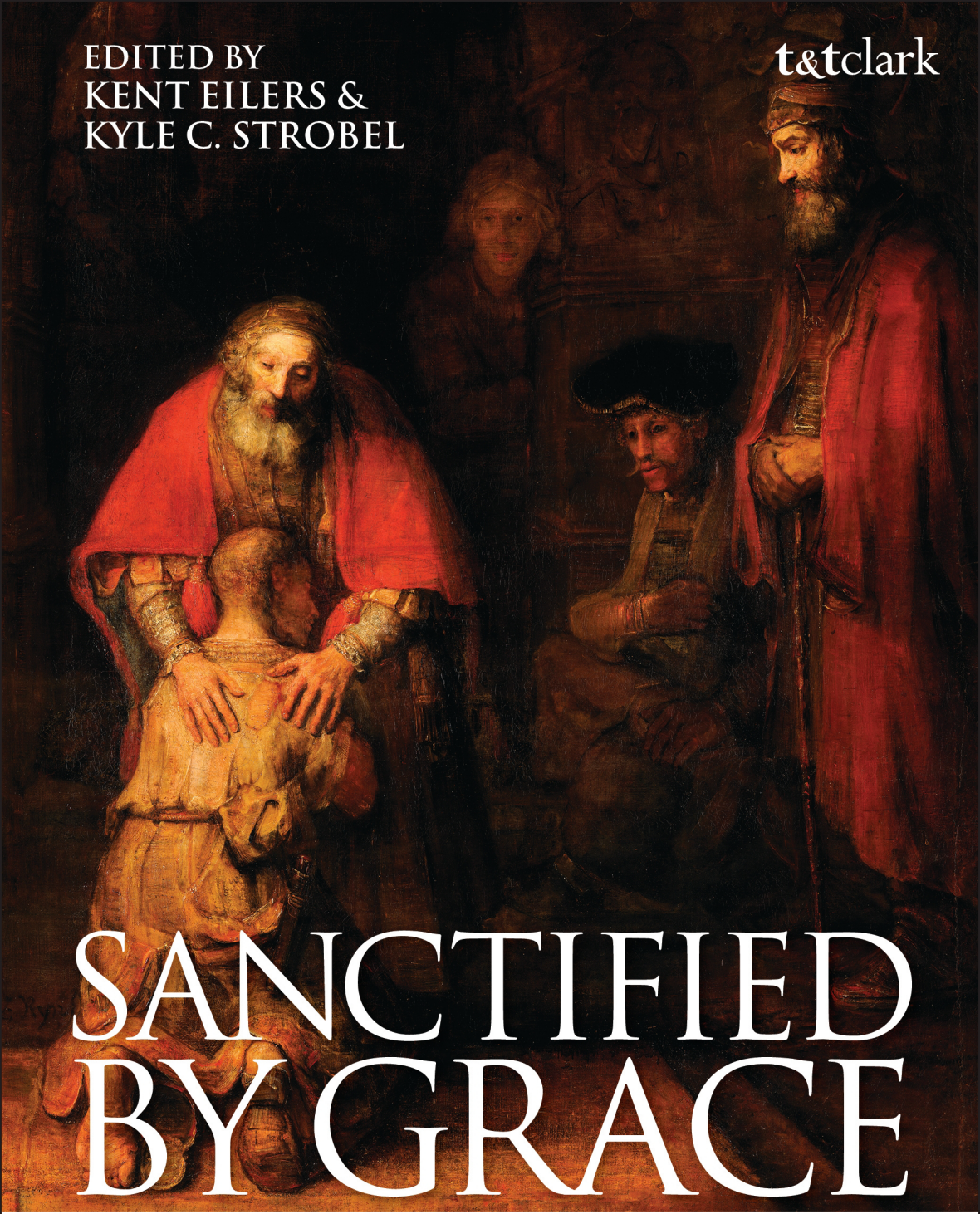
EDITED BY
KENT EILERS &
KYLE C. STROBEL

t&tclark



SANCTIFIED BY GRACE

A THEOLOGY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

BLOOMSBURY

Sanctified by Grace

Sanctified by Grace

A Theology of the Christian Life

Edited by

Kent Eilers and Kyle Strobel

BLOOMSBURY
LONDON • NEW DELHI • NEW YORK • SYDNEY

Bloomsbury T&T Clark
An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

50 Bedford Square
London
WC1B 3DP
UK

1385 Broadway
New York
NY 10018
USA

www.bloomsbury.com

Bloomsbury is a registered trade mark of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published 2014
© Kent Eilers, Kyle Strobel, and contributors, 2014

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

Kent Eilers, Kyle Strobel and contributors have asserted their right under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as Authors of this work.

No responsibility for loss caused to any individual or organization acting on or refraining from action as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by Bloomsbury or the author.

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

eISBN: 978-0-5673-2306-4

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Sanctified by Grace / Kent Eilers, Kyle Strobel and contributors p.cm
Includes bibliographic references and index.
ISBN 978-0-567-63217-3 (hardcover) – ISBN 978-0-567-38343-3 (pbk.)

Typeset by Newgen Knowledge Works (P) Ltd., Chennai, India

For John Webster, Donald Wood, and Philip Ziegler, in whose wise companionship our vision for this book was conceived.

CONTENTS

PREFACE

Far too often Christians perceive that theology has so very little to do with everyday life, with the actual business of existence, and much less to do with the ministries of the church. 'Theologies of' this or that come and go while life goes on much the same as before, all the while fads of the day dictate the direction of the church. This book arose from a starkly different conviction about theology: theology is not an activity sequestered from life, cordoned from the praise of God, or dedicated to maintaining tidy abstractions; rather, theology arises from *life lived before God*. Theology is itself a response to the Word spoken by God in Jesus Christ, which is continually spoken through the work of the Holy Spirit.

On these terms, the form of Christian theology known as dogmatics, or systematic theology, can and should serve the church's faithful presence in the world and her joyful proclamation of the Gospel. There is risk here of course. The practice of dogmatics places us in a rather *dangerous* place. Unless we know how, as Barth says, to 'walk warily around the burning bush',[1] it puts us at risk by demanding *us* to say *something* of *God*. The theologian thus proceeds with humility and not a little bit of joy because she knows that she goes in the company of the One whose own spoken Word initiated her speech. All of which is thankfully true of those who contributed to this book.

As practised by the authors here, dogmatics is a theological discipline both conceptual and practical. Conceptual in the sense that it concerns itself with the 'scope, unity, and coherence' of Christian teaching,[2] and practical in the sense that it is likewise concerned with the flourishing of Christian faithfulness. This is to say that it involves more than a deep comprehension of Christian truth (though it certainly includes this) but the flourishing of actual Christian existence: *faithfulness*. Christian dogmatics of this sort proceeds under the assumption that the practice of everyday life is, in fact, intimately and inescapably theological, and the cheerful work of dogmatics

---

[1]Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion* (trans. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 5.

[2]John Webster, 'Introduction: Systematic Theology', in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner and Iain Torrance; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 1.

can and should participate in the sanctification of the Holy Spirit who forms Christians in the likeness of Christ. That being said, theology capable of holding conceptual and practical reflection together has not always been readily prized or accessible, especially as universities and seminaries often separate courses and degrees in 'theology' and 'doctrine' from 'spirituality' or 'ministry'. We hope this book modestly contributes to bridging that divide.

Many people should be thanked for their generous support and involvement with this book. The contributors deserve special thanks. Each author provides works of constructive theology towards a common end; we think the result is in every sense a collaborative effort, a rare thing in Christian dogmatics. They have all made sacrifices difficult to quantify – teaching and institutional obligations juggled, family commitments negotiated, other scholarly and churchly involvements rearranged and no small amount of rest forfeited. May each sacrifice be richly rewarded, and may God make 'all grace abound to you' (2 Cor. 9.8).

T&T Clark has a long and significant history in Christian theology, and we are grateful for their expert support and guidance – thank you Anna Turton, Thomas Kraft and others who worked to bring this volume to print. Our thanks also to Huntington University and Grand Canyon University for their institution support, especially for the research fellowship awarded to Kent, and to Zen Hess and Alli Dozet who set aside valuable time during busy semesters to help prepare the manuscript. Thanks as well to James Merrick and Mark McDowell who suffered through numerous chats about this book as it was being conceived and whose constructive insights made it better.

Most significantly, we could not estimate the debt we owe to our families who consistently support our work with good cheer.

Tammy, Hannah and Abigail – you fill me with joy and refresh my heart. It is impossible to imagine fulfilling my vocational calling without your love and companionship. Bless you. (Kent)

Kelli, Brighton and Oliver – you are such an endless joy to me. Thank you for your support, encouragement and love. Bless you. (Kyle)

Christmastide 2013
Kent Eilers and Kyle Strobel

ABBREVIATIONS

CD	Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics*, 4 volumes in 13 parts (ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956–75).
ICR	Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (ed. J. T. McNeill; trans. F. L. Battles, Library of Christian Classics; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).
NPNF[1]	*Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers Series 1* (ed. Philip Schaff; 14 vols; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994).
NPNF[2]	*Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers Series 2* (ed. Philip Schaff; 14 vols; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994).
ST	Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (ed. Timothy McDermott; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Rev. John P. Burgess is the James Henry Snowden Professor of Systematic Theology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary and the author of *Encounters with Orthodoxy: How Protestant Churches Can Reform Themselves Again* (Westminster John Knox, 2013); *After Baptism: Shaping the Christian Life* (Westminster John Knox, 2005); and *Why Scripture Matters: Reading the Bible in a Time of Church Conflict* (Westminster John Knox, 1998).

Ellen T. Charry is the Margaret W. Harmon Professor of Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary and the author of *God and the Art of Happiness* (Eerdmans, 2010); *Inquiring After God: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Blackwell, 2000); and *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (Oxford University Press, 1999).

Ashley Cocksworth is Tutor in Systematic Theology for The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education. He is the author of *Karl Barth's Theology of Prayer* (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, forthcoming) and *Prayer: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Bloomsbury T&T Clark, forthcoming).

Tom Greggs is Professor of Historical and Doctrinal Theology at the University of Aberdeen, and the author of *The Vocation of Theology Today* (Cascade, 2013, with Rachel Muers and Simeon Zahl); *New Perspectives for Evangelical Theology: Engaging God, Scripture and the World* (Routledge, 2010); and *Barth, Origen, and Universal Salvation: Restoring Particularity* (Oxford University Press, 2009).

Christopher R. J. Holmes is Senior Lecturer in Theology at the University of Otago and the author of *Ethics in the Presence of Jesus* (T&T Clark, 2012) and *Revisiting the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes: In Dialogue with Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel, and Wolf Krötke* (Peter Lang, 2007).

Rev. D. Stephen Long is Professor of Systematic Theology at Marquette University and the author of *Keeping Faith: An Ecumenical Commentary on the Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith in the Wesleyan Traditions*

(Cascade, 2012); *Hebrews: Belief, A Theological Commentary on the Bible* (Westminster John Knox, 2011); and *Christian Ethics: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

Suzanne McDonald is Associate Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology at Western Theological Seminary and the author of *John Knox for Armchair Theologians* (Westminster John Knox, 2013) and *Reimagining Election* (Eerdmans, 2010).

Ian A. McFarland is Professor of Systematic Theology at Emory University and the author of *In Adam's Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin*. Challenges in Contemporary Theology (Blackwell, 2010); *The Divine Image: Imaging the Invisible God* (Fortress, 2005); and *Difference and Identity: A Christian Anthropology* (Pilgrim, 2001).

Rev. Christiaan Mostert was Professor of Systematic Theology at Uniting Church Theological College until retiring in 2013. He is the author of *Hope: Challenging a Culture of Despair* (ATF Press, 2004); *God and the Future: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Eschatological Doctrine of God* (T&T Clark, 2002); and the co-editor of *Karl Barth: A Future for Postmodern Theology?* (Australian Theological Forum, 2000).

Fred Sanders is Associate Professor of Systematic Theology at Torrey Honors Institute, Biola University and the author of *John Wesley on the Christian Life* (Crossway, 2013); *The Deep Things of God* (Crossway, 2012); and *The Image of the Immanent Trinity: Rahner's Rule and the Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Peter Lang, 2005).

Rev. Katherine Sonderegger is Professor of Theology at Virginia Theological Seminary and the author of *Systematic Theology* (Westminster John Knox, forthcoming) and *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew: Karl Barth's Doctrine of Israel* (Pennsylvania University Press, 1992).

Rev. John Webster is Professor of Divinity at the University of St. Andrews and the author of *The Domain of the Word: Scripture and Theological Reasoning* (T&T Clark, 2012); *Confessing God. Essays in Christian Dogmatics II* (T&T Clark International, 2005); and *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge University Press, 2003).

Rev. William Willimon is Professor of the Practice of Christian Ministry at Duke Divinity School and the author of *The Early Preaching of Karl Barth* (Westminster John Knox, 2009); *Conversations with Barth on Preaching* (Abingdon, 2006); and *Proclamation and Theology* (Abingdon, 2005).

Donald Wood is Lecturer in Divinity at the University of Aberdeen and the author of *Holy Scripture* (Zondervan, forthcoming) and *Barth's Theology of Interpretation* (Ashgate, 2007).

Philip Ziegler is Senior Lecturer of Divinity at the University of Aberdeen and the author of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologian of the Word of God* (Ashgate, forthcoming) and *Doing Theology When God Is Forgotten: The Theological Achievement of Wolf Krötke* (Peter Lang, 2006).

Introduction: The Christian life in dogmatic key

Kent Eilers and Kyle Strobel

When John the Seer narrates his vision of the New Jerusalem descending to earth, he does so as a prototypical theologian. John is a witness to God's self-presenting, a presenting that orients creaturely realities around the God who descends. John witnesses and proclaims God's presence descending to narrate how *this* presence reorders and perfects: 'Behold, the dwelling place of God is with mankind. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people, and God himself will be with them as their God' (Rev. 21.3). John sets his eyes to the perfection of creation, a perfection derived from God's presence. In that place, there is no temple, 'for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb' (Rev. 21.22). The city, furthermore, has no need of a sun or moon 'for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the lamb' (Rev. 21.23). Jesus' call to be the light that descended into darkness (Jn 1) is completed in the descent of the city of light whose glory cannot be hid. But the glory and luminosity of the New Jerusalem is simply the presence of God known and received, and in that presence creatures come to know their vocation ('By its light will the nations walk' (Rev. 21.24)).

God's presence is the central feature of redemption history, seen in God's covenantal commitment to Abraham and his seed through the gift of himself and his faithfulness: the gift of God's presence in cloud and fire as Israel 'exodused' from Egypt; God's presence in the tabernacle and temple; the self-giving of God in Christ; and, the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost and his continual self-giving to the body of Christ. Christ fulfils the first three as the true Son of Abraham (Mt. 1.1), the true Son called out of Egypt (Mt. 2.15) and the true temple of God (Jn 2.19–21). Pentecost does not alter this Christological centring, but further establishes it; the Spirit *of Christ* is

the one given and the same Spirit who unites us to Christ (Eph. 3.14–19; 1 Jn 3.24). Though we do not see as John did, we are drawn into the current of God's self-giving. Caught in the wake of his redemptive economy we become a people held together by the sight of Christ's beauty. Now we see through the dark glass of faith, but then, in the light of the Lamb, we will see face to face.[1]

Holy Scripture provides *this* picture of our end, and it colours and orients the nature of the theological task. Just as God's presence orders the society of the redeemed, so theology is ordered by the presence of God and oriented towards faithfulness. The theologian is thus called to focus the church's attention on the reality and implications of God's presence. His self-giving establishes the pattern. The same was true for John. Jesus' self-proclamation (Emmanuel) inaugurates the kingdom of God, a reign deriving from God's presence.[2] John's move was identical. He proclaims the descent of God with the New Jerusalem and thereby paints a picture of the kingdom in full: 'but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it' (Rev. 22.3). God's descent forms the witness of his people now as well. Because of the Incarnation, God's people proclaim 'Emmanuel' even though the reality of God's full presence is not known until John's vision comes to pass.

Theology takes on the dual nature of John's witness. Witnessing to the descent of God in Christ, the theologian must also detail the life and society formed by this presence. The dual nature of the theologian's witness is properly developed in the category of grace. Grace entails God's self-giving to his creature and the fellowship generated through that self-giving in Christ and the Spirit. Paul can therefore say, 'For through him (Jesus) we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God' (Eph. 2.18–19). Paul highlights adoption and redemption *in* Christ as the foundation of grace (Eph. 1.2–7) and then names his apostolic calling within that redemption as grace as well (Eph. 3.1). Grace is the unity of the presence and call of God because they are united in Christ. It is *in* Christ that the presence and call of God are known, and *in* Christ where they are perfected (Col. 1.15–23). Just as

[1]Hans Urs von Balthasar notes, 'if one proposes a more limited meaning of the terms "knowing" and "seeing" such that faith is now incompatible with it and by definition excludes it (knowledge being defined as *resolutio in principia evidentia intellectus*), then even though such a definition may be of quite fundamental importance in clarifying what faith is, it will have nothing to do with *the* knowing and *the* seeing which in Scripture are attributed to faith itself' (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, I. Seeing the Form* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982], pp. 141–42).

[2]One might note the unhelpfulness of the 'already-but-not-yet' cliché. It is not that Jesus started a kingdom that was anticipatory or incomplete, but that he had yet to give his full presence. Rather than focusing on the kingdom, the focus is on the ascent of Christ. It is God's self-giving in Christ that is 'already-but-not-yet'. The people of God wait in anticipation not because the kingdom is not yet complete, but because Christ has not yet descended to reign in full.

Christology and grace are interwoven in orthodox Christian theology,[3] so are doctrine and the formation of redeemed Christian existence, namely 'the Christian life'.

The Christian life in dogmatic key

'The Christian life' is theological shorthand for redeemed human existence in communion with the triune God through union with Christ in the Spirit. That is, it names the temporal experience of God's eternal purposes for fellowship as they are realized in human beings according to God's grace. To state it yet another way, to address 'the Christian life' is to speak about the character of reconciled and renewed human existence. God's gracious purpose to conform fallen people to the image of Christ takes shape and fulfils itself in time and space; this is the Christian life.

Putting it this way points out the rich doctrinal nexus within which the doctrine of the Christian life is situated. While the primary reference of 'the Christian life' is the lived experience of Christian identity, as a doctrinal locus it stands dogmatically related to other areas of Christian witness such as the doctrines of the Trinity, creation and providence, Christ, the church and the final consummation (to name a few). Being so related, the doctrine of the Christian life is informed and illumined by a whole series of theological claims about God, such as his relation to created reality, his reconciling works and the human activities which arise from them. In turn, those other doctrines are likewise informed and illumined through the doctrine of the Christian life. Our approach thus articulates a theology of the Christian life in terms of the *whole* of the Christian confession rather than just one dimension.

The upshots of developing a theology of the Christian life 'in dogmatic key' are several. First, it trains us to keep the doctrine of God (theology proper) always in view when talking about the Christian life. It ensures that the doctrine of the Christian life does not float free from the doctrine of God, a drift which quickly depletes emphasis upon the origin of the Christian life in God's gracious initiative[4] and its dependence upon God for its final fulfilment.[5] The theology of the Christian life found here thus seeks to show that God's grace is found not merely at the foundation of the Christian life or at its end, but that every facet of the Christian life is suffused with God's gracious self-giving. Second, because this doctrine is so

[3]Donald Fairbairn makes this case well in his books *Grace and Christology in the Early Church*, Oxford Early Christian Studies (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and *Fulgentius of Ruspe and The Scythian Monks: Correspondence on Christology and Grace*, The Fathers of the Church (ed. Donald Fairbairn; trans. Rob Roy McGregor and Donald Fairbairn; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2013).

[4]Mt. 16.13-20; Jn 6.35-40; Rom. 9.10–29, 11.5–6; Eph. 1.4–8, 2.8–10.

[5]2 Cor. 3.18; Gal. 4.19; Eph. 4.15, 22–24; Phil. 1.1–6, 2.12–13; Col. 1.29; 1 Thess. 5.23–24.

closely related to moral theology and ethics, it is a temptation to make the practices or activities of the Christian life the primary or sole focus. This approach portrays a truncated image (and, as we suggest below, it risks detaching practices from the gospel).[6] It merely attends to the outward signs of redeemed life and not the character and purposes of the One who established and perfects it – not a brute causal force, but the God of grace! Third, the same holds for the category of 'spirituality'. Developing a theology of the Christian life primarily on its terms alone risks isolating it from the distinctly Christian resources made available from a more explicitly doctrinal approach.[7] Finally, delineating the Christian life principally in terms of one closely related doctrine – such as justification, common among Protestant accounts – *may* portray the Christian life without the depth and richness available from the vantage point of its relationship to the dogmatic whole. To say this another way, addressing the Christian life puts us in the vicinity of the doctrines of justification and sanctification, but without attending well to its wider dogmatic connections the Christian life risks being over-determined by those doctrines which lie 'closest' to it. For example, though the doctrine of justification witnesses to the forensic realities of Christian existence, on its own it fails to relate the Christian life to the full spectrum of God's revealed nature and actions, nor does it necessarily indicate the outward practices fitting to justified existence.

The metaphor of a many-faceted crystal is useful for picturing our approach. Each facet of a crystal is interconnected to other facets on every side; none stands alone. Looking through any one facet, all at once we see the basic structure of the whole *and* we gain the unique perspective of the particular facet through which we look. On the approach of this volume, the 'crystal' is the expansive and interconnected whole of the Christian faith, and we 'turn it' in order to look through the doctrine of the Christian life. Thus, all at once we view this particular doctrine *and* the basic structure of the whole. The approach has at least two advantages. First, it prevents us

[6]The relation between belief and practices is certainly tangled and mutually informing, and our order of approach – doctrine then practices – is not meant to elide that complexity. The universe of doctrines, values and ideas that surround practices do not merely give rise to them, but practices inform their doctrinal matrix as well (no more clear than in the early development of the doctrine of Christ). Our approach is also not meant to deplete the value of reflection on practices, as the fourth part of this book should make clear. On the relation between practices and belief (or 'imagination') see Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2007), esp. pp. 171–76; Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 23–31; Etienne Wenger, *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); David J. Bryant, *Faith and the Play of Imagination: On the Role of Imagination in Religion* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1989); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (trans. S. Rendall; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984); Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (trans. Richard Nice; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[7]See Kyle Strobel, '"In Your Light We See Light": A Theological Prolegomena for Contemplation', *The Journal for Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* (forthcoming).

from developing this doctrine on the terms of whatever might be currently popular or faddish. Rather, just as one facet of a crystal is connected to all those around it, the doctrinal approach we adopt trains us to develop a theology of the Christian life *through* the complex and beautiful interrelationships within the Christian witness.[8] Second, the metaphor of a crystal also reminds us that a theology of the Christian life is not concerned *only* with redeemed Christian existence, but with the God of the Gospel, the God of grace who establishes its very possibility and brings it to perfection. In other words, though we gaze through this particular facet, the Christian life, we must not forget that we see *through it* to the basic structure of the whole, not a crystalline matrix but a person, the God of grace who sanctifies the Christian life.[9]

We could also describe the approach in terms of three different 'logics'. David Kelsey suggests that theological inquiry typically proceeds according to its focus on one or more of the following three questions, and for each question a particular logic is fitting.[10] The first is the logic of *belief* and concerns who God is and how he relates to us. The second is the logic of coming to faith, or *apologetics*, and concerns how we move from unbelief to belief. The third is the logic of the *life of faith* and asks about what we do as Christians. Kelsey argues that each is entirely legitimate in its own right but that problems ensue when they are conflated.[11]

---

[8]Every approach has gains and losses. A potential risk of this one is, as Rowan Williams phrases it, 'that congruence becomes so densely worked that the language is in danger of being sealed in on itself. The cross-referencing of images and patterns, in more and more intricate ways, the displaying of an ever-more complex texture to the language of belief, will risk "freezing" the reflective process and denying it the possibility of actively illuminating and modifying the concrete historical discourse of its environment, and of being renewed and extended by them', *On Christian Theology* (London: Blackwell, 2000), p. xiv. It is as if Williams fears the doors of the church will never open and out pour God's people into their uncommitted setting (see, Kent Eilers, 'Rowan Williams and Christian Language: Mystery, Disruption, and Rebirth', in *Christianity and Literature* 61/1 [Autumn 2011], pp. 19–32). The concern is legitimate and has often been voiced. The solution is a performance of dogmatic theology that remains confident enough in its own categories of belief and traditions to venture into the cultural mediums of its day – literature, film, political theory, etc. 'The assumption is', Williams explains, 'that this or that intellectual idiom not only offers a way into fruitful conversation with the current environment but also that the unfamiliar idiom may uncover aspects of the deposits of belief hitherto unexamined' (*Christian Theology*, p. xiv).

[9]George Hunsinger describes Karl Barth's method with the same metaphor (*How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991], p. 29).

[10]David Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 2009), pp. 80–119.

[11]This is so because the three logics are 'conceptually different kinds of inquiry'. An account of how Christian beliefs function 'in the movement from unfaith to faith (or in living the life of faith, for that matter) is not the same as an account of what the beliefs mean, how they do or do not hang together, what they imply, how they may be freshly articulated most perspicuously, and so forth' (*Eccentric Existence*, p. 113).

Confusion of the first and the second logic, belief and apologetics, was Barth's steady concern for fear that the logic of belief would be 'distorted in some way by its conflation with an apologetic logic'.[12] Some other system (rational, moral or religious) comes to determine what constitutes Christian belief rather than what is internal to itself. Similar problems arise, Nicholas Healy argues, when the first and third are confused, the logic of belief and practice. This conflation risks unmooring ethics from the Gospel with moralism as the quick result, 'much the same as a moral theology, ethics, or account of the Christian life insufficiently determined by the logic of belief'.[13]

With both risks in mind, the approach of this volume proceeds from the *logic of belief* and seeks to allow the following three elements of Christian witness to shape its theology of the Christian life: who God is, how he relates to us as Father, Son, and Spirit, and the end towards which he draws men and women in the Spirit. Barth calls these the three main 'assertions' of dogmatics: 'He is the one who created heaven and earth, and on earth and under heaven man. He is the one who reconciles to Himself the man who as a sinner has become His enemy, and in man the world. And He is the One who, from the danger and conflict in which man must still stand here and now, will liberate him for eternal life, redeeming and making him perfect in the final act and revelation of his love.'[14]

It should not be thought, however, that a theology of the Christian life according to the logic of belief hovers above the church's lived existence, some ephemeral construction that never touches the ground. To the contrary, a theology of the Christian life must have the ethical shape and form of the church always in mind; the church's dailyness must never slide out of view. To maintain the dogmatic orientation of the Christian life to the triune God while also retaining focus on the practical shape of redeemed existence is the task at hand. We want neither to reduce the doctrine of the Christian life to rationality, to a theory or idea, nor diminish it to merely practices or church culture.

What this volume provides, therefore, is a theology of the Christian life oriented around the triune God of grace. This means coordinating the triune God, his reconciling, justifying, redemptive, restorative and otherwise transformative action with those practices of the Christian life emerging from it. The doctrine of the Christian life which emerges is grounded *in* the self-revelation of God and oriented *towards* the witness of the church, the body of people called into being by Christ and given life through the Spirit. Redeemed life – the life which is given to fallen creatures that we call 'the Christian life' – is not life that we make for

[12]Nicholas Healy, 'Karl Barth and Thomas Aquinas in Dialogue: On the Christian Life'. Paper presented at the Karl Barth Conference, Princeton Theological Seminary, June 2013 (unpublished). Cf. Karl Barth, *CD* IV/3.1, p. 32.
[13]Healy, 'Karl Barth and Thomas Aquinas in Dialogue'.
[14]Karl Barth, *CD* III/4, p. 24.

ourselves but life that we receive as unmerited gift, *grace*. In this sense grace names the movement of God for the redemption of fallen creation. Grace thus serves to organize the doctrinal and practical material in this volume and to highlight their interconnection. It is a modest retrieval of classic theology in which doctrine and practice are grounded in the self-revelation of God, and oriented towards the life of the church in worship and mission. The four parts in this book are organized to facilitate this approach, and when taken collectively they come together as a collaborative exercise in Christian dogmatics.

