven: The Finest Flowering of Missionary Zeal in Scottish History* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1985).

life-changing appeal. His apologetics are ultimately for the practical purpose of evangelism. He writes, 'the more practical—the better'. A maxim, which he says, 'is not vulgarizing Christianity to bring it down to the very humblest occupations of human life. It is, in fact, dignifying human life, by bringing it up to the level of Christianity'.[40] We hope this aspect of Chalmers' apologetics—the practical—will generate greater appreciation in academia, and instil a desire in Christians to seek out and read his writings.

[40] Thomas Chalmers, *The Application of Christianity to the Commercial and Ordinary Affairs of Life in a Series of Discourses* (Glasgow: Collins, 1820), p. 96.

Unravelling Scottish Evangelicalism (Part Three)

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REFORM AND RENEWAL C.1920-C.1960[1]

In the early decades of the twentieth century, particularly in the bleak landscape of post- First World War Scotland, there began to emerge a fracture line between those who called themselves 'Evangelical' on the basis of commitment to cultivating heart-felt love and devotion to Jesus, and those who thought that specific dogmatic assertions, particularly on issues that higher critical methodology appeared to be calling into question in regards to scriptural authority and the core miracles of the Bible (e.g., the virgin birth, resurrection of Christ, and second coming), needed to be stated and defended if there was to be any Gospel to which to respond.

Textually-oriented Evangelicalism and a commitment to broadly Reformed theology had never entirely disappeared in late Victorian Scotland, of course. It was perhaps best represented by the influential Free Church leaders Horatius Bonar (1808–1889), Andrew Bonar (1810–1892) and James Begg (1808–1883).[2] In the first decades of the twentieth century this tradition began to regroup into what we might call a 'foundationalist' movement within the revivalist network. This invented term is deliberately chosen to echo the term 'Fundamentalist' while also signalling some distinctions. First, whereas the term 'Fundamentalism' signifies opposition to theological modernism, the foundationalist movement rejected both liberalism *and* emotion-laden revivalism. In fact, although characterized as an anti-intellectual movement, early 'Fundamentalism' in both Britain and America was more about a reassertion of classical orthodoxy than about cultural crusades. This re-engagement with historic Christian

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1 For previous parts, see M. Spence, 'Unravelling Scottish Evangelicalism (Part One)', *SBET* 30 (2012), 30–50; and 'Unravelling Scottish Evangelicalism (Part Two)', *SBET* 31 (2013), 163–86.

2 D. Bebbington, 'Evangelicalism', in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, ed. by Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), pp. 306–8 (p. 307).

teaching pervaded the pamphlets, *The Fundamentals*, published in the United States between 1910-1915, from which the name of the Fundamentalist movement derived. A quarter of these pamphlets were by British authors, and four were by Scottish Evangelicals including the United Free Church lecturer James Orr (1844–1913), the United Free Church minister Thomas Whitelaw (1840–1917), and Baptist pastor T.W. Medhurst (1834–1917).[3]

Second, in the British context, the term 'foundationalism' suggests a broader movement of which 'Fundamentalism' precisely termed was only a subset. As David Bebbington has argued, although there was a number of avowedly British Fundamentalist organizations formed in the first three decades of the twentieth century, there were also moderating forces within British Evangelicalism that prevented the kind of wide-scale acrimonious fractures that occurred within the American church. Moreover, high-profile issues, such as the teaching of biological evolution in schools, did not gain the traction that they did in 1920s America.[4] The term 'foundationalism' is thus intended to signify a slow return to the privileging of biblical study, expository preaching, and doctrinal apologetics rather than the controversial polemics of separatist militancy which marked only a small number of British organizations. Foundationalism represented the return to Evangelicalism of thinking over emotion, reason over revivalism. As W. Graham Scroggie (1877–1958), minister of Charlotte Chapel (1916-33), reminded the Keswick movement in the 1920s: 'Faith is open-eyed; faith has a reason as well as emotion.'[5] The foundationalist movement would come to be dubbed by historians as 'conservative Evangelicalism', although this term conceals the fact that, given the hegemony of the late Victorian revivalist culture, the movement innovated as much as it conserved.[6]

In Scotland, the Bible Training Institute (BTI) in Glasgow, under the early twentieth-century guidance of Principal David McIntyre (1859–1938, who was married to Horatius Bonar's daughter, Jane, 1862–1940), exemplified the emerging foundationalist approach within Scottish Evangelicalism.[7] McIntyre stressed that 'faith is eminently reasonable, rigidly

3 N. Dickson, 'A Scottish Fundamentalist?', <http://www.eauk.org/_efb/downloads.html>, accessed 11 July, 2013.

4 D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 181–94; 217–23.

5 I. Randall, *Evangelical Experiences: A Study in the Spirituality of English Evangelicalism* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), pp. 25–6.

6 Ibid., pp. 36–39

7 For more on McIntyre, see: M.E.H. Spence and M. Spence, 'McIntyre, David Martin (1859–1938)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Sept 2012), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/101334>, accessed 11 July 2013.

truthful'.[8] The BTI mirrored the parallel Bible Institutes that emerged in the United States, notably the Moody Bible Institute which was headed by Reuben Archer Torrey (1856–1928), a leading 'Fundamentalist' champion who visited Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dundee in 1903. McIntyre was one of the few British Evangelicals to subscribe to the important American Fundamentalist doctrine of Biblical inerrancy as a way of guarding against higher critical methodology. However, McIntyre also worried about obscurantism. He deliberately avoided sectarian controversies, refusing to endorse a particular scheme of prophetical interpretation, for example, and he warned against narrow dogmatism on issues such as the penal substitution. He also remained a faithful denominational minister, moving with the majority of the Free Church into union with the United Presbyterians in 1900, and then with the Church of Scotland in 1929. Given two opportunities to protest against the broadening of his denomination McIntyre betrayed little hint of the sectarianism that marked the large-scale American or small-scale British Fundamentalist movement.

The example of the BTI, which continued to sponsor evangelism and religious philanthropy, reminds us that the re-engagement with learning and scholarship did not immediately cause a break with the panoply of missions and social services associated with revivalism. The division between the revivalist and foundationalist ages was not absolute or immediate. McIntyre himself was carefully poised between the two epochs, his concern for studious apologetics and careful expositions of scripture matched with his injunction, contained within his best-selling *The Hidden Life of Prayer* (1907) for Christians to seek 'seasons of communion when, as one turns to the unseen glory, the veil of sense becomes translucent, and one seems to behold within the Holiest the very face'.[9]

It was, in fact, from within the strong missionary networks energized by the revivalist culture that a renewed shift toward intellectual re-engagement took place. In the Scottish Universities in the early-twentieth century, the evangelistic spirit of the age, embodied in the Edinburgh 1910 Mission Conference, had been remarkably successful in creating groups of mission-minded young students, eager to join organizations such as the China Inland Mission. Eric Liddell (1902–1945) was but the most famous example. It was the very success of revivalism within this

8 D. M. M'Intyre, *The Divine Authority of the Scriptures of the Old Testament* (London: Drummond's Tract Deposit, 1902), p. 23.

9 D.M. McIntyre, *The Hidden Life of Prayer* (Tain: Christian Focus Publications, 1989), p. 79.

academic environment which helped move former revivalist zeal toward a re-engagement with the life of the mind. In the 1920s, the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society offered a rallying point for thoughtful student Evangelicals, holding yearly conferences from 1925.[10] The formation of the Inter-Varsity Fellowship in 1928, which established a presence on several Scottish campuses, also aided the growth of an intelligent Evangelical witness. This student Evangelicalism was aided by several high-profile Evangelical professors, including Duncan Blair (1896–1944), Regius Professor of Anatomy at the University of Glasgow, and Daniel Lamont (1869–1950), Chair of Apologetics at New College, Edinburgh and author of the *Christ and the World of Thought* (1934).[11]

Popular revivalism, meanwhile, slowly died. Sometimes it was deliberately euthanized, as happened in the case of the influential Church of Scotland Evangelical minister William Still (1911–1997). Still, who himself had been shaped by Inter-Varsity Fellowship and Evangelical foundationalism, stood at the heart of a new mid-twentieth century Evangelical Calvinist party in the Church of Scotland which included James and George Philip, Eric Alexander, George Duncan, and Sinclair Ferguson, and later solidified around the Crieff Fraternal (founded 1971). At his first parochial charge of Gilcomston South (which he assumed in 1945), William Still symbolically ended the Saturday night youth rallies (run at this time by Youth for Christ), the product of old somewhat *ersatz*, showy revivalism (and which he had, for a while, endorsed) and replaced them with quiet prayer. In tandem with this move, he began systematic expository preaching on a Sunday. Still retold the story himself:

> After eighteen months of aggressive evangelism, during which we drew large crowds, mostly of evangelistic folk from every sort of church, assembly, mission and sect, I turned the Word of God upon the Christians for the sake of the large nursery of babes we then had…and within a week, from one Sunday to another you could not see that mission crowd for dust! And they have maligned me all these years…because I ceased to provide evangelistic entertainment for them when all I was doing was seeking to feed the lambs.[12]

[10] O.R. Barclay, 'Inter–Varsity Fellowship/Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship', in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, p. 432.

[11] F.F. Bruce, 'Daniel Lamont', in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, p. 470.

[12] N.M. de S. Cameron and S.B. Ferguson (eds), *Pulpit and People: Essays in Honour of William Still on his 75th Birthday* (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1986), p. 19.

Still's disarmingly frank admission that he wished to disperse the 'mission crowd' who only wanted 'evangelistic entertainment' is indicative of the shifting tectonics of the Scottish Evangelical movement.

The re-emergence of this brand of measured, non-histrionic, anti-faddish, expositional, broadly Calvinist, and liturgically sober Evangelicalism in the Church of Scotland was enabled by the effective ending of the Disruption (and, indeed, of the Secession) in 1929 as most of the United Free Church re-joined the Church of Scotland, thus revalidating the Kirk as a potential venue for Evangelical Presbyterianism. That this opportunity was seized by Still and others as a moment for Evangelical consolidation was due to the broader movement within post-War British Evangelicalism that saw the growth of conservative Evangelical ministry, scholarship, and mission. Galvanized by the visits of American evangelist Billy Graham in the 1950s (who, while clearly standing in the revivalist tradition, also considerably toned-down the emotional elements of the tradition), the movement was associated with Anglican clergyman John Stott (1921–2011), theologians including Scottish-born Brethren Biblical scholar F.F. Bruce (1910–1990), and academically-leaning institutions such as the Inter Varsity Fellowship and London Bible College. The cause of Scottish Evangelical scholarship increased with the foundation of the Scottish Tyndale Fellowship (later the Scottish Evangelical Theological Society) in 1958.[13]

One element of this 'conservative' Evangelical revival was the rediscovery of Puritan divinity in the 1960s, a movement associated in particular with Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981) and Jim Packer.[14] These 'Reformed' views had particular resonance in Scotland given the Calvinist heritage of Scottish churches. The Scottish Evangelical Council, which had absorbed several nineteenth century revivalist-oriented mission organizations such as the Scottish Colportage Society and the Caravan Mission, sponsored a yearly visit to Scotland of Martyn Lloyd-Jones.[15]

In fact, the pegging of Evangelical identity to Calvinist reformation convictions was already evident in the post-1900 Free Church of Scotland.

[13] G.W. Grogan 'Scottish Evangelical Theological Society', in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, p. 757.

[14] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 261–3.

[15] Although some in Scotland were suspicious of his views on the possibility of a second blessing of the Holy Spirit, others (including Finlayson) thought his Calvinism too elastic and noted that he allowed hymns to be sung at Westminster Chapel, London. John Brencher, *Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981) and Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), pp. 209–13; A.T.B. McGowan, 'Scottish Evangelical Council', in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, pp. 757–8.