Life and reason sanctified by grace

Coordinating the doctrine of the Christian life to God's economy of salvation and the practices which are fitting to redeemed existence is not one option among many. Rather, we suggest, this coordination between doctrine and life, belief and practice is integral to life within the movement of God's Spirit. Within the dynamism of the Spirit's formation, doctrine and life are *pulled together* in the broader picture of grace. In this sense, grace names the self-giving nature of God and his movement in the Spirit to draw believers into fellowship and sanctification. Thus, the theology of the Christian life developed here attempts to mirror the broad movement of God's saving action – the fellowship of the triune God turned outward in self-giving in Son and Spirit and the calling of his people to fellowship and mission.

This approach gestures towards a style of theological work that has in mind two temptations of contemporary theology. First, a great need exists to recover a form of dogmatics in which Christian rationality is grounded in the movement of the Spirit within the sphere of grace. As noted by John Webster,

> Converted reason, reason made holy, is reason set free from wilfulness, illusion and anxiety, reason emancipated for the truth. The bonds of reason and holiness have been largely dissolved in modern Christian theological culture, partly because theology has generally conceded its critics' claim that unformed natural reason is the only reason there is, partly because theology has been reluctant to believe that holiness can be predicated of intellectual (rather than only moral) acts.[15]

Said differently, Christian rationality is natural reason caught up in the divine economy of grace. Reason is not cordoned off from the sphere of grace, set aside from the work of the Spirit to make holy (sanctify) but caught up within it. The 'graces' offered by God to the Christian carry within them

[15]John Webster, 'Editorial' in *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 4/2 (July 2002), p. 135.

the call for faith to 'seek understanding' but the understanding which faith seeks occurs within the sphere of grace and thus reason's own sanctification. As Webster puts it, rationality 'set free from willfulness, illusion and anxiety, reason emancipated for the truth'. The apostle Paul had something like this in mind when he wrote to the Ephesians that they would be 'strengthened with power through [God's] Spirit in your inner being' to 'comprehend' Christ's expansive love (Eph. 3.16–18). The comprehension of which Paul speaks is no bare rationality but Spirit-fostered knowledge of 'the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge' (v. 19). As reason is caught up in the economy of grace, knowledge is not 'surpassed' in the sense of being undermined – a flight from reason to fancy or something like it – rather, Paul points out, in the love of Christ knowledge overflows 'that you may be filled with all the fullness of God'.

These remarks are brief, but they suggest how the approach of this volume acknowledges the sanctification of reason. Christian rationality caught up in the divine economy of grace is reason diligently attentive to God's self-presentation and set apart for service to the church. The sanctification of reason thus entails the serious and cheerful work of the theologian. In the form of Christian dogmatics, their service – regardless of its sophistication, either academic or lay – will be neither mere detailing of activity nor cataloging of doctrine. Rather, by attending to the doctrinal whole of the Christian faith they will attempt to situate their entire existence 'within the frame' of revealed truth known in Jesus Christ. The result will be a portrait of the Christian life characterized by the textures, nuances and subtleties of the Christian faith *in toto*.

Second, the temptation to accept unformed natural reason as the only reason possible is matched by the temptation to accept the hyper-specialization of the academy. Spirituality, the Christian life and Christian practice are all relegated to other disciplines and no longer flow from and speak back (prophetically) into theology. Rather than recognizing the death of spirituality when it is divorced from theology (and vice versa), the modern academy baptizes this separation with academic programmes and books in which theology and spirituality rarely collide (let alone mutually influence).[16] People on both sides bemoan that 'our theologians used to be saints and our saints used to be theologians'[17] but helpful ways forward tend to fail on both fronts.

---

[16]See Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2001).

[17]For representative samples, see Hans Urs von Balthasar 'Theology and Sanctity', in *Word and Redemption: Essays in Theology 2* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965), pp. 49–86; Mark A. McIntosh, 'Spirituality and Theology: The Questions at Issue', in *Mystical Theology, Challenges in Contemporary Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), pp. 3–38; and Philip Sheldrake, 'The Divorce of Spirituality and Theology', in *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God*, Trinity and Truth Series (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1998), pp. 33–64.

We seek to address these temptations by providing a dogmatic account of the Christian life in which doctrine and life, confession and practice are held together in the divine economy of grace. The approach is straightforwardly doctrinal – focusing the life of the Christian on the triune God who creates, elects, calls and redeems. This is the God of grace who gives himself in Jesus Christ and who catches people up in the movement of his Spirit of love.

Overview

The first part, 'The gracious one', grounds the loci that follow by orienting the approach of the whole to the doctrine of God (theology proper).[18] A doctrinally expansive account of redeemed human existence thus requires careful elaboration upon the One who establishes, sustains and perfects the Christian life. God in 'unimpaired unity yet also in unimpaired distinction' is God the Lord, the Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and Perfector of all that is, seen and unseen.[19] There is no god *behind* the Trinity, some undifferentiated deity to whom Christians direct their worship. God the Lord, revealed in Jesus Christ – 'the exact imprint of his nature' (Heb. 1.3) – *is* Father, Son and Spirit. It is this God Christians worship, and his eternally joyous life is the *telos* towards which Christian existence is drawn along by the Son and the Spirit. Only there will human beings find their ultimate happiness and fulfilment as they gaze upon the beauty of God as co-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8.15, 23; Gal. 4.5; Eph. 1.5). So it is to the doctrine of the Trinity we turn first.

Chapter 1, 'The triune God', situates the doctrine of the Christian life against the backdrop of God's own life. More specifically, it shows how theological reflection on the eternal generation of the Son and the spiration of the Spirit illuminates the origins from which God's saving action arises and the destination towards which redeemed human existence is set. Far from a conceptual abstraction, the doctrine of trinitarian processions gives the Christian life its 'distinctive character' as *trinitarian adoption*. Indeed, it is into *this* gloriously complete life between the Father, Son and Spirit that the Christian is adopted. Regarding the Son, his eternal begetting from

[18]Picking up another metaphor, we might say that this organization is meant to allow the doctrine of God to exert a 'gravitational pull' on all subsequent theological reasoning about the Christian life; certainly not to elide the complexity of doctrinal relations, but to draw the doctrine of the Christian life into its particular orbit, to set it on its particular course. Along similar lines to the gravitational metaphor, T. F. Torrance describes the doctrine of the Trinity as theology's 'basic grammar', the 'ultimate ground of theological knowledge about God' (T. F. Torrance, *The Ground and Grammar of Theology* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001], pp. 158–59).

[19]Karl Barth, *CD*, I/2, p. 295.

the Father stands behind his temporal sending to save, and his eternal filial relation to the Father is the life secured by our union with Christ. Likewise, regarding the Spirit, the eternal breathing forth of the Spirit (spiration) stands behind his application of Christ's finished work. That is, when the Spirit takes residence in the hearts of believers 'his eternal relationship with the Father and the Son begins to take place among us'. Indeed, through the enlightening and enlivening movement of the Spirit, Christians receive the Sonship of the Son (Rom. 8.15; Gal. 4.6).[20] Thus, at the very outset of this theology of the Christian life, the doctrine of the Trinity is permitted to illumine Christian existence simultaneously 'from above' and 'from below'. From 'below', the doctrine of the Trinity sheds light 'upward' from the temporal missions of the Son and the Spirit to show their *telos* in the completeness of God's own life. That is to say, it illumines the ultimate end of the redemption and rescue they accomplish. From 'above', the doctrine of the Trinity sheds light 'downward' onto the works of the Son and Spirit illumining their origination in the eternal fellowship of the Godhead. One ready consequence is simply this: by indicating the eternal backdrop of the Christian life, its origin is thus shown to precede felt experience. Avoiding focus on felt experience goes some way towards protecting the doctrine of the Christian life from being swamped in preoccupation with the self or the benefits of liberation from sin. Together with trinitarian processions, the doctrine of election has the potential to exert the same salutary effect.

The doctrine of election (Chapter 2) is sometimes orientated primarily to the salvation of individuals. Though its scope overlaps individual redemption (hence historical debates going all the way back to Augustine and Pelagius), its scope includes more broadly the divine character, the mission of the Son, and thereby the mission of God's people. In other words, the eternal origin and temporal expressions of God's election reveals his character as faithful, his mission to bless, and his inclusion and enablement of the elect in that mission. The triune God of grace is the faithful One from all eternity, and in election he sets apart those – without merit or standing of their own – through whom his faithfulness is made known as blessing: 'I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing' (Gen. 12.2). God establishes a people, then invites and enables them to participate in his unfolding work of redemption. Culminating in Jesus Christ, the promise to redeem is fulfilled. He is the 'perfectly faithful covenant God in person and the perfectly faithful human covenant partner that neither Israel, nor subsequently the church, could possibly be'. The doctrine of election thus orients the Christian, together with the rest of Christ's body, towards its Spirit-enabled participation in the *mission* of the eternal Son sent by the Father.

[20]Athanasius says this in bold, strong terms: 'Being so regenerated from above of water and Spirit, in the Christ we are all quickened; the flesh being no longer earthly, but being henceforth *made Word* by reason of God's Word who for our sake "became flesh"' (*Contra Arianos*, 3.26.33).

When taken together the doctrines of the Trinity and election illumine the eternal backdrop of Christian existence (however partially and beyond comprehensive perception). This illumination ensures that the doctrine of the Christian life is oriented 'beyond' merely the temporal experience of *being redeemed*. Instead, it is oriented towards the Gracious One whose own life and purpose to redeem establishes both the possibility of Christian life and its ultimate end.

Chapter 3 turns to the doctrines of creation and providence. Here, the Christian life is seen within the context of God's fashioning and preserving of the cosmos. Christian teaching about creation alerts us to the pure givenness of the created realm: as a gift of grace the universe 'springs from the light of divine command'. Whatever else might be said about Christian existence that makes it appear other-wordly (ascetic strands of the Christian tradition walk this line), a properly ordered doctrine of creation gives no ground to such distortion. Redeemed life takes place in this particular cosmos, a created realm God calls 'very good', and one destined for redemption itself. Closely aligned to the doctrine of creation, the doctrine of providence extends the reach of the Christian confession about the gracious character of the universe's origin through to its ongoing existence: the flourishing of the created order under God's care is likewise *grace*. From this perspective, in our world of 'amplitude, richness, and depth' it is also a gift of grace that human life is given space for thriving. Under God's providential care, ours is a world in which purpose, meaning, and beauty are to be found, even while sin (mysteriously) threatens. The doctrines of creation and providence thus extend the 'reach' of the Christian understanding of grace from the doctrines of the Trinity and eternal election towards areas of reflection in which the focus on the saving work of God is more 'direct', such as the Incarnation of the Son and the perfecting work of the Spirit.

Thus Chapter 4 ('The saving God') turns to the Christian life, first, in its relation to the Incarnation of Christ and, second, to the Holy Spirit who enables us to heed God's call and fulfil our vocations. In the Incarnation, we are met in the person of Jesus with nothing less than *God's own life*. As Emmanuel, God with us, Jesus eradicated the distance between us and our Creator and Sustainer before we even knew such distance existed: 'For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God' (Eph. 2.11). Simply said, Jesus is the centre of Christian salvation because 'Jesus is God's way to us.' Attention to this fact ensures that Christian understanding of 'being saved' is kept moored to the person of Jesus Christ in whom all the fullness of deity dwelled bodily and through whom fellowship with the Father is known. Anchoring 'salvation' to the person of Christ also ensures that 'salvation' is given its full trinitarian due and thereby shown to encompass the entire temporal course of the Christian life. In other words, the pilgrimage of the Christian life from the cross and towards Christ's return is caught up in the healing work of the Holy Spirit as salvation stretches out, or 'extends', over one's entire life. Terms

common to Protestant soteriology, such as justification and sanctification, are thus illumined by the doctrine of the Trinity and enabled to fulfil their proportioned ends: justification and sanctification first name the work of the Gracious One in *rescuing* and *healing* fallen sinners, and secondarily – though importantly – name the status or 'place' within which the Christian resides, in Christ. Such proportioning goes some way towards ensuring that the doctrine of the Christian life retains its dogmatic relation to theology proper, the doctrine of God, and therefore remains from top to bottom *grace*.

The Spirit-infused and thus forward-looking (eschatological) dimension of the Christian life is the focus of Chapter 5 ('The perfecting God'). What God accomplished through Christ in his death and resurrection was nothing less than the re-creation of reality. To this reality the Spirit moves to conform the church. Acting according to the shape of Christ's cross, the Spirit aligns the Christian community to Jesus Christ and thereby to the new reality established by his finished work. That is to say, the Spirit aligns the church with the way things *really* are, bringing Christ's commands to them and enabling them to hear and obey. Simply put: the Spirit is the Perfecting God, perfecting the life of the community of faith in relationship to Jesus Christ. And, like every other insight provided by viewing the doctrine of the Christian life through the facet of the doctrine of God, dogmatic reflection on the relationship between the Spirit and the Christian life shows that God's perfecting activity is *all grace*. Sent by the exalted Christ, the Spirit always precedes; the church does not initiate but follows as the community of those encountered by the Gracious One. 'The faithfulness by which we are made and kept right is always in advance of us by the Spirit. And so, Christian life is but a matter of being shaped by Christ's faithfulness in the Spirit, a faithfulness which can only be followed, not realized.'

The second part, 'The graces of the Christian life', follows the first by fleshing out the notion of grace as God's redemptive activity. The term 'graces', not often used in Protestant theology, calls out the movement of the Gracious God in redemption. As *grace*, this is not movement into an abyss, but a calling forth to creation for creaturely response. While the emphasis is weighted on *God's* gracious action, the creaturely response is not a faint echo of God's call rebounding back, but is the resounding reaction of life reconciled, redeemed and won. Grace, in other words, names God's movement to and within his creatures for life with him. Ultimately, this life of grace knows its form in the historical reality of Jesus Christ. For those taken up into this life of grace, the form of Christ's life provides the shape of faithfulness; Christ is the witness to the reconciling, redeeming and communing of God.

In this section we 'turn the crystal', to invoke our earlier image, to assess God's work of reconciliation, redemption and communion. This, it should be noted, is not a turn to the creature as if Part 1 focuses on God and Part 2 focuses on humankind. Rather, grounding itself deeply in the doctrine of

God, the second part outlines the reality of God's electing, creating, saving and perfecting activity. Furthermore, more than simply sketching the doctrine of God further, now with specific reference to various aspects of redemption, this second part serves as a second layer of dogmatic material. Before turning to the means of grace or the practices of grace, this dogmatic discussion focuses on the redemptive movement of God in Christ and Spirit. This, of course, necessitates ecclesial, anthropological and eschatological orientation – these issues are put to work in a variety of ways – but do so within a discussion of *God's* redemptive activity. Therefore, while the focus is an historical, constructive dogmatic engagement on justification, redemption and communion, these chapters explicitly call out God's movement of grace and the formation of an ecclesial response.

Chapter 6 grounds reconciliation and justification together in God's commitment for his righteous will to be 'on earth as it is in heaven'. This necessitates the location of these theological loci in the broad movement of salvation. More specifically, justification is not simply explicated and then subsequently ignored; rather, the Christian life can only truly be explicated as the life of the justified as the life in Christ. As the way of freedom, the Christian life outlines the reality of a baptized existence. Reaching forward to speak into the ecclesial dimension of the justified life calls for a reform of baptism, so that it may more clearly reflect the reconciling righteousness of God. Pushing beyond historic debates concerning the age of the baptized suggests that further attention be turned to the 'dramatic expression' of this good news. This dramatic expression is not mere theatre but refocuses baptism around the justified life – a life oriented by and towards peace.

Continuing along the same trajectory, the Christian life is grounded in the redemption and victory known only in Christ (Chapter 7). The truth of Christ's life as the One who has died, risen and who will return, therefore, serves as 'co-ordinates of the dynamic structure of the economy of salvation'. These points of reference ground the Christian in the reality of *this* redemption and *this* victory, one that entails losing one's life in order to save it. These orienting aspects of Christ's life push victory and redemption into an ecclesial and eschatological mold, pushing hard against individualism and self-obsession on the one hand, and an overly realized victory on the other. Furthermore, since victory is eschatologically conditioned, it follows the contours of salvation that is known now and yet still being experienced. Victory is known but known as partial; Victory and redemption are therefore anticipatory, constantly held in a posture of hope. The only adequate response to the call of grace is the movement of the heart in faith. In this hope, sin is known and experienced, but it does not overwhelm; it is present, but not primary. In the face of sin and the temptation to turn inward to hopelessness, the orienting reality that Christ has died, Christ has risen and Christ will come again relocates the Christian in hope in the sphere of grace.

This 'sphere of grace' calls out redeemed existence in communion with God (Chapter 8). As such, the life God bestows upon his creatures is a particular

kind of life; it is life *with* God. Being made alive entails communion or fellowship with God. Life with God and life *in* God do not undermine our individual existence, but are still aspects of *our* life. It is the life of those who have been baptized into Christ. This does not mean that regeneration is extrinsic to the human person – a mere prodding towards holiness – but is, in fact, *physical*.[21] Regeneration entails a movement of the Spirit to reorient the human person beyond the possibility of the human agent as such. The regenerate are not overtaken and perfected by God, but are, in some sense, newly created. This newness is not an annihilation of sin, but 'the alteration of the Christian's relation to the sin which continues, by establishing a new principle of existence'. Regardless, this regenerate life still entails dying and rising; we are called to 'put off' our old nature and 'put on' the new. Mortification and vivification then, are not simply practices of the Christian life (although they are that), but call out a formal feature of redeemed existence. They are not the foundation for Christian existence but always derive from and refer to Christ and the Spirit. Redeemed existence is from him, through him and to him, that he would have the glory in all (Rom. 11.36).

The third part, 'The means of grace', considers the channels or instruments by which the sufficiency of God's grace in Christ is offered and set forth. 'Scripture' and 'Church and Sacraments' are not self-created or even chosen but given, and unpossessible. Their basis *as means* is none other than the triune God whose purpose to redeem and restore is actualized in the life of the Christian. This is to say his purpose is actualized through these means, but in their tangibility they are nonetheless not ours to possess; they remain means of the Gracious One through whom the Christian life is sanctified. When dogmatically isolated from the doctrines God and salvation, their function within the economy of salvation can be distorted.[22]

---

[21]In a sermon on Jn 3.3, Jonathan Edwards states, 'The change of man from a sinner to a saint is not a moral, but a physical change.' Jonathan Edwards, 'Born Again' in Sermons and Discourses, 1730–33 (ed. Mark R. Valeri; *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 17; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 187. The use of the term 'physical' here became commonplace in Reformed High Orthodoxy, sometimes being replaced by 'hyperphysical' to protect against the connotation that physical could mean natural.

[22]Holy Scripture is a ready example. Christian Scripture migrated from the doctrine of God and into the prolegomena of most Protestant systematic theologies since the Reformation (see, John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003]). Its isolation from the economy of salvation meant that questions about what Scripture 'is' were increasingly dealt with only in terms of its natural history. The theological distortions that attend this move have been shown through recent investment in theological interpretations of Scripture. Such investment has also highlighted the benefits of closely reordering Scripture in terms of its relation to God's purposes for creation and the church. For helpful historical and theological overview see Legaspi, Michael, *The Death of Scripture and the Rise of Biblical Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Stephen Fowl, *Theological Interpretation of Scripture* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009); Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008); A. T. B. McGowan, *The Divine Authenticity of Scripture: Retrieving an Evangelical Heritage* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007).

Holy Scripture (Chapter 9) is the 'prime textual product and instrument of God's sanctifying grace', and is, therefore, the central place where God's people hold their rationality under the judgement and grace of God. To call these texts *holy* is to note their derivation. God is the holy One, and the holiness of *this* text notes its relationship to God and to his activities in the world to call a people to himself. Furthermore, holiness denotes not only the relationship of *these* texts to God's life and activity, but to the calling of God that his people would be 'holy as I am holy'. Holy Scripture is the place where this call is known. Therefore, attending deeply to Scripture is one of the foundational means by which his people embrace that call. In the sphere of Scripture human rationality is caught up in a movement of grace as they are caught up in a movement of the Spirit. God's action and human action are not vying for space to move; God's proclamation to us in his Son and within us by his Spirit does not undermine the human call to preach, teach and proclaim the Word of the Lord. Rather, as a work of grace, the people of God continually pray for guidance and wisdom to hear the Lord anew in *this* place, in *these* texts, that through them God's would be 'done on earth as it is in heaven'.

Caught up in the Spirit's sanctifying work, Christians in union with Christ are freed from hearts turned in upon themselves (*incurvatus in se*) and are simultaneously oriented towards the Father in praise and worship and towards others in service and mission. This is the grace received through the work of the Spirit in the church and its sacraments (Chapter 10). What was once a life for myself is now life for God and for others. In the vertical dimension of this new orientation the Spirit enables people to 'proclaim the Lordship of Christ and to direct themselves to the activity of glorifying God in worship and praise'. Horizontally, the Christian discovers that the Spirit turns them towards their neighbour in love and service. For both the horizontal and vertical dimension the essential element is the Spirit's sanctifying work and not the physical or social structure of the temporal church. In other words, the holiness of the church does not come from within – structures, form, institutional organization, etc. – but from *without* by the Spirit. Life is given to the church by the person of the Holy Spirit alone, and forgetfulness of this point risks forfeiting the basic *givenness* of the church (likewise other means of grace). The holiness of the church is not *achieved* but *given* because the Spirit is the agent of the church's identity and mission. Attentiveness to this theological point anchors the church's self-understanding of its worship and mission to the Gracious One's initiative and ongoing work. The same Spirit 'who leads the church into deep worship and love of God and each other' is the Spirit who 'leads us outward to the world'.

The fourth and final part turns a practical corner from the movement of the preceding material. It runs 'closer to the ground' we might say. The notion orienting this entire volume is that dogmatics is more than simply faith seeking *understanding*, but faith seeking *faithfulness*. Understanding,

as such, is not the end for which theology is done, but faithful living and a worshipful existence before the Lord of glory. The movement of God to his creation is never an end in itself, as if God seeks to be recognized but not known. Rather, God's economy in Christ by the Spirit is paralleled with a movement, in Christ by the Spirit, of a people of God (1 Pet. 2.9) called forth as witnesses into the specific shape of this life. Therefore, these chapters are not simply applications of the previous material, leaving behind the *theological* for practical considerations. Each chapter in this final section extends the preceding material, grounding it firmly in faithfulness so that at the key moment of worshipful response the people of God do not break off from life in Christ to life in self, but continue on in faithfulness.

The life of the disciple, as one who follows after this Lord, is necessarily the life of one who prays (Chapter 12). This is not mere imitation – the imperative of a master who has now left to return at an unknown hour – but is participation with the One who still prays, now at the right hand of the Father. The disciple is not left to gaze into the clouds to ponder Christ's *absence*, however palpable that reality is, but to partake of the Son's prayers to the Father as the Spirit binds us to his life. In this sense, the disciple is one who prays within the prayers of the Son and Spirit, and therefore, the life and response of the disciple are inherently theological. Theology is done in response to this movement of God in Son and Spirit, not *about* God, but directed back to him in prayer. *Lex orandi*, *lex credendi*, as the tradition would have it. Prayer follows the contours of God's own economic movement,[23] and therefore is not simply an action among others for the Christian, but is the context of redeemed existence *in toto*. The Christian life is the expression of this participation in the prayers of the Son, a partaking of the 'oneness that exists between the Father and Son'.

Just as all Christians are called to respond in prayer as the fundamental movement of the Christian life, so are all Christians called to some form of theological reflection (Chapter 13). Whether this reflection is academic or lay, it is a sanctifying practice of the Christian life. The question is how. Unlike much modern reflection, theology is not a sanctifying activity as it points to itself and its inner cohesion. Theology is not responding to God by making true statements about him, as important as that is, but is rational reflection that 'sets our eyes above' (Col. 3). Theology is a movement of the heart as much as the mind. In this key, theology combines understanding with practical wisdom, such that intellectual satisfaction is not the goal, but an aspect of our whole lives being ordered by God's reality and call. Theology functions within the context of sanctification, and therefore a truncated understanding of the human person and formation will lead, inevitably, to

[23] '*Christian prayer can attain to God only along the path that God himself has trod; otherwise it stumbles out of the world and into the void, falling prey to the temptation of taking this void to be God or of taking God to be nothingness itself*.' Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Threefold Garland: The World's Salvation in Mary's Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1978), p. 19.

a superficial grasp of theology's task. This is faith seeking holiness, or faith seeking love, because it is faith seeking the God who is both holy and love itself.

Theology, in this mode, is never an end in itself; knowledge of God always breaks forth in love to others. A central outlet for this love is the task of preaching (Chapter 14). As one of the central acts of the church preaching is formed by hearing the loquacious God. Our doctrine of God is limited if it does not locate God's speaking at its centre. Christ, of course, is *the Word*, whose revelation of light fell on the deaf ears of darkness. Moreover, we speak because God has spoken; but more provocatively, our speech is not somehow outside of God's speaking, but in our preaching God speaks. Jesus' claim that 'Whoever listens to you listens to me' (Lk. 10.16) is perhaps the most daring and bold of his many audacious affirmations. Listening is, therefore, a central posture of Christian existence, both for the preacher who attends faithfully to the biblical text, as well as the hearers who must actually hear the Word proclaimed. This listening is more than a skill to develop, though it may include that, but is a deeply spiritual reality – listening is not simply auditory, but a way of the heart. A sanctified self is one who has been caught up in the movement of the Spirit to hear – to receive the self-revealing God as he has offered himself.

True listening, at the heart of discipleship, prayer, theology and preaching, is formational. God's declaration calls forth response, and that response must be caught up in the idea of Christian 'listening'. A proper hearing by the disciple is one that forms a life along the contours of Christ, as a movement of God to his creatures. The movement of the Christian life must take on the form of forgiveness and reconciliation because that is how God has moved in, with and to his creatures (Chapter 15). The Christian life is a reciprocal movement. The concrete practices of forgiveness, however much they vary, at their heart serve as a proper response to God's movement to his people in grace. In this grace God has communed with his people – he has given himself – and it is this communion that offers holiness. Baptism and Eucharist ground this movement in the life of the body, from the presence and holiness offered in the waters of baptism to the presence and life in the bread and wine of Eucharist. Both of these practices have a Christological orientation that ground the location of reconciliation *in Christ*, the reconciling One. These visible words must be heard – attended to with the deep listening of the disciple – as a means of Christian response. Through the hearing of this Word the Christian is caught up in the reconciliation of God, and is formed by contours of that reconciliation in Christ.

PART ONE

The gracious one

1

The triune God

Fred Sanders

Every account of the Christian life is suspended from a particular doctrine of God. Any soteriology is dependent on its presupposed doctrine of God for its terms, its structure and its scope. The doctrine of the Christian life is always aligned in some way with the doctrine of God, but it can be well aligned or poorly aligned. In this chapter I would like to sketch a way of aligning the doctrine of the Christian life with a well-formed doctrine of the Trinity. 'Well-formed' means, in this instance, a classical doctrine of the Trinity, complete with an explicit affirmation of the eternal processions of the Son and the Holy Spirit from the Father, together with an account of the way these processions form the background for the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit into the economy of salvation. The goal of this exercise is to ground the Gospel of God in the character of the God of the Gospel, to connect the Christian life to the living God.

The glorious irrelevance of the immanent Trinity

There are two errors to be avoided in undertaking this task, and it may be worthwhile to point them out before proceeding with the exposition of how the Christian life presupposes the triune God. First, a description of the difference the Trinity makes for the Christian life, if it is to be a helpfully dogmatic description, must not merely be a rehearsal of the work of God in the economy of salvation. Because the Christian life is immediately grounded in God's saving actions, there is certainly much to say about the

work of the Father, Son and Spirit in constituting the reality that is the Christian life. There is even much to say about how all the work of God is grounded in the character and being of God, such that God acts towards us as the one he is, and the graces of the Christian life take on the character of the Gracious One who is the electing God, the creating and providential God, the saving God and the perfecting God. Further, none of this can be elaborated concretely without making specific reference to its trinitarian character, because the one God who gives the Christian life its reality and identity is, to the uttermost depths of being, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. All the external works of the triune God are indivisibly and identifiably the concerted work of these three, and every aspect of the Christian life is most fruitfully described in terms of the Son and the Holy Spirit carrying out the Father's will. But all of that will be said in subsequent chapters. Leaving aside each of those topics for fuller elaboration in the course of this book, what is there to say about the triune God in himself? That is, bracketing for a moment the economic Trinity, what can be said of the difference the immanent Trinity makes for the Christian life?

Second, a description of the triune God that intends to highlight how it is aligned with the doctrine of the Christian life must resist the distorting influence of rushing towards relevance. It must devote its attention to the revelation of God's identity first, without asking in advance which elements of that description might later prove informative or helpful for the doctrine of the Christian life. Many recent theological projects have erred at this point, describing the immanent Trinity in a way that underwrites practical concerns and goals, attending selectively to only those elements of trinitarianism that are judged to be relevant for soteriology or spirituality. Many such efforts to apply the Trinity to the Christian life, as Daniel Keating observes, have 'become unmoored from the very reality they so ardently labour to apply. Caught up in the enthusiasm to make the Trinity applicable and relevant to any and every aspect of Christian life, they sometimes too readily select and appropriate one aspect of Trinitarian doctrine to the detriment of others, thus diminishing or deforming the doctrine of the Trinity itself'.[1] In much modern theology, the doctrine of the Trinity has suffered from being too relevant, or too immediately relevant.

It seems that there is something gloriously irrelevant about the doctrine of the eternal processions, in that if the doctrine is true, it is something true of God's own identity, true before and apart from the salvation of fallen creatures, indeed apart from the very existence of any creatures. The Father always begat the Son, and there was never a time when the Son had not been begotten. It is this Christological and pneumatological aspect of the doctrine of God that we now place in alignment with the doctrine of the Christian life.

---

[1]Daniel Keating, 'Trinity and Salvation', in *The Oxford Handbook to the Trinity* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 442–43.

The task, then, is to describe the coherence or alignment of the doctrine of the Trinity with the doctrine of the Christian life. To set out the task in this way is to highlight the fact that it is not enough to link Christology and pneumatology to the doctrine of the Christian life, a task always necessarily undertaken by any account of the person and work of Christ and the Spirit. But to turn to the eternal generation of the Son and the eternal procession of the Spirit is to turn resolutely to theology proper, that is, to the doctrine of God, and not merely to the person and work of the mediator. Consideration of the mediatorial office of Christ always necessarily includes a consideration of soteriology, and consideration of the work of the Spirit necessarily includes consideration of the Christian life. Not so the doctrine of God. There is more to God's life than the saving of creatures. Hypothetically, and counterfactually, God would be God without having freely taken on the administration of redemption; though thanks be to the God of salvation, we have never known a God who prescinded from saving, who withheld his sovereign covenant faithfulness to his unexacted promise. The God whose story is told in the Bible is the God who is caught in the act of rescue. Still, as John Webster insists, 'the salvation of creatures is a great affair, but not the greatest, which is God's majesty and its promulgation'.[2]

A particular God and a determinate sort of salvation

Now, because God comes absolutely first in any possible order of being, the doctrine of God determines the doctrine of the Christian life – theology proper norms and forms soteriology and everything downstream from it. A particular God will accomplish a determinate sort of salvation. A God having a certain character, or specified attributes, will bring about a salvation commensurate with that divine character. There are two proofs of this: the first is a proof from comparative religion, in which a wide variety of God concepts are found to be correlated with a wide variety of quite diverse soteriologies. Nirvana, Valhalla and Paradise are not just different words for referring to the same thing, but are names for competing, alternative visions of human fulfilment. The second proof is from the history of Christian doctrine. The major clarifying moments in the development of the Christian doctrine of God were yoked to moments of greater clarity about the character of Christian salvation. Nicaea, as defended by Athanasius, is the signal instance. The decisive step forward taken in that theological moment was the proof that Jesus Christ had to be confessed as fully divine, consubstantial

[2]John Webster, '"It Was the Will of the Lord to Bruise Him": Soteriology and the Doctrine of God', in Murray Rae and Ivor Davidson (eds), *God of Salvation: Soteriology in Theological Perspective* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), p. 20.

with the Father, if salvation were to be sufficiently anchored. But notice that the Nicene proof only works if a particular notion of soteriology has been specified or at least presupposed. The Arian Christ – a mighty creature, called into being *ex nihilo* by the high God before the ages themselves were set in motion – could be counted as competent to save only if the content of salvation were decisively downgraded. What kind of salvation could the Arian Christ deliver? Since the Arian Christ is not fully divine, the salvation he brings could only be the kind of salvation made available by a third party, not so much a mediator as an intermediary, and one who, while towering imposingly above his worshippers (could such a being truly have human brothers?) must nevertheless be recognized as remaining infinitely lower than God. The Athanasian insight, in other words, is that soteriology is our best orientation to the truths of theology proper. In the order of discovery, and of tracing out a path of understanding, we often begin with the character of salvation and then reason our way to the confession of the character of the God who has thus saved.

What, then, is the significance of the doctrine of the Trinity for the doctrine of the Christian life? Beginning from the doctrine of the Christian life, we can say that the God who adopts sinners into a filial relationship in which they cry 'Abba! Father!' (Mk 14.36; Rom. 8.15; Gal. 4.6) must be a God in whom the relationship of Father and Son already exists. Or beginning from the doctrine of God we can say: It is the eternal Son who becomes the incarnate Son to propitiate the Father and bring into being adopted sons. Or, to trace again the trajectory from here to there, we are born again through the work of the one who was born of the virgin because he was of the Father's love begotten before the world began to be (Jn 3.3–7; 1 Pet. 1.3; Lk. 1.34; Jn 1.14). Or again from above to below, the eternal, internal flow of the life of God streams forth into the human nature of Christ, whose death and resurrection cause the streaming forth of new life in redeemed sinners. Or again, from below to above, we are given life by the death and resurrection of the indestructible human life of the one to whom the Father (who has life in himself) gave also to have life in himself (Heb. 7.16; Jn 5.26). Or again, from above to below, the one who shared the glory of the Father before the world existed, came among us full of grace and truth, so that we who beheld his glory are among those many children who he leads to glory (Jn 17.5, 17.24, 1.14; Heb. 2.10).

All the long lines of the life in Christ reach up towards the life of God in himself. All the trajectories of soteriology are launched towards something greater than soteriology. Indeed, without the doctrine of eternal generation, soteriology stops short of saying what it wants to be able to say. The task of soteriology is only half done when it describes what we are saved from, and even when it specifies the agent of salvation. Soteriology finds its real footing when it announces what end we are saved to; and that goal or direction of salvation has never been better stated than in the doctrine of trinitarian adoption. The character or the relationship that grace brings us

into, at great cost to God the Father, is the filial character, the dependent relationship of a sonship which is not simply a created relationship but is our created participation in his uncreated filiality. As Ivor Davidson says, 'At the heart of the *beneficia Christi* of which the gospel speaks lies a specific blessing: the opening up of the eternal Son's native sphere to others, the drawing of contingent beings into the realm of his intimate, eternally secure relation to his Father.'[3]

Let us look first to the way the classical dogmatic tradition has described 'the eternal Son's native sphere', then to its opening up for our inclusion, and finally to the benefits of the doctrine of the eternal processions for the doctrine of the Christian life.

From eternal processions to temporal missions

Classic trinitarianism has taught that the Son and the Spirit proceed eternally from the Father by way of two distinct, eternal, internal processions. The leading edge of this doctrine was the confession of the eternal generation of the Son; while the elaboration of the Spirit's own personal mode of origination (spiration) came later in the history of doctrine. That a 'son' should come from a 'father' is evident from the revealed metaphors themselves (just as a 'logos' should come from a speaker), and so speaking of the Son as 'begotten' was natural for the early Christian tradition. The rise of Arianism, however, called for a conceptual defense of this simpler biblical language: Arians argued on the one hand that if the Son was begotten of the Father, there must have been a time before he was begotten, and on the other hand that all things come from the Father, so the Son is not qualitatively different from creation for his being generated. In response, the formulators and defenders of Nicaea argued that the begetting of the Son was not temporal, but eternal: He was always begotten of the Father, and there was never a time when the Father was the Father without the Son. Further, they distinguished between the Son's being begotten by the Father and the world's being created by the Father through the Son. Just as 'a man by counsel builds a house, but by nature begets a son', reasoned Athanasius, God brings forth eternally a Son who has his own nature: 'the son is proper offspring of the father's essence, and is not external to him'.[4]

When this argument is extended to include the Holy Spirit, the Christian doctrine of God is completed in its trinitarian form. When we meet the Son and the Holy Spirit in salvation history, we meet divine persons. They are eternal, and there was never a time when they did not already exist as persons

[3]Davidson, 'Heirs', *God of Salvation*, p. 161.
[4]Athanasius, *Contra Arianos* (Book II, section 62).

of the Trinity, as God. Their coming into our history is not their coming into existence. But their coming into our history is an extension of who they have always been, in a very specific, trinitarian way. When the Father sends the Son into salvation history, he is doing something astonishing: He is extending the relationship of divine sonship from its home in the life of God, down into human history. The relationship of divine sonship has always existed, as part of the very definition of God, but it has existed only within the being of the Trinity. In sending of the Son to us, the Father chose for that line of filial relation to extend out into created reality and human history. The same is true for the Holy Spirit: when he is sent to be the Spirit of Pentecost who applies the finished work of redemption and live in the hearts of believers, his eternal relationship with the Father and the Son begins to take place among us. Having always proceeded from the Father in eternity, he now is poured out by the Father on the church.

There are helpful terms available for all of this in the traditional theological categories of trinitarianism. At the level of the eternal being of God, the Son and the Spirit are related to the Father by eternal processions. The Son's procession is 'sonly', or filial, so it is called generation. The Spirit's procession is 'spiritly', so it is called spiration, or, in a more familiar word, breathing. Those two eternal processions belong to God's divine essence, and define who he is. The living God is the Trinity: God the Father standing in these two eternal relationships to the Son and the Spirit. These processions would have belonged to the nature of God even if there had never been any creation or any redemption. But turning our attention from God's eternal being to the temporal salvation he works out in the economy of salvation, we see that by God's unfathomable grace and sovereign power, the eternal trinitarian processions reach beyond the limits of the divine life and extend to fallen man.

Behind the missions of the Son and the Holy Spirit stand their eternal processions, and when they enter the history of salvation, they are here as the ones who, by virtue of who they eternally are, have these specific relations to the Father. For this reason, the Trinity is not just what God is at home in the divine life itself, but that same Trinity is also what God is among us for our salvation. This is an account of how eternal processions give rise to temporal missions, or how the immanent life of God is freely extended to form the economy of salvation. Without entering into a full description of the Christian life, we can describe how the trinitarian processions give the Christian life its distinctive character.

The scope of the doctrine of the Christian life: Breadth and length

God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying, 'Abba! Father!' In the words of Gilles Emery, 'the filiation of the Son is the foundation of all human sonship and of filial adoption by the Father . . . salvation consists

in the reception of adoptive sonship by which humans become children of God. This sonship by grace is a participation in his personal relationship to the Father, an assimilation to his mode of existence that is completely referred to the Father'.[5] So we have characterized 'the native sphere of the Son' and indicated that salvation is adoptive affiliation. Much more ought to be said about the cost of that affiliation. Attending to the goal and purpose of salvation is a vital task, but doctrines of the Christian life that focus on the Incarnation and union with the Trinity are notorious for eliding, or simply not making conspicuous enough, the fact that none of it works without the atonement. Even Irenaeus and Athanasius found it difficult to write at length on the Incarnation with its trinitarian background, without distracting attention from the cross and resurrection, and their commentators are in constant danger of the theological error of exalting Christmas over Easter. These things ought to be tightly integrated, not simply taped together or added as elements on a list. J. I. Packer once remarked that the best three-word summary of New Testament soteriology is 'adoption through propitiation', an admirable formula that succeeds in giving equal weight to both halves while ordering the latter (propitiation) to the former (adoption). The theological challenge is how to maintain those proportions when saying more than three words. In this chapter I am recommending that we invest heavily in the conceptual schema of eternal processions, temporal missions, and salvific adoption, but I do not want to give the impression that taking on this venerable trinitarian-incarnational schema will remove our theological need for constant vigilance to ensure we are not leaving anything out of the full counsel of the Word of God. The doctrine of eternal processions and temporal missions does not automatically solve every soteriological problem. It only solves most of them.

In particular, a doctrine of the Christian life properly joined up with a fully elaborated doctrine of eternal processions pushes us to comprehend, with all the saints, the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge (Eph. 3.18). Breadth, length, height and depth: the doctrine of eternal processions underwrites an expansiveness and comprehensiveness that the doctrine of the Christian life fares poorly without. I have assigned these four directions, more by way of convenience and fittingness than by way of necessity, to four directions that Christian soteriology is directed by an alignment with eternal processions. Breadth points to the expanse of the whole economy of salvation. Length indicates the span between the two eternal persons sent into that economy, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Height gestures towards the fact that what takes place between the Son and Spirit here among us in the economy of salvation corresponds to the reality of God in himself, and depth shows how far down into the details of soteriology the doctrine of eternal generation descends.

---

[5]Gilles Emery, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God* (trans. Matthew Levering; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), pp. 126–27.

The breadth: Modern exegetes are stumped by the confidence with which the classical dogmatic tradition affirmed eternal generation and spiration. With microscopic accuracy we moderns examine the individual scenes of salvation history and can barely find eternal sonship there, never mind a relation of origin or begetting behind it. What we need to grasp is that the judgement about eternal processions is a holistic judgement, a conviction that the entire scope of God's economy is communicating the sonship of the Lord. It is a judgement about the total economy, the one unified work of God that arises with creation and moves on prophetically to consummation. Such a judgement is not unthinkable: a parallel situation in the modern period is the development and expansion of biblical theology. Sober exegetes debate the prospects of a biblical theology that encompasses the entire Bible and, without suppressing individual voices, nevertheless treats Holy Scripture as a single book brought about by a single divine author and having one identifiable central message. That is a vast thought. But greater still is the classic Christian commitment to the whole economy of salvation as a single purposeful work of God that displays his wisdom and delivers his Word. That wisdom and that Word are the Spirit of God and the Son of God, which brings us to the category of length.

The category of length is about confessing the unity of the Son and the Spirit as an economy-spanning unity grounded in an immanent trinitarian commonality – both Son and Spirit have their eternal origins from the Father and so both are sent to us from the Father. The theology of the eternal Son provides a stronger than average rationale for the unity of the work of the Son and Holy Spirit on their coordinated mission from the Father. That the work of the Son and the work of the Holy Spirit go together is clear from the basic facts of the scriptural witness. Even a unitarian reading of the New Testament would admit as much, while insisting that there is a monopersonal God behind that threefold pattern. It is the glory of the trinitarian reading of the New Testament, on the other hand, that it perceives in the coordinated work of the Son and the Holy Spirit an eternal background of consubstantiality that accounts for the coherence of their work. It is not just that Christ and the Holy Spirit are often seen to be in open collaboration with each other. The reason for this collaboration is that they are, together with the Father who sent them, the one God of Israel, carrying out the one plan of Redemption. The classical Christian view grounds the coherence of the economy in the coinherence of the Trinity.

The procession-mission model adds no greater depth or scope to the trinitarian anchoring of salvation history in the being of God. Even a minimal trinitarianism affirms the deity of the three and their eternal unity. No theology offers a vision deeper or wider than this grounding in God, even if it is the kind of trinitarianism that refuses to acknowledge eternal processions. But a well-ordered trinitarianism replete with the conceptual specifications of the procession-mission model has the great advantage of displaying the distinctiveness of the Son and the Holy Spirit (their *idiotetes*,

their distinguishing marks, the ways they are not each other) in a way that is equally illuminating whether these two are contemplated at the bottom of the line that runs from the economy of salvation to the immanent Trinity, or at the top. The same momentum of fromness helps us recognize and confess (on the one hand) the eternal Son and the eternal Holy Spirit who came from the Father in different ways, and (on the other hand) the same eternal-now-incarnate Son and the same eternal-now-outpoured Holy Spirit here among us in the economy.

Under the rubric of length, we have at last overcome a besetting tendency to give more attention to the Son than to the Holy Spirit; or at least to eternal generation than to eternal spiration. We have extended our consideration to include the entire scope of both processions. With what warrant? Assumed here is the same warrant that led us to talk about grasping the entire economy of salvation as a single whole. The patristic mindset that first accomplished that task was a mindset gifted in holistic thinking, graced with a sense of totality even when the details were sketchy, certain of the gestalt emerging from all the dots and lines. Our own modern intellectual cultures have the opposite strength: a gift for details even at the cost of having lost the big picture. As a result, we tend to approach the doctrine of eternal processions as an isolated thing, with a desire to keep it strictly and chemically separated from other doctrines. But it did not arise in such a piecemeal fashion, and it is no wonder that it has seemed less persuasive and compelling to moderns when approached in such a way. If we are to rehabilitate the doctrine, it should not be an isolated doctrine of eternal processions that is described or defended, but the whole thing, along with the generative matrix that produced it in the first place.

Let us have this trinitarian breadth and length in our doctrine of the Christian life. Let us not be conceptually stingy with this doctrine. God loves a cheerful giver. Eternal generation demands a link with pneumatology because it is one part of the doctrine of processions within God, of which there are two. And the whole doctrine of eternal generation and spiration, understood as internal processions, is a doctrine of remarkable fecundity. The classical dogmatic tradition does not just barely manage to confess eternal generation – it situates that confession within a recognition that these processions, these 'comings-from', are the highest and most generalized way of saying what Scripture says in a rich variety of ways: the trinitarian relations are an interconnected and overlapping nexus of richly structured exchanges that make up the life of the living God. There are glorifyings, illuminatings, restings upon, motivatings, givings and receivings, shinings forth, mutual insidedness and in-beings, postures towards, and intimations of a blessed exchange for which we have no adequate concepts or terms. These are not reduced to, but are summarized as, relations of origin. When the classic tradition says 'eternal generation', it is not excluding all this. The relations of origin are capacious. In fact, in a neglected but important turn at the end of his treatise on the Trinity in

the *Summa Theologiae*,[6] Thomas Aquinas subjects the notion of internal procession to a surprising analysis: he points out that procession of a divine person from another entails procession into or towards something. In the case of the Son, he proceeds from the Father and into the divine nature; that is, the more completely he goes out, the more completely he arrives in. The more perfectly he is distinct from the Father, the more perfectly he is God the Son. His eternal generation has an eternal terminus in God. His emergence is immersion. It is not only ineffable, but also undiagrammable. Aquinas makes much of this 'from-to' structure of the processions in God; moderns have made little. In fact, what moderns have rejected is the minimized doctrine of eternal generation when they should have given the fully elaborated version a closer look.

Norms for the Christian life: Height and depth

About the height of eternal processions, there is little to say beyond what has already been said. Eternal sonship is the transcendent ground of incarnational sonship; eternal generation is the transcendent ground of the sending of the Son. The economy is a revelation of God's character. This is what elevates our talk of salvation into something truly deserving the name theology: it is about God.

Regarding the depth: How far down into the details of the doctrine of the Christian life does the doctrine of eternal processions go? It imparts to the doctrine of the Christian life a fundamental character that allows the doctrine of salvation to maintain a poise between two opposite errors. The first error is a minimizing one, a view in which all the language about salvation in the New Testament can be misunderstood as a host of metaphors without deeper referent. Kinship and adoption can be a way of talking, and other apostolic language drawn from contexts like temple, courtroom or politics can also be construed as poetic ways of saying that God chooses to do some saving act. But there is a too-blunt appeal here to the divine will, and a nominalistic and voluntaristic current that deflates what Scripture has to say. On this account we are said to be sons metaphorically, and the Christian life is flatly and straightforwardly one of obedience to a supreme power. Christian soteriology runs the risk of being the kind of salvation that could be traceable to a Unitarian supreme being. He is lord, we receive his salvation and then imitate his character. Whenever the Christian life is presented as merely taking in a new set of ideas, taking on a new set of activities, and perhaps feeling certain new emotions, the minimizing error is in effect.

---

[6]Thomas Aquinas, *ST,* I:43, question 2.

At the opposite extreme is a maximizing error. Some of the promises and announcements of the New Testament can be misinterpreted as breaking down all distinctions, and chiefly that between creator and creature, and promising total immersion in the being of God, with a depth of ingression into God's essence that is quite startling to contemplate. One is reminded of the Rhineland mystics and their tendency to make statements so extreme in their piety that they resulted in impiety. Spiritual teachers have spread a way of talking about salvation as being 'Godded with God' and 'Christed with Christ'. Angelus Silesius routinely wrote things like, 'the blessedness of God, His life without desire, He doth as much from me, as I from Him acquire'.[7] Whenever the Christian life is described as theosis, and careful distinctions between God and creation are not observed and policed, this maximizing error is in effect.

If these two tendencies represent minimalist and maximalist doctrines of the Christian life, enacting errors of defect and excess respectively, then dogmatic soteriology following the classical guidelines can leave them to fight it out between themselves. A doctrine of the Christian life grounded in the eternal generation of the Son and eternal spiration of the Spirit can keep to its course, confident that it is not speculative in affirming participation in sonship. Gilles Emery again: 'Sonship by grace conforms believers to the Son; it "makes them similar" to the Son; it enables them to be associated with the very sonship of the Son in relation to the Father . . .' This is a high claim, but not too high. As John Calvin says, 'God, to keep us sober, speaks sparingly of his essence.'[8] Instead, he speaks lavishly of his only Son, and our adoption into sonship. And when we imitate the sonship of Christ, we are doing it from the inside, so to speak, having been placed in the relationship of created sonship opened up and extended to us by the mission of the only begotten Son. The soteriology of trinitarian adoption, well-connected to the doctrine of eternal generation and spiration, finds the balancing point and enables us to affirm our distinction from, and our intimacy with, God. This is what Kevin Vanhoozer means when he asserts that 'the Gospel is ultimately unintelligible apart from Trinitarian theology'. He is articulating what a number of contemporary theologians have converged on confessing: 'Only the doctrine of the Trinity adequately accounts for how those who are not God come to share in the fellowship of Father and Son through the Spirit.'[9]

Emery indicates how such a soteriology avoids the minimalist extreme as well:

> This conformation to the Son, by the Holy Spirit, renews human beings who thereby become 'new creatures.' . . . The Son is the 'ontological' model

[7]Lines like these seem calculated to drive Karl Barth to distraction; indeed, I quote this one from a chain of 'pious blasphemies' reported by Barth in *CD,* II/1, p. 282.
[8]Calvin, *ICR,* Book I, chapter 13.
[9]Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), pp. 43–44.

> of the new being of believers. This new being blossoms in the imitation of the holy life of Christ, lived wholly for his Father. The Christian vocation is thus filial by essence.[10]

Formed and normed by the doctrine of the immanent Trinity, that is, the eternal processions that are the life of the living God, the doctrine of the Christian life is also filial by essence.

[10]Emery, *The Trinity,* p. 127.

2

The electing God

Suzanne McDonald

Election takes us to the heart of God's intentions for the whole of creation. It is the setting apart of a particular people for a unique relationship with God, and to be the instruments of his promises and purposes in the world. It entails nothing less than the eternal Son taking flesh as a member of his own covenant people. It is the key to mission, serving to remind us that a central element in the calling of God's people is to be the bearers of God's blessing to those beyond the elect community itself.

This is far from a usual summary of this highly controversial doctrine. More often than not, the moment the doctrine of election is mentioned we move immediately to thinking about how the doctrine relates to the eschatological destiny of every human being. It is not surprising that this so often becomes the main focus (and sometimes the only focus) for our thinking about election, because issues related to individual salvation have dominated much of the theological discourse on the doctrine down the centuries, from Augustine to the debates of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and beyond.

There have been alternative voices – those who have wanted to say, 'yes, and' or even 'yes, but' to this approach. The fact that this chapter occupies the place that it does is a statement that while the implications of election for the salvation of individuals are indeed important, this is not the first word that needs to be said about it. The initial focus of this chapter will be on what election tells us about God (and about being God's people) via a brief sketch of the sweep of election in Scripture. With this in place, we will have a broader perspective within which to place two representative debates, one

on issues related to individual salvation, and one on the implications of a particular construal of election for the doctrine of the Trinity.

Broad scriptural contours

First and foremost, within the 'big picture' of Scripture, election serves to reveal God's total, covenantal commitment to the world that he has made, and to his purposes for human beings and all of creation. This might seem like a peculiar statement to make. Why should God singling out one man in the first instance (Abram) and then through him, one people (Israel) and then later the new covenant people in Christ (the church) indicate anything of the sort? Rather, might this not suggest that God has rejected the rest of humanity, to focus his loving attention above all on his elect, chosen ones?

The overall narrative of Scripture indicates precisely the opposite. Taking a canonical approach to the Bible, which sees the person and work of Jesus Christ as the culmination of and hermeneutical key to the overall narrative of Scripture, we see that God elects the covenanted one for the sake of the alienated many. Likewise, we see that his overall purpose in election is to ensure that human sin will not derail his ultimate intentions for the whole of his creation, which is that we and all things will find fullest flourishing in right relationship with God and with each other.

A brief glance at a foundational 'election' text in Scripture – God's promises to Abram in Gen. 12.1–3 – will help us to see that this is the overall trajectory for election from the outset. As many biblical scholars point out, this text marks a transition in Genesis that shapes the rest of the Bible. From a 'wide-angled' lens in the earlier chapters of Genesis, where the focus is on the whole of creation and humanity in general, suddenly the focus narrows to one man and his family, and in due course, the nation of Israel. From this moment, the Old Testament has almost nothing to say about any other peoples except insofar as their histories intersect with that of Israel.

Theologically, the turn in the story at Gen. 12 suggests that election is God's answer to the presenting problem of Gen. 3–11: the dire and inescapable consequences of a humanity turned aside from God. God elects Abram, and through him the people of Israel, in order that his purposes, and especially his purpose of blessing, will prevail in spite of the all-pervasiveness of human sin and its radiating consequences. With the overwhelming preponderance of 'blessing' language in Gen. 12.1–3 – and especially the notion that the blessing of God's election is not simply to, but also in some way *through* Abram and God's people to other nations – we see that the foundational principle of election is not at all about God 'giving up' on the rest of the world. God does not elect so that his chosen people may be the only object of his blessing in a world upon which God has otherwise turned his back. Rather, God elects a people for himself so that they may be the instrument of his promises and purposes of blessing to

the rest of the world.[1] As this text indicates, there is judgement too, because to respond to God's people is to respond to God himself. Nevertheless, the clear priority of the text is that the primary purpose of election is for the sake of blessing.[2]

Central to the character of God's choosing is that it is presented as unconditional (see for example Gen. 25.21–26, taken up by Paul in Rom. 9.10–13; Deut. 7.7–8, 9.4–29). God's electing does not depend upon any qualities in the person or people chosen. Indeed, it seems as though God's preferential pattern in election is to choose the least and the least likely – very often, despised younger sons, such as Jacob, Joseph and David. God's elect have nothing of which to boast. Very obviously, election as God's answer to sin does not mean the sinless perfection of his chosen people. From Abraham onwards, it is painfully evident that God's elect share in the sinfulness of humanity as a whole. The point is not that God's chosen people are uniquely capable of maintaining a right relationship with God. Rather, God's elect are so because God has graciously chosen to establish a unique relationship with them, and thereby to involve them in a unique way in the unfolding of his purposes. They are as flawed and broken and inadequate as anyone else. It is because of their election that they are made into fit instruments through whom God has chosen to work out his covenant purposes. Election shows the accommodating grace of God, that he chooses to involve and enable those who, in themselves, would be incapable of making any positive contribution to the unfolding of his purposes.