This denomination was founded by those individuals who refused to sacrifice the Westminster Confession as the conditions for a merger with the United Presbyterian Church in 1900. This union itself had been prompted in part by the late Victorian revivalist ecumenism and by 'a decline in sectarian animosity [as a result]… of the campaign of Moody and Sankey and its aftermath, and a growing liturgical union, again drawing on the innovations in worship spurred on by revivalism, which culminated in the issue of a new hymnbook in 1898'.[16] Those objecting to the 1900 Union, who continued to use the 'Free Church' moniker, thus signalled the first major resistance of the spirit of revivalistic, dogmatic soft-pedalling that had pervaded the late Victorian age. The Free Church pioneered an attitude that located the essence of 'Evangelicalism' within classical Protestant orthodoxy rather than the Finney-esque revivalist culture of the nineteenth century. Members of the Free Church made significant contributions to the recovery of Evangelical intellect in the twentieth century. Free Church theologians John MacLeod (1872–1948) and John R. MacKay (1865–1939), for example, helped form the *Evangelical Quarterly* in 1929 [17] while Roderick Alexander Finlayson (1895–1989) was one of the founding members of the Scottish Evangelical Theological Society and contributed to the Inter-Varsity Fellowship.[18]

In the Free Church, as also within the 'Still-ites' in the Church of Scotland and a number of Reformed Baptists who emerged from the 1950s, confessional Calvinism has acted as a convenient bulwark against both theological liberalism and pietistic, individualistic emotionalism. While it occasionally breathed the air of nostalgia for an era that was passed, it is important to note that this mobilization of Calvinism was not simply a hangover from a bygone age but was in fact new and in some ways radical. It deliberately challenged the liberalizing drift of Evangelical revivalism and theology in the late nineteenth century. To some extent, it also reversed the populism of the late Victorian movement. It flourished among students and the well-educated, reflecting the decline of industrial Scotland and the increasing accessibility of tertiary education. It also often looked askance at the ecumenical drift of twentieth-century Christianity. It was generally sceptical of the breadth of theological opinions contained within the global ecumenical movement. This attitude com-

[16] A.L. Drummond and J. Bulloch, *The Church in Late Victorian Scotland, 1874–1900* (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1978), pp. 309–10.

[17] J.D. MacMillan, 'Free Church of Scotland, post–1900', in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, pp. 338–9

[18] J.D. Macmillan, 'Finlayson, R.A.', in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, p. 321.

plicated relationships between these Christians and other Evangelicals who, while they themselves may have been viewed as 'orthodox', could nonetheless be viewed by Reformed Christians as compromised because of their participation in mixed denominations or pan-Christian movements, a debate which intensified after the infamous controversy between Martyn Lloyd-Jones and John Stott at an Evangelical Alliance meeting in 1966.[19] Such attitudes had an impact on inter-denominational ecumenical dialogue, but with many of these Evangelicals also now reunited the Church of Scotland, intra-denominational strife also became increasingly evident in the late twentieth-century, particularly on issues of Biblical authority, the role of women, and the ordination of practicing homosexual ministers.

Not all late twentieth-century Evangelicals were enamoured of Puritan or dogmatically Calvinist divinity, even if they shared the Reformed suspicion of populist-Arminianism and revivalist- holiness teaching, and desired Evangelicalism to be rooted in solid and careful scholarship. Indeed, the typical conservative centrist Evangelical of the post-1945 era might be described as 'unselfconsciously Reformed'. Geoffrey Grogan, McIntyre's late twentieth-century successor at the Bible Training Institute, captured this spirit well when he described himself as 'a low-key Calvinist' and compared himself to 'somebody like John Stott [who I suspect] is [also] a low-key Calvinist. Nobody would identify him immediately as a Calvinist, but he believes in the sovereignty of God.'[20] This pragmatically Reformed, doctrinally astute, Biblically-learnèd, and temperamentally centrist Evangelicalism held ground in Scotland, as in England, roughly between the 1950s and 1970s. As Grogan suggested, John Stott, whose influence stretched crossed denominational and national divides, was the unofficial figurehead of this movement.[21]

New challenges were emerging in the 1960s that would mean this hegemony of the so-called 'conservative' Evangelicals of all hues was relatively short-lived. In particular, two offspring of the late nineteenth-century Evangelical movement emerged to contest the legitimacy of the 'foundationalist' conservatives claims to the leadership of the Evangelical coalition. A third impulse, the primitivist desire to remake the church with greater fidelity to Biblical models that had pulsed through the movement since its inception, also resurfaced with new energy, thus further

[19] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 267.

[20] G. W. Grogan, Interview with Martin Spence, November 2009, International Christian College, Glasgow.

[21] Randall, *Evangelical Experiences*, pp. 276–7

dissipating the temporary hegemony of the 'conservative' Evangelical consensus.

RE-EMERGING QUESTIONS, 1960-2013

As the 'foundationalist' movement within early twentieth-century Evangelicalism had solidified in the early twentieth century, stressing reason, textual study, and a return to doctrine, so too there emerged a 'liberal' Evangelical sector, the members of which desired to self-consciously merge Evangelical piety with at least moderately progressive theology.[22] As Brian Stanley notes, the outright bifurcation of 'liberal' and 'conservatives' in Scotland was deferred to about a generation later than in England. 'Believing critics' still owned the 'evangelical' moniker until after the Second World War, while conservative Evangelicals still co-operated with a broad range of other Christians, for example in the *Tell Scotland* campaigns of the 1950s.[23]

Perhaps the main institutional representation of self-consciously liberal Evangelicalism in Scotland was the United Free Church, the product of the merger of the United Presbyterian Church and the Free Church of Scotland in 1900. After this church reunited with the Church of Scotland in 1929 the (Continuing) United Free Church (consisting of those United Free Church members who had rejected the 1929 reunion) carried on this legacy by blending support for evangelical mission with 'believing criticism'.[24] Interestingly, one of the most damning critiques of the mid-twentieth-century conservative Evangelical movement in the late twentieth century was made by James Barr (1924–2006), grandson of the first moderator of the post-1929 United Free Church and a self-identified Evangelical during his student days at the University of Edinburgh. Barr was surprised to find dogmatic conservative Evangelicalism (which he called 'Fundamentalism') resurgent in the 1970s, claiming that Evangelicalism of his youth was a pietistic, relational religion rather than a dogmatic, textually foundationalist one. He was recalling, of course, the liberal-romantic evangelical pietism of early century Scottish Evangelicalism that had marked the United Free Church and, indeed, all denominations in the twilight of the revivalist coalition, and comparing it to the

22 This development is most fully treated in Randall, *Evangelical Experiences*.

23 B. Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism: The Age of Billy Graham and John Stott* (Nottingham: Inter–Varsity Press, 2013), pp. 47–8; D.W. Bebbington, 'Evangelicalism in Modern Scotland', *SBET* 9 (1991), pp.14–12 (pp. 10–11); Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 253.

24 N.R. Needham 'United Free Church', in *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, pp.838–9.

kind of conservative resurgence that marked both Calvinist and centrist Conservative elements of the late twentieth-century Evangelical coalition.[25]

The United Free Church was small, but from the 1970s onward, slowly at first, but later with greater force, the mature fruits of theological liberalism started to be raised as possibilities within the British Evangelical community, with obvious ramifications within Scotland. These critiques came not so much from an avowedly 'liberal' wing of the movement as from a growing revisionist camp within the 'conservative' Evangelical camp itself (Rob Warner defines this as the 'post-conservative' group).[26] Ironically, the emergence of such critiques was in part a consequence of the increased intellectual content of the movement which now encouraged academic study of scripture and thus exposed leaders to a broad range of theological positions from the academic community, including a variety of opinions about key issues such as the nature of scriptural authority, the interpretation of the atonement and issues of gender and sexuality. Perhaps more importantly, but less well appreciated, the constructed nature of the Evangelical coalition itself also came under increasing scrutiny. At a popular level, the sub-cultural shibboleths and taboos that had helped define the identity of the movement began to be questioned.[27]At a scholarly level, the rise of historical accounts of the Evangelical movement, along with the rise of Biblical hermeneutics, led some to question whether 'Evangelicalism' (and even the Reformation itself) was really the appropriate vehicle for expressing the Gospel or whether it was simply a culturally-conditioned discourse that ought to be relativized within the broader drift of church history. The ecumenical movement, with deep roots in Scotland thanks to the legacy of the 1910 World Missionary Conference

25 Barr's observations are telling: 'I know the evangelical world well from my student days, when I was active in an evangelical organisation, the Edinburgh University Christian Union.... Basic to the movement was the primacy of faith and the refusal to adopt an apologetic attitude which could "prove" the reliability of biblical materials; along with this went the emphasis on personal, existential relations… Precisely because of this position, this was a very powerful and effective evangelistic agency with a profound outreach and impact… Evangelicalism … has a choice before it between two leading principles. One is that of a personal religion with the primacy of faith; the other is that of orthodoxy reinforced by rationalist argumentation. To me the heart of evangelical religion lies in the former.…' J. Barr, *The Scope and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), pp. 81–2.

26 R. Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism 1966–2001: A Theological and Sociological Study* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), p.34.

27 Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 263–4.

held in Edinburgh, prompted Evangelicals to consider their relationships with Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians.[28] The impact of the 1974 Lausanne Conference alerted Evangelicals to the possibility that Western European predilections had unduly shaped some of their theological constructions and that the Gospel needed to register in a social key. Meanwhile non-Evangelical institutions, such as the Iona Community, offered compelling visions of a holistic, radical form of Christianity that was quite distinct in style and substance from the Evangelical sub-culture. The revival of 'Celtic' Christianity made a similar appeal to wisdom drawn from beyond modernity.[29]

Such theological reappraisals occurred within the context of a socially-liberalizing British social milieu in which people were prepared to question anything that seemed overly-serious, censorious, or simply stuck in the past. If these developments occurred at a somewhat slower pace in Scotland than in the south-east of England, they had nonetheless become very evident by the last decade of the twentieth century. By the turn of the twenty-first century some of this theological revisionism was rebranded as part of an Anglo-American movement styled 'generous orthodoxy.'[30] But more generally, a range of theological options were diffused throughout the churches, seminaries, and institutions of the Evangelical coalition, creating a low-grade uncertainty about what it really meant to be an Evangelical. In reaction to this apparent breakdown of Evangelical identity, a certain amount of Evangelical sectarianism and 'tribalism' increased and 'the scope for centrist enterprise declined.'[31]

CHARISMATIC RENEWAL IN THE MIX

Some of these revisionist approaches gained greater traction because they often resonated, although were never exactly coalescent, with the other child of late Victorian romantic revivalism: the charismatic renewal movement. This movement articulated a particular theological point in regard to believing in a second baptism of the Holy Spirit as the right of every believer, but it also spoke more broadly of a desire to let fresh breezes blow into supposedly stale orthodoxy, and of the need to update

[28] [D.F. Wright], 'Evangelicals and Catholics—Together?', *SBET* 14 (1996), 93–95; Bradley Nassif, 'Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism: The Status of an Emerging Global Dialogue', *SBET* 18 (2000), 21–55.

[29] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 263; D. Meek, 'The Revival of Celtic Christianity', *SBET* 10 (1991), 6–32.

[30] The title of an influential book by American 'emerging church' leader, Brian McLaren.

[31] Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, pp. 253; 262; 267–270.

Christianity to meet the new demands of a post-colonial, post-modern age.

The charismatic movement emerged in full flood in the 1960s. However its roots were in the early twentieth century, and perhaps even in the 1860s turn to 'higher life' and holiness teaching. While Victorian revivalism was beginning to be questioned in the early twentieth century, the more precise doctrinal assertions of a 'second blessing' that had done much to generate the temperament of the revivalist movement were institutionalized in a set of churches that extended the wares of the Evangelical market even further. The first of these were the 'holiness' churches that taught a second blessing that was believed to help a believer live a sanctified and Spirit-filled life. I have alluded to these already: the churches included the Salvation Army, the Faith Mission, and the Church of the Nazarene. These churches, moving in a Wesleyan Methodist groove, believed that the second blessing would endow believers with power to overcome sin in their lives and thereby obtain 'holiness.' At the turn of the century, often from within these holiness churches and the revivalist networks, there emerged a further network of churches which interpreted the second blessing as an enduement with spiritual power, focusing particularly on the coming of the gifts of healing, prophecy and speaking in tongues. This 'Pentecostal' movement was given definition a set of global revival events of the early twentieth century, including the Welsh Revival of 1905, the Azusa Street, Los Angeles, revival of 1906 and the Oslo Revival of 1907.