Election entails a particular kind of relationship between God and his people that further illustrates the character of God: God is a faithful covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. While there are obligations of grace for God's chosen people, and dire consequences follow from disobedience, God will never turn aside from his covenant purposes. Election demonstrates God's character as unchangeably faithful to all that he has promised to accomplish, in spite of the faithlessness of his people. Moreover, when we see the 'story' of election in Scripture in the light of the Incarnation and the gift of the Spirit, we recognize that this covenant faithfulness is nothing less than the eternal triune life of love expressing itself as redeeming love in the context of human sin. The entire history of Israel in the Old Testament can be seen as the outworking out of this covenant relationship, culminating in

[1]For an excellent summary of this overall shape of election in scripture, see Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).

[2]As the history of Israel continues, many strands emerge concerning the relationship between God, his people and the Gentiles. See, for example, Joel Kaminsky's *Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), where he develops a typology of elect Israel, the non-elect nations and the anti-elect nations. Nevertheless, in a canonical reading, the notion that blessing will come to the nations through God's chosen people Israel becomes a golden thread that runs from Gen. 12 through Isaiah to the coming of Jesus.

the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and then continuing to unfold in the world through the people of Christ, the church. The climax of God's electing in Scripture is Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God who comes as one of his own chosen people. As we reflect on election in relation to Jesus, it is crucial that we take with full seriousness that Jesus is both the faithful covenant God in person and the perfectly faithful human covenant partner that neither Israel, nor subsequently the church, could possibly be. All of God's purposes and promises, including his purposes in election from the outset, find their 'Yes and Amen' in Jesus (2 Cor. 1.20). So, for example, in Jesus we see the culmination of election as God's refusal to allow his purposes for humanity and the whole of creation to be thwarted by human sin. In Jesus, God brings judgement upon, triumphs over and undoes the consequences of evil, sin and death. In Jesus we see the fulfilment of the promise that through God's elect people Israel, blessing will be opened out to the nations.

Since Jesus Christ is both sides of the covenant in person, it follows that for the New Testament, the elect covenant people of God is now centred upon him. For all the complexities of key passages, such as Rom. 9–11, the golden thread is that to be 'in covenant' (and so, to be 'elect') is synonymous with being 'in Christ'. We are found to be in Christ by grace through faith, which is the gift and work of the Holy Spirit in us. The dividing wall of hostility has been broken down (Eph. 2.11–22) and Jew and Gentile alike may belong to the elect people of God on the same basis – faith in the Faithful One, Jesus Christ.

If we reflect on the *character of God* as it is suggested in this scriptural 'big picture' of election, then at a minimum, what it reveals about God is his relentless, passionate commitment to all that he has made, his gracious willingness to include flawed people as the bearers of his promises and purposes, his unshakeable faithfulness and his self-giving love. Towards the end of this chapter we will turn to a contemporary controversy about how we speak of God's eternal being in the light of his electing. For the moment, it suffices to say that as a general principle, what we see of God at work in Scripture gives us a window into who God is in himself – or, in technical terms, that the economic Trinity gives us true insights into the immanent Trinity. On this basis, whatever else we say about God as we reflect on other aspects of election must be consonant with what this overall understanding of the nature and purpose of election makes known about him.

Seeing election in this way also has profound implications for what it means to be the people of God, both individually and corporately. In the first instance, it helps us to see that, as Lesslie Newbigin has pointed out, the doctrine of election is at the very heart of a trinitarian understanding of mission. As 'the key to the relation between the universal and the particular' election gets us to the heart of the nature of mission, and understood in terms of the broad scriptural sketch given here, it is a doctrine 'that permeates and controls the whole Bible . . .', since '[f]rom the beginning of the Bible to

its end we are presented with the story of a universal purpose carried out through a continuous series of particular choices'.[3] God chooses to enact his universal purposes through calling out a chosen covenant people, and their calling is mission – to be the instruments to further God's purposes for the whole of creation.

For this reason, whatever else we would want to say about the elect people of God, we need to keep at the forefront that God's people are set apart for the sake of furthering God's purpose of blessing. That was the case from the outset in God's promises to Abram, it culminates in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and it remains the case for God's people in Christ now in the unfolding of Christ's finished work between the ascension and the *parousia*.

Election is therefore for the sake of the 'other'. God's election of Israel was in part so that blessing would flow to the other nations, and in Jesus Christ we see the One who came both to bear the covenant curse on behalf of God's own sinful, rebellious people, and also (and therefore) to open out God's promised blessing and salvation beyond Israel to the nations. As indicated above, election was never about God choosing one set of people in order to abandon everyone else. The elect community in itself is never the sole focus of God's purposes in election. The elect community of the church is to conform to the same pattern that characterizes the foundation of Israel's election and culminates in Jesus, Israel's Messiah – to be instrumental in bringing God's promises and purposes and blessing to those who apparently lie outside those covenant promises and purposes and blessings.[4]

Election and the individual

The previous section presents a rather different picture of the nature and purpose of election – and what election suggests about God and God's people – than if we begin where the discussion very often begins. We do the scriptural concept of election a great disservice if our interest in it starts and ends with individual salvation. While election does indeed include salvation, it is not simply synonymous with salvation. If we say anything less than that election is the means God has chosen to bring about his purposes for the

[3]Lesslie Newbigin, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (London: SPCK, rev. edn, 1995), p. 68. See chapter 7 ('The Gospel in World History') passim for his discussion of election in relation to the mission of the church. For the relationship between election and mission, in addition to *The Bible and Mission* by Bauckham, see the very insightful reflections of Christopher Seitz, 'The Old Testament, Mission and Christian Scripture', in his *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

[4]For further ideas on the implications of this approach to election for what it means to be the people of God, see my *Re-Imaging Election: Divine Election as Representing God to Others and Others to God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

redemption and renewal of the whole of creation, we are saying less than what Scripture demands of us.

Only with this broad picture in mind are we able to turn wisely, and with a proper perspective, to the disputes about election and individual salvation that have dominated the discussion of the doctrine for centuries. There is not space here to set out the details of the historical and contemporary debates. Since the issues at stake are still as vigorously debated as ever, there is no shortage of resources setting out the contours of the 'Calvinism' ('Augustinianism') versus 'Arminianism' debates. For the purposes of basic clarity rather than comprehensiveness, and without intending to capture the nuances of each position, here are a few of the key assumptions for each position, to give some orientation in the debates, and also to provide some background for the rest of this section of the chapter.

The 'Calvinist'/'Augustinian' position maintains that the impact of sin on all human beings is such that we are unable to turn to God without the Holy Spirit's effectual enabling. Everyone is free to do what they want, but because the will is tainted by sin, left to ourselves we would neither desire God nor turn to him. Faith is therefore the gift of God. God's election of someone is the source of faith; faith is not the condition of election. Since some people turn to God in faith and some do not, by implication this leads to the retrospective conclusion that God has eternally chosen those to whom he will give the saving gift of faith, but has either passed over the rest, or has actively chosen to withhold that gift from them. On this understanding, God demonstrates his grace and mercy in enabling some to be saved through Christ, while his just judgement against sin is enacted against those who follow their unaided inclinations and remain apart from Christ.

An 'Arminian' position assumes that while sin has wrought havoc on all human beings in many ways, by God's grace to all, it has not impaired our capacity to choose to turn to him. While on our own, we could not choose God, the Spirit's prevenient grace places all human beings in a neutral position, able to choose for or against God in Christ. The choice for God therefore does not arise from the specific, effectual, enabling grace of the Spirit, but from the individual's decision to cooperate with the Spirit. This means that God does not determine the eternal destiny of individuals – they do that for themselves. God's 'election' is based upon his foreknowledge of those who will come to faith and persevere in faith. God's mercy is revealed in opening out the possibility of salvation through faith in Christ, and his judgement falls upon those who refuse to accept that possibility.

Contemporary debates on these aspects of election are as polemically charged as their historical equivalents.[5] This is hardly surprising, since many of the issues at stake expose crucial differences in how we understand the relationship between God and human beings. Even so, many of the more

[5]The volume edited by Chad Owen Brand, *Perspectives on Election: Five Views* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2006) is a helpful overview of the contemporary versions of these debates.

common polarizations employed in such debates can easily become at least somewhat misleading.

Two examples, both of which are related to the election and the nature of the Christian life, provide a helpful illustration of the need to be alert to a very particular danger. We frequently find the suggestion that rather than seeing election as about personal salvation, we should understand that it is about service, or a particular role in the unfolding of salvation history. The equally vigorous riposte is likely to be that election is primarily about the eternal destiny of individuals and only marginally about service, if at all. Much the same happens with the question of whether the focus of election is 'individual' or 'corporate'.

The danger here is the ease with which the full range of the scriptural witness can be compromised or distorted in the polemical crossfire. Perhaps not surprisingly, the overall scriptural picture points us to the need to speak of both/and on these issues, rather than an overly simplistic either/or. This is particularly so in the light of the New Testament's re-alignment of election around Christ. So, for example, as the Spirit enables individuals to confess Christ as Lord, so the Spirit also incorporates those individuals into the church, the body of Christ. Moreover, as noted above, since to be 'elect' could be summarized as being 'in Christ' by the Spirit through faith, and since the New Testament assures us of salvation if we are in Christ by the Spirit through faith, then election entails salvation, even as it cannot be confined to salvation. Likewise, as the broad scriptural contours have made clear, election also very emphatically carries with it a unique 'service', to be bearers and instruments of God's promises and purposes. The obverse of this, however, is that while it is very clear throughout Scripture that God can and does use the evil desires and purposes of those who do not belong to his elect covenant community (as well as those who do!) for his good purposes, there is no indication that because God uses someone's evil for his good, that person is therefore of necessity 'elect'.

Scripture almost invariably asks us to indwell such tensions as these, rather than to resolve them in neat ways. This crucial point is emphasized in Matthew Levering's *Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths*. In addition to giving a succinct overview of developments of the doctrine of election from the early church onwards, Levering also maps out the key scriptural tension with regard to election and salvation, one that theology must always be wary of seeking to resolve. It is the polarity of 'God's all-encompassing love for each and every rational creature' on the one hand and 'God's transcendent providence and permission of permanent rebellion' on the other. As Levering remarks, 'Until the eschaton, these two affirmations cannot be resolved into one.'[6] For the moment, all that we can do if we

[6]Matthew Levering, *Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 178. Levering takes as his model Catherine of Sienna and Francis of Sales, as two theologians of a basically Augustinian orientation, but who succeed in holding these two poles in scriptural tension.

are to be true to the fullness of the scriptural witness is to affirm these two poles doxologically. Most theological accounts of election – and many of the resulting disputes between the various accounts – stem from the desire to resolve this tension too readily, one way or another. As we have seen, this same principle applies to at least some of the other unhelpful polarizations that arise in the debates on election and salvation.

As we are navigating these debates, it is also important to be mindful of fundamental assumptions that are rarely stated directly, but which provide the presuppositional framework for interpreting (and sometimes filtering) texts on particular issues. One key example when it comes to the relationship between election and individual salvation is raised in the summary of the two main positions above: the issue of the source of faith. This is not a question that can be straightforwardly answered by one or two Scripture texts. Anyone's position on this – as on most theological issues – will be the result of a synthetic approach to the witness of Scripture on how God relates to us and we to God. Moreover, anyone's position on this 'background' issue will establish the fundamental orientation of his or her thinking on election and the individual. If you reach the conclusion that Scripture indicates that faith arises from the effectual work of the Spirit, then your basic framework will be 'Augustinian'/'Calvininst'. If, however, you decide that Scripture indicates that by grace we are neutrally poised and able to choose entirely for ourselves for or against God, then your basic presuppositions and framework will be 'Arminian'.

A second, related presupposition highlights another general issue to which we need to be alert as we engage the debates on election and salvation: how we understand the concept of the 'freedom of the will' with regard to our relationship with God. This particular issue confronts us with the need to acknowledge that Scripture is not greatly interested in giving direct answers to some of the questions that begin to arise once we start to pursue the concept of election through the lens of individual salvation. Nowhere does Scripture directly pose or answer questions concerning what we refer to as the 'freedom of the will'. In general, Scripture does not deal in such abstract categories. Instead, Scripture depicts aspects of the relationship between God and human beings, from which we can then draw inferences to attempt to answer such questions from a scriptural perspective. And once again, how we piece together the inferences from Scripture to come to an overall position on this matter will instinctively align us with one 'side' or the other of this overall debate on the nature of individual election.

Even as the debate between these positions is unlikely to be resolved this side of the eschaton, whether we find ourselves on the 'Calvinist'/'Augustinian' or 'Arminian' end of the spectrum, the primary response to the electing and saving grace of God in relation to those of us who have come to confess Christ as Lord should be gratitude, humility, the desire to grow in likeness to Christ, and the desire to point others to Christ, that others too may come to know the love of God in him. Whether we are speaking of Augustine,

Calvin, Arminius, the Wesleys, Whitefield, Edwards or any others who have contributed to these debates, they would all rightly indicate that awareness of one's election in Christ should issue in a people who know that they have received mercy and love beyond all deserving, and are seeking both to live more and more fully in response to that mercy and love, and to share it. Moreover, no matter where we find ourselves in the debates, we should take careful heed of the way in which the New Testament uses election language – not so much as a weapon or a threat to level at others, but as a doctrine for the comfort and building up of God's people. It is also primarily a doctrine of hope for all whom we encounter. To paraphrase a rather bracing point made by Calvin, once you realize that God has chosen and called you to be his, you realize that he can choose and call anybody to be his!

Election and the triune being of God: A contemporary controversy within Barth studies

Whereas the previous section focused on the implications of election for human beings, we now turn to a debate that asks us to think about election and the inner life of God. While the relationship between election and the triune being of God might seem to be a very abstruse and speculative matter, the issues at stake are extremely significant. Scripture does not spend much time reflecting directly and in detail on the inner being of God, but we trust that through the scriptures in general and Jesus Christ in particular, when we are shown the activity of God towards his creation this gives us a true window into the being of God in himself. In technical terms, while Scripture focuses mainly on the economic activity of God, it is on the basis of this that we infer certain things about the immanent life of God.

How then are we to construe the implications of the relationship between God's activity in and for the world in election for the being of God in himself? A recent debate on Karl Barth's doctrine of election helps to bring some critical questions into focus. Does God's eternal electing decree suggest that God is dependent upon the existence of the world in order to be God? Does the eternal determination that the second person of the Trinity will become incarnate in order to redeem make sin necessary, not only in relation to human beings, but for God to be who he is? If God's triune being is not eternally determined towards the redemption of his creation, does that mean that we cannot trust that Jesus truly reveals the very heart of who God is?

For an overview of the debate to make sense, we need to sketch out some of the most important points in Barth's monumental reworking of the doctrine of election. Although the 'Calvinism vs. Arminianism' debates have predominated, especially in popular engagement with election, without a doubt the most influential restatement of the doctrine is that of Karl Barth

in volume II/2 of his Church Dogmatics. While continuing to maintain certain fundamentally 'Augustinian'/'Calvinist' tenets against 'Arminianism', his approach remains highly distinctive, and he does not reach the same conclusions as the historic 'Augustinian'/'Calvinist' position.

For Barth, God's eternal electing decision is not for or against each individual, but is the election of himself to be God-for-us in the person of Jesus Christ. The Incarnation is therefore the content of the electing decree of God. Moreover, the election of Jesus Christ is all-encompassing, in that it includes within itself both election and rejection. Barth speaks of Jesus Christ as the one elect human being and also the one rejected human being, since the eternal Son elects to come among us precisely to bear rejection on behalf of all. With both 'sides' of election concentrated in the person of Christ in this way, Barth goes on to delineate the election of the community (Israel and the Church) and of individuals as expressing one or other side of Christ's own election to bear away rejection. As a result, Barth speaks of all people being 'in Christ' and included in Christ's election. He nevertheless denies dogmatic universalism (that all will be saved). Debate continues as to whether or not Barth's account does indeed lead logically to universal salvation.[7]

Recently, however, a significant controversy has arisen concerning the implications of Barth's doctrine of election for the doctrine of God's Triunity. Very specifically, the question is whether God's electing decision (his decision to be God-for-us in Jesus Christ) is the ground and 'source' of his Triunity.[8] To a considerable extent, this particular debate concerns how to arrive at the most accurate account of Barth's position (or the implications of his position). While that is important for the history of Barth interpretation, of far more significance here are the wider issues at stake for systematic theology, in particular with regard to how we understand the relationship between God and his creation.

We could express the basic framework of the debate in the following way: On one side are those who consider that the decision of God to be God-for-us in Christ solves a crucial problem, because they are afraid that if anything else (or nothing at all) precedes this decision of God by which he determines

---

[7]For Barth's account of the doctrine, see *CD,* II/2. For a concise description of Barth's doctrine of election in the context of the Reformed heritage, see my 'Calvin's Theology of Election and Its Reception: Modern Reception and Contemporary Possibilities', in I. John Hesselink and J. Todd Billings, *Calvin's Theology and Its Reception: Disputes, Developments and New Possibilities* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012). For a more critical account, including discussion of the issue of Barth and 'universalism', see chapters 2 and 3 in my *Re-Imaging Election.*

[8]The debate was sparked by Bruce L. McCormack's essay, 'Grace and Being', in John Webster (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). It has largely been carried on in various theological journals over a number of years (see Michael T. Dempsey (ed.), *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2011).

his being and character, then there must be a God 'behind' the God who has made himself known in Jesus Christ. The argument is that we can only be truly assured of the character of the Son if that is determined, through and through, by the fact that he is eternally *incarnandus* – eternally determined to come in Jesus Christ to redeem his fallen but beloved creation – and only if that decision to become incarnate is the sole ground of the entire being and character of the Son. To see God's decision to be God-for-us in Christ as the logical ground of his triune being safeguards against any possible 'gap' between God as he is revealed to us in Jesus and God as he is in himself. Since those who hold this position consider that this is the logical extension and consequence of Barth's doctrine of election for the doctrine of the Trinity, they consider that Barth has closed a gap that the earlier Christian tradition left wide open. This gap is thought to have been filled in unacceptable ways (including the 'Augustinian'/'Calvinist' account of double predestination) that have compromised our understanding of the essential character of God as self-giving, redeeming love. Moreover, none of this is seen as compromising God's fundamental aseity (his self-existence and self-sufficiency) because nothing and no-one outside of God has compelled him to choose to be God in this way. It is entirely his free decision.

On the other side are those who affirm that there is no 'reason' for God's existence as Father, Son and Holy Spirit outside of God's own eternally self-existent being. The argument here is that if God's Triunity is made dependent upon election, understood as God's decision to come to his creation to redeem it in the person of the incarnate Son, it seems inevitable that the being of God is thereby made dependent upon the existence of the world. They consider that the first position does indeed surrender the aseity of God, and that it undermines the basis of God's freedom in creation and redemption. Neither the creation of the world nor its redemption can truly be acts of free grace, if God in any way depends upon these things in order to be God. It also seems that sin is made necessary, not only for the world, but for God to be who God is. In other words, on this basis, for God to actually be the triune God requires that God intends to create a world that falls into sin. Moreover it would seem, ironically, that the first position logically requires that there be an unknown God behind the triune God, in order for 'God' (whoever 'God' is prior to his being as triune) to decide that his being as Father, Son and Holy Spirit will be determined by his self-election to be God-for-us in Christ.

With these positions in view, another way to summarize the debate from a slightly different angle is to ask the following questions. Are we to consider that the history of Jesus, as it will come to be in the Incarnation, is constitutive of the Triunity of God? Or are we to consider that the history of Jesus is the expression in the economy of the triune relations, giving a true window into understanding of those triune relations, but not the reason for God's Triunity? It might also help to think of the two positions in this way: for both, the Son is eternally *incarnandus* (i.e. he will become incarnate), but for

the first position this is the entire basis of the Son's existence in the Godhead (and therefore the being of God as Trinity), whereas for the second, it is how the eternal relationship between the Son, the Father and the Spirit (which is not constituted by the way that the triune God will relate to his creation) will be expressed under the conditions of a creation fallen into sin.

As with many of the controversies surrounding 'Arminianism' and 'Calvinism', no simple appeal to a handful of Scripture texts is going to resolve the issues (and indeed, as the debate proves, there is no simple appeal to texts in Barth's Church Dogmatics either). It goes without saying that there is nowhere in Scripture where the question 'Does God's being as Father, Son and Spirit depend upon his decision that the eternal Son should become incarnate to redeem the world?' is directly posed or directly answered. The position one adopts in this debate will depend upon far wider theological presuppositions about how we consider that God relates to the world on the basis of Scripture, and it will also depend upon one's assessment of each side's account of earlier theological approaches.

The first position, which sees Barth's doctrine of election as a 'solution' to a 'problem' in the theological tradition's doctrine of God, depends in part upon a construal of the earlier tradition that interprets it as opening up the possibility of a mysterious 'gap' between the incarnate Son and the eternal Son. This is felt to create the dangerous possibility that we do not see the true fullness of the character of the eternal Son in Jesus Christ, and so we cannot fully trust that what we see in Jesus Christ gives us true access to the heart of the triune God. If the tradition is guilty as charged, that creates a genuine and serious problem. If it is not – and as Matthew Levering's essay in the Dempsey volume indicates, this construal of the tradition is open to strong dispute – then there are questions concerning the necessity for the 'solution' advocated by the first position, which in turn creates the potentially significant theological problems of its own.[9]

Conclusion

The issues in the preceding two sections are weighty. Where we stand on them will be formative for our understanding of who God is, how God relates to us and we to him, and indeed, how God engages with the whole of creation. By taking these controversies as an example, the hope is that we will be better able to discern the crucial scriptural and theological issues at stake in these and other discussions of the myriad issues raised by election. No matter what particular aspects of election engage our attention, however, it is vital that we continue to see them in the context of the broad scriptural contours with which this chapter began. While the representative controversies about election have helped to remind us that we cannot always expect Scripture

[9]Matthew Levering, 'Christ, the Trinity, and Predestination: McCormack and Aquinas' in Michael T. Dempsey (ed.), *Trinity and Election in Contemporary Theology* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2011), pp. 244–76.

to give us straightforward answers to our pressing questions on election, neither can we afford to allow those pressing questions and debated issues to take us away from what the sweep of the scriptural narrative does indicate to us about the nature and purpose of election, and the character of the God who elects. Whatever positions we come to in any of the issues raised by the doctrine of election, the resulting picture of God – and of God's people – must be consonant with the priorities that emerge from election as God's chosen means to bring about the fulfilment of his promises and purposes for the whole of creation.[10]

[10]Many thanks to J. Todd Billings for very helpful comments on a draft of this chapter.

3

The creating and providential God

Katherine Sonderegger

'I opened myself to the benign indifference of the universe', the murderer Meursault confessed at life's end; so concludes Albert Camus' celebrated novel, *The Stranger*.[1] Written out of the author's searing memory of colonial Algiers, *The Stranger* lays out in bitter clarity – though the clarity of a photographic negative – the theme of our chapter: the inner relation of a doctrine of the universe to the course of a human life. Meursault has happened upon 'an Arab' on the beach one day, and in an act at once his own and his absurd fate, he shoots him dead; his life can end only in death, the death of a life already dead, unsustained by a senseless universe; numb, purposeless, dark. Meursault is the perfectly objective self, blank and himself indifferent, to his mother's death or his own, mirroring and repeating the chaotic movements of an outer world that presses on, relentless and pitiless. The prosecutor at Meursault's trial attacks him as a moral monster, cold and coldly calculating; but this judgement too is blind. Meursault simply *is* the universe – that incoherent, ungrounded and coldly determined world that lies just beyond the prisoner as he awaits his useless death. In turns polite,

[1]Albert Camus, *The Stranger* (trans. S. Gilbert; New York: Knopf, 1967), p. 154. Originally published by Gallimard in 1942, *L'Etranger* has undergone several influential translations; I have cited the Gilbert translation, the best known. Some have argued that the original, 'la tendre indifference' connotes something warmer than 'benign indifference': 'gentle', so Joseph Laredo, for example. Those who find an ineffable mysticism in Camus may prefer such a reading; but it may be doubted that Meursault for all his honesty would recognize what Christians would call tenderness or mercy.

even friendly, and savage, his ordinary days stretch out without purpose or direction or joy. His is a complete honesty: he alone fits the world that no god has made.

Christians have reason to study this novel closely. In one way, *The Stranger* is the perfect obverse to Christian doctrine, the pure cautionary tale. Meursault may appear to many bourgeois readers a bracing example of radical liberty; early critics of the novel seem to have seen it in that light, and considered it an anti-heroic tale of francophone Existentialism. But with some years behind us in the world the twentieth century has made, we might well wonder whether Meursault does not offer a different lesson to readers than the strong tonic of unconstrained freedom. Christians may well ask: does Camus' character reveal with a clarity usually obscured by various pieties a life utterly unshaped by the doctrine of God or of creation: is *this* what complete secularism is like?

Now we should guard against speaking too quickly. We do not yet know just how to depict the relation between a world-view and an inner life, nor, more importantly, the relation between the Creator and creature. The aim of this essay – indeed of the book as a whole – is to clarify these relations, and bring them into the heart of Christian teaching. But this is no easy task! For these terms are relations derived and posed within only one relatum of the pair, the inner world of the creature, and such depictions are attended by the enigma and mystery that accompany all attempts to speak of the Origin and the All, the riddle of all religious thought. Such riddles extend even to the secular realm and the inner life shaped by it. We know from our own experience of the world, after all, that most secular cultures and individuals are neither Meursaults-manqué, nor do their moral and political lives disintegrate as do his. Any Christian alive to the complexity and the decency, courage, and selflessness of the life of her secular neighbour will know that Camus' novel cannot be read as a simple exposé of the secular world, nor can his diagnosis of the world's absurdity be applied in such a way that a Christian could be easily exempt from its power. Rather, the analysis Christians will gain from a close study of *The Stranger* is a *doctrinal and systematic* one, that the relation between the outer and inner world of a human life, or more, the gracious gift of creation to a creature must lead to an account of the world neither wholly deterministic nor wholly arbitrary; such absurdity cannot sustain or ground a human life of inwardness, mercy and purpose.

Christian doctrine and Christian life

It is sometimes thought that Christian doctrine exists in metaphysical purity: a dogmatic universe wholly enclosed in itself, utterly ramified and self-justified, to which believers may give their assent. In an instructive parallel, this form of thorough-going propositionalism in doctrine presents a 'benign

indifference' to the believer, revolving brilliantly in its own truth, but never touching or transforming the person who holds it true. But this cannot be the proper relation of Christian teaching to the believer. More properly, Christian doctrine presents the truth of God and the world in such a way, and with such power, that a human life which mirrors it is transformed and set free. Christian doctrine most properly is *grace*: the proclamation of the free gift of God that, ever anew, makes human beings *creatures*, free children in their Maker's house. Christian doctrine is not *about* grace, that is (though to be sure it speaks of it); it simply *is* grace, the free and existential appropriation, through the Holy Spirit, of the gracious Truth who is triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In its fullest sense, doctrine addresses and even more, comprehends the personal life of its believers.

Accordingly, we might try a first thesis, this time perfectly general, about the relation of cosmology to human life: A ruthlessly reductive and exhaustive cosmology of utter naturalism – the ontology frequently summed up as 'atoms and the void' – could consist only in a unrelenting determinism, itself wholly random, in which human life is undergone as brute fact and fate. That we seldom witness such brutal out-working of godlessness is itself a testimony, we Christians must say, to the providential mercy of God, an insight Kuyper called 'common grace'. That the unreligious world mirrors in blessed abundance the kindness, delicacy, strength and tenacity that creatures are set upon this earth to carry out can be grounded in the end only in the free mercy of the Good and Gracious God. To speak in dogmatic terms: God is merciful to creatures, both within and beyond the church. We might make a second thesis, then, this time perfectly *theological*, about the cosmology-human life relation, that God is the *ground* of creaturely purpose and order. But we can say more. Human life is more than act and desire; it is interiority, a world beneath the skin. As Christians we should pay special attention to this human power of inwardness, and in such light Camus' novel speaks with greatest power.

The possibility of an inner life

Meursault lives a life entirely flattened out, an inwardness pinned directly to the currents and backwash of the world. Now this is not, it seems, because he has wished it so, deadening himself to the call to care for others or to live an ordered life. Camus does not depict Meursault's world as Satanic, in a Miltonian sense. 'Evil be thou my good!' could never be defiantly scrawled across Meursault's life. Rather we are being shown what Hannah Arendt controversially termed the 'banality' of evil; indeed it is not even clear that Meursault's life could ever rise to the exalted level of 'evil'. Rather, Camus depicts a life entirely circumscribed by outer event. A bit of curiosity; but not too much: will it rain today, I wonder? A stirring towards another, but not too deeply: perhaps it's time to take the dog for a walk? Meursault

finds a sexual mate much as he does a meal, a need, a hunger, a foraging. His inner thoughts do not quite rise to what we might call 'introspection': sometimes puzzled, sometimes impulsive, always led by the unexpected and the unexplored, to some purpose forever undisclosed and unsought, Meursault does not so much think as record. Meursault does not know why he carries out one task or another, nor does he struggle to discover a reason. In fact the reader is left with the stunning inadequacy of his 'explanations': the unrelieved heat of a Mediterranean sun must serve as reason for his murder of 'the Arab'. The memorable opening of *The Stranger*, like that of Kafka's 'Metamorphosis', sums up the whole: 'MOTHER died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can't be sure. The telegram from the Home says: YOUR MOTHER PASSED AWAY. FUNERAL TOMORROW. DEEP SYMPATHY. Which leaves the matter doubtful; it could have been yesterday.'[2] Here human reasoning leaves hardly a shadow on the landscape; the trivial weighs in equal balance to the profound. Karl Rahner considered a world utterly scrubbed clean of even the word, 'God', to be home only to 'clever animals', a parody of the human creature made in the image and likeness of its Creator.[3] Meursault gives us a glimpse of what such 'clever animals' might look like.

Against such a nightmarish tableau, Christians ask with renewed urgency: What is it that sustains human inwardness? What sort of universe must the world be for true human interiority to arise and govern our lives? With Camus as our aide, we might propose several broad elements to such a cosmology. As Meursault lies on his bed, awaiting his execution, he finds himself oddly peaceful. He has exploded in fury at the prison chaplain – guards hurry in to quell the storm – but Meursault remembers only the odd purgation and catharsis of anger slowly ebbing away. The future, he has roared to the chaplain, is like a relentless and dark wind, sweeping away all purpose, all value: 'Surely he knew that!' But now, after the storm, Meursault can see this pitiless world as his only true companion and mirror, his 'brother'. As the world is silent and random, so he is without hope; as it is irrational and naked, so he is without aim or regret. The relation between cosmology and inwardness here is intimate, a kinship. The smooth impenetrable surface of the world reflects directly the superficial clarity and blankness of Meursault's interiority: both are but skin deep. So, we might also propose that the world, to mirror and nourish human inwardness – we need not consider 'cause' here – must be one in which purpose must be possible; it must be one in which ordering and valuing can be carried out; it must include the objects that human lives prize; and among these must be human beings themselves. A Christian can be neutral here about compatibilism in the will – whether human liberty is compatible with determinism – but it cannot be neutral

[2]*The Stranger*, S. Gilbert, trans. p. 1.
[3]Karl Rahner, *Foundations of the Christian Faith* (trans. W. V. Dych; New York: Seabury Press, 1978), p. 48.

about liberty itself. A life that includes decisions, aims, and ends; that yields guilt or praise; that depends upon others and waits on them – these are the hallmarks of human inwardness and are themselves the signs of human liberty. We might more broadly consider them the irreducible traits of the *personal*: to be a human person is to carry out an act that is *intended* and for which an explanation *at the level* of the personal is both expected and satisfying.

Notice here that we have now taken a step beyond the 'world-view', the 'construction' or 'seeing-as' that places value as a human gift or consolation over the brute reality of an irrational world. If Camus is right – or indeed if we are persuaded by Rahner – the remarkable fact of personal inwardness correlates with, even depends upon, a world of order and of rationality. The world, that is, must allow, support, and contain *purpose*, *teleology*. A world truly absurd – not simply one interleaved with suffering and riddle but itself nothing more than the collision and random refraction of atoms – could not serve as the precondition, the landscape, and the mirror of human intentionality. The 'laws of nature', as they govern and express themselves in the world of every day objects and kinds, are the *sine qua non* of a world fit for human reflection, action and response. Far from a constraint on personal liberty, an ordered universe is the *presupposition* of personal freedom, for it is against and with such order that human beings enact the purpose of their lives. Natural order and fatalism, that is, are not the same.

So too we must say that a world of 'medium-sized dry goods', to borrow the phrase of J. L. Austin, must have reality integral to its own level, for human judgement and commitment and guilt to be possible and significant. A world wholly reduced to atomic or subatomic particles, governed perhaps by the stochastic principles of quanta, could not sustain the human conviction that one object is to be prized above others, one life loved above all else, one deed of cruelty or inattention to be regretted and atonement made, one war to be fought and sacrifice made, another to be deplored, and at great cost, to be resisted and refused. Personal inwardness mirrors a world of *persons and things*, and the introspection that lays bare our motivations – as best we can find them – and builds up a culture of response and responsibility to these objects cannot in the end and at the last be nothing but a glorious and convenient illusion. The interconnection and development of these ordinary objects is just what we mean by 'reality'. So, Christians need not fear the doctrine of evolution on grounds of reductionism, even if the sometimes loose talk of 'reproductive advantage' appears sub-personal and arbitrary, because evolutionary theory itself cannot be wholly reductive: population genetics, however biochemically interpreted, requires the herd, and flock, and school to measure 'fitness' and mutation. Not subatomic particles, but whole animals evolve, their species and kind, and just so human inwardness, however explained genetically and biologically, develops from and builds upon the whole, the world of ordinary things, and all the parts that make

them up. Against these and with them, the human person decides and values, loves and fears, lays down one's life and rejoices in another's birth.

And we may intuit one further element in a proper Christian teaching about creation and creaturely life from the example of *The Stranger*, an example that can only warn us to return home by another way. Meursault does not merely lack inwardness – however great a lack that may be! He also cannot properly distinguish himself from the world. The interplay of subject and object, so common as to be frequently considered a presupposition of all human thought, does not come entailed in every cosmology.[4] When we see Meursault as an 'objective self', when he records rather than deliberates on his actions, when he 'opens himself' to a universe without hope or benevolence, we observe a human life that measures no distance between itself and the world. This is a doctrine of naturalism (or materialism) raised to the ultimate stakes; and Christians have every reason to oppose it. To be able to think about the world, and our place in it, we must be able to remove ourselves from it – not wholly of course; but enough so that we can turn around to face it – such that the world can become an object for our consideration. We often reach for visual analogies here, and wisely so. Sight may not be active in the fashion Galen imagined, rays of light streaming out from our irises, yet sight does, even in its reception of the world, allow us an agential *distance*: the tree is across the road, and I sit here, admiring it. As I turn my head, the world stands open to my gaze, and I see it, stretching out before me. Meursault, Camus shows us, never *beholds* the world in this sense. Rather, he floats upon it or better, swims submerged in it. Such a world lacks *depth*, as do the human lives on its shiny, streaming surface. The 'dimension of depth' belongs to a world in which distinction and difference, among natural kinds and things, is mirrored in the difference of human subjectivity from the world. Distance from the world opens up breadth, depth and difference within it.

A proper Christian doctrine of the world – indeed any cosmology that supports and endorses human consideration and analysis of it – must allow a human encounter with the world that distinguishes an inward life from the external world it beholds. We need not stake human introspection upon a single epistemology, nor need we endorse a full kantian programme of the 'transcendental unity of apperception'. Yet self-consciousness, even a rough-and-ready sketch of one, must allow for a self or human inner life that is the subject of experience, the agent who encounters the world. This is the minimal sense in which human beings differ from the world, from all else animate and inanimate, and a theory or science of the universe cannot dispense with such difference. Christians, then, need not react defensively

[4]We might think here of Schleiermacher's well-developed dialectic of inner and outer within human awareness in *The Christian Faith*, §§3–5, or in a different fashion, Descartes' account of mind and extended matter, or Levi-strauss' analysis of dialectical consciousness.

when accused of prying human beings out of the kingdom of nature or of animals. All human sciences, indeed all human introspection, requires and entails some such distance from what it inspects. Of course the form and degree of this distance varies, sometimes radically! But Meursault reminds us vividly that a life we recognize as human and humane – not one simply hominid – requires a space between inner and outer, a space in which an inner life grows and acts.

Such are the object lessons we may glean from the Camus' tale of Meursault, a life that haunts and instructs Christian teaching on creation and providence. But we have only laid down here, led as it were by the hand of Camus, the *presuppositions* or general framework for Christian teaching on creation, its origin and governance. We have seen what such teaching *cannot* be: it cannot be a pious overlayment on an irrational and disordered world; it cannot take the form of indifference to human inwardness and guilt; it cannot dispense with the familiar, human-scale objects mentioned so majestically in Genesis; it cannot allow the very idea of reality to be reduced to the sub-personal, the subatomic and the sub-moral; it cannot collapse the human inner world into the outer, nor identify the two *simpliciter*. Christian teaching cannot countenance any of that.

A positive account of the doctrines of creation and providence

The Christian doctrines of creation and providence must set forth a depiction of the world, under the intention and grace of Almighty God, in which a truly human life and society can be possible and built up. The world must be ordered, and it must encompass freedom; it must itself be the gift and reflection of the God who is truly Personal, truly Free. The world, as freely given by such a God, can only be good; and in all that has been made, very good. If we do not lean too heavily upon a single verse, we might say that these elements of a proper creaturely world are just what we mean by the world's being ordered in 'measure, number, and weight', the minimum of a good earth created by a Good God.

But of course Christian doctrines of providence and creation are far bolder that that; the world far more splendid and showered by benevolence than that bare minimum. When we turn away from Meursault and turn towards the proper doctrines of creation and preservation, we must first be struck by the amplitude, the richness, and the great dignity of a universe now fashioned by God. There is a high vault in the heavens now, stretching well above the earth, and that canopy and all that dwells beneath it is bathed in heavenly light. This is the 'photographic positive' we now aim to set out, the reverse, but far more than that, of the nightmare endured by Meursault and his bare universe. Many elements of the traditional doctrines

of creation and providence will enter our discussion, but all will find their natural aim and anchor in their relation to the human creature and its life before Almighty God. Here we focus not so much on the 'existential appropriation' of doctrine – though such doctrines, when grasped as true, lead to this – as the relation *among* the doctrines: creation and providence compass sanctification. We begin with the highest level of generality in these doctrines, the God-world relation itself. This most general relation will extend down through the ordered relations of God with his creatures, finding their clearest instance in the Creator's relation to the human creature. Just this interwoven pattern of relation is what we expected, after all, when we early on affirmed that Christian doctrine properly 'addresses and comprehends the creature'. Just this is what we mean when we affirm that the doctrine of sanctification is 'included' in the doctrine of creation, or more generally, that all other Christian doctrines are ordered by and to the doctrine of divine grace.

Now this is a very tidy package, a nested box of doctrines. But not too tidy! Christian theology must guard against the drive to utterly systematize doctrine, to render all discrete areas of Christian teaching into a fully uniform and homogenous whole. Karl Barth spied a grave temptation here, and marshalled his remarkable dogmatic powers against the 'ésprit de systèm' – the spirit of a titanic theology which believes it orders, predicts, controls and harmonizes the living Spirit of God. We need not enter here into the complex argument Barth lodges against the theological system; rather we can diagnose the side effects. When theology gives way to this temptation, a particular doctrine and relation – the God-world relation in creation, for example – governs and limits the scope of all others. We see something of this kind in Athanasius' early treatise, *On the Incarnation*. Here Athanasius seeks to solve Christological problems – how can a Transcendent and Immaterial God be joined to a creature? How can the Measureless God be confined to a single human life? – through the elixir of the God-world relation. Just as God is related to the world as Origin and Governor, so the Logos is related to his human body: the Logos is sovereign over the human nature, uncircumscribed by it; and his relation to it is as a Creator to a body. Christ makes use of his body as the instrument of salvation, just as the Creator makes use of the created order to speak of his glory. From such an assimilation of Incarnation to creation is born the charge that Athanasius' Christology is in the end docetic, the human body little more than a tool of the omnipotent Logos.

Perhaps closer to our subject-matter here is the attempt, powerful since Martin Luther's Heidelberg Disputations, to order and govern all Christian doctrines by a 'theology of the cross', by the doctrine of justification. The temptation here is powerful indeed as we may well seek, like the Apostle Paul, to know Christ only, and him crucified. From such biblical roots – unsystematic in Luther, but powerfully systematic in modern theologians

such as Jürgen Moltmann[5] – springs the conviction that God suffers in the world, a Crucified God who cannot be known apart from his impassioned, incarnate Life. This is a God impaled upon the suffering of the world, exposed in raw vulnerability to the cruelty and blindness of the creatures he has made. In these theologies, we do not know another God; we do not speculate about a Trinity high and lifted up beyond the earthly shadow of death. Rather, the doctrine of justification, the free pardon of God rained down upon his enemies, governs and restricts all other doctrines, all other acts of God *ad extra*. We might well wonder if such a God can be real apart from creation; more, apart from the atoning death of the Son. We might well wonder if such a God can be sovereign over his creation, so immolated is he upon the earth's cruel fire. Yet Christian theology governed by such systematic spirit cannot in truth raise such questions or quarrels. A single doctrine has determined the scope of knowledge as well as the form of Divine relating; all else is empty speculation, a hunger for the false god.

Creation, then, cannot 'include' sanctification in this strong, systematic way; nor can sanctification govern and restrict creation and providence. The boxes will not nest so neatly. Rather, a proper doctrine of creation will comprise the Christian life, its sanctity and order, in a looser and more diverse pattern. Not *entailment*, nor *identity*, but rather 'differing relations to some third thing', a relation scholastic theology called, 'analogy' or in a looser sense still, the relation Wittgenstein famously called, 'family resemblance'.[6] Barth may have been guided by some such instinct when he nested creation in Covenant, Covenant in creation, but with a clear distinction: creation is the 'outer basis' for Covenant; Covenant the 'inner basis' of creation.[7] Now we need not specify any of these relationships closely: no neat boxes here either! But we might consider some scriptural examples to highlight this loose analogical relation of doctrines to one another.

Take the *Hexameron* as a first example. Note how the days of creation replicate one another, yet differ: an evening, a morning, one day; yet each day differs by creature and by order. Such reflections prompted a careful exegete such as Augustine to speak of creation as one, a single Divine act, yet multiple, comprising intellectual and material creations.[8] So too the

---

[5]Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (trans. R. A. Wilson and J. Bowden; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991). Similar systematic temptations can be seen in Karl Rahner's famous maxim that the 'economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity; and vice versa', *The Trinity* (trans. J. Donceel; New York: Crossroads, 1997), p. 22.

[6]This is Thomas Aquinas' formulation: *ST*, Part I, Q13, a. 5. Wittgenstein discusses complex forms of relation, including cause, in *Philosophical Investigations* (trans. G. E. M. Anscombe; New York: MacMillan, 1953). Paragraphs ¶ 66–88, 611–32.

[7]Karl Barth, *CD*, III/1 §41. 2, 3.

[8]Augustine, *Literal Meaning of Genesis*, vol. I, Books 1–5; *Confessions*, Book XII. Thomas Aquinas continues this tradition in the *ST* with questions on Creation and a distinct Treatise on the Six Days.

modern exegetes note the presence of 'two creation stories' within Genesis, each complete and whole, distinct from the other; yet both within the one scriptural book, and denoting the one complete Divine work. Or note how the Passion and Resurrection of Christ are one act, one redeeming work, perfect, whole and entire; yet taking place over the great three days of Passiontide; and taking place over the grave of every sinner brought to life by Christ's glorious sacrifice and heavenly life. So we might conceive the church as the 'body of Christ', yet also his disciples and followers – at great distance. Or the Sacraments of the church as one gift of Christ, one presentation of his Risen Life, the one earthly Christ, present now; yet distinct, in earthly era, in his forms of presence, in effective grace. Or, most fittingly, the One work of God *ad extra*, unified by the mighty acts of God's Nature, yet distinctly expressive of the Divine Persons (so Thomas Aquinas in the Doctrine of Creation, STh 1, Q 44). Or, most closely tied to our task here, the doctrines of creation and providence, one Divine act, perfect and complete; yet diverse, temporally extended, distinct. Just so we must see the relation of creation to sanctification and grace: unified yet mixed, distinct, and perfect, a free and unique relation, given by the Free and Provident God.

A scriptural depiction of creation and providence

Such unified diversity is what we see when we turn our eyes to the world the LORD God has made, and placed his creatures within. Here we see in full flower the cosmos healed and delivered from the nightmare Meursault recorded in a godless world. The cosmos of the Gracious God is a rich land, broad and deep, filled with creatures not homogenous but floridly diverse: stars with their own bodies, and great sea creatures with other bodies; flying things in the caverns of the air; grasses and date palms; small mosses and creeping things; bodies great and small hidden from our eyes in the vast corridors of deep, vibrant space. This cosmos has the breath of life given to it. Not lifeless and dark, inert or idly colliding, one particular with the next, but rather living, multiplying, moving, the free sport of living creatures in a cosmos fashioned by the Good God. It begins in light. Creation does not take its springs from a brute fact, a cold and impenetrable irrationality; it is not simply 'there'. The cosmos, our cosmos, springs from the light of Divine command, a supercelestial light that precedes and transcends the lights of great suns. It is the light of Divine origin, the luminescent rationality of the Creator, who makes not himself, in ceaseless Self-repetition but *another*, a not-God, itself bathed in the dignity of rational light.

The cosmos the LORD God made and preserves does not stand still or erupt complete in a single moment: the 'whole substances' the LORD God

made (so Thomas Aquinas) develop over seasons and days, over Sabbaths of rest and days of labour, over seed time and harvest. The broad and rich cosmos of the Creator is marked by time, that is, and by direction. The doctrines of creation and providence preserve the distinction between them – one devoted to absolute origin, the other to preservation and governance – yet they share in this analogous way in the 'time of the creature', the unfolding of a purpose, direction and development that is the order of the natural world. And into this world of celestial elements, living creatures, unfolding change and growth, the LORD God placed 'commandment:' the Divine direction that bestows both order and freedom. The Genesis account of creation and preservation takes commandment as its special marker and integument: to the lights of the heavens and fruit trees with its developing seeds, the LORD God commands existence and growth; but most especially he commands the Earthling, the Adamah, to name the living creatures and keep and till the Creator's garden. And when this Earthling becomes two – not identical, yet not entirely other; the true 'family resemblance' – the LORD commands them to live, to flourish, to cleave to one another, and to know one thing truly, the Good. This is the scriptural expression of a world comprising freedom and teleology, a world of human responsibility and delight, of intimacy and covenant, within a world habitable and fit for living things of all kinds. This is a world of depth. Against the realm of diversity and order, the human creature can develop proper inwardness, a setting apart – a sanctification – that permits an encounter with the world, a contemplation and an engagement. Introspection is the act of a human creature, or a spiritual one, that accompanies and is made possible by this rich world of things, and commandments, and freedom: we know our inner lives not because the mind alone is rational and intelligible but because we are *placed*, knit up in the LORD's own garden, an ordered world with a gate house that allows one to go out, and so to go deep within. Altogether such a world is 'very good', the gift of grace by the Good God.

We have been unfolding the family resemblance among creation, preservation and sanctification here using the idiom and wisdom of Holy Scripture. But Christian theology can speak analytically as well. So we might restate this depiction of the good cosmos once again in the language of doctrinal theology.

A doctrinal depiction of creation and providence

We begin with the traditional affirmation that creation is an utterly free act of the True and Good God. The world is 'grace', that is, in a strict sense: it is the gift of Pure Benevolence, and the beauty and goodness it possesses are not its own achievement but rather the creation of its own Creator.

Thomas makes this Augustinian point when he affirms that God does not first love the goodness in the creature, but rather, by loving it, creates the very goodness he approves.

Another traditional doctrinal *locus* expresses the utter gratuity of the cosmos: it is created *ex nihilo*, from nothing. The radicality of this teaching did not escape the notice of our ancestors in the faith: Philo of Alexandria, Athanasius and Augustine all remarked on the distinctiveness of this teaching over against the wisdom of the Greeks; Thomas Aquinas devotes some of the most technical discussion of the *Summa* to the significance of this phrase, 'from nothing'. That we cannot imagine the creation of time and space itself, for which there is no preparation and no 'before'; that we cannot understand the making of complete objects without raw materials or elements or 'prime matter'; and that we resort, with greater of lesser sophistication, to images of architects or artisans or poets, images we know cannot apply literally: all these perplexities express not the weakness but the strength of this traditional teaching. For the mediaeval scholastics who faced a resurgent Aristotelianism, the doctrine of *Creatio ex Nihilo* allowed theologians to calmly affirm creation even should the cosmos be eternal. And for modern theologians presented with the Quantum notion of 'block time', without past, present or future, this doctrine of creation from Nothing allows Christians to distinguish plainly the Divine act of creating from any particular doctrine of time.

Finally, the traditional doctrine of creation has taught that the cosmos is not God, nor any part of him, nor a simple mirror image and reversal of him. The cosmos the LORD God creates is not 'other' from God, but 'another', a distinct and dependent reality of God's free gift, a work of sheer grace. Perhaps no element of the traditional structure of the doctrine has come under such fire as this in the modern era; modern theology is more than ready to speak of the world as 'God's body' and the natural world as 'sacred'. Indeed, the pantheistic and panentheistic movements integrate God and his creation so closely that the world is sacralized, the Creator rendered temporal and passible.[9] (We might consider this another object lesson in the need to guard against tight system-building.) But traditionally, the Creator is another from his world; the world distinct and another from God. The world is material and finite, plunged into time, washed by death and loss and change. The free creatures who inhabit such a cosmos are material as well, embodied spirits, those living beings whose vocation is to know their world, to behold it and keep it, to endure its suffering and frailty and dying with eyes wide open, to give thanks in all things. Such a world depends utterly upon its Creator for life. This too is the grace of creation. The world is, in traditional terms, 'contingent being'; even its necessities are

[9]Here we might think of the work of Sallie McFague, *The Body of God*, or *Super, Natural Christians*, and the hegelianizing school of Process Theologians and some Eco-theologians.

'contingent' upon the majestic Free God. To be material and to be embodied are forms of radical dependence. Not autonomy nor self-will nor least of all autocracy flows from the Christian teaching of creation but rather an open, grateful dependence. Just this is to 'present ourselves as a living sacrifice'. The liberty of embodied spirits, then, has a character, a shape. Its outline is teleological, bent on a purpose, the 'high calling in Christ Jesus', to 'outdo one another in giving honor'.

The doctrine of providence extends the reach of the doctrine of creation; but with its own special voice. Governance and preservation have traditionally characterized this doctrine, the distinctive forms of a continuing world, utterly dependent upon its Maker. Providence invites us, and frees us in grace, to live as those embodied beings who know their Creator. We will not be able to read the direction of a proper human life exactly and directly in the Book of Nature as though the sanctified life were analytically contained in creation itself. Rather we will receive in contemplation and discipleship the analogies and resemblances creation offers in rich bounty. We will live as ones who know that materiality is good; that the diverse and rich admixture of creatures within our cosmos is gift and grace; that the natural order of medium-sized objects is the theatre of our own purpose and self-giving; that service to God and neighbour is 'perfect freedom'; and that altogether, in weal and woe, spring time and in harvest, all things are good, and even very good. Providence is creation opened out to the mysterious purposes of God, and to the invitation to walk in the ways he prepared for us. Eternal life is the exceeding weight of glory; but while we are on this good earth, to walk humbly with our God is the exceeding dignity of creatures fashioned and sustained by the LORD who made of this world a garden. He makes it so still, even when out of the garden, the Beloved must go to the cross his creatures raise against the darkened sky.

This is the benign goodness of the universe, and in these teachings of the church, we open ourselves up to it, in thanksgiving and in grace.

Conclusion

Human creatures live in a world created, shaped and led by the triune Creator, shielded and sustained in their pilgrimage towards God. Ours in a cosmos of grace, that is: the world in its diversity and order, its suffering and joy, its great goods and deliverances from evils, is sheer gift, freely given and borne up by a Creator, apart from all merit or desert. Christians teach that the cosmos is made from nothing – *creatio ex nihilo* – in a single, simple act of Divine will, yet unfolded in a careful sequence, the Six Days, and a rich multiplicity, the many creatures and all their kinds. It is a good world, a world of richness and depth. In such a world, clever animals become human beings, persons, with full inwardness, salted with aims and sorrows, duties and delights. Human beings are set apart, sanctified, for service to

such a gracious Creator, and through their inwardness are brought to the discipleship, repentance and witness that persons alone can and should display.

These Christian doctrines *cohere* with one another, but are not reduced or identified with each other. Rather, the dignity, integrity and harmony the good cosmos exhibits is mirrored in the order, distinctiveness and integration of Christian teaching about God, the world and the human self.

Camus' Meursault did not inhabit such a world, nor did he enter into his world as a full human and humane person, a person of responsibility and depth. Such a godless world neither permitted nor demanded it. But there is One, in a strange echo of that 'Arab' left for dead at the seaside, who laid down his life, abandoned and condemned, that all the haunted of the earth, the emptied and the lost, may find life, the rich and good and gracious life bestowed without measure or merit on a good, and hungry earth.

4

The saving God

Ian A. McFarland

'Jesus saves' is among the oldest of Christian confessions, and its continued prominence on bumper stickers and billboards shows that the passing of centuries has not diminished its cachet. Yet it is also perhaps the church's most contentious and seemingly problematic claim. While Jews and Muslims, for example, are happy to join Christians in ascribing salvation to *God* (by which they no less than Christians mean quite specifically the God of Abraham), they find the idea that *Jesus* saves impossible to accept. The reasons for this are not hard to fathom, for it is a deep conviction of all three traditions that only God can save, and this belief can only be squared with the claim that Jesus saves if Jesus – a first-century, Palestinian Jewish man – is also God. Christians have, for the most part, been willing to draw this conclusion. Already in the second century, an unknown homilist could exhort his audience, 'Brothers and sisters, we ought to think of Jesus Christ as of God, as the judge of the living and the dead; and we ought not to belittle our salvation. For when we belittle him, we hope to get but little.'[1] But Jews and Muslims have demurred, convinced that to ascribe divinity to a human being constitutes idolatry.