English Anglican minister Alexander Boddy (1854–1930) and English-born, Norwegian pastor, Thomas Barratt (1862–1940), helped disseminate this new expectation of Pentecostal power to the British Isles, although it clearly took flight only because it tapped into the pre-existing revivalist and holiness traditions. The first recorded instances of Pentecostal manifestations following a 'second blessing' in Scotland were in Kilsyth where, in January 1908, twelve people received the second blessing, now described not as 'holiness' but empowerment. Thomas Boddy visited Kilsyth in March of that year and, at one point, lay prostrate on his stomach the front of the hall.[32] The movement spread quickly. Early Pentecostal congregations were established at Dunfermline, Kilsyth, Coatbridge, Clydebank, and Hawick. These Pentecostal congregations later affiliated with national bodies such as the Apostolic Faith Church, the Assemblies of God, and Elim. The Apostolic Faith Church was particularly strong with fifty assemblies across Scotland by the mid-twentieth

[32] T. Lennie, *Glory in the Glen: A History of Evangelical Revivals in Scotland* (Fearn: Christian Focus Publications, 2009), p. 423.

century. Its first convention was held in Glasgow, in 1920.[33] Donald Gee (1891–1966), arguably one of the most influential leaders of British Pentecostalism, was pastor at Leith and stimulated large Pentecostal meetings in Scotland in the 1920s.

Pentecostalism continued to grow across northern Europe and beyond in the 1930s and 1940s.[34] During the 1950s Pentecostal emphases began to break free from the relatively insular Pentecostal subculture, not least through the work of South African Pentecostal David du Plessis (1905–1987).[35] From the late 1950s, an emphasis on receiving the second blessing of the Holy Spirit began to appear among non-Pentecostal Evangelicals, a development that is identified as the 'charismatic renewal movement'. The story of the introduction of baptism in the Holy Spirit and a new focus on healing, *glossolalia*, and other 'gifts of the Spirit' into non-Pentecostal churches is an intricate one, traditionally dated to the emergence of speaking in tongues among Californian Episcopalians, and then spreading to networks of ministers and laity across Britain and America.[36]

It is difficult to pin-point the exact beginning of this phenomenon in Scotland; it probably happened in multiple places at once. Early incidents of 'Spirit baptism' were recorded in Aberdeen and Glasgow in 1960. The movement became public in 1961 when Bill McLean, who had been called to Presbyterian ministry through Pentecostal healing in New Zealand, and fellow New College, Edinburgh student, C. Gordon Strachan, began holding charismatic prayer meetings on campus.[37] They encouraged their friend, Brian Casebow, a Church of Scotland minister in Motherwell, to pray for the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Charismatic revival meetings at which participants were slain in the spirit and spoke in tongues increased in frequency from 1962. The *Glasgow Sunday Mail* even reported a 'strange new sect in the Scottish Kirk'.[38] Motherwell became a centre of Charismatic renewal, attracting international interest.[39] It is worth noting in passing that Strachan was inspired by his new experiences to study the nineteenth-century preacher and pastor, Edward Irving (1792–1834).

33 R.D. Massey, 'Pentecostalism', *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology*, pp. 652–3.

34 W. K. Kay, *Apostolic Networks of Britain: New Ways of Being Church* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), pp. 4–6.

35 Ibid., pp. 6–8

36 For a helpful overview, see N. Hudson, 'The Development of British Pentecostalism', in *European Pentecostalism*, ed. by W.W. Kay and A. Dyer (Leiden: Brill, 2011), pp. 41–60.

37 P. Hocken, *Streams of Renewal* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1997), p. 96.

38 Ibid., p. 88.

39 Ibid., p. 97.

Irving held a high pneumatology and presided over an occurrence of *glossolalia* among members of his Church of Scotland congregation in London in the early 1830s. Irving is often noted as a 'Pentecostal' pioneer, suggesting that the charismatic impulse within Evangelicalism has been disturbing the movement for quite some time and that the intensely romantic longings for spiritual communion unleashed in the nineteenth century were, in a transmuted form, still shaping British Evangelicalism—causing now, as then, both growth and disquiet within the Evangelical coalition.[40]

Charismatic Christianity provided a new tone and energy to Scottish Evangelicalism, perhaps particularly to some Baptist congregations, and, from the late 1980s, through new international church plants such as the American Vineyard movement.[41] One of Britain's leading advocates of charismatic renewal was a minister ordained in the Church of Scotland, Tom Smail (1928–2012).[42]

While the charismatic movement transmitted a particular idea about the second blessing for each individual believer, it also longed for a more general and regular experience of 'spiritual' power throughout the corporate church community. Indeed, the more general ethos of 'renewal' became as important as the precise focus on second blessing. [43] A popular song of the movement captured the ethos of the movement: 'Holy Spirit, we welcome you / Move among us with holy fire / As we lay aside all earthly desire'.[44] In this hankering after regular corporate experiences of the divine, the charismatic renewal movement was clearly the heir of late

40 C. G. Strachan, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1973). The Banner of Truth issued a book by Arnold Dallimore that concluded more or less the same thing about Irving, but, in keeping with his non-charismatic theology, he saw this as sign that charismatic heresy had been around a very long time! A. Dallimore, *The Life of Edward Irving: Forerunner of the Charismatic Movement* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1983). For a balanced assessment of Irving, see T. Grass, *Edward Irving: The Lord's Watchman* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2011).

41 The full extent of the movement in Scotland is not quantified. There is thus ample scope for further scholarly studies on the history of the Scottish charismatic movement.

42 Smail became an Anglican priest in 1979; <https://wipfandstock.com/author/15794>, accessed 7 August, 2013.

43 Hudson, 'The Development of British Pentecostalism', p.55.

44 Chris Bowater, 'Holy Spirit, We Welcome You', <http://chrisbowater.com/assets/media/documents/Holy_Spirit_We_Welcome_You.pdf>, accessed 12 July 2013.

nineteenth-century revivalist movement and, by extension, also of the experientialist Pietist emphases of the eighteenth century.[45]

Like these revivalist and Pietist movements that preceded it, the charismatic movement helped the cause of Evangelical unity. In particular, it represented a cultural shift towards greater informality in worship styles, including a bounty of new music, a desire for community and authenticity, and a greater role for the laity in the life of the church.[46] Many churches, even those not strictly accepting charismatic theology, absorbed the basic premise that the form and style of church must modernize and adapt to modern culture. The Holy Spirit became implicitly associated with modernization. Charismatic churches, with their emphasis on small groups, lay participation, and contemporary music, often provided a useful template. Thus many Evangelical churches ended up singing 'charismatic' songs led by a 'worship band' even though they did not have a particular theology or experience of a 'second blessing'.[47] Evangelical participation in festivals such as Spring Harvest (which staged one of its conventions at Ayr during the 1990s) and in the early 2000s, Clan Gathering (the Scottish venue of the New Wine network of churches), offered a venue for an encounter with charismatic culture even while not necessarily demanding an explicit allegiance to charismatic theology.[48] The same can be said of the Alpha Course, which despite its climactic emphasis on the reception of the Holy Spirit, was widely used by non-charismatic churches as an evangelism strategy. [49]

[45] Indeed, Michael Harper (1931–2010), leader of the Fountain Trust, had been inspired in his commitment to renewal by reading J. Edwin Orr's account of the late nineteenth century revivalist era, *The Second Great Awakening in Britain* (Kay, *Apostolic Networks*, p. 10). In fact, as early as the 1920s, the notion of 'revival' was being redefined to apply to *renewal* in the church for example in the work of the Baptist pastor A. Douglas Brown, who influenced the so–called 'Fisherman's Revival' (1921) among the itinerant Scottish herring fleets docked in Suffolk. 'Revival is not for the drunken man coming to the penitent form', Brown argued, 'it is for the proud church member … [and] unconverted deacon.' (*The Christian*, (27 July 1922)); see also M. Spence, 'Brown, Archibald Geikie (1844–1922)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Sept 2012), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/101229>, accessed 12 July, 2013.

[46] D. F. Wright, 'The Charismatic Movement: The Laicizing of the Church?' in D. Lovegrove, ed., *The Rise of the Laity in Evangelical Protestantism* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 253–64.

[47] T. Cummings, 'Spring Harvest: Looking at the Annual Bible Week', Cross Rhythms 14 (1993). <http://www.crossrhythms.co.uk/articles/music/Spring_Harvest_Looking_at_the_annual_Bible_week/37008/p1/>, accessed July 12, 2013.

[48] Kay, *Apostolic Networks*, p. 233.

The rise of the charismatic renewal movement cohered with a wider burst of pan-evangelical unity, centred on the growing influence of the Evangelical Alliance under the direction of Clive Calver and a renewed commitment for Evangelical activism, focused particularly on engagement with the media, public policy and culture. Institutions with a distinct Evangelical policy agenda, such as CARE, established a presence in Scotland. As Warner points out, the late 1980s and 1990s represented a period of 'vision inflation', leading to expectations of renewal and church growth that did not statistically deliver: a further factor, perhaps, in explaining a current perception of decline which may pivot on the failure to live up to aspirations as much signify an objectively-verifiable malaise.[50]

Suspicion of the charismatic renewal from so-called 'conservative' Evangelicals was largely on the same grounds that this tradition had rejected experiential revivalism just a few decades ago, namely its tendency to value experience as a bond that could dissolve theological difference, and a concern that Scriptural challenge was outweighed by therapeutic celebration. To these was added, in the throes of late capitalism, also a fear about the debasing of the Gospel by consumerist and managerial methodology, particularly in regard to 'selling' worship and achieving high returns on church growth strategies. There was also the inexact symbiosis between charismatic renewal and reappraisals of Evangelical theology, with some parts of the charismatic movement showing the same willingness to downplay dogma in favour of spiritual fervour that had marked the revivalist coalition in the late Victorian era, thus providing a venue for the subtle reconsideration of—or perhaps simply lackadaisical carelessness toward—classical Protestant doctrinal formulations.

FURTHER STRANDS: TOWARDS AN ASSESSMENT

In the context of our own generation, these questions often seem urgent and unprecedented, and yet the same critiques about showmanship, celebrity, experiential corrosion of doctrine, and a certain casualness about confessional distinctives could have been made (and, in fact, were made) about the eighteenth-century revival. Such was the genetic constituency of the movement from the outset. Rather than asking whether the charismatic movement was Evangelical, one might better pause to

[49] Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism*, pp. 115–37; S. Hunt, *The Alpha Enterprise: Evangelism in a Post-Christian Era* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 103.

[50] Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism*, pp. 85–6.

ask whether 'Evangelicalism' itself was evangelical. In other words, was the eighteenth-century revival that had twisted Reformation orthodoxy into its evangelical shape in the eighteenth century, a turn that ought to be preserved and celebrated? Was the modern emphasis on individual choice, inner experience, spiritual empowerment and 'a personal relationship with Jesus' that was often expected to produce regular spiritual, and perhaps physical, manifestations of religious revival actually apostolic, catholic, orthodox Christianity? Could 'Evangelicalism' bear the weight of the Gospel?

This question has been raised, in fact, from two distinct wings of the Evangelical movement in the early twenty first century. First, the Reformed sector of the Evangelical movement has amplified its doubts about whether much of the Evangelical coalition is truly 'evangelical', by which is generally meant whether it is in line with the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Protestant reformers (who believed themselves to be recovering the primitive emphases of the early church).[51] One example of this critique is the debate about the thesis proposed by Professor David Bebbington, arguably the leading historical investigator of the modern British Evangelical movement, that 'Evangelicalism' was essentially a new movement forged in the eighteenth-century. In his seminal *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (1989), Bebbington argued that it was the cultural temperament of the Enlightenment that transformed Protestant doctrines of a previous age into a new movement of popular, confident, pragmatic, and activist Christianity. In a number of articles and essays, published to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the book's publication, historians and theologians, many from the Reformed wing of transatlantic Evangelicalism, and several of whom with links to Scotland, questioned this thesis.[52] Although there is much useful scholarly debate in such examina-

[51] Much of this critique has come from the United States although I suspect it finds a ready audience among Reformed Evangelicals in Scotland. Examples include the collection of essays in M. Horton, ed., *Power Religion: The Selling Out of the Evangelical Church* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1992). See also D.F. Wells, *No Place for Truth—Or, Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans, 1993); C. Trueman, *The Real Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012).