Even among Christians making sense of the claim that Jesus is God proved difficult. While Christians venerated Jesus, they also were sensitive to the charge that identifying him with God appeared idolatrous, and it took hundreds of years before the church achieved some conceptual clarity

[1] *2 Clement 1:1–2, in Early Christian Fathers* (trans. and ed. Cyril C. Richardson; New York: Macmillan, 1970), p. 193; translations slightly modified.

on this issue through the doctrine of the Trinity and (more contentiously) the two-nature Christology defined at the Council of Chalcedon. These teachings provided a theological vocabulary that Christians used to explain how confessing Jesus as God did not fall foul of the Bible's proscription of idolatry, and their role in clarifying the identity of the saving God is explored in Fred Sanders's essay in this volume. No less important, however, is their significance for Christian understanding of what it means to be saved. That is the subject of the present chapter. How does the confession that the saving God is Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – shape the Christian doctrine of salvation (or, in more technical language, soteriology)?

The content of salvation

It is the claim of Christians that our salvation was accomplished when one of the Trinity – the Son – took flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. The import of this claim is sharpened when the biblical passages most frequently cited in support of Jesus' unique status are kept in mind. Particularly striking are Jesus' own words as recorded in the Gospel of John: 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me' (14.6). Alongside this verse stands the equally uncompromising claim of Peter in Acts: 'There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved' (Acts 4.12). Many contemporary readers, both inside and outside the church, are repelled by these statements, which they understand to mean that only Christians – those who, in the words of Paul, 'confess with [their] lips that Jesus is Lord' (Rom. 10.9) – will be saved.

There are good theological reasons to be concerned with the apparent implications of texts like these. As Paul acknowledges later in the very same chapter of Romans, in order to confess Jesus as Lord, a person has to have heard of him; but untold numbers of human beings, by virtue of the time and place where they lived, have had no such opportunity. And even among those who have been the object of Christian missionary activity, it is difficult to avoid the judgement that in many cases the way in which the news of Jesus' lordship was communicated to them was more likely to impede than promote Christian faith.[2] Such facts hardly seem to accord with the biblical assurance that God 'desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim. 2.4) and make it correspondingly difficult to understand how the proclamation of Jesus as Saviour can be counted as good news for all people.

[2]The 'evangelization' of Native American peoples by the Spanish conquistadors of the sixteenth century constitutes a particularly notorious case. See Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ* (trans. Robert R. Barr; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992), pp. 113–16.

In order to meet the criticism that 'Jesus saves' places improper restrictions on God's capacity to save, many theologians have proposed accounts of salvation that do not depend on explicit confession of Jesus.[3] The problem with such proposals is that their focus on the *scope* of God's saving work tends to bypass attention to salvation's *content*. When the central question in soteriology is whether or not a person can be saved apart from Jesus, 'salvation' is treated as an independent end – a state can be described (e.g. as walking on streets of gold, playing harps on the clouds or enjoying endless bliss) without referring to Jesus, who is simply the means by which we arrive at this end. When salvation is conceived on these terms, the proclamation that Jesus saves then gives rise to endless questions about how salvation is accomplished in individual cases, thereby obscuring its status as good news. Even the most pious Christians will find themselves worrying about their soteriological status, since once salvation has been made conditional, there is no limit to the human capacity to doubt whether we have satisfied those conditions. How do I know whether Jesus has saved me? If it is a matter of belief, is my faith sincere enough? If it is a question of love, is mine genuine enough?

Ironically, the problem with theologies that prompt such questions is precisely that they fail to take the full measure of Jn 14. There Jesus claims not only that he is the 'way' to some higher end, but also that he is 'the truth and the life' – and thus that he is *himself* the end. To say that a person cannot be saved apart from Jesus is therefore not to name a precondition of salvation (as though Jesus were a kind of gatekeeper whose favour was needed to gain admission to a more or less exclusive club), but rather to specify what Christians *mean* by salvation. As Paul makes clear in passages like 1 Thess. 4.17 and Phil. 1.23, for Christians to be saved is nothing else than *to be with Jesus* – and by definition one cannot be with Jesus without Jesus. This is the heart of the specifically trinitarian character of Christian soteriology: Jesus is properly confessed as saviour because in his life we are met with nothing less than God's own life.

This way of reframing the question is an important step in averting certain ways of misunderstanding the claim that Jesus saves, but by itself it does not gain us very much ground. Granted that to be saved is to be with Jesus, one can still ask how a person comes to be with Jesus, and it is hard to see how any answer can avoid saddling the Gospel with limiting conditions. In order to address this problem, it is necessary to recognize

[3]Perhaps the most well-known example is Karl Rahner's idea of the 'anonymous Christian', defined as one 'who lives in the state of Christ's grace through faith, hope and love, yet who has no explicit knowledge of the fact that his life is orientated in grace-given salvation to Jesus Christ'. Karl Rahner, 'Observations on the Problem of the "Anonymous Christian"', in *Theological Investigations* (trans. David Bourke; vol. 14; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976), p. 283. For a different strategy, see George Lindbeck in *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1984), pp. 57–63.

that the question of how *we* come to Jesus is badly posed, because the claim that in Jesus God 'became flesh and lived among us' (Jn 1.14) means that salvation is accomplished by Jesus coming to *us*. Once again, Jn 14 is instructive, for though Jesus there describes himself as 'the way', the fact that he also identifies himself as 'the truth and the life' means that the upshot of this claim cannot be that Jesus is *our* way to God, in the sense of a road that we need to follow in order to reach the divine. Again, the trinitarian identification of Jesus with God subverts this whole way of thinking: as himself the truth and the life, Jesus is *God's way to us*: the one who has in his person closed the distance between heaven and earth before we even recognize it.[4] Because God has shared (and in the resurrection continues to share) our life in Jesus, we share God's life, too.

This focus on Jesus makes salvation intensely personal, but it is not for that reason a private matter of 'me and my Jesus'. On the contrary, the Christian vision of salvation is inherently social, because life with Jesus is realized in communion with others that finds its most concrete biblical expression in the image of the body of Christ, where each member has a place that is at once distinctive and yet inseparable from all the others:

> For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. . . . If the foot were to say, 'Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, 'Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,' that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them as he chose . . . that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. (1 Cor. 12.12, 15–18, 25–26; cf. Rom. 12.4–5)

According to Paul, there can be no life with Jesus apart from other human beings, because Jesus lives precisely by drawing a multiplicity of persons together to be members of one body. Consequently, to be saved is not to be with Jesus in some privatized or generic sense, but to realize a specific

[4]Note that when Jesus says, 'No one comes to the Father except through me' (Jn 14.6), and Philip interprets this claim instrumentally as implying some sort of gap between Jesus and the Father ('Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied'), Jesus' response is to deny that any such gap exists: 'How can you say, "Show us the Father?" Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me' (vv. 8–11).

form of relationship with Jesus that is inseparable from being in mutually supportive relation with all the other members of the body.[5] Nor does God 'arrange' the members of the body by force. Instead, we are *called* to be with Jesus (Rom. 1.6–7; 1 Cor. 1.9) in a way that seeks our response. Living out one's particular place in the body of Christ therefore involves discerning the particular form of that call – one's vocation (literally, 'calling'). And because each person's place in the body is unique, the shape of every vocation is distinctive: however much others may serve as sources of inspiration and insight in discerning one's calling, no one can serve as a template that may simply be copied.[6]

The context of salvation

Because God has bound himself to us by taking our flesh, we have no ground for concern about our status before God. And yet the fact that we describe the goal of the Incarnation as our salvation raises the question of what sort of danger threatens us that makes it necessary for us to be saved. At one level, this question can be answered quite easily: if the *content* of Christian salvation is to live out one's vocation as a member of Christ's body, then it follows that the danger from which we are saved – the *context* of God's saving work – is the possibility that we should somehow fail to realize this end. The problem is that the sufficiency of what God has accomplished in Jesus would seem to render that possibility non-existent. Yet the fact that life with Jesus is something to which we are *called* means that our agency in responding to that call cannot be ignored. In Jesus God gives us life, but even the most freely given gift can be refused, and Christians hold that the reason we need to be saved is that, as a matter of fact, we all *do* refuse God's gift of life. Why should that be?

Over the course of church's history there has been no shortage of causes proposed to account for this refusal. Human perversity, the constraints inherent to finite existence, and hostile supernatural forces have all been (and continue to be) cited as reasons why human beings resist grace. Martin Luther was fond of combining all three, naming 'sin, death, and the devil' together as a summary of the range of factors that stand between human

[5]'And having made the whole church one body of the bridegroom, [God] displays its beauty by giving particular thought to each of the members, for it is only through all of them considered individually that the beauty of the body is complete.' Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Homily 13, in *Patrologia Graeca* 44:1052A-B.

[6]Paul does exhort the Corinthians to 'be imitators of me, as I am of Christ' (1 Cor. 11.1; cf. 4.16; Gal. 6.17), but the imitation in question is precisely that of each faithfully working out her own calling under God (1 Cor. 7.17), not copying another's. Jesus, of course, has his own particular place in the body as the head who empowers the other members to grow together in love (Eph. 4.16).

beings and God.[7] This triad has the benefit of pointing out that our failure to respond to God's call includes the dimensions of personal fault (sin), ontological vulnerability (death) and external attack (the devil). It is not that these forces bar our way to God, for on a trinitarian interpretation of the Incarnation God has drawn so near to us in Jesus that there is no distance between us and God that remains to be traversed. What is at stake where sin, death and the devil are in play is therefore not our coming to God, but rather our acknowledging that God has already come to us. And this, in turn, means that sin, death and the devil are not properly regarded as truths about the nature of humanity or the non-human universe that need to be negotiated in order for us to find our way to God. They are rather manifestations of falsehood that impede our ability to recognize God as the One who has already secured our lives against every conceivable threat.

While all three of these forces deceive us on this score, it seems that sin has a definite priority over the other two. After all, death is just the wages of sin (Rom. 6.23), and the power of the devil lies in the capacity to entice us to sin (1 Jn 3.8; cf. Mt. 4.1 and par.; 2 Tim. 2.26; 1 Pet. 5.8; 1 Jn 3.8; Rev. 12.9). What then is sin? The Bible defines it as lawlessness (1 Jn 3.4), and since God as Creator is the source of law – the order that enables creatures to flourish – a more explicitly theological definition of sin might be 'resistance to God's will'. But because the content of God's will for human beings is quite specifically that they should 'have life and have it abundantly' (Jn 10.10), it would be more precise to define sin as *resistance to the grace of God that culminates in the sending of Jesus Christ.*[8]

Why human beings should sin is for Christians a profound mystery, and yet they do not view sin as a rare or anomalous occurrence. On the contrary, since Jesus can meaningfully be proclaimed as saviour only to those who need saving, the Christian conviction that 'Jesus saves' is good news for everyone entails the belief that all people are sinners in need of this good news (Rom. 3.23; 1 Jn 1.8; cf. Pss. 14.1, 53.3). In order to explain this fact, Christians (especially in the Western Catholic and Protestant churches) have spoken of a state of 'original sin' that afflicts all persons in such a way as to render them congenitally resistant to God's will for life in Christ.

While the character of original sin has been a matter of debate within the church since the doctrine was given explicit form by Saint Augustine in the early fifth century,[9] there is general agreement is that it needs to be

---

[7]The triad occurs frequently throughout Luther's works. In the article on baptism in his *Large Catechism,* for example, he writes: 'To be saved, we know, is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil and to enter into the kingdom of Christ and live with him forever.' *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), p. 439.

[8]'Sin means to reject the grace of God as such, which approaches us and is present to us.' Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), p. 105.

[9]Augustine's views on original sin took shape over a long period, but became the particular focus of his attention in his 'anti-Pelagian' beginning with the treatise *The Punishment and Forgiveness of Sins and the Baptism of Little Ones* of 412 and extending through the *Unfinished Work in Answer to Julian*, on which he was still working at the time of his death in 430.

distinguished from *actual* sin: the concrete ways in which individuals resist God's call through particular, identifiable acts ('sins of commission') – or through equally particular failure to act ('sins of omission'). Attempts to identify original sin with any kind of actual sin (pride, for example) come to grief on the impossibility of reducing the endlessly diverse forms of human resistance to God to a particular fault. After all, if original sin is a congenital resistance to the grace of God, and God's grace engages each person as a call to a particular form of life with Jesus, then resistance to that call cannot be understood in generic terms. For while the doctrine of original sin teaches that we all resist God's call for us, the fact that each of us has a different call means that for each of us our resistance to God will take a different form that is no more reducible to a single type of sin (pride, for example) than any one of our vocations is reducible to a single type of calling. Because the particular form original sin takes will in this way be unique to every person, it follows that original sin is common to all human beings only in the way that vocation itself is: as a mark of each person's unique place in the body of Christ. Moreover, insofar as actual sins manifest this basic posture of resistance, they, too, will vary with the individual. For what constitutes resistance to one's vocation will depend on the place in the body to which one has been called. For example, entering a monastery might be integral to one person's vocation but the (sinful) rejection of vocation for another. Indeed, even within a single person's life, a particular action (e.g. marriage) may count as fulfilling one's vocation at the age of 30, but not if undertaken at 13.

The impossibility of knowing in advance what may count as sin for any person at any given time thus derives both from the innumerable range of vocations (i.e. concrete forms of life with Jesus in the body of Christ) and from the evolving shape of every vocation over the course of a lifetime. It follows that vocation is not best understood as the endpoint of a long process of preparation (as when, for example, we speak of someone having failed to achieve her vocation as a lawyer by failing the bar exam). It should rather be seen as encompassing the entirety of one's life under God, since the flourishing of the whole body is bound up with the well-being of every member at every point of her existence, from birth to adulthood to old age. Nor can vocation be defined by reference to any one social role, since every life includes indefinitely many. My status as son, brother, husband, father, teacher, citizen, consumer (to name only the most public) are all constitutive of my calling from God, but none of them exhausts it. And because the way in which each of these roles contributes to my calling is a matter of continual discernment, my salvation is not reducible to the question of where I end up at the end of my life. It is instead being realized at every moment, for at every moment God is calling me – and at every moment sin threatens my response to that calling. God's sending to Jesus is 'once for all' (Heb. 10.10), but the effects of that saving work on the lives of those who have been called are ongoing.[10]

[10]For further discussion of this point, as well as the relationship between vocation, justification and sanctification that follows, see my *In Adam's Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), especially chapter 8.

The process of salvation

In order to appreciate the way in which God's saving work shapes our lives in Christ over time, it may be helpful to shift soteriological metaphors. Up till now I have equated 'saving' with 'rescue' as a means of highlighting both the desperate character of our lives apart from God's coming to us in Jesus and the free and gracious character of God's intervention on our behalf. Yet because this imagery is less well suited to the ongoing, day-to-day and hour-to-hour dimensions of the work by which God brings us to life in Christ in the face of our resistance to our callings, it is important to remember that the Greek word that is usually rendered 'save' in English versions of the New Testament can also be translated as 'heal' (see, for example, Lk. 18.42). Speaking of salvation in terms of healing helps us remember that it is achieved as God counters the particular forms of sin that from moment to moment threaten to keep a person from taking her place in the body of Christ. As a process of healing, salvation extends over the whole of a person's lifetime, and in churches that trace their heritage to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, it is customary to identify two dimensions in this process: justification and sanctification.

Justification refers to God's forgiving our sin. In justifying us, God through Jesus forgives our repeated failure to heed God's call. Our sin is that we turn away from God, refusing the life that God offers to us; but in Jesus God has refused our refusal by coming among us as one of us. Thanks to the Incarnation, in the very act of turning away from God towards the death and destruction, we are met by God, who has occupied and overcome that place of death and destruction in Jesus. Our turning away is thus rendered ineffective, and we discover that nothing is able to separate us from the love of God enacted on our behalf in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8.39). Within the metaphor of healing, justification can be conceived on analogy with a physician stopping the bleeding or destroying the pathogen that would otherwise kill us.

Yet there is more to healing than closing a wound or stopping an infection. That work is necessary, but it is not sufficient, because serious injury or illness leaves the afflicted person so weakened as to be unable to meet even the minor demands of everyday existence. To be healed fully, one must also be strengthened, and that is the work of sanctification: the process by which God makes us holy (sanctification's literal meaning) by training us in works of love and righteousness. The doctrine of sanctification reminds us that God's will for us is that we be freed not only *from* sin in justification, but also *for* the calling God has given us. Sanctification thus includes every activity whereby God, having liberated us from bondage to evil through justification, enables us to do the good. As we are sanctified we are enabled to realize our vocations by taking our own particular places in Christ's body.

This generalized account of justification and sanctification is accurate as far as it goes. Just as was the case in our analysis of sin, however, the problem with presenting the work of salvation in general terms is that it makes it all too easy to lose sight of its character as a process tied to the particularity of the individual's vocation. Loosed from this context, justification and sanctification tend to become, respectively, a blanket declaration of forgiveness on the one hand, and a generic programme of moral improvement on the other. The German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously decried the former error as 'cheap grace', in which justification ceases to be received as a personal declaration of forgiveness that is in every case inseparable from concrete obedience to God's call and becomes instead an abstract principle that covers all sins in advance.[11] As a result, its meaning is perverted: instead of serving as a simultaneous indictment and cancellation of sin, it functions psychologically to diminish sin's significance (since 'God will forgive') and thereby to strengthen its hold on the individual. But if generic justification fails to attend to the need for faithful obedience, the risks of generic sanctification tend in the opposite direction of a narrow legalism. Decoupled from attention to the particularity of vocations, the church's vision of holiness can easily be reduced to a sterile checklist of do's and don'ts. The result is that sanctification becomes less about the hard work of discerning the precise – and inherently unpredictable – shape of one's vocation than about conforming to well-established social roles.

These deformations in theologies of justification and sanctification are difficult to avoid when vocation is treated as a more or less distant goal of existence rather than as the ground and centre of human life under God. Prioritizing vocation within Christian soteriology can help prevent missteps of this sort by casting both justification and sanctification as the particular ways by which human beings hear and are enabled to fulfil their callings under the conditions of sin. Afflicted by original sin, we resist our vocations from the womb. Within this context, God calls us to life by forgiving our intransigence (justification) and setting before us a path of growth in grace (sanctification).[12] Yet because vocation refers to each person's particular place within Christ's body, the shape that this twofold pattern of address takes will be different for every person. What it means for me to be justified and sanctified is never the same as what it means for my neighbour. This is not because each of us marches to a different drummer (for we are all called

[11]See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, vol. 4 of *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (ed. Clifford J. Green; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2003), pp. 42–43.

[12]The example of Jesus (who, following Heb. 4.5, is confessed as being 'without sin') implies apart from sin there would still be vocation, but no need for justification or sanctification (provided that the latter is understood quite specifically as the overcoming of the effects of sin and not as the 'increase in wisdom' [Lk. 2.52] that is a natural feature of human beings insofar as they are material creatures whose existence is marked by processes like maturation over time).

by the same God), but because the one drummer plays many rhythms that beat out the pulse of Christ's body only when sounding together.

Because life in the body of Christ entails the mutual and coordinated flourishing of all the members, the process of discerning one's vocation is no more a private matter than the vocation itself is. God's calling us – declaring to us the entire forgiveness of all our sin in justification and showing us the way to life in sanctification – happens through the body's other members. That others should serve us (and we serve others) as the occasion for God's address is only possible through the Holy Spirit, through whom Christ is present in the world prior to his return in glory. It is part of the abundance of God's grace that the Spirit employs a variety of means to call us: clergy pronounce absolution, preach sermons, and administer the sacraments; parents, teachers, and other mentors reflect on their experience and give advice; friends (including everyone from casual acquaintances to long-time colleagues to one's spouse) offer the possibility of mutual criticism and support. Nor is there any reason to limit the means by which God calls us either to official representatives of the church or to people personally known to us. The Spirit blows where it wills, and our blindness to our own sin is such that it is often only by hearing the appeals of those who are directly harmed by it (whatever their relation to the church may be) that we become aware of our need for justification and sanctification and are thus enabled through grace to receive it.

In all cases taking up my particular place in the body of Christ is a process that cannot be divorced from my engaging freely and honestly with other people whose own places in the body impinge more or less immediately on mine. This point, in turn, brings us back to the question of salvation's scope. If my actions impact the ability of others to discern and realize their callings (as, reciprocally, the action of others impact mine), then my salvation cannot be separated from that of other people in its final fulfilment any more that in the process by which it comes to be realized over time. If to be saved is to be in communion with others under the head who is Christ, then my flourishing (as realized through my being justified and sanctified) is bound up with that of every other member. Indeed, because my realizing my vocation is bound up with others' success in realizing theirs (including especially discerning and addressing the features that block it), where anyone else's calling remains unfulfilled, mine does as well. In this respect the joy of vocation – the recognition that one has been called to intimacy with God that is meant for no one else – cannot be divorced from the process by which we struggle to discern our own place in the body in concert with our neighbours.[13]

[13]This account of salvation's scope does not address the question of how Jesus can possibly save people who have never heard the Gospel – and to whom it therefore seems that he has not come near. I freely confess that I have no idea how he can. But this bothers me very little, because I do not have a much clearer notion of how Jesus saves those who *have* heard the good news but who, invariably, betray it daily. I simply trust that he can, because he has said he can, however odd or unlikely it may appear that he should do so in any individual case. For myself no differently than for Francis of Assisi or the Tasmanian living 10,000 years before Christ, hope rests on *Jesus* only and not on any feature of our particular biographies that *we* imagine links us with him.

Working out salvation

It may seem that we have come full circle in analysing what it means to confess, 'Jesus saves.' I began by arguing that the good news of this confession lies in the claim that in Jesus God has come to us to give us life, thereby removing every ground for anxiety on our part over how we might come to God. My aim was to stress that salvation is both utterly gracious and already accomplished – secured for us by God in Christ before we are even aware that we need to be saved. 'For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God' (Eph. 2.11). But analysing the dynamics of justification and sanctification as the concrete means by which God calls us to life in the context of our sin reminds us that discerning the shape of our vocations demands a level of effort that brings to mind a very different biblical teaching: 'work out your own salvation with fear and trembling' (Phil. 2.12). This suggestion that we bear some responsibility for our salvation seems to belie its status as a gift and thereby to rekindle anxiety over whether we will achieve it. How can this tension between the graciousness of God's gift and the work involved in its reception be resolved?

Given that no one is more emphatic than Paul in insisting that salvation is a matter of grace rather than works, it should come as no surprise that for him 'working out' salvation is not a matter of human ability. Lest anyone conclude otherwise, he immediately follows his exhortation to 'work out your own salvation' with the reminder that, 'it is *God* who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure' (Phil. 2.13). And yet as much as Paul wishes to foreclose the possibility that salvation might be understood as something merited by the believer's own efforts and abilities, neither does he want it to be seen as something that is merely passively received. After all, God calls us precisely to *life*, and living is not something that happens to us, but something we are meant to undertake in joy, 'building up the body of Christ until all of us come to the unity of faith . . . to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ' (Eph. 4.12–13).

In order to make sense of this simultaneous affirmation of divine responsibility and human participation, it is necessary to invoke the third of the divine persons: the Holy Spirit. According to Paul, the Spirit – who is, of course, none other than the Spirit of Jesus Christ – dwells in the believer (Rom. 8.9) and makes us children of God (Rom. 8.14; cf. Jn 1.12–13, 3.5–6), with the result that when we cry, 'Abba! Father!' it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom. 8.15–16). It is thus through this work of the Spirit that salvation in Christ acquires a fully trinitarian profile. If in the Incarnation God comes near to us, this is not a matter of overcoming any sort of spatial distance, since God, as the Creator who sustains our lives at every moment of our existence is always already maximally present to us. God's drawing near in Christ is much more radical. It is nothing less than God breaking open the divine life so as to

bring us within it. From all eternity the Son rejoices in the life of the Father through the power of the Spirit. But in taking flesh the Son now lives out that relationship in time and space, so that just as the Spirit has joined the Son's life to that of human beings through the Incarnation (Mt. 1.20; Lk. 1.35), so now human beings may through the gift of that same Spirit share the Son's life as children of the Father.

As the struggles of Paul's own ministry attest, the presence of the Spirit in our hearts does not diminish the genuine effort required to live into our respective callings. On the contrary, it is the Spirit who enables us to undertake the process of discerning our vocations that our sin would otherwise make impossible. God calls us through the Spirit, who is active in ministers, mentors, friends and strangers; and the Spirit gives us the grace to attend to what they have to say. Yet this does not happen automatically. The Spirit is, after all, the one who rests on us so that we can be the creatures God wishes us to be, and so it should come as no surprise that the process whereby we are graced to realize our vocations takes place through human, creaturely means. It is simply the church's conviction that the Spirit acts through these means, building up the body of Christ through the mutual aid of its members (1 Cor. 12.4–11). Most obviously, the reading of and reflection on Scripture through the ministries of proclamation, confession and catechesis have as their explicit aim turning our attention to the good news of salvation. No less important (if usually less formally structured) are various forms of service to the poor, the imprisoned, the sick and other vulnerable populations, which bring us face to face with the concrete effects of sin on human lives and thereby force us to reckon with and correct the ways in which we contribute to it. No less significantly, personal disciplines like marriage and various forms of monastic life provide more intimate settings for discerning the shape of one's vocation in formally defined contexts of vowed trust and shared vulnerability.

There is no limit to the kinds of practices that the Spirit may call forth for the building up of Christ's body. Testing out strategies for helping the community discern God's will is integral to the ongoing life of the church (see 1 Jn 4.1), for the Spirit blows where it wills (Jn 3.8), and alongside all the more or less well-established protocols that may be in place at any given time stand those serendipitous encounters with people we may know well or not at all but which may nevertheless be occasions where God, through the Spirit, calls to us most clearly. In every case, working out one's salvation means struggling against the forces of sin in one's own and other's lives, and the sheer magnitude and diversity of sin can make the struggle wearying. Yet it is bearable when we remember that our goal in the struggle is not to earn our salvation. It is not even to contribute to it, as though we could (let alone needed to) do something in order to make it possible for God to bring us life. Our battle against sin, whether in ourselves or in the world around us, is not in any sense the cause of our salvation. It is rather our response to

it – a point Paul makes later in the same letter that contains the injunction to work out one's salvation:

> Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3.12–4)

Paul's message is clear: because Jesus has claimed us, we cannot help but live in a way that reflects that claim.

How we do that concretely will be for each of us as unique as our individual vocation. It is, in fact, the sum of what it means to have a vocation. To work out our places in the body of Christ requires an openness to the Spirit that is lived out by attending to the lives of those around us. For they, too, have been called to be members of that body, and their proximity to us means that we cannot possibly figure out the shape of our vocation without attending to how our lives affect and are affected by theirs. After all, if we are called to build up the body of Christ together, then when I cause another harm, that is a strong indicator that my discernment of the proper shape of my call is in error. As such, it is an occasion for repentance, forgiveness and renewed straining forward in patient conversation with those around me towards what lies ahead.

The point of engaging in this often difficult and always challenging work is not that by our efforts we will succeed, for it is an unavoidable consequence of our status as sinners that we will always fail. But the Gospel is that God is for us in spite of our failure. Our confidence in God's favour is grounded in Jesus, who has already realized in his person God's being for and with us in a way that is subject to neither reversal nor improvement. It was out of the conviction that God's action and not ours is decisive here that Luther famously counselled his nervous friend, Philip Melanchthon, 'Sin boldly – but believe and rejoice in Christ more boldly still.'[14] For the point of proclaiming, 'Jesus saves', is above all to free us from the need and the desire to look to anyone or anything except Jesus for assurance of our salvation. That is what it means to be sanctified (and justified) by grace.

[14]Martin Luther, Letter 99, in *Dr. Martin Luthers Saemmtliche Schriften* (ed. Johannes Georg Walch; vol. 15; St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), col. 2590.