[52] M.A.G. Haykin and K.J. Stewart, *The Advent of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2008), published in the UK as *The Emergence of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2008). Some of the contributors to the volume were not as eager to deconstruct Bebbington's thesis as others. In particular, the essays in this volume by David Ceri-Jones and John Coffey, while admitting continuities, also maintained the novelty of eighteenth-century

tions, the underlying agenda of some of those mounting this argument has been to decouple the essence of 'Evangelical' Christianity from the emphases of eighteenth-century culture and society.

The reason for their critique is two-fold. First, since much of the Reformed wing looks to pre-eighteenth century Protestants for ecclesial and confessional identity, there is a desire to defend the pre-eighteenth-century religionists as friends and allies—a desire to call them fellow 'evangelicals'. Second, if one allows that the essence of the Evangelical movement only came into existence in the eighteenth century, then it is defined equally by Arminianism as Calvinism. Since many Reformed critics deplore the developments of Arminianism, particularly in its post-Finney revivalist form, it becomes an urgent task to assert that the original credentials of Evangelicalism were unsullied by the Arminianist turn.[53] Thus, it becomes necessary to argue that true evangelicalism existed before the Evangelical revivals and that much of what passes as 'Evangelicalism' today is, in fact, inadequate if not dangerous when considered against the original Calvinism (or, at least, non-Arminianism) of the movement. Iain Murray's work, particularly his *Evangelicalism Divided*, is a good exemplar of such presuppositions in action.[54]

The second objection to whether the Evangelical coalition can actually bear the full weight of the *evangel* has been raised from the so-called 'emergent' or 'emerging' church movement. This is a broad transatlantic alliance of churches that have self-consciously sought to refashion Christianity for a post-modern post-Christian society, sometimes using the term 'post-evangelical' to refer to their evolution out of the perceived subcultural ghetto of the Evangelical movement.[55] One of its most dis-

Evangelicalism, particularly in regards to the sociological, rather than theological or missiological, distinctives of the Evangelical revival.

[53] Joel Beeke argues: 'The position of radical discontinuity in evangelicalism in the 1730s cannot be historically confirmed and is theologically dangerous, for it leaves us with the impression that Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley are the fathers of evangelicalism. The result of this controversial position is that Wesley's Arminianism could then no longer be viewed as aberrational theology within a solidify Reformed movement. Instead, Reformed and Arminian theology would be given equal status in the origins of evangelicalism, as is often done today.' J. R. Beeke, 'Evangelicalism and the Dutch Further Reformation', in *The Advent of Evangelicalism*, ed. by Haykin and Stewart, pp. 146–68, (p.168).

[54] I.H. Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2000).

[55] For an indicative overview, see D. Kimball, *Emerging Church: Vintage Christianity for New Generations* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003). British

tinctive notes is an emphasis on 'missionality', meaning a commitment to promoting evangelism that is lived in and through the everyday circumstances of ordinary Christians rather than embodied in what it sees as overly-modernistic and ultimately self-limiting mission agencies. The movement draws much inspiration from the work of the English-born, Church of Scotland-ordained, missionary to India, Lesslie Newbigin (1909–1998). Other elements of the movement hanker after pre-Reformation ('ancient') forms of wisdom, spirituality, and worship. Like some Evangelicals-turned-Anglo/Scotto-Catholics in the nineteenth century, these desired to go beyond the Reformation (and, for current Evangelicals, also beyond the AD 1053 East-West Schism, and even beyond the AD 476 Council of Chalcedon or AD 325 Council of Nicaea) in search of authority and wisdom.[56] There is also a desire to reassess the allegedly Enlightenment epistemologies that are thought to undergird some of Evangelicalism's propositional truth claims about scripture and the nature of authority and which sustain its often unyieldingly utilitarian and pragmatic approaches to worship and evangelism.

Some of these 'emergent' impulses are simply a continuation of the persistent Evangelical tendency to reform ecclesiastical structures and practices to meet the perceived cultural needs of contemporary society; other trends within the movement embody the drift of progressive theological re-appraisals that have pervaded parts of the Evangelical movement since the late nineteenth century. Steve Chalke's critique of penal substitution (*The Lost Message of Jesus*) and Rob Bell's desire to broaden eschatology (*Love Wins*) were nothing new to anyone who had studied nineteenth-century debates on similar issues. Whatever one thinks of the critiques offered, however, the movement's predominant tone is undeniably one of dissatisfaction with the 'old' Evangelicalism birthed by modernity and thus a desire to restate the Gospel in new, more fluid, provisional and experimental terms. Whether the emergent church has

expressions of the need to reimagine church include D. Tomlinson, *The Post–Evangelical* (London: Triangle, 1995) and P. Ward, *Liquid Church* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002). For a critique, see A. Crouch, 'The Emergent Mystique', *Christianity Today* (Nov. 2004), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/november/12.36.html>, accessed 12 July, 2013.

56 Rob Bell claimed that 'we're rediscovering Christianity as an Eastern religion, as a way of life. Legal metaphors for faith don't deliver a way of life. We grew up in churches where people knew the nine verses why we don't speak in tongues, but had never experienced the overwhelming presence of God.' Quoted in Crouch, 'The Emergent Mystique', *Christianity Today* (Nov. 2004), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/november/12.36.html>, accessed 12 July, 2013.

the capacity to break with the Evangelical subculture which gave it birth is yet to be seen.[57] Nevertheless, the soul-searching that arises from its discourses creates a feeling of considerable flux in the Evangelical world, especially because, somewhat surprisingly, the emergent church actually shares certain aspirations to remould the Evangelical landscape with the Reformed Evangelicals: both stress community over individualism; both deplore pietism and pragmatism; both lament the shallowness of much of Evangelical liturgy and devotion; both look askance at the Enlightenment and all its works.

From the 1980s onward, Scotland, in common with the rest of the United Kingdom, has witnessed a further round of church planting. In what is now a familiar pattern from Scottish Evangelical history, both charismatic renewal and a new concern for en-cultured mission has led to the multiplication of Evangelical institutions. This was particularly embodied in the so-called New Church (originally styled House Church or Restorationist) movement. These institutions attempted to embody the 'power' and 'signs' that the charismatic movement talked of in new ecclesiastical structures, having grown weary of waiting for charismatic renewal to effect wide-scale change in existing denominations. They had a particular concern with energetic, even confrontational, evangelism.[58] Although several studies of this New Church movement exist, most notably those by Andrew Walker and William Kay, most analysis applies to England.[59] This reflects the fact that the weight of the movement was centred in South East England, reflecting, as Rob Warner has argued, that 1980s English Evangelicalism was shaped by an entrepreneurial Thatcherite streak in1980s Evangelicalism that was less popular in Scotland.[60]

57 Reflecting on an emerging church conference in 2004, Robert Webber, author of a book that celebrated the emergent movement (*The Younger Evangelicals* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002)) nevertheless lamented: 'They claim to be rejecting the last 30 years of evangelicalism—and they're repeating the last 30 years of evangelicalism.' Quoted in Crouch, 'The Emergent Mystique', *Christianity Today* (Nov. 2004), <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/november/12.36.html>, accessed 12 July, 2013.

58 Kay, *Apostolic Networks*, pp.10–13

59 A. Walker, *Restoring the Kingdom* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985).

60 A full study of the New Church movement in Scotland is still needed. That which to my knowledge is the first study of Scottish New Church movement is being prepared by Alistair MacIndoe, a founding leader of the Rock Community Church, Dumbarton, as part of doctoral research at the University of Edinburgh. A cursory overview is also provided by K. Roxborough, 'Growth Amidst Decline', in *Church Growth in Britain 1980 to the Present*, ed. by D.

However, Scotland was not exempted from the movement, and we await a full-orbed study of Scottish New Churches.

One of the earliest Scottish examples of a New Church impulse was New Frontiers International (NFI), founded by Terry Virgo. Virgo, in what must be grist to the mill of any Scottish nationalist, had a vision of a bow strategically positioned along the Southern English coastline (where the earliest New Frontiers churches had been formed), pointing at the rest of the United Kingdom.[61] His archery skills were successful. Today New Frontiers churches include King's Church, Edinburgh; City of Joy, Aberdeen; City Church, Dundee; Hope Church, Glasgow; and The King's House, Perth.[62]

The NFI church network is interesting because it combines a Charismatic emphasis on the gifts of the spirit with a broadly Reformed theology.[63] This confluence belies any simple 'charismatic' versus 'conservative' dichotomy that we might be tempted to use to define dividing lines in the contemporary Evangelical coalition. Indeed, one of NFI's worship leaders, Stuart Townend (based at the flagship New Frontiers church of Christ the King, Brighton), has been responsible for diffusing new hymns across the transatlantic Evangelical community that deliberately emphasize scripturally-rich doctrines that are broadly acceptable to, and indeed welcomed by, most 'conservative' Evangelicals for their emphasis on the uniqueness of Christ ('In Christ Alone'), divine sovereignty ('from life's first cry, to final breath / Jesus commands my destiny'), substitutionary atonement (''Til on that cross as Jesus died / The wrath of God was satisfied') and even the perseverance of the saints ('no power of hell, no scheme of man / can ever pluck me from his hand').[64] Yet Townend also stands in the Charismatic tradition. He was converted age thirteen and then experienced 'a profound encounter with the Holy Spirit' when he was eighteen

Goodhew (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2012) pp. 209–20; Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism*, p. 26.

61 Kay, *Apostolic Networks*, pp. 74–75.

62 <http://newfrontierstogether.org/ChDatabase/Newfrontiers_UK_Churches_by_Town.pdf>, accessed 12 July, 2013.

63 It thus has similarities with the so-called 'New Calvinism' associated with American leaders such as John Piper and C.J. Mahaney. The confluence of 'Spirit', 'Word', and a restorationist desire 'to discover what the New Testament church was' was, of course, announced by Martyn Lloyd–Jones in the 1960s. Lloyd–Jones had numerous vital links with early New Church leaders. Kay¸ *Apostolic Networks*, pp. 13–17.

64 Stuart Townend, 'In Christ Alone', <http://www.stuarttownend.co.uk/song/in–christ–alone/>, accessed 12 July, 2013.

years old.[65] In his earlier songs, charismatic renewalist emphases were very evident: 'My first love is a blazing fire / I feel His powerful love in me / For He has kindled a flame of passion / And I will let it grow in me.'[66] Townend and NFI nicely signal the immense complexity of Evangelical categorization in the early twentieth-first century.

By the early 2000s, the establishment of New Churches in Scotland was accelerating. Several of these churches are linked to regional, national or international networks. They represent a diverse range of theological agendas, from the Reformed principles of Re:Hope (founded by the American Christian Resource Ministries to be a 'next generation Bible church' and based in the West End of Glasgow),[67] through the Dispensationalist Fundamentalism of the Calvary Chapel movement (churches in Dunfermline, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Carluke, Stirling, Ayr, Kilmarnock, and Motherwell),[68] the neo-Pentecostal stress on 'healing and life-changing supernatural power' of Destiny Ministries International, the intimate charismatic emphasis of the Vineyard movement (Edinburgh and Glasgow),[69] the celebratory and aspiration-fulfilling ministries of Hillsongs International (known as C7 Church in Edinburgh and Glasgow),[70] to the 'cornucopia' Ancient-Future ('blended') style of the Mosaic Community (founded by the American Christian Associates International and based in Glasgow).[71] Other 'new' churches are, in fact, old churches relaunched. Several Brethren churches, for example, have rebranded themselves as an 'Evangelical Church' or as a 'Fellowship' and have constructed new buildings to symbolize a less sectarian mind-set.[72] As in the nine-

65 'Stuart Townend', <http://worshiptogether.com/worship–leaders/?iid=216440>, accessed 12 July 12th, 2013.

66 S. Townend, 'My First Love', <http://www.stuarttownend.co.uk/song/my–first–love/>, accessed 12, 2013.

67 <http://www.rehope.co.uk/>, accessed 12 July, 2013.

68 < http://www.calvarychapelradio.co.uk/churches.asp>, accessed 6 August, 2013.

69 <http://www.gwvineyard.co.uk/drupal6/node/49>, accessed 12 July, 2013.

70 C7 Glasgow wants 'to reach every person in Glasgow and in Edinburgh with the message of Christ. To equip and empower those in Church in order for them to fulfil their God-given dreams.' <http://www.c7church.com/aboutus–glasgow/vision> , accessed July 12, 2013.

71 <http://glasgowmosaic.com/about–us/>, accessed 28th June, 2013. This is not an exhaustive list of New Church networks, and it reflects the author's own knowledge of Glasgow more than some other Scottish towns and cities.

72 T. Grass, *Gathering to His Name: the story of the Open Brethren in Britain and Ireland* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), pp. 425–431; N.T.R. Dickson, *Brethren in Scotland 1838–2000* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), pp. 336–7.

teenth century, there was some scope to flourish for these new Brethren movements during the 1980s and 1990s in towns that have experienced urban growth.[73]

As was the case in the nineteenth century, the underlying principle of all these New Churches has been rooted in an interest in forming new communities in places perceived to lack a church relevant or supple enough to meet the needs of modern society. These are New Churches doing an old thing. Many of these churches have tight internal networks and, like the United Presbyterians of the Victorian age, often plant churches in areas—such as the West End of Glasgow—where there are already a number of other Evangelical churches, sometimes antagonising local ecumenical relations. Despite this multiplication of new churches, the spirit of so-called 'pioneer' ministries is unabated, spurred on by the general decline of church-going across the Scotland which helps convince every new church planter that the time is ripe for a 'new' approach.[74]

However, despite the many claims to novelty and 'fresh expressions' made by these New Churches, it is perhaps an almost entirely hermetically-sealed branch of Evangelical Christianity that possesses the potential to most alter the face of Scottish, and British, Evangelicalism: the Black Majority Churches.[75] Between 2005 and 2010 there was, according to Peter Brierley, a 27% surge in Pentecostal Church membership, the membership of which is 'mostly black, evangelical and charismatic,' with a further 22% increase predicted in this sector between 2010 and 2015.[76] In concrete terms, this meant that in there were six hundred new Pentecostal churches founded between 2005 and 2010, the large majority of them being Black Majority Churches.[77]

Black Majority Churches were originally formed by those Caribbean and West African immigrants who arrived in Britain in great numbers from the 1950s onward. Many were small and located in England, although several founded congregations (often referred to as 'branches') in Scotland. For example, the Nigerian Celestial Church of God (founded in 1967) has congregations across Britain, including one in Glasgow. Since the 1980s, Black New Churches have, in common with the parallel White New Churches, adopted a greater focus on church planting and mission to

73 Dickson, *Brethren in Scotland*, p. 341.

74 <http://www.investscotland.org/>, accessed 12 July, 2013.

75 For an overview (albeit one which makes no mention of Scotland), see H. Osgood, 'The Rise of Black Churches', in *Church Growth in Britain*, ed. by D. Goodhew, pp. 107–125.

76 P. Brierley, 'Introduction', *UK Church Statistics 2005–2010*, p. 2. <http://www.brierleyconsultancy.com/images/csintro.pdf>, accessed 9th August, 2013.

77 Ibid., p. 5.

'un-evangelized' parts of the United Kingdom.[78] Many of these Black New Churches consist of West African (often Nigerian) Christians from the 'Aladura' tradition of Yoruba Pentecostalism, which emphasises healing, regular divine interventions and an emphasis on personal holiness. The largest African Church in Britain is the Redeemed Christian Church of God. It has 80,000 members. It founded 190 new churches between 2005 and 2010, which means that it now has a church in two-thirds (64%) of the cities in the UK.[79] It has multiple congregations in Scotland, including communities in Glasgow (seven congregations), Edinburgh (six congregations), Dundee (two congregations), Aberdeen, Stirling, Elgin, Fort William, Fraserborough, Inverness, Montrose, Motherwell, Portlethen, and Banchory.[80] The network aims to found a church within five minutes driving distance of every town and city in Great Britain, and, indeed, of the entire developed world.[81] Other Black New Churches include the Deeper Life Bible Church, which has congregations in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Dundee, and the Church of Pentecost, which has churches in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, and two in Glasgow.

These Black Majority churches are, of course, not solely defined by ethnicity. They also tap into the international networks of the Pentecostal movement and, at least in London, find alliances with Charismatic and Pentecostal churches such as Holy Trinity, Brompton (Anglican) and Kensington Temple (Elim).[82] However, the broad failure to create or even aim for pan-ethnic Evangelical unity within much of British Evangelicalism might be the most troubling of all polarizations in the early twenty-first century precisely because it is so generally ignored when listing divisions. It was a fitting sign of the need for greater integration that the very room used to host the 2011 SETS conference on 'Evangelical Ecumenicity' was rented two days later by Scottish Black Church leaders for their own conference. It would be interesting to learn the number of individuals who attended both meetings. I suspect it would be low, with the current author himself sharing in this collective failure of Evangelical ecumenicity.

78 Osgood, 'The Rise of Black Churches', p. 109.

79 Brierley, *UK Church Statistics*, pp. 3, 5.

80 <http://www.rccguk.org/parish–finder>, accessed 25 June, 2013; R. Burgess, 'African Pentecostal Growth: The Redeemed Christian Church of God in Britain', in *Church Growth in Britain*, ed. by D. Goodhew, pp. 127–43.

81 Burgess, 'African Pentecostal Growth', p. 135.

82 Osgood, 'The Rise of Black Churches', p. 117; Kay, *Apostolic Networks*, pp. 145–6.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this review of the history of Evangelical diversity in Scotland, I can do no better than reference sociologist Derek Tidball's analogy of Evangelicalism as a Rubik's Cube. Evangelicalism is best pictured as possessing a multi-faced set of emphases, practices, and beliefs which can be combined in a staggering number of configurations. In the case of the Rubik's Cube, the exact number of possible arrangements is apparently forty-three quintillion, although Tidball does not quite list this many permutations of Evangelicalism![83]

Tidball's sociological analysis is amply supported by the history of Scottish Evangelicalism. The movement has been prone to divergence and even polarisation because it is, by very definition, a coalition forged within the context of a highly fluid post-enlightenment religious free market. It is inherently pluriform. It has always contained within it a debate about the proper locus of authority because of the twin emphases on reviving an authoritative past (be that Reformation or New Testament Christianity) on the one hand, and a desire to incarnate those truths within contemporary society in a way that stresses personal communion and transformative encounters with God on the other. This emphasis has led both individuals and communities to seek 'fresh expressions' of the Evangelical tradition as they hanker for new ways to experience and express old truths (albeit sometimes 'old' truths as mediated through modern eyes).

This diversity has not occluded the possibility of unity. Indeed, many of the communities surveyed in this paper came into being precisely because they expressed a shared discontent with the existing state of the church or of the temperature of Christian spirituality, and thus a common desire for mission and revival. In particular, the drive to create an authentic, essentialist, New Testament church has pulsed through each generation of Scottish Evangelicalism since 1800. In the late nineteenth century this allowed for a considerable ecumenical unity based around the priorities of simple, direct, mass preaching and revival. The charismatic revival of the late twentieth century duplicated this co-operative affinity based on shared language, worship and spiritual experiences. In between, the hegemony of 'conservative' and 'Reformed' theological statements united Evangelicals around a shared range of Bible studies, apologetical networks, and preachers.

But this greatest strength—the construction of an 'imagined community' of mission and worship—is also the movement's greatest weakness. The sinews of the community are stitched not simply from confes-

[83] D. Tidball, *Who Are the Evangelicals?: Tracing The Roots of the Modern Movement* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994), pp. 19–24.

sions, nor are they enforced by ecclesiastical discipline, but rather they arise from the willingness of participants to authenticate each other's spiritual, doctrinal and liturgical principles and practices. Everyone, and no-one, gets the final say in determining the boundaries. The movement is congenitally destined to be in a constant state of anxiety about its own identity and to fear for its own existence. This is the by-product of the immense effort needed to keep the coalition alive through the constant imaginative re-assessment of its participants. Indeed, its existence may even be fed and sustained by such angst-ridden debates, because they help to keep alive the idea that there *is* such a thing as Evangelicalism to be debated and contested in the first place.

Feelings of disunity and quiet despair about the movement's future longevity may thus, ironically, be a tribute to the very *success* of its networks, institutions, publications, hymns, vocabularies, shibboleths, festivals, merchandise, celebrity preachers in eliding multiple denominations, theologies, and personalities into something that has, on occasion, been capable of exhibiting considerable unity and missiological activism. When these affective bonds break, when individuals transgress invisible boundaries, and when theological factiousness emerges, it probably often comes as more a surprise than it really should! Thus when the nineteenth-century social reformer Lord Shaftesbury lamented 'I know what constituted an Evangelical in former times. I have no clear notion what constitutes one now', we probably learn more about Lord Shaftesbury's varying alertness to the complexity and ambiguities of the movement than we do about Evangelicalism itself. As John Wolffe notes, all participants in the movement 'have been faced with the tension between a perception of evangelicalism as a broad coherent movement and the tendency for this impression to dissolve as soon as precise questions of definition and detail are faced'.[84]

Evangelicals (and post-Evangelicals) often create myths about golden ages that have passed and set them against the supposed decadence or turmoil of the present. Such myth-making is common in all communities, but in Evangelicalism it is symptomatic of the persistent internal quest to comprehend what is an inherently irreducible and sometimes incoherent set of ideas and beliefs. The idea that in the past everything was tidier is a way of helping to bring a conceptual order to a chaotic present. Many of these myths do not, of course, bear up to historical scrutiny. Thus, despite

[84] J. Wolffe, 'Unity in Diversity? North Atlantic Evangelical Thought in the Mid-Nineteenth Century', in *Unity and Diversity in the Church: Studies in Church History*, vol. 32, ed. by R.N. Swanson (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 1996), pp. 363–75 (p. 375).

a dominant narrative, it is simply not true that Scottish Evangelicals always used to be Calvinist. While eighteenth-century Evangelicalism did run in Calvinist grooves, the Arminian and existentialist drift of the movement during the nineteenth century was unmistakable. The narrative of an entrenched Calvinism at most speaks more about a hegemony of broadly-Reformed theology within more recent living memory than it does of a history where John Knox has ruled without rival until he was knocked from his pulpit by a man wielding a copy of *The Lost Message of Jesus* and demanding that we should all be slain in the Spirit. Even then, the gap between William Still symbolically showing the revivalist 'mission crowd' the door and C. Gordon Strachan speaking in tongues was only fifteen years: a very brief interlude between two longer periods of typically pietistic emphasis on affective spiritual experientialism.

Nor is it true that Evangelicals used to be wholly or persistently united—on Calvinism, or anything else for that matter. There have been important moments and movements of unity, and moments and movements of division. In every age, there has been a restless restatement of Evangelical priorities that has broken the bounds of established structures and established new ones, sometimes creating division in the very act of seeking greater evangelical unity. This tendency toward pluralism also means that is it also patently untrue that Scottish Evangelicalism is somehow more 'traditional' and hidebound than other parts of the United Kingdom. In fact, the central lowlands and north-eastern coastal communities were the 'burned over' districts of Victorian and early twentieth-century revivalism; Glasgow was 'Gospel City'.[85] Arguably, Scotland was among the most religiously fissiparous, free market, liberalizing, and democratic region of the British Isles. The prevalence of the obdurate-traditionalist-Scot stereotype may owe more to the sense of socio-economic pessimism triggered by the mid-twentieth century decline of heavy industry and its associated malaise than to a historically verifiable Scottish congenital disposition. Evangelicalism flourished, with increasingly rambunctiousness, in a Scotland marked by the individualistic modernism of the Enlightenment and the wide-eyed optimism of Victorian entrepreneurship. There are even signs it is flourishing again, in new ways, in the socially fluid landscape of post-modern Scottish towns and cities.