5

The perfecting God

Christopher R. J. Holmes

In this essay I argue, in conversation with St Paul's Letter to the Galatians, that the Holy Spirit is best understood as the perfecting God who perfects the life of the Christian community in relationship to Jesus Christ. The Spirit does so by establishing the church in the reality of the new world that has come to be by virtue of Christ's cross. Accordingly, the pattern of the Spirit's work is given form by the cross: the Spirit effects fruits in the Christian community that are in agreement with the cosmos that now is. If this is so, then, the Christian life, as Karl Barth helps us to appreciate, is a life that involves allegiance to a living Lord who continues in the power of the Spirit to call men and women to live in light of the new order. Similarly, a contemporary interlocutor, Douglas Farrow, describes the ascended Christ as working, indeed rendering a people who through his Spirit are conformed to the reality of the new creation heralded by the radical transfiguration of the Eucharistic bread and wine. The Spirit, as the perfecting God, is at work sanctifying us and so guiding us into the hope that we await and whose fruits, we pray, are taking shape in and among us.

Christian existence is often regarded, and rightly so, as being bound up with the person and work of the Holy Spirit. To live as a Christian is, among other things, to live in fellowship with the Holy Spirit. There is less certainty, however, about what is to be considered the proper work of the Holy Spirit. In short, What does the Spirit do? What is the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the everyday life of the Christian and the Christian community? In this essay I will argue that it is Christ whose life and, most especially, *cross* determines the shape of the Spirit's work. To attend to Jesus' ministry and

its culmination on the cross is to receive serious insight into the character of the Spirit's contemporary work. Through a close reading of Gal. 5.13–6.10, I argue that life in God's church is life in the Spirit *of* Christ, the Spirit who works powerfully so as to establish the Christian community in accord with reality. In other words, what the Spirit does is to conform, align – or, better – baptize women and men into reality, into the sheer givenness of the new creation whose birthplace is Christ's cross.

When it comes to carefully hearing Paul's account of the Spirit's work in relationship to Christ and his Father as well as the Christian community, a great deal of misguided thinking surrounding the question of 'relevance' has the opportunity to be put to rest. Christians today are quite preoccupied with relevance, it seems. Accordingly, Jesus is someone who has to be made relevant. By living lives of faithful obedience, Christians, it is sometimes thought, thereby demonstrate Jesus' relevance and the relevance of the Gospel to an indifferent world. Paul, however, is utterly unconcerned with questions we might today raise under the umbrella of relevance. Rather, Paul's concern is to describe to the Galatian communities what is real, and so to offer guidance regarding the shape of daily life that is mindful of the way the world really is post-Christ.[1] More specifically, Christ's suffering crucifixion establishes, for Paul, the indicative – what is truly the case. And the Spirit enables us to live by the command of neighbourly love – the imperative – in order that we might be conformed to what is real, that is, the new creation whose centre is Christ. We might envisage Paul saying: 'Eschew questions of "relevance," and focus instead on living in light of the One into whom you have been baptized.' Hence the thesis of this essay: The Spirit's activity is that of aligning the Christian community to Jesus Christ. The Spirit of Christ works invasively as the power of what *is* – the new world brought into being by the cross of Christ – thereby establishing the new world among the Galatian communities. This is to say that the Spirit appropriates the new creation to the Christian community effecting fruits – namely, mutual love – which point to the new world. I will pursue this thesis in four ways.

First, I will consult the biblical material, specifically Gal. 5 and 6 as providing a salutary mapping of the relationship between the indicative and the imperative – between what is and what should be done. Second, I will briefly engage the classical tradition in the form of Karl Barth's discussion of 'The Call to Discipleship' in *CD* IV/2. Barth's treatment can be read as something of a commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians inasmuch as the call to discipleship involves, for Barth, an ever-new awakening to reality. Third, I will refer to one work on the contemporary landscape that offers,

[1]The locution 'post-Christ' is taken from J. Louis Martyn. For example, commenting on Gal. 5.15, he states: 'The whole of the Law *post Christum* is the Law that Christ has loosed from its paired and plural mode of existence, restoring it to the original singularity in which it spoke God's own word.' See *Galatians* (AB 33A; New Haven: Yale, 1997), p. 524.

among other things, a Christologically concentrated account of the Spirit's work that is quite complementary, in its own way, to the relationship I am mapping between the indicative and the imperative. This work is Douglas Farrow's *Ascension Theology*. Fourth and last, I offer a few comments as to how to the testing of the spirits in 'the new creational community' may take place.[2]

Scripture: Galatians 5 and 6 – Paul on the Spirit and the Christian life

Freedom is a theme that is important to an account of the Spirit and of the Christian life. 'For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another' (5.13). However, there is often a great deal of disagreement surrounding what the Christian community is freed *from* and what it is freed *for*. In Galatians, Paul really does argue with white hot anger that the world of opposites, the world that pitted, for example, Jew against Gentile, the circumcised against the uncircumcised, male against female, has been crucified. Such a world is no longer. Redemption is indeed an accomplished fact, an event that is constitutive of what is. Paul, therefore, does not talk about what the Christian community is freed *from* as if the community has any say in it. Rather, the emphasis in Galatians is that of 'God's liberating invasion, an invasion that, in making things right, brings about a fatal separation from – a death to – the old cosmos'.[3] God is the acting subject who through the cross of his Son has 'set us free from the present evil age' (1.4). The evil age is the age captive to sin, an anti-God power that elicits works that are of the flesh. And it is precisely this age that is, for Paul, no more.

It is important to recognize what it is that precedes the pastoral guidance Paul offers in Gal. 5.25–6.10. What precedes is Paul's radical portrait of human history and indeed the history of the cosmos, the decisive point of which is the suffering and cross of God's Son. The suffering and cross of God's Son marks the end of the world which refuses to acknowledge the truth. To be sure, Paul's account of the history of the cosmos is radically punctiliar. That is to say, Paul thinks about his own people and indeed all peoples and the cosmos they inhabit in relationship to one event: Christ's cross. Christ's cross (and the resurrection as its consequence) makes 'the world what it really is'.[4] Far from simply landing like a thud in the lap of the Galatian communities, such a declaration is of enormous consequence as far

[2]Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 381.
[3]Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 102.
[4]Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 282.

as the living of daily life is concerned. Daily life is a matter of waking up to the real world, the world brought into being by Christ's cross. The real world is the world of 'redemption as an accomplished fact'.[5] The proclamation of the Gospel *is* the very announcement of this fact, of the world being righted by Jesus' suffering and death.

In Gal. 5.13–24 Paul addresses the everyday life of the church in an especially descriptive way. That is, Paul gives an account of the world that now is: 'And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires' (5.24). All of the verbs in 5.17–24 are, as Martyn notes, in the indicative mode.[6] They are verbs whose tense bespeaks what is the case. Accordingly, when it comes then to how to best read Paul's famous description of the 'works of the flesh' and the 'fruit of the Spirit' in 5.19–23, we see the force of the indicative at work. Paul would have us see that there are two different kinds of communities. There is, on the one hand, the community that would live in accord with how things were, the old. This is a community that advocated circumcision for Gentiles as the means of entry into God's covenant people. On the other hand, there are those who would heed what *is*, and so be filled by the Spirit who perfects us by bearing fruits in us which attest that 'A new creation is everything!' (5.15).

The way in which Paul moves from the indicative to the imperative is profoundly instructive as we consider the ground and basis of the Christian life and indeed of the Christian community. We notice in 5.25–6.10 that the mood changes:

> Paul turns from the essentially descriptive paragraph of 5.13–24 to a series of imperative and hortatory verses in the next paragraph, 5.25–6.10. He is free to do that, however, only because in 5.13–24 he has descriptively portrayed the activity by which God has graciously created an addressable community, a church that, led by the Spirit, is able to hear the imperative and to be thankful to God for it.[7]

The note about hearing, of being addressable is especially apt: what the Spirit does is give birth to ears that hear and so can respond to what has been and is being done by Jesus Christ. Indeed, the pattern of the Spirit's work is set by Christ. When one considers the nature of the Spirit's activity in Galatians, it is a matter of being guided in relationship to what the Son of God has achieved and is achieving. The Spirit is of the Son, bringing the new creation accomplished by his Son to bear in all aspects of the life of the Galatian communities.

The necessarily *asymmetrical* relationship between Christ and the Spirit, the indicative and the imperative, is crucial in any account of the person

---

[5]Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 90.
[6]See Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 536.
[7]Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 536.

and work of the Spirit. The Spirit's activity in indeed determined by Christ, who through his cross establishes the real, the indicative, what really is. But the proclamation of Christ's cross is suffused with the Spirit, the power of the real, the guarantor of the very advancement of the real. For this reason, as Martyn notes, the 'standard is the *real* world that has now been made what it is by the *event* of God's gracious invasion via his Son and the Spirit of the Son. In short, the standard is not a "should" but rather an "is," a cosmic announcement couched in the indicative mood in order to *describe* the real world'.[8] Said differently, the indicative includes the imperative, the Spirit is intrinsic to Christ, what is, is also what is enabled to be. To live as a Christian community is thus to exist above all else in relationship to one thing: that is, Christ.

There are then good reasons to talk about the contemporary ministry of Christ, to take seriously that he is a living Lord and Saviour. His contemporaneity has force, indeed his ministry is effective, precisely because it is a ministry that takes place in and by his Spirit. Jesus cannot therefore be made real or relevant: he is not inert. Rather, he lives; he is relevant, and so is working by his Word and Spirit to render us relevant to him. Accordingly, the joy of the Christian community is to call upon his Spirit and to be made transparent to him – 'It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me' (2.20). Christ Jesus ministers in the Spirit; his person and work have contemporary force *in* the Spirit. By that same Spirit, *his* Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ is making things right. He continues to put to death that which he has once and for all vanquished by his cross.

What underwrites Christ Jesus' contemporary ministry is his resurrection from the dead. To be sure, the emphasis in Galatians is on the cross; the resurrection is an event that Paul understands to follow from the cross. This is not to say that Paul neglects the resurrection in Galatians. However, it is to note that the cross is the means by which God liberates the cosmos from the forces that enslave. The act by which the old cosmos was killed – Christ's crucifixion – and by which all things have been made right is profoundly expansive; it truly liberates. In this regard, Martyn calls the church 'God's expanding beachhead in the world'.[9] That the church is expanding is not due to effort of its own so much as to do with God who is doing something, and so calling the church by the Spirit of his Son to follow in the way of his Son. The church is the witness to God's Kingdom in the world. God promises to advance his rule, and so establish the church as his rule's beachhead in the world.

If this is so, the church's obedience, its ability to hear, is a radical gift evoked by the apocalypse of Christ, the Christ who continually comes again in the Spirit so as to enable his people to live by the only law there is: 'the law of Christ' (6.2). The law of Christ is concrete, and it is summed

[8]Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 567.
[9]Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 154.

up very nicely by the commandment, 'You shall love the neighbour as yourself' (5.14). Ethical chaos does not reign in the Christian life. Rather, neighbourly love is what the Spirit of Christ effects. Such love, precisely because it is summed up in Christ and his faithful death, is indeed 'the singular Law of love'.[10]

The law of love is dynamic as it is of Christ. This implies that One can never say in advance what exactly the form of such love might be. Hence the eschatological dimension of the Spirit's perfecting work comes to the fore. Because Christ has restored the Sinaitic law 'to the original singularity in which it spoke God's own word', the law of Christ, which is ultimately the law of love, always remains ahead of the Christian community in the form of a call or a summons. In other words, the law of Christ is to be followed, not applied. Were Christ's law to be applied, it would be our possession to do with it what we will. But the law of the Christian community is the law of Christ. We are called to be faithful to Christ, and thus to his commandment to neighbourly love. The law of love is therefore a law that elicits a cry: again, the 'Abba! Father!' of Gal. 4.6.[11] The law of Christ has a cruciform shape, and so neighbourly love will involve death to the old self, the flesh. Mutual and loving service of the neighbour in daily life is *of* Christ and directed towards Christ who through the Spirit continues to enable the community heed the law he is.

In sum, Jesus Christ continues to perfect the Christian community in and by his Spirit – the perfecting God. His Spirit empowers the community to truly hear and to follow the summons to neighbourly love. Rather than being an ideal, the law of Christ is a living law which, through the perfecting agency of the Spirit, brings about what it commands: cruciform obedience in accord with the new order which is coming to be.

The classical tradition: Karl Barth on Jesus' call

Consideration of the 'faithful and dynamic love' that is at the base of the new community founded upon the new reality is not a consideration of a human deed.[12] Christ's faith creates women and men who by his Spirit live on the basis of his faith and so love the neighbour. This is a point that Karl Barth especially appreciated. His treatment of 'The Call to Discipleship' in *CD* IV/2 brings to the fore many of the themes present in Paul's Letter to the Galatians and helps us to hear them in a fresh way. As with Paul, Barth's treatment is profoundly Christological in orientation; Christ is

[10]Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 524.
[11]For the law of love, see Gal. 5.14.
[12]Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 473.

the centre. This does not mean that Barth negates the work of the Spirit thereby championing a kind of Christomonism. Rather, like Paul, Barth sees the pattern of the Spirit's work as being set by Christ in terms of the subjectivizing of the objective, appropriating the real to us at it were.

Barth writes, programmatically, 'The call to discipleship is the particular form of the summons by which Jesus discloses and reveals Himself to a man in order to claim and sanctify him as His own, and as His witness [*Zeugen*] in the world.'[13] There are several things to note. First, discipleship is possible because there is One who summons, who calls, who reveals himself, and effectively so. Christ Jesus for Barth is (as for Paul) the agent of his own presence in the world; he attests himself. Jesus reveals himself not just in any old way, however, but in the form of a summons. In other words, he reveals himself in order to claim the human, indeed humanity, as his own. His self-revelation or self-disclosure has a definite purpose, and that is to establish covenant fellowship with the man or woman to whom he reveals himself. The claimed man or woman is, in turn, established as his witness and his follower. Discipleship, the living of the Christian life is, essentially, that of responding to a call that is forever new. That call is of Christ who would have us die to the flesh and so to live day in and day out by the power of Spirit: 'Does God supply you with the Spirit and work miracles among you by your doing the works of the law, or by your believing what you heard?' (3.5).

'Obedience', Barth writes, 'is simply when we do just what we are told – nothing more, nothing less, and nothing different'.[14] In Galatians, it is clear that Paul does not neglect to tell the Galatians what to do. However, pastoral guidance cannot be isolated from Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is 'for us', states Barth. It is 'He who is the divine reality; He who decides what can and cannot be, what is and is not, a divinely given reality for us.'[15] It is not surprising to hear Barth emphasize reality, for that is precisely what Paul emphasizes throughout Galatians. So Martyn: 'Wake up to the real world, you Galatians! God's redemptive act has been carried out!'[16] The way in which one wakes up to the real world is very simple: namely, waking up is a matter of indicating. So Barth:

> Even for the sake of the kingdom of God which we are ordained to serve we need fight only by indicating, in what we do and do not do, the fact that it has dawned. . . . Our task is perhaps offensive to others, but intrinsically it is the friendly and happy one of giving a practical indication of this fact [that the Kingdom has dawned].[17]

---

[13]Karl Barth, *CD*, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation* (ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; vol. 4/2; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), p. 534 [hereafter *CD*].
[14]*CD*, IV/2, p. 540.
[15]*CD*, IV/2, p. 544.
[16]Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 90.
[17]*CD*, IV/2, p. 546.

The hortatory section of Galatians, namely from 5.25–6.10 does just that. It is a matter of Paul's giving practical indications that help the Galatians to point to what is 'a divinely given reality'.[18]

A Christologically charged account of the Christian life is a pneumatologically charged one, for it is the Spirit who capacitates the happy witness to what is in fact the case. The imperative (the Spirit) follows upon the indicative (Christ Jesus); neither one comes at the expense of the other. But there is an asymmetrical order to be observed. The order, when rightly observed, does not look down upon 'practical' matters. Rather, it is always a question of the ground of such practical guidance. Following Paul (and Barth), we must remember the foundation of all pastoral guidance: the Gospel of Christ. The question to be asked is whether the guidance commended is rooted in a recognition of the way things really are.

Likewise, the language of 'command' needs to be handled with great care in accord with two precious little words: 'for us'. The command is, for Barth, 'the concrete form of the call to discipleship'.[19] Commands in the New Testament are an easy burden, for it is Christ who fulfils them in and through us by his Spirit. The command to neighbourly love in Gal. 5.14 or to bearing burdens in 6.2 are commands of grace. Their concreteness lies in the fact that there is no such thing as an abstract or impersonal command of God. There is really only a command of God 'for us'. In what is a very subtle argument, Barth describes how God's commanding – and Barth is thinking here of Jesus' actual commands given to particular individuals (and groups) in the Gospel narratives – 'while it does not require the same thing of everyone, or even of the same man in every time and situation, always moves along one or more of these prominent lines'.[20] That is to say, there is no command of God that is not issued to a particular person or persons.

That Jesus tells, for example, an unnamed sick man in Jn 5.8 to take up his mat is not a command that you or I need to heed today. The call to discipleship, however, is to be heard just as much today as it was in Jesus' day. This is because Jesus, he who issues the call to discipleship, *lives*. Accordingly, he is not 'confined as it were to the sequence of His previous encounters, or that His commanding moves only in the circle of His previous commanding and the obedience which it received'.[21] The living Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, confronting us now, as he confronted men and women in the Gospels, with the call to obey. In this connection, Barth writes, 'He speaks to us, calling us in the particular situation of obedience determined by His Word. It is not enough, then, merely to copy in our activity the outlines of that in which these men [as recorded in the Gospels] had to obey His demands.'[22] What Christ does is call us, indeed speak to us, as those

[18] *CD*, IV/2, p. 544.
[19] *CD*, IV/2, p. 547.
[20] *CD*, IV/2, p. 547.
[21] *CD*, IV/2, p. 552.
[22] *CD*, IV/2, p. 553.

whose situation is determined by him. We cannot simply copy the *form* of obedience found in the Gospels precisely because they do not exhaust Jesus' contemporary call to obedience. Indeed, the form of obedience may change but the call stays the same: Jesus calls *us*, just as he called the Twelve. Our situation, like those among whom he ministered, is, again, a determined situation. Try as we might, and so assume that we are autonomous, our context can only be seen for what it is in light of Jesus Christ, that is as a context in which obedience to his Word can and is to be rendered. In the context in which we find ourselves we do not imitate the obedience of others so much as 'render simple obedience . . . to the One who, as He called them [the disciples] then, calls us today'.[23]

Engagement with Barth on the call to discipleship is important, mainly because it helps us to further appreciate something of what is going on in Gal. 5 and 6. In particular, Barth helps us to hear of the perfecting character of the Spirit's work. Indeed, Paul gives specific guidance to the Galatian communities that is part and parcel of their living by the perfecting Spirit. 'If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit' (5.25). The Spirit of Christ by whom we live and so are guided confronts us in the here and now with the call to discipleship, the very summons to participate in and be conformed to the Spirit's very own perfecting work. The Spirit perfects and is at work among us in order that we may obey the call to abscond from the desires of the flesh. The exhortation to live by the Spirit in this regard, in Gal. 5.16, can be heard as the living Jesus' speaking to the Galatian communities and to us through Paul's words to them. The Spirit would have us 'inherit the kingdom of God', to be aligned with the rule that vivifies and perfects, and so to flee from 'the law' that is only interested in harkening back to what no longer is – the old order.

The exhortations Paul gives in 5.25–6.10 are to be heard by the Galatians not as aphorisms but rather as instrumental to their being obedient to the call. Moreover, when the Christian community today reads Paul's Letter to the Galatians and hears these exhortations it too finds itself addressed. But it does not then follow that the Christian community is to simply copy what the Galatians communities were exhorted to do. However, the Christian community cannot rule out in advance that what was asked of the Galatians may be asked of it. What matters most is that with the Galatians we recognize that with call to discipleship there is freedom. 'Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another' (5.13). Obedience to the call to discipleship includes a profound gift of freedom. Accordingly, freedom is only truly used to the extent that people through their behaviour give witness to the way things really are. The way in which they do so is through mutual, neighbourly love that points to the new reality achieved by the Father's sending of the Son by the Spirit.

---

[23]*CD*, IV/2, p. 553.

The contemporary landscape: A notable contribution

If an appeal to one of the seminal voices of the Christian theological tradition in the form of Karl Barth has helped argue the point that the Spirit aligns us with the way things really are, and that the pattern of the Spirit's activity is determined by Christ, then hopefully a very brief appeal to one able contemporary Catholic voice will help us to further appreciate the highly Christocentric account of the Spirit's person and work that I have so far offered. In his edifying treatment of the ascension in *Ascension Theology*, Douglas Farrow presents a robust account of the ascension as bodily ascension. Rather than arguing, as have some classical and many modern thinkers, that the ascension is really truly a matter of the mind, Farrow, following Irenaeus, champions the bodily character of the ascension. His approach is an eschatological one, meaning that the ascension points to how 'the entire cosmos is fundamentally reordered to God in Christ'.[24] The upshot of this is that we ought to take 'the reality of Jesus as far weightier than our own'.[25] Jesus, in other words, determines how we ought to approach our own reality. While not going into the finer points of Farrow's eschatologically oriented account of transubstantiation or his criticisms of Karl Barth, Farrow emphasizes repeatedly that we cannot explain the new creation – what is – in terms of the old creation.

Farrow argues this point by pointing to how the coming of the Word in the consecration of the Eucharistic elements and his coming in the Parousia 'are comings from heaven, that is, from the new creation, neither [again] is explicable in terms of the old creation'.[26] This insight is crucial for understanding the logic of St Paul and of Barth that I am pressing. When Paul addresses the Galatians, he addresses them from the standpoint of the new, specifically the new creation 'embodied in Christ, in the church, and thus in the Israel of God'.[27] Through 'the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world' (6.14). Paul addresses the Galatians on the basis of the new creation, which 'is everything' (6.15)! Just as Farrow argues that the coming of the Word in the consecration of the Eucharistic bread and wine is not explicable on the basis of the old, so too does Paul speak to the Galatians on the basis of the only thing that *is* – the new creation which the Spirit enables them and us to indwell. Similarly, Barth is keen to account for the call to discipleship on the basis of the new creation, the new reality. There is in all of this a basic intuition regarding the work of the triune God, specifically the work of the Spirit. The Holy

[24]Douglas Farrow, *Ascension Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), p. 65.
[25]Farrow, *Ascension*, p. 49.
[26]Farrow, *Ascension*, p. 76.
[27]Martyn, *Galatians*, p. 573.

Spirit would have us take the reality of Jesus far more seriously than what we would our own reality, for the Spirit aligns us to what does exist, namely the new creation and its firstfruits, which we pray is being done on earth as it is in heaven.[28]

Farrow's account is truly important to consider for it points us to how one of the most doctrinally sensitive contemporary Catholic theologians presses home the importance of taking things 'as they actually are'.[29] Accordingly, 'The politics of the eucharist takes one into the heart of things as they actually are, and teaches a prudence that only the love of God knows.'[30] Although I would want to argue that Word and Sacrament together do the work of taking us into the heart of things 'as they actually are', I, as a Reformed theologian in the Anglican tradition, also want to endorse a Eucharistic realism similar to Farrow's. Indeed, God in Christ by the Spirit sets the world to rights, and the hope of the Christian community is that the life-giving Spirit would perfect us in Jesus Christ so that his light and life might also be found in us. It is our feeding upon him in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving that seals us in what shall be: his bodily presence from whom, through whom and to whom are all things.

Here again the eschatological dimension of the Christian life comes to the fore. As Paul writes, 'For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness' (5.5). We wait for the day when what is, shall be revealed and manifest to all. This will be the day when the new creation is everything. The Spirit's work is indeed future-oriented, inasmuch as the Spirit perfects in ever greater increase the reality of the promise which we feed upon when we eat and drink together. Of this hope, Farrow writes, 'We believe that the dew of the Spirit is able to preserve us, not only from the ravages of time but also from the raging fires that will disclose the world and forge it anew.'[31]

In sum, we are baptized into Christ by the Spirit, and it is the Spirit who clothes us not with the Spirit's self but with Christ.[32] The Spirit does not work by the Spirit's self but rather in the name of another, so that we too may cry out to his Father who is now, by virtue of our being adopted in his Son, *our* Father. Such knowledge is of course too deep to comprehend, and so the way in which it works its way into us is by 'faith working through love' (5.6).

---

[28]This is not to suggest that the eschatological consummation of the Kingdom has already come. Rather, it is to affirm, if I may use an analogy, that the old creation as identified by the flesh and its works, although it has been drowned, still, in a sense, swims. 'The hope of righteousness' for which 'we eagerly wait' is the hope for the day when that which has been drowned will no longer be able to swim.

[29]Farrow, *Ascension*, p. 118.

[30]Farrow, *Ascension*, p. 118.

[31]Farrow, *Ascension*, p. 138.

[32]Farrow, *Ascension*, p. 150.

Testing the spirits: On the art of making judgements[33]

In this fourth and last section, I would like to offer a few comments by which one might know whether pastoral guidance is really guidance or direction that is *of* the Spirit of Christ. While it would be much simpler to offer a series of 'dos' and 'do nots', such would grievously compromise the integrity of the remarks made in the previous three sections. As every Christian knows, the call to discipleship is a call that has to be heard. Because it is a call spoken by One who is outside of oneself, it is a call that can never be conflated with oneself. There is alterity in the Christian life, and that alterity is rooted in the Spirit of Christ who calls us to hear by speaking Christ's own words. What words are Christ's words? They are the words of the Prophets and Apostles as contained in Holy Scripture. Christ speaks through them. Their words have power because Christ speaks them in the Spirit and enables us to receive them in the Spirit as the instrument of our sanctification.

A community might read Paul's Letter to the Galatians and be tempted to think, 'This has nothing to do with my world.' Indeed, one might be tempted to say that Paul's white hot anger towards those who would compromise the circumcision-free mission to the Gentiles is hardly relevant to Christian communities in the late-modern West. That would be a grave mistake. The whole point in listening to Paul's Letter in the Spirit is that the contemporary Christian community might hear that it, too, is tempted to abscond from the Word. As the Christian community learns to hear the Word by which it lives, it can hear words written to other Christian communities such as the Galatians as words that become the Lord's words to them. This is important to recognize because the Christian community today, no less than in Paul's day, is terribly adept at living as though it has not been crucified with Christ. Practical guidance is truly *pastoral* guidance inasmuch as it enables the community to continue to clothe itself with the One in whom it has been crucified. Such guidance will be ad hoc; but it will also be consonant with the kind of guidance Paul gives to the Galatian communities. It will be a matter of commending forms of life that 'sow to the Spirit' (6.8).

Not only hearing or listening is crucial for the testing of the spirits, but also following the form of the Spirit's work in the world. Given that the Spirit is the perfecting agent of the triune God, the Spirit's work is future-oriented, indeed eschatologically oriented. Sowing to the Spirit results in the reaping of 'eternal life from the Spirit' (6.8). Such a note reminds us that the Spirit as the perfecting God is ahead of us, enabling us to share in what

[33]'Testing the Spirits' is a gloss on 1 Jn 4.1. 'Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world.'

shall be. In a sense, the Spirit enables us to share in the here and now in the future harvest time.

TO SOW to the One who perfects our life in relation to the Father and his Son is also to sound a profoundly anti-Pelagian note. The faithfulness of Christ by which we are made and kept right is always in advance of us by the Spirit. And so, Christian life is but a matter of being shaped by Christ's faithfulness in the Spirit, a faithfulness which can only be followed, not realized. To be sure, it is a faithfulness in which the Christian community can be truly said to be *in*; equally important is that it is a faithfulness for which we hope. That Paul would never dream of opposing what is now the case and what shall be the case, that the latter is but the visible manifestation of the former, is but testimony to how the faith that works through love looks back to the cross and, in looking back, looks ahead. The accent on the Spirit's work in Galatians is decidedly future-oriented. But such an accent does not come at the expense of the cross which makes the future something to look forward to. And so, the Spirit as perfecting God would have us follow after and hope for what shall be. The Spirit would have us simply taking more seriously what is and so be transformed by it.