Is Evangelicalism unravelling? No, in fact the real problem is probably quite the opposite. It's constantly getting thicker, knottier, and more difficult to unravel. This means it becomes harder to dismiss as pure abstraction, and yet, frustratingly for historian and participant alike,

[85] C.G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Scotland Since 1707* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 102.

also increasingly harder to describe with anything approaching elegant simplicity. Rob Warner's analysis of late twentieth-century English Evangelicalism might apply to the whole movement in Scotland from the late eighteenth-century onward when he refers to the 'chaotic vibrancy' of the Evangelical movement:

> This generates their persistent capacity for self-reinvention and yet, through lack of reflexivity and unconscious accommodationism, produces an inevitable tendency to self-attenuation. Evangelicals are invariably less homogenous, more capable of diverse, competing and even contradictory initiatives, than their advocates may wish or their opponents may fear.[86]

We should therefore not be surprised when the boundaries of today's Scottish Evangelical community stretch, transmute or, as might well be the case within the next three centuries of the movement, become geographically and ethnically re-centred. Indeed, as the work of scholars examining the phenomenon of Christian globalization, such as Lamin Sanneh,[87] Philip Jenkins,[88] Mark Noll,[89] Andrew Walls,[90] Donald Lewis[91] and Brian Stanley,[92] reminds us, late twentieth-century debates about identity and beliefs among white Evangelicals in a small corner of north-western Europe may well pale in significance the questions starting to be raised about Christian identity, leadership, authority, ethics, politics, and economics in the globalized twenty-first century. As these debates increasingly play out among international alliances of Christians in a world dominated demographically by the church of the global South, twenty-first century discussions of Evangelical identity are going to have to increasingly grapple with the disruption of a Scottish (and British) parochialism of a rather different kind.

[86] Warner, *Reinventing English Evangelicalism*, p. 142.

[87] L. Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003).

[88] P. Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[89] M. Noll, *The New Shape of World Christianity: How American Experience Reflects Global Faith* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009).

[90] A.F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002).

[91] D.M. Lewis, *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004).

[92] Stanley, *The Global Diffusion of Evangelicalism*, op. cit.

Paul Through Mediterranean Eyes: Cultural Studies in 1 Corinthians. By Kenneth E. Bailey. London: SPCK, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-281-06455-7. 560pp. £16.99.

Kenneth Bailey has lived and worked in the Middle East teaching New Testament in English and Arabic for forty years, and the fruits of his labours are reflected in this unique and helpful study. Bailey's work here has two key themes, an investigation and presentation of Paul's rhetorical style as being in the tradition of the Hebrew prophets and an examination of the theological purpose of Paul's metaphors. Bailey's work is informed by study of rare commentaries of 1 Corinthians in Arabic, Greek and Syriac from the past 1600 years.

Principally focusing upon the use of parallelism in classical Hebrew poetry Bailey offers a reading of 1 Corinthians which describes a highly structured piece of writing, in Bailey's term a series of five "essays". Bailey contends that 1 Corinthians was written to the whole Christian Church (1 Cor 1:2), and thus Paul sets the agenda taking up themes arising in Corinth and fitting them into his overall structure. Bailey finds it unimaginable that the issue arising in Corinth were not also arising in every Christian community. This reading of 1 Corinthians gives a great sense of unity and overall purpose to the letter than many other modern commentaries.

Bailey's reading of Paul's metaphors is very helpful. It is not good to consider these only to be illustrative stories or asides merely reinforcing an abstract theological point. Biblical metaphors do carry theological meaning and purpose. There are many passages where Bailey's insight into Paul's metaphors will prove helpful.

From Bailey's work in the Middle East and his engagement with a relatively unknown stream of Christian translation and interpretation of the New Testament Bailey is able to present fresh and insightful readings of 1 Corinthians which will clarify both academic study of the letter and aid preaching and teaching not only on 1 Corinthians but on other Pauline texts.

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Communion with the Triune God: The Trinitarian Soteriology of T. F. Torrance. By Dick O. Eugenio. Princeton Theological Monograph Series; Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2014. ISBN: 978-1-62564-036-9. xxii + 242 pp. £18.00.

In this volume, Dick O. Eugenio provides a survey of Thomas F. Torrance's soteriology, organised around the unified reconciling acts of the Triune God. Eugenio argues that this study is unique because 'it consciously presents Torrance's soteriological Trinity and Trinitarian soteriology at the same time' (p. xx). By 'soteriological Trinity' Eugenio means the unity of divine Act and Being for salvation, and by 'Trinitarian soteriology' Eugenio means these acts of salvation are both rooted in the communion of the Triune God and also oriented toward bringing the human race into participation in that communion. Thus, the Trinity is both the origin and *telos* of our salvation.

This book is distinctive in its exclusive focus on Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology, but the subject-matter itself has already been treated elsewhere, for example in Elmer Colyer's *How to Read T. F. Torrance: Understanding His Trinitarian and Scientific Theology* (InterVarsity, 2001) and in Paul Molnar's *Thomas F. Torrance: Theologian of the Trinity* (Ashgate, 2009). Eugenio acknowledges this, but provides only a fleeting comparison of his work with these prior studies. Further clarification would have been helpful. The prior studies mentioned are said to contain similar content, yet Eugenio's book is unique in that its organisation is reflective of the evangelical pattern of that content (pp. 23-24). This is true, but it is unclear whether this unique organisation yields substantially new observations or evaluations of the subject-matter.

After introducing this organisation and its *scientific*, *evangelical*, and *Trinitarian* character (chapter 1), Eugenio turns to the work of the incarnate Son (chapter 2). The Son is discussed first 'because reconciliation can only be properly understood when it is grounded upon the Person of the Reconciler,' who is the full self-revelation of God to man (p. 30). Torrance's particular view of incarnational atonement, in which Christ assumes our fallen human nature and transforms and heals it throughout his life, death, and resurrection, receives due attention here. The book next moves to an account of the Father and his loving act of election (chapter 3). Salvation accomplishes our adoption as children of the Father, and to this end the Father *sends* the Son and Spirit, the '*apostle-shaliachs*' who are *sent* (pp. 108-110). It is the Holy Spirit who actualises this accomplished salvation in our subjective experience and establishes communion between the Church and the Triune God (chapter 4). The book closes with a study of the nature of this communion or participation via various

Torrancean themes, such as mediation, *perichoresis*, onto-relationality, and *theosis* (chapter 5).

Eugenio is Wesleyan, but the soteriology of that tradition figures little in the discussion. He hopes to avoid a comparative study which might result in misrepresentation or in a lopsided account of Torrance's soteriology (p. 213). That motivation is admirable, but the book swings quite far in the other direction, with authorial voice often being swallowed up in a largely descriptive text. Eugenio seems aware of this 'weakness,' noting that the book is 'generally appreciative,' offering critiques which are 'only minor' (p. 213). More indications about *why* Torrance's soteriology is to be appreciated or critiqued would have been a welcome addition.

That said, the book clearly achieves its objective, the provision of a 'descriptive and analytical' survey of Torrance's Trinitarian soteriology and soteriological Trinitarianism (p. 213). In that function it is a helpful and informative resource for future studies on Torrance's thought.

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God without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness. By James E. Dolezal. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock. 2011. ISBN: 978-1-61097-658-9. xxi + 239pp. £19.00.

The doctrine of divine simplicity (DDS) is, most basically, the notion that God is *not* physically, logically, or metaphysically composite—he is not made up of parts (p. 31). It would be an understatement to suggest this doctrine has fallen on hard times in the current landscape of philosophical theology. *God without Parts*, one of very few book-length treatments of DDS specifically, responds to this theologically adverse climate with pronounced philosophical and theological acumen. James Dolezal's work not only manages to capture the wide-ranging significance of DDS, but also skillfully exposits the Christian tradition by leveraging the traditional DDS to profitably engage contemporary philosophical suspicions. Dolezal's aim in this treatment of DDS is to argue the importance of a *strong* Identity Account (IA) of DDS (i.e., one that upholds that God is identical to his perfections, and his perfections are identical to each other) for God's metaphysical absoluteness.

Dolezal's central argument is that 'simplicity is the ontologically sufficient condition for God's absoluteness,' (p. 2), such that God is 'the sufficient reason for his own existence, essence, and attributes' (p. 1). In more theologically familiar words, DDS is, in Dolezal's estimate, the pillar on which God's aseity, unity, infinity, immutability, and eternity stand (p. 67). His contribution to this topic is valuable in at least two ways: (1) it is a lucid presentation of the historical origins, the philosophical contours, and the theological implications of DDS, thus offering the reader an unparalleled introduction to DDS; and (2) it is a thorough treatment of DDS that leverages careful historical, theological, and philosophical analysis in service of a substantive rejoinder to the objections contemporary philosophers and theologians have hurled at DDS in recent years. For these reasons and more, this book will serve as a wonderful addition both to the current discussion over DDS and similar discussions about the absoluteness of God, especially regarding the Creator-creature distinction.

In the first chapter, Dolezal provides a stark contrast between Christianity's traditional adherence to DDS and the widespread rejection found among contemporary philosophers and theologians. He first demonstrates the extent of subscription to DDS by canvasing the history of Christian orthodoxy, in its patristic, medieval, reformed, and modern renditions. From this canvas is drawn a strand of doctrines, which depend upon DDS: God's unity, necessity, immutability, self-sufficiency, independence, perfection, and infinity (p. 10). Whereas the traditional adherents to DDS understood the creature's relation to the Creator in analogical terms, the contemporary critics bolster a 'strong commitment to ontological univocism' such that God and his creatures are found within the same order of being and therefore differ only in 'degrees' (p. 29). Hence, one of Dolezal's primary contentions is that DDS is fundamentally a statement about the Creator-creature distinction, a distinction that has also fallen on hard times in contemporary philosophical theology.

In the second chapter, Dolezal elucidates the conceptual content of the claim that God is simple and therefore without parts. Primarily through the lens of act-potency metaphysics, especially as found in Aquinas, he clarifies what is meant by the 'composition,' which DDS intrinsically rejects. Composition in God 'would jettison God's independent self-sufficiency, his uncausedness, his fullness of being, and his absolute self-identity' (p. 33). This leads into the third chapter of the book, wherein Dolezal spells out how DDS is 'the theological rationale underlying each of these claims,' which are what contribute to 'the strongest accounts of the Creator-creature distinction' (p. 67). Dolezal argues in every instance—with respect to aseity, unity, infinity, immutability, and eternity—that DDS is necessary to uphold the absoluteness of the Creator-creature distinction under consideration.

Chapters four and five mark a shift from explication of DDS to the explication of particular questions arising from it. Chapter four is the central chapter of the book insofar as it demonstrates the impact that DDS has on the absoluteness of God's existence. More specifically, Dolezal shows the way in which DDS is necessary to understand (1) how

the being of God is fundamentally different than the being of creatures and (2) how it is that God is perfectly self-sufficient. Dolezal concludes that 'it is God's simplicity that enables us to maintain that God is identical with *that by which* he exists' (p. 123), a central notion motivating his commitment to the *strong* IA version of DDS. Chapter five explains how God is not dependent on anything but himself to be what he in fact is. The chapter proceeds in four steps in which Dolezal engages the critics of an IA version of DDS. Dolezal concludes that God does not exist by dint of properties coinhering within him, but by way of his Godhead as himself a *minimal* truthmaker.

Chapters six and seven offer explanation of how DDS affects our understanding of God's will, knowledge, and freedom. Chapter six explains how it is that (1) God knows many things through his one imitable divine nature and (2) God is identical with both his will and the object of his will, which is finally himself. Chapter seven responds to what is considered the paramount problem for DDS: the affirmation of DDS alongside divine freedom, such that, despite being incomprehensible, both are necessary for God to remain absolute. The concept of divine freedom arrived at is not passive counterfactual openness, which Dolezal expressly denies, but rather God's absolute independence from the creature.

Despite the wide-ranging nature of Dolezal's volume, a book of this size cannot cover everything. For example, it is often said that DDS is the doctrine that prevents Christianity from slipping into tritheism. Why then is there no mention of the doctrine of the Trinity? Another area that will be flagged as a deficiency is the lack of any extended consideration of biblical warrant for DDS. Although a holistic account of DDS ought to give attention to these concerns, the present volume is responding to a different set of questions. That is, this text is more philosophically responsive than dogmatically constructive, more driven by the occasion of DDS's philosophical detractors than by the question of whether it is biblical.

Paul Helm gets it right when he says in the foreword of the book, 'The result is the best full-length philosophical treatment of divine simplicity that I know' (p. xi). Anyone interested in bringing historically and philosophically informed consideration of DDS together with its contemporary critiques should read this book, for although it is written for the academically disposed, it has to be to provide a capable rejoinder to the legion of contemporary DDS skeptics.

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The Suffering and Victorious Christ: Toward a More Compassionate Christology. By Richard J. Mouw and Douglas A. Sweeney. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-8010-4844-9. x + 112 pp. £12.99.

The aim of this short book is a humble response to what the authors describe as a global criticism of Western Christology. The criticism is that Western Christology heavily accents the *Christus victor* theme while remaining virtually silent on the *Christus dolor*. Mouw and Sweeney regard the criticism as fair, but they reject a further accusation often regarded as inevitable: chiefly, that 'violence, triumphalism, and denial of the suffering of God are essential to the Reformation traditions' (p. 7). In fact, the Calvinist Mouw and Lutheran Sweeney argue that Christians in the Reformation traditions find deep in their own storehouses all the resources needed for a compassionate Christology, - 'a profound conviction that the Son of God understands the deepest hopes and fears of the human condition' (p. 93). The theologies of John Williamson Nevin and Franz Pieper are discussed at length as the primary examples from the Reformation traditions where a compassionate Christology can be found most clearly. Separate chapters consider the contributions of these men who belong to the Calvinist and Lutheran traditions respectively.

While these theologians are highlighted, the book is no uncritical defense of Reformed Christology. In a chapter titled 'Reformed Theology and the Suffering of Christ', the authors critique what they consider to be a significant weaknesses in the Reformed tradition: a tendency to focus almost exclusively on Jesus' final - and unique - act of suffering, and to speak of the many years of his suffering life before his passion mostly in polemical terms aimed at Lutheran hypostatic speculations. Here, Charles Hodge and Louis Berkhof come under scrutiny. In American theology, the authors suggest the remoteness (for many) of oppression and suffering 'helps explain why divine suffering has been relegated to a place of secondary importance in our theology' (p. 62). They observe that for theologians in an American context, the suffering of Christ, whether more or less developed, seemed likely to remain a theological abstraction. Even in Nevin, for all his emphasis on union with Christ, the idea is not fully developed.

One place where *Christus dolor* does not remain a theological abstraction is in the African American experience, especially in early America. Mouw and Sweeney make the case that while African Americans spoke of Christ differently from Reformed theology, they were not speaking of a different Christ. 'The suffering Messiah that is latent in Lutheran and Reformed dogmatics comes boldly to life in the hymns, sermons, and

prayers of subjugated American slaves and their descendants' (p. 79). In the end, the authors encourage us toward embracing a Christ who suffers in solidarity with his people. But they also offer a warning: 'Indeed, American history shows us that we often fashion the kind of Christ we need - or think we need - whether we find ourselves in power or in weakness and despair' (p. 89).

Mouw and Sweeney have raised important considerations in this compact book. Theologians in a global context will find critique and encouragement as they seek a nuanced Christology. Perhaps most helpful for pastors and informed lay leaders, the authors deepen and enrich our vision of the suffering Jesus.

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Disunity in Christ: Uncovering the Hidden Forces that Keep Us Apart. By Christena Cleveland. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013. ISBN 978-0-8308-4403-6. 220 pp. £11.99.

Reflections on the nature of the unity of the church and considerations of the challenges that unity faces began with the New Testament writings and have never gone out of fashion. From time to time, however, theological or ethical tremors put greater pressure on the fault lines and the cracks are easier to see. Christena Cleveland's suggestively titled *Disunity in Christ* comes at such a time, and makes a welcome contribution to the maintenance of healthy Christian community. Dr Cleveland writes as a social psychologist rather than theologian or ethicist, and this brings a sense of freshness and and practical engagement to her work. As is often the case, however, a strength brings an attendant weakness, and such is the case here. But first—how does Cleveland address her task?

The book comprises ten relatively brief chapters. The opening chapter sets out the basic problem: whereas Jesus connected with everybody, the tendency in today's church is towards cultural homogeneity—relating to the 'right' kind, remaining distant from the 'wrong' kind. Cleveland applies the insights of social psychology both to the diagnosis of this condition, and to the prescriptions for overcoming it. Chapters 2 through 4 explore the nature, origins, and outworking of social division. Ethnic, cultural, and theological homogeneity are the norm; ironically, proximity leads groups to accentuate difference in order to maintain boundaries. Such divisions often arise out of simple preference elevated to group identity markers. With categories of 'in' and 'out' groups formed, interpersonal relationships are 'polluted' by the operation of these alternate universes. Chapter 5 reflects pointedly on the interrelationship of self-

and group-identity, noting the ways in which self esteem can be bolstered or damaged by group interaction. Altering self-perception and expanding group identity can promote inclusion. This insight is worked out over the following chapters 6 through 9, extrapolating the theme of conflict through identity formation, cultural allegiances, and cultural threats. While Cleveland throughout keeps a steady eye on ways in which these tensions and conflicts may be addressed, the final two chapters provide a more focused and sustained engagement with the positive steps that might be taken to promote positive cross-cultural interaction, and to do this out of an identity rooted in Christ.

There is much to appreciate here. Cleveland writes deftly and wears her learning lightly. Social scientific prose can often be jargon laden, but Cleveland avoids this pitfall; the system adopted for references is unobtrusive and effective. From the anecdotes and illustrations, it is clear that the book is deeply contextualized in the life of the local church, for all that it is avowedly a work of social psychology. Even though some chapters seem to blur together (I think this is especially true of chs. 6-8, moving from 'identity wars' to 'culture wars' to 'cultural conflict'), Cleveland manages to maintain the book's momentum, in spite of the inevitable overlap that comes with attending to the multi-faceted processes of social division and their outcomes.

There are points at which Cleveland demonstrates (inadvertently?) just how difficult is the task she calls us to. Given the encouragement to move beyond simplistic categorizations it was unnerving to see the handling of 'Randy the Hymn Lover' (p. 139, 150) who becomes a casualty of the culture wars Cleveland is attempting to stop.

My lingering sense, however, is that there is a missing—or at least significantly under-represented—element in the analysis. Cleveland's firm and patient probes into the dynamics of social differentiation seldom stray from the social scientific realm. To be fair, the framework of social psychology is explicitly declared (p. 22) and the book's aims qualified (pp. 18-19). But it remains the case that the diagnostic tools used determine the prescriptions offered. Social causes invite social solutions. Should it be at all unsettling that in a book about Christian community, the problems and prospects should derive from and be wholly transferable to sports teams, friendship networks, book clubs, or just about any voluntary society? The sort of 'group think' that underlies the counsel that we need to change the way we see ourselves, and develop 'strategies' for doing so (pp. 98, 98-100, 184-5) relegates the necessity of the gospel's power to transform, and results in a 'self-help' scenario at home in any secular setting. The relationship, at any rate, seems inverted in Paul's confrontation with Peter in Galatians 2:14, where gospel claims take priority

over identity formation, and where diving deeper into the nature of salvation—as Paul goes on to do—is the vehicle for addressing the problem of communal fissures.

It is not that this sort of reflection is entirely absent from Cleveland's book: there is, for example, an effective example woven into chapter 6 (p. 114). But on the whole, I was reminded of the preface to Peter Berger's *A Rumour of Angels* (London: Allen Lane, 1969) in which he confessed his disquiet at the way his previous book on the sociology of religion 'read like a treatise on atheism, at least in parts'. Its appendix dealing with 'theological implications' struck him as unsatisfactory, and *A Rumour of Angels* was his attempt to provide a more appropriate place for explicitly Christian, theological reflection. Signs of this kind of methodological self-awareness are difficult to discern in Cleveland's work, although it is possible that, like Berger, she will will bring them to the fore in subsequent studies.

There is another point at which this tension emerges, one which is not easily resolved. The notion of 'self-esteem' has some importance in the central part of the book (in chapter 5 in particular), as in psychological terms, a healthy 'self-concept' contributes positively to healthy relationships more widely. As it happened, I was reading Timothy Dudley-Smith's biography of John Stott at the same time as reading *Disunity in Christ*. In this context, it was jarring to arrive at an account of some of the parallels between Stott and Charles Simeon. Dudley-Smith notes a telling use Stott made of a Simeon quote on the question of the 'principal mark of regeneration'. Simeon's reply: 'The very first and indispensable sign is self-loathing and abhorrence... Were I now addressing to you my dying words, I should say nothing else but what I have just said. Try to live in this spirit of self-abhorrence...' (T. Dudley-Smith, *John Stott: A Global Ministry. The Later Years* (Leicester: InterVarsity, 2001), p. 429). This is another point at which gospel inversion invites a different kind of reflection and prescription than one bounded so markedly by the social scientific.

These are again days in which the church in Scotland, as elsewhere, is facing pressures which could lead to the sort of splintering that damages its witness before a watching world. It is imperative that Christians not divide needlessly while seeking to live as faithful disciples of Jesus, who was willing to reject as well as connect, and in whom is found the power to transform lives and communities. Cleveland's book offers much to help in that task.

David J. Reimer, University of Edinburgh

Outreach and the Artist. By Constantine R. Campbell. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013. ISBN: 978-0-310-49496-6. 128 pp. £10.99.

This book by Con Campbell, who lectures in theology and is an accomplished jazz musician, is immediately valuable for its rarity. It concerns the arts and outreach. Campbell explains why and how these relate to one another, and what pitfalls must be avoided. It is a subject seldom addressed, especially by someone qualified in both fields. Through theology, personal anecdotes and professional artists' profiles, he constructs a convincing edifice to support the arts as a valid, even essential means of outreach.

After opening with his own testimony, Campbell gets to the nuts and bolts of outreach through the arts by discussing his 'Jazz Testimonial' nights. He asks 'What does jazz have to do with Jesus?' (p. 30). It is always possible to find a connection between the arts and the gospel because art is about life. Jesus is the source of all life, therefore the arts must relate to Jesus. The real purpose of the arts is to 'give expression to the human condition' (p. 34). The connection does not need to be forced, it is already there.

There are plenty do's and don'ts, which he outlines. It is desirable to have good communication and good rapport between the church and the artists they are using for the outreach. While the message must not be dumbed down, neither, the artist might argue, should the quality of the art. Both must, above all, give God the glory.

He is very clear that you must always be honest with the audience. Nothing annoys people more than deception, offering a jazz concert with an unexpected evangelistic message about Jesus half way through. Also, Western societies are more secular than at the time of the Billy Graham crusades, making them a much harder audience than the previous generation. So Campbell tells us that he treats his Jazz Testimonial evenings more like a first date. 'What's the purpose of a first date?' he asks? 'To get a second date, of course'. He backs this up by recounting how a man came to Christ through just such a gradual introduction (p. 52).

At the heart of all artistic endeavours by Christians is the issue of what has predominance: the message or the medium? Campbell rightly points out there is room for two approaches. The first gives greater emphasis on art being used as a means to promote the gospel message, and is well documented by Campbell's own story.

In the second approach, while the art form may be informed by the truth of Christ, the message is not immediately explicit. It could be termed 'pre-evangelism' (p. 64). This slow burn style is essential in reaching the secular world with the ultimate truth of Christianity. Campbell is clear

that while applauding both approaches, the message and medium format is better and more direct for outreach.

Targeting the artistic community is difficult, because often these subcultures can be near impenetrable to the uninformed. Campbell concludes that 'the best evangelism occurs through relationships' (p. 76); either through artists who are Christians, or Christians who have a real appreciation of the arts. All the profiles of professional artists provided in the book clarify the difficulties both groups have in understanding each other. One hurdle to overcome is that for many artists, their art is their idol. He says 'art is a wonderful servant but a terrible master' (p. 103). Christ alone is worthy of our adoration. Another is the view, among many artists, that the church is 'characterized by conservatism, a degree of intellectual naiveté, self-absorption and moralizing' (p. 84).

This book reminds us that art was God's idea, follows from his nature, and must therefore be appropriate for use in glorifying him. Artists who are Christians have much to offer, both through art-inspired ministry and also when embedded within the artistic community. While a brief mention of the history of arts and the church would have been a useful addition, Con Campbell's book is a great encouragement for artists who are Christians, and a timely prompt for the church to support and utilise this underused, yet essential, asset.

Allan MacDonald, Inverness

Triple Jeopardy for the West: Aggressive Secularism, Radical Islam and Multiculturalism. By Michael Nazir-Ali. London: Bloomsbury, 2012. ISBN: 978-1-4411-1347-4. 196 pp. £10.99.

Bishop Nazir-Ali presents a pertinent thesis in an urgent style. His argument is that the foundation of British morality, stability and prosperity is Christianity. However this foundation is being undermined by extremist forms of secularism and Islam and a wrong approach to multiculturalism. So the country faces different kinds of crises.

British society still uses many ethical concepts based upon the biblical account of creation, such as equality, freedom and social welfare. However an aggressive secularist worldview is attacking practices which are beneficial for the nation. This includes the weakening of the family through absentee fathers and the lack of personal responsibility towards one's neighbour through a demand for rights.

Within this situation of change an alternative religious and political ideology – that of radical Islam – has established itself. This form of Islam which has produced atrocities, is distinct from the moderate type which can exist peacefully with the Christian worldview.

British politicians hope that society can be stabilized and developed through scientific progress and multicultural harmony. However, aims to achieve tolerance between ethnic communities has failed because of the promotion of the diversity of languages and cultures, and a lack of Christian hospitality in receiving the incomer. So rather than multicultural policies producing peace in society there has been an increase in tension and violence. Nazir-Ali's view of multiculturalism is different from that of Dewi Hughes who argues that diverse ethnicity and languages are God given (*Castrating Culture: A Christian Perspective on Ethnic Identity from the Margins* [Paternoster, 2001]).

The writer warns against the expectation that all religions are equally valid in producing a lifestyle beneficial to society. The only solution to the present situation is found in a recognition of the positive influence of biblical thought and a faith in the triune God whose nature is one of shared love and ordered relationships and who calls for responsible action.

Nazir-Ali's publication presents this thesis in four parts dealing with the roots of British society, the threat of radical Islam, scientific issues and political implications. The author is one of the most qualified Christians to write upon this theme, having dual Pakistani and British citizenship and experience of sitting in the House of Lords as well as that of a diocesan Bishop. He has an understanding of a wide range of ethical disciplines including embryo research and end-of-life issues and a thorough knowledge of Islam and its radical tendencies as seen in the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

Sympathetic reviewers have found the book's main weakness to be that it is a compilation of previously published articles and broadcasts. So it fails to read as a composite publication, and contains an overlap of material and an imbalance of content.

Nevertheless, those who are interested in the subject of the Christian prophetic voice in society will be most appreciative of the author's work. It helpfully provides an insight into the changes and crises experienced in Britain and points to the extent that biblical influence is still evident. This publication is an encouragement to Christian pastors engaged in a multicultural society.

Shortly before its publication the author gave an hour long talk to Irish Roman Catholic priests and students summarising the book's arguments and also responding to questions. This is a more coherent presentation of his main thesis and is available online under the 'Talks' section of the Iona Institute website (www.ionainstitute.ir).

David E. C. Ford, Free Church College, Edinburgh

Global Mission: Reflections and Case Studies in Contextualization for the Whole Church. Edited by Rose Dowsett. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-87808-532-3. xvii + 277 pp. £10.84.

The authentic contextualisation of the Gospel is one of the enduring challenges faced by all who engage in cross-cultural mission. As the church in the west faces the challenge of communicating the gospel to a post-Christian culture, it is, and will increasingly become a crucial issue for UK churches and Christians. A new book on contextualisation then holds the promise of being a welcome resource. Like the proverbial football match, this is very much a book of two halves. It is a book in two sections, with the first section entitled 'Reflections and Foundations' and consisting of a number of chapters aiming to give some biblical and theological foundations for contextualisation, and the second, entitled "Contextualisation at Work", consisting of a large number of cases studies and accounts of contextualisation in practice. Like many recent books produced by the World Evangelical Alliance, it is a multi-author work, with contributors coming from all five continents (though only eight of the thirty or so contributors are women). However, as it may be in the proverbial football game, the quality of the two sections is rather different.

The strengths of this book lie in the second section, which consists of case studies drawn from a wide range of contexts and areas of mission practice. It is in these situations that questions of contextualisation arise, and where the challenges of contextualising authentically become most acute. The various situations are presented by the authors, and then study questions are provided to encourage reflection. This makes the book a very helpful resource for all those who teach mission. The chapters which look at aspects of mission in Asia by Chua, Chew, Lee, Imamura and Maggay are all very good, as are the chapters looking at the fascinating question of 'Churchless Christianity' which arise from the Indian context. There is also, as would be expected, some stimulating chapters exploring contextualisation among Muslims, probably the area of sharpest contention in mission at present. Only one chapter, by Richard Tiplady, addresses issues of contextualisation in post-Christian Europe. It offers a helpful analysis of why Europe presents a missiological challenge, but does not have the space to look at the range of current responses. Its focus on emerging church means it is limited in its usefulness.

The first section of the book is, however, disappointing. None of the chapters offer the depth of investigation needed to provide an overall definition of contextualisation, let alone any real biblical or theological framework within which to consider it. There is insufficient attention paid to the pioneer writers in this field—Walls, Hiebert, Kraft and Hesselgrave—and no mention of Richard Niebuhr's work, which means there is little attention paid to the question of how we conceive of culture. Lidorio's opening chapter promises 'a biblical theology of contextualisation' but fails to deliver anything like that (in fairness, probably hampered by word restrictions). Cook's chapter on 'contextual exegesis' introduces the concept of producing an interpretive summary of a passage of Scripture as the essential work to precede both preaching and theological formulation, and here too a much longer treatment would have been welcome. Some of the writers seem to treat contextualisation as equivalent to communicating across cultures, but this is only one dimension of it, and the fuller question of how one expresses the gospel faithfully and authentically in a given cultural context is not really tackled. Brown, for example, refers to the Council of Jerusalem, which is in my view the biblical paradigm for authentic contextualisation, and refers also to Hiebert's 'Critical Contextualisation' but again there is nothing like the depth of content necessary. Since these foundations are not in place, no clear guidelines are given by which to assess the approaches taken to contextualisation by the practitioners who appear in the second section.

Overall then, this book it is not really one to recommend for those new to the subject, but it contains much that is helpful for teachers of mission to use with their students and also for practitioners to consider as they reflect on their own approach.

David Miller, Millerston United Free Church, Glasgow

The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity. By David Brakke. Cambridge, Mass./London: Harvard University Press, 2010. xii + 164 pp. £24.95.

In this book, David Brakke positions his project within a larger scholarly fray that is acutely aware of the problematic nature of 'Gnosticism' as a descriptive historical category. Against several paradigms which have been tried and (rightly) found wanting, Brakke commends a study of the early Christian milieu that attends to the ways in which early Christians employed hybridity, rhetoric, and metaphors of ethnicity as means of constructing reality. Unlike typological accounts of Gnosticism, which seem to prioritise – perhaps arbitrarily – certain theological or mythic features, and unlike other proposals for dropping the label 'Gnosticism' altogether, Brakke's account seeks to identify social continuities through discerning shared mythologies and rituals.

This begins in Chapter 2 with an examination of the 'Gnostic' literature. For Brakke, the 'Gnostics'—despite the fact that the term also enjoys a broader, elastic use among the ancient heresiologists—were indeed

an identifiable community by the same name, otherwise known to us today as the 'Sethian Gnostics' (p. 31). Teasing out a shared mythological account, the author identifies texts which may be deemed Gnostic in the strict sense. In Chapter 3, following some discussion of specific features of the Gnostic myth, Brakke goes on to treat the distinctive Gnostic practices of baptism and theurgical ascent. Whereas Gnosticism has been broadly conceived as having originated in pre-Christian Judaism, Brakke demurs on this point, insisting that 'the Gnostic myth … represented a creative response to the life and message of Jesus of Nazareth' (p. 88). In Chapter 4, the author examines three key second-century figures: Marcion, Valentinus, and Justin Martyr. The longevity of both Marcion and Valentinus as members of good standing within the Roman church is a measure of the same church's institutional tolerance. By contrast, Justin 'developed his idea of heresy explicitly in response to [this] Christian diversity' (p. 109), even though he 'can hardly be distinguished from either Valentinus or Marcion as clearly as the label "proto-orthodox" implies' (p. 111). The book closes in Chapter 5 with some reflection on how all these figures employed similar strategies of legitimisation and self-differentiation, including appeals to apostolic succession, canons of authoritative texts, speculative allegorising, and withdrawal of communion. The upshot of all this is that the '"Church" did not reject "Gnosticism," nor did the Gnostics "lose" to "proto-orthodoxy." Rather, the Gnostic school of thought, small and limited as it was, played an important role in the process by which Christians, even today, continually reinvent themselves, their ideas, and their communities in light of their experience of Jesus Christ' (p. 137).

By all accounts, *The Gnostics* is a well-researched and exquisitely-written book. In a scholarly arena which to vacillate between, on the one side, heavy-handed etic categorizations and, on the other side, a radically (and thus heuristically useless) historicist approach, Brakke's volume strikes a very welcome middle ground. The author has done remarkable justice to the complexity of second-century Christianity, especially within the scope of such a short book. The book's major weakness – perhaps a function of its sociological interest – has to do with its occasional theological obtuseness. Without more nuanced attention to the flashpoints between the heresiologists and their opponents, I for one remain unpersuaded that ascriptions of heresy had more to do with certain isolated petulant voices than the trajectory to which these belonged.

Nicholas Perrin, Wheaton College, IL, USA

Covenantal Apologetics: Principles & Practices in Defense of Our Faith. By K. Scott Oliphint. Wheaton, Il: Crossway, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-4335-2817-0. 277 pp. £13.49.

Ministers in secular society are increasingly seeing a need for training congregations in apologetics, that they might be equipped to defend their Christian faith. Consequently the need has emerged for literature that provides the tools necessary for engaging in today's society from the pulpit and in personal conversation. But many have found apologetics a difficult subject that is concerned with philosophical matters and best studied by academics. Students, less comfortable with philosophical categories are often left asking the question, 'How does this teaching apply?' Oliphint's *Covenantal Apologetics* goes a long way in addressing this matter. He shows both the principles of apologetics and their application. It is an accessible, yet thorough study of the subject by an apologist who is also an ordained minister, well-acquainted with the needs of pastoral ministry. Accordingly, the reader will find relevant insights that are ready for application in evangelism. This text ought to be received well by all who are engaged in gospel ministry.

Some knowledge of philosophy will be helpful in reading this book, but Oliphint's grasp of the history of thought is such that he is able to spell out the significance of these matters in a way that will appeal to all readers. Accounts of philosophers such as Hume and Kant show the influence these figures have had upon contemporary thought (see pp. 66-71 especially for his analysis of Kant), as well as critiques on current influential figures such as Richard Dawkins.

At the heart of this volume are ten theses concerning human relationships to God. These are referred to throughout the course of the book and are particularly helpful in thinking through the often-neglected relationship in Christian theology of postlapsarian human nature 'in Adam' to God. Oliphint's view, consistent with the Westminster Confession of Faith, is that the human relationship between man and God is covenantal both before and after the fall. Oliphint is concerned with the outworking of this covenantal relationship. Given that the covenantal character of the prelapsarian human relationship to God is not in vogue among evangelical theologians today, perhaps more could be said to persuade readers of the prelapsarian covenant. But for those who are committed to a covenantal framework there will be much to gain from Oliphint's insights, as to what the covenantal relationship entails for all 'in Adam' and 'in Christ'. Some may find the covenantal approach off-putting if they have been unconvinced by arguments for the significance of covenant in the opening chapters of Scripture. But any who engage in evangelising

will find the analysis of how deeply embedded the rejection of God is both historically and doctrinally to be thought-provoking, if not convincing.

There is much here to encourage the reader in personal evangelism. The emphasis is upon the authority of Christ and his word. Knowledge of philosophy, religion and culture is desirable, but not necessary in evangelism. The greater concern is to introduce a person to the word of God, for here authority structures outside of Christ are exposed and the truth of Christ and his salvation is communicated to us. Examples of evangelistic debates and conversations are given and analysed to encourage the reader to think through their own personal conversations and apply the principles given in the book. Mention must also be made of the excellent introductory essay by William Edgar which provides background to the methodology of this volume.

John C. A. Ferguson, Kingsview Christian Centre, Inverness