Conclusion

In this essay I have sought to argue that the Spirit, as the perfecting God, perfects the life of the Christian community in relationship to Jesus Christ. The Spirit does so by establishing the church in the reality of the new world that has come to be by Christ's cross. The Spirit's work is thus 'set' by the cross to the extent that the Spirit works fruits in the Christian community that are in agreement with the cosmos that now is, a cosmos shorn of opposites and entirely made right – that is, rectified.

Karl Barth in his treatment of the call to discipleship would have the Christian community eschew accounts of discipleship which reduce it to the mere copying of the summons Jesus gave to the Twelve and to those whom he encountered in his earthly ministry. To do so would not be to take the dynamic character of the new order he has established fully seriously. Allegiance to Christ is allegiance to a *living* Lord who continues to call men and women to follow Him through his call to those whom the Gospels record as being the recipients of his ministry. Similarly, Douglas Farrow, noted as an exemplary contemporary Catholic voice, would have us take the reality of Jesus 'more seriously than our own' through a robust Eucharistic realism.[34] Farrow's point that the new is the basis for our life in and approach to the old order is salutary, for it complements Paul and also Barth's reading of

[34]Farrow, *Ascension*, p. 49.

Pauline themes by having us take seriously that the ascended Christ reigns. The ascended Christ is working to conform people through his Spirit to the reality of the new creation, the new creation in which bread and wine present the radical transfiguration that shall be. And last, I offered a brief account of how one might test the spirits by listening to the Spirit and by following the Spirit. The Spirit of Christ indeed speaks, and we will not know what to do until we hear him speak his Word through the words spoken in, for example, the Letter to the Galatians. In like manner, the Spirit as the perfecting God is *not* One whose work we perfect or realize but rather One who perfects us by guiding us to the hope that we await and whose fruits we pray are taking shape in and among us.

PART TWO

The graces of the Christian life

6

Reconciliation and justification

John P. Burgess

Christian teachings about reconciliation and justification call forth not only intellectual assent, but also commitment to the righteous will of God 'on earth, as it is in heaven'. Salvation is not merely a matter of knowing what God has done for us; it is also a distinctive way of life in Christ.[1] While it may be too much to say that 'the church stands or falls by the doctrine of justification', as though other doctrines were secondary or derivative, it is clear that the character of the Christian life cannot be explicated apart from it.[2]

God is the Gracious One whose justifying work frees us for life with God and his people. God calls us to be his partners in the cause of reconciliation, says Karl Barth.[3] Because of our justification, all that we do should flow from and back into fellowship with God and each other. While justification and freedom are not the only categories for framing the Christian life, they are central because they so clearly establish that the Christian life is truly a new life in Jesus Christ.

---

[1]See David Yeago, 'Grace and the Good Life: Why the God of the Gospel Cares How We Live', in *The Morally Divided Body: Ethical Disagreement and the Disunity of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), pp. 77–92.

[2]Luther's formulation. Later Lutheran theology often took justification to be the central doctrine of Christian faith. See Michael Weinrich, 'Justified for Covenant Partnership: A Key Biblical Theme for the Whole of Theology', in *What Is Justification About?: Reformed Contributions to an Ecumenical Theme* (ed. Michael Weinrich and John P. Burgess; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), p. 8.

[3]See Wolf Krötke, 'Gott und Mensch als "Partner". Zur Bedeutung einer zentralen Kategorie in Karl Barths Kirchlicher Dogmatik', in *Theologie als Christologie: Zum Werk und Leben Karl Barths* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1988), pp. 106–20.

Baptismal practice should give dramatic expression to this good news. While other Christian practices, especially the pursuit of social and moral righteousness, also deserve sustained attention, the character of baptism is especially endangered in the church today. Greater clarity about the liberating, justifying character of baptism can only strengthen the Christian pursuit of goodness and justice on earth; indeed, the Christian pursuit of earthly righteousness will inevitably fall captive to the reigning social ideologies of our time unless baptismal practice firmly establishes that we belong to Christ and his reconciling peace alone.

The longing for peace

In his famous treatise on *The City of God*, St Augustine asserted that the deepest human longing is for peace. We long for peace within ourselves, with others and with the larger created order. Earthly peace, however, is always fragmentary and momentary. Death never seems far away, and the ultimate peace that it represents seems to be no peace at all, but rather an obliteration of any of the blessings of life.

More than one contemporary commentator has suggested that our era resembles Augustine's.[4] By the beginning of the fifth century, the mighty Roman Empire no longer seemed invulnerable. While the barbarian pillaging of Rome in 410 was quickly repelled, the psychological foundations of the Eternal City had been shaken. Mass movements of refugees and immigrants were reshaping the Mediterranean world. The old political order was cracking apart, but what would come next was not yet clear. People longed for the security of the old gods yet doubted their reliability.

In our time, the trauma of 9/11 and the economic crises of the new millennium, while not marking the end of Western civilization, have nevertheless exposed our deep anxieties about its future. 'Homeland Security' has entered into our everyday vocabulary. We wonder what will happen to that culture that we once called Christian and that we thought to be firmly established in Europe and North America. We, like Augustine and his fellow citizens, fear that our peace is fragile.

Every great world religion responds to the human longing for peace. Buddhism speaks of nirvana, a state of non-being that overcomes the tensions and contradictions inherent to earthly existence. Taoism promises people a state of harmony if they conform their lives to the basic laws of the universe. Rabbinic Judaism, Christianity and Islam await a day of divine reckoning, when all earthly wrongs will be made right and those who have suffered for righteousness' sake will be vindicated. In the

[4]See Charles T. Mathewes, *The Republic of Grace: Augustinian Thoughts for Dark Times* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

meantime, faith in God's ultimate purposes enables us to experience his peace even here and now.

The Christian tradition has emphasized that God's peace is characterized by reconciliation. Within the self, different physical and emotional impulses no longer war against each other, but rather work together to deepen human wonder in existence. Between humans, the struggle for domination gives way to mutual service. Those who were at enmity are able to forgive each other and even embrace.[5] Deep, abiding communion – what the author of the First Letter of John calls *koinonia* – pervades life. Even the larger created order no longer represents a threat to human existence, and humans care for it rather than trying to conquer it.

This Christian vision of reconciliation finds marvellous expression in a series of paintings entitled 'The Peaceable Kingdom', by eighteenth-century American artist Edward Hicks. In a primitivist, almost childlike manner, Hicks depicts an America in which white settlers and Indian natives meet in peace, as do the wild animals of the forest and the domesticated animals of the field. This kind of peace rests on more than a distributive justice that guarantees every being the space and basic goods that it needs to survive. 'The Peaceable Kingdom' is a world in which life in each of its forms flourishes by virtue of its interrelationship with life in all of its forms. Fear and suspicion have given way to trust and friendship.

The Christian hope of earthly reconciliation within the self, between others, and with the larger creation rests on a fundamental realignment of the relationship between God and humanity. Humans no longer seek to displace God, but rather acknowledge him as their creator, redeemer and sustainer. Rather than trying to hide from God, they call on him for daily bread and thank him for providing. The impossible possibility of human sin – that God's good creation could turn against him – is replaced by the impossible possibility of a divine love that restores relationship with sinful humans through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In an act as miraculous as the seven days of creation, God offers human beings an 'eighth day', an age of rich and intimate relationship with him and each other. As Paul declares, Christ 'is our peace . . . and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility' (Eph. 2.14).

Reconciliation as justification

Biblical authors use different terms to speak of this change in human fortunes before God. The Evangelist John employs imagery of light, life and love. Matthew relates parables of the kingdom of heaven: yeast, a mustard seed, a prodigal son. The Book of Hebrews draws on cultic, sacrificial language

[5]See Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

of the Old Testament. Justification belongs primarily to the vocabulary of the Apostle Paul and has dominated Protestant theological reflection since Luther's rediscovery of the term in the sixteenth century.

Justification refers to God's gracious act in Jesus Christ of making us right again with God. If Christians speak of sin as that rupture in relationship with God that humans have precipitated and in which they persist, justification refers to the healing and deepening of this relationship at God's initiative and by his power. God forgives us our sin and enables us to grow more fully into the image of his Son. Christ makes us righteous before God.

It is especially in his letters to the Galatians and the Romans that Paul develops his theology of justification. Paul contrasts the justification that comes to humans through the law with that which comes to them through Jesus Christ. Recent biblical scholarship has corrected earlier readings of Paul that made him sound more like Luther than a rabbinic Jew who converted to Christianity only a few years after Jesus' death.[6] The issue for Paul is not so much works versus faith, but rather the nature of God's covenant faithfulness. The covenant that God made with Israel has in Christ been extended to all peoples.

In Paul's words, God has acted so 'that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles' (Gal. 3.14). Moreover, humans no longer ratify the covenant by Jewish practices of circumcision, Sabbath-keeping, and dietary restriction, but rather by works of God's Spirit in conformity with Christ's life: 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control' (Gal. 5.22–23).

Nevertheless, Paul's theology is complex and especially in Romans introduces themes that opened other lines of thought. Especially important to Western Christianity has been Paul's discussion of sin and grace. In Romans, Paul depicts a world trapped in rebellion against God. No human being, Jew or Gentile, is free of sin's grip. Both Jew and Gentile should know better – the Jew by virtue of the covenant (2.17–24), the Gentile through the testimony of nature (1.18–22) – yet neither acknowledges God as Lord.

In their efforts to be masters of their own lives, humans have only enslaved themselves. The sinful self is at war not only with God but also with itself, unable to do the good that it wishes or to find that peace that it seeks (7.13–24). Social relationships are marred by moral chaos. The whole creation lies in bondage to decay and groans for redemption (8.22–23).

Sin has so deeply penetrated the human condition that our actions are always distorted by selfish motives and evil even if sometimes unintended consequences. Only God's saving work in Jesus Christ can liberate humans to become the creatures that God created them to be: servants of the good that is God himself.

---

[6]See James D. G. Dunn, 'The New Perspective on Paul', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 65/2, pp. 95–122.

Paul's insights into sin and grace became especially important to Augustine in his debates with Pelagius and his followers.[7] The Pelagians asserted that God had graced humans with a natural capacity to obey his commandments. The human condition depended on a human decision to follow Christ. Augustine retorted that the human will is in bondage to sin. Moreover, argued Augustine, because the Pelagians misjudged the power of sin, they also obscured the character of God. God's grace is not limited to creating us; it is above all a grace that redeems us. Only God can set us free from sin, and this freedom is nothing other than the freedom to choose the good. Christ is therefore more than a moral example; he is the Saviour who redirects us by giving us his very life.

Augustine's insights into Paul's theology influenced Luther's understanding of justification. Although Paul, as we have seen, thought primarily in terms of God's covenant with a people, he also spoke of the struggle of the individual to escape sin. If Paul's principal question was the status of the Gentiles and how they were now included in the promises of God, Luther focused on the sinful self and how it could find a gracious God.

As a monk, Luther had zealously striven to fulfil ascetic demands of prayer, fasting, celibacy and self-denial, only to see that his best efforts fell fall short of the perfect righteousness that God demanded. The great turning point in his life came as he read Romans. Luther suddenly understood that the righteousness of God was only secondarily the righteousness that God demands of humans. It was first of all the righteousness by which God makes humans righteous. Righteousness is not a moral standard that God sets up next to himself. Rather, righteousness is inscribed into God's very character. When God acts, he acts in righteousness to create right relationship between himself and humans in all aspects of their existence.[8]

Luther affirms Augustine's 'by grace alone' (*sola gratia*) and then adds, 'by faith alone' (*sola fidei*). For Luther, faith is entirely passive. It does nothing; it is not a work that can merit a reward. Rather, faith, like righteousness, is God's gift to us. Faith grasps the promises of God offered to us in Jesus Christ and unites us to him.

Christ alone is the foundation of God's covenant faithfulness (Paul); grace alone frees humans from sin for God (Augustine); faith alone unites us to Christ (Luther). Each of these aspects of justification has deeply shaped Protestant Reformation traditions. Together they characterize a saving act of God that thoroughly transforms the human. We die and rise with Christ. We cast off an old life and begin a new one. The break with the sinful past

---

[7]See especially his treatise on 'The Spirit and the Letter', in *Augustine: Later Works* (ed. John Burnaby; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), pp. 182–250.

[8]Luther's classic statement of these themes is found in 'The Freedom of a Christian', while his Commentary on Galatians develops their exegetical basis. For both writings, see *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (ed. John Dillenberger; New York: Anchor Books, 1962), pp. 42–85, 99–165.

is so complete that Paul can declare that we are truly a new creation (2 Cor. 5.17). We are reconciled to God because we are justified by God.

Nevertheless, Paul, Augustine and Luther all agreed that this new life has a paradoxical quality. Our salvation in Christ is already secure, yet we are still working it out with 'fear and trembling' (Phil. 2.12). Even though sin no longer defines us, we must still resist it. In Luther's words, we are 'simultaneously sinners and saints'. We live not by the absence of sin, but rather by the forgiveness of sins, looking forward to a day when sin will finally lose its sting and death will be 'swallowed up in victory' (1 Cor. 15.54–55). Luther therefore told believers to begin each day by making the sign of the cross and reminding themselves of their justification. We must still become who we really are.

Becoming who we really are

How to understand this dynamic tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet' of justification led to vigorous debate at the time of the Reformation both within Protestantism and between Protestants and Catholics. Two issues were central. First, how could Christ's justifying work be said to transform believers if sin remained active in their lives? Second, how could believers be said not to contribute to their salvation if Christ's justifying work freed them to grow more fully into his image?[9]

Justification and sin. One way in which Reformation traditions tried to resolve the paradox of 'both saint and sinner' was with the image of a courtroom. Sinful humans stood like criminal lawbreakers before a judging God. They deserved to be condemned and punished. God, however, saw only Christ before him. Sometimes Christ was said to have taken humans' place; other times, to have clothed them with himself. In either case, the righteousness of Christ now covered believers, such that God declared them righteous, even though they continued to sin. For Christ's sake, God had forgiven them and given them new life.

Next to this forensic understanding of justification, Reformation traditions could speak of believers' effective justification. Not only were believers declared righteous, they had truly become righteous. Sin had been disarmed. It no longer had the power to turn humans away from God. Although their communion with God would be perfected only at the end of time, believers could already anticipate it by faith in Jesus Christ. We could even now live for God and each other, despite our sinful thoughts and deeds.

The Catholic Church formulated an alternative position at the Council of Trent (1545–63). Trent emphasized that Christ's justifying work had truly

[9]For a good overview of the debate, see Jan Rohls, *Reformed Confessions* (trans. John Hoffmeyer; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), pp. 117–39.

made believers holy. Although sinful thoughts and temptations might afflict them, God had given them strength not to succumb to them. Especially by uniting themselves to the church and receiving its sacraments, believers could live sinless lives. In reaction to Trent, Reformation traditions increasingly emphasized the forensic rather than effective dimensions of justification.

Two sets of terms – justification and sanctification, and imputed righteousness and infused righteousness – further complicated the debate. First, the Reformers (although Calvin more forcefully than Luther) distinguished justification and sanctification, whereas Catholic teaching collapsed them together. For Reformation traditions, justification and sanctification, while inseparable, represented two different aspects of humans' reconciliation and union with Christ. Justification referred to the righteousness that one already had by virtue of Christ's atoning death; sanctification designated the process whereby one's life continually grew to correspond more closely to Christ's. Both justification and sanctification depended on God's grace alone; both were Christ's work in the believer. In Catholic teaching, by contrast, justification and sanctification were practically synonymous. If one was justified, one was also holy and therefore able to do good works.[10]

Second, Reformation traditions spoke of imputed righteousness, whereas Catholic teaching referred to infused righteousness. For the Reformers, justification was not a quality that inhered in the character of the believer. Rather, our righteousness is entirely in Christ, who continually intercedes for us. Catholic teaching, by contrast, insisted that God pours his grace into the believer. The believer is infused with the theological virtues of hope, faith, and love, and they become the fundamental dispositions that direct the believer's actions.

In sum, Reformation traditions thought of justification primarily in relational terms. The believer, though still a sinner, could now in confidence call on God for forgiveness and help in living righteously. One no longer feared divine condemnation, but rather trusted that God's transforming grace judges in order to make new. From the Catholic perspective, however, justification was more than the restoration of relationship; it also involved a change in the constitution of the soul. The believer had passed from a state of sin to a state of grace. Grace was like a substance or medicine that healed the sin-sick soul and made it holy.

Justification and Freedom. The second issue related to the 'already, not yet' of justification had to do with the status of the human will in the process of salvation. Luther and his followers insisted that the human will was in bondage to sin until Christ's saving work freed it for joyful obedience to God. On its own, the human will had no capacity to do good. Even after its justification, it was weak and fell far short of the good. God nevertheless

[10]For Trent's canons on justification, see *Creeds of the Churches* (ed. John H. Leith; Atlanta: John Knox Press, 3rd edn, 1982), pp. 408–24.

accepts our feeble efforts for the sake of Christ, who as our Mediator corrects them and brings them to God on our behalf. In no way do we cooperate with our salvation, let alone merit it. Rather, we respond to God's grace by living in gratitude to him.

Catholic teaching, while clearly affirming the priority of God's grace, left a place for cooperation and merit. To be sure, the Council of Trent vigorously rejected Pelagianism. In the technical scholastic language of the times, the human was incapable of 'condign merit'. But Trent left open the possibility that the human will, having been offered the redemptive benefits of Christ's death, could freely choose to accept them. Humans could therefore cooperate in the process of salvation and achieve 'congruent merit'. Moreover, once redeemed, the human will could truly do good, not just a pale imitation of it, and thereby win God's favour.

We can again summarize. In explicating justification, Reformation Protestants and Catholics have held different understandings of the capacity of the human will to cooperate with God in the process of salvation. The Reformers did not dispute that sinful people can help others and care for the world around them, but they regarded such good as merely external. The motivations behind it were never free of sinful self-interest. In contrast, the Catholic Church held that believers could resist sin and do the good that God required.[11]

We might say that Reformation Protestants have preferred to err on the side of 'not yet' when speaking of the capacity of the redeemed human for good, whereas Catholics have given more emphasis to the 'already'. Reformation Protestants have wanted to say as clearly as possible, 'Christ alone, grace alone, and faith alone.' Another way to state the Protestant position is that a person grasps the 'already' of salvation in Christ only by grace through faith. We hold salvation in trust and hope, and therefore not as something that we can demonstrate by anything that we do. Catholics worry that the Reformation position devalues the human; Reformation Protestants respond that humans have no greater value than when they confess their total dependence on God for the good.

These differences complicate ecumenical relations to this day. Recent Lutheran and Catholic efforts to resolve them came to fruition in the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (1999). Nevertheless, leading Lutheran as well as Reformed theologians have continued to find troubling ambiguities in the Catholic position.[12] Perhaps these differences reflect tensions within the Scriptures themselves, with Reformation Protestants reading the New Testament through Paul, whereas Catholics have read Paul

[11]Some later Protestant groups, such as the Methodists, moved closer to the Catholic position on sin and the will's role in salvation, while retaining Reformation notions of Scripture, the church and the sacraments.

[12]See Eberhard Jüngel, *Justification: The Heart of the Christian Faith* (trans. Jeffrey F. Crazer; New York: T&T Clark, 2001), p. 236; and Michael Weinrich, 'The Reformed Reception of the Joint Declaration', *Reformed World* 52/1, pp. 22–23.

through the lens of books like Matthew, which seem to make more room for human works.

The Catholic position reminds Christians that God's justifying work does not relieve us of responsibility for our actions, while the historic Reformation position speaks with particular power to the problem of 'works righteousness'. Today, the tendency for humans to justify themselves by their own efforts has assumed forms that move well beyond what Paul, Augustine or Luther ever imagined.

Christian freedom

As we have seen, reconciliation and justification are inseparable. The doctrine of justification, as developed by Luther and Calvin, explicates God's reconciling work in Jesus Christ. The doctrine of justification asserts that despite our sinful inability to trust in God and correspond to his character, God forgives us and makes our relationship with him right. In what the Reformers called the wonderful exchange, Christ has taken our sins upon himself and offered us his life and therefore communion with God. We are able to confess our sins, confident that God hears us and accepts us, even as he calls us to new patterns of behaviour. We are in the process of becoming who we really are.

A central dimension of justification is freedom – freedom from powers of sin and chaos, and freedom for fellowship with God and each other.[13] Recent theologies of justification have emphasized the significance of Christian freedom for a world dominated by ideologies of the independent, self-reliant self that is supposedly free to construct its own identity but in reality is constrained by social standards of productivity and consumption. Under the conditions of political democracy and economic liberalism, people define themselves by what they do and by what they acquire with their financial resources. The doctrine of justification declares that our true identity is in Christ prior to and apart from what we achieve or acquire materially. Whereas productivity and consumption make human beings into competitors, because one's identity depends on whether one does (and has) more or less than others, justification calls us into solidarity with each other. All have fallen short of the glory of God, yet all are offered redemption in Jesus Christ.

Karl Barth offers a penetrating analysis of these contemporary ideologies.[14] Barth argues that under the conditions of sin, various human powers and capacities escape our control and threaten rather than guarantee

[13]This theme of freedom is especially prominent in Barth's treatment of justification. See, for example, *CD,* IV/1, pp. 744–45.

[14]See Karl Barth, 'Gespräch mit Evangelischen Buchhändlern', in Karl Barth, *Gespräche 1959–1962* (ed. Eberhard Busch; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1995), pp. 345–61. Barth makes similar comments in *The Christian Life: CD,* IV/1, *Lecture Fragments* (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), pp. 224–33.

our well-being. In the language of Scripture, they become demonic. Some of these powers relate to social organization, such as the state and the economy. Instead of providing for right relations among human beings, they become large, impersonal forces that absolutize themselves. The state demands total submission to itself in the name of national security, even when its demands are unjust. Similarly, the economy defines production and consumption as unassailable ends, even though we cannot finally say what is so good about having to achieve and acquire ever more. The economy must grow; there is apparently no alternative.

In other cases, physical powers and impulses absolutize themselves. Physical strength as represented by sport becomes an unquestioned social value. We must care who wins the game.[15] Barth also mentions fashion. The human desire to look physically attractive makes us vulnerable to those social powers that define what we should wear and how we should look. We may celebrate our freedom to choose what we want; nevertheless, powerful social norms ensure that we will in fact conform to them.[16]

Barth argues that the Gospel frees us both to recognize these social dynamics and to resist them. To belong to Christ is always to be swimming 'against the stream'.[17] One no longer thinks and acts simply on the basis of what 'people say', but rather for the sake of genuine fellowship with God and others. When the church remains focused on its justification by grace alone in Jesus Christ, it becomes a sphere of genuine freedom. Those who dwell in Christ know that their value is defined not by what they eat, drink, or wear, but rather by God's righteousness (Mt. 6.31, 33). Again, reconciliation with God means justification by God.

We might expand on Barth's observations by relating them to the biblical insight that sin disrupts peace within the self, with others, and with the larger creation. The Gospels describe how demons inflicted individuals with disease and disability, destroyed their capacity to live with others and made the forces of nature life-threatening. Similarly, the self-absolutizing ideologies of our time result in massive damage to the self, social relations and the environment. The demon of having to be economically productive and consumptive in order to justify one's existence leaves people physically and mentally exhausted. Social life is characterized by endless self-assertion of competing interests. The larger creation is raped for its resources, and fragile ecosystems are destroyed.

The doctrine of justification speaks into these deep crises of our time and declares that God also casts out our demons. The Jesus who during the

---

[15]In the North American context, every pastor contends with sports taking precedence over church attendance. The prospects of the home team may even dictate sermon topics or prayer concerns.

[16]C. S. Lewis provides a similar analysis in *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1947).

[17]Barth frequently uses this term. See, for example, *CD,* IV.1, p. 745.

years of his earthly ministry healed the sick, forgave his enemies and stilled the stormy waters is the resurrected, living Son of God who frees us from the power of sin. Freedom to do whatever we want is no freedom at all, but rather capitulation to the social ideologies that be. True freedom calls us to serve the cause of peace in Christ. Peace with God brings the self into order, overcomes social alienation, and fills us with awe and respect for the wider creation. Reconciliation and justification are one.

Baptism as sacrament of reconciliation

A central practice that the church must reform in order to reflect more clearly the good news of God's reconciling righteousness is baptism. Historic church debates have focused on whether baptism is best understood as a means by which God communicates his grace to us or as a human response to the good news of salvation. This debate has in turn led to the question of whether baptism should be extended to infants or reserved for those who consciously declare their loyalty to Christ. While these disagreements continue into the present, they obscure larger distortions of baptismal practice in contemporary North American churches. Whether of infants or adults, baptism today is often treated as little more than a friendly community ritual, a way in which a congregation, much like a fraternity or sorority, welcomes a new member into its midst.

The community's valuing of the baptized person as a new child of God (infants) or as a follower of Jesus Christ (adults) does give witness to the doctrine of justification. It affirms that one is loved and accepted not on the basis of material achievements or acquisitions, but because God has created one and has called one to cast his or her lot with this group of believers. But this witness to justification is incomplete. It fails to demonstrate that God's liberating, justifying work brings about a death and resurrection with Christ.

A fuller, more vigorous witness to justification would demonstrate that the child whom we bring for baptism is in fact not ours.[18] We have to die to our natural instinct to hold on to the child and revel in its innocence and wondrous potentialities. In baptism, we place it in the hands of God. Nevertheless, the dying of one relationship gives birth to another. Even as we let go of the child, we commit ourselves to nurturing it in Christian faith, so that it may come to know and affirm that it ultimately belongs to God alone.

Demonstrating the liberating, justifying action of God would also reshape baptism of adults. Rather than focusing on the individual's decision for

[18]See my further reflections in *After Baptism: Shaping the Christian Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), pp. 1–7.

Christ, we would lift up God's decision in Christ for him or her. Christ has done what one could not do for oneself: secured true peace by forgiving us and uniting us to him. Baptism should declare not only one's new identity in Christ, but also one's continuing dependence on Christ to sustain that identity. Baptism is an occasion for the baptized or their representative to confess not only the faith, but also sin, in the assurance of Christ's pardon.

Churches today need to reform their baptismal practice in order to dramatize this passage from death to life. The gestures of the ancient church – a change of clothes, immersion in flowing waters, and bestowal of a new name – may stimulate our liturgical thinking. We do not need 'theatrical trifles' that obscure the freedom of the Gospel, but we do need powerful ways of representing the change in identity that faith in Christ effects.[19]

Baptismal practice would be further strengthened by lifting up the three aspects of earthly reconciliation that flow from human reconciliation with God. First, baptismal identity in Christ calls us to peace with ourselves. We no longer have to construct an identity or live with split identities. By virtue of our baptism, our vocational identities, such as spouse, child, parent, citizen, or professional, do not define us, but rather become opportunities for us to serve others. Identities based on various social conditions, such as race, age, gender, sexual orientation, or marital status, are relegated to second place or even exposed as false if they bind us to ideologies that contradict the freedom of the Gospel. Baptismal practice should make clear that the baptized person belongs alone to the One who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Second, baptismal identity in Christ calls us to peace with others. Bonhoeffer speaks eloquently of Christ as the sole bond of Christian community. No worldly identity can unite us; only God's justifying action makes us one. We stand together as forgiven sinners beneath the cross. Further, Bonhoeffer delineates practices of mutual encouragement and accountability that help make members of a Christian community right with each other, such as listening to, helping, forbearing and correcting one another.[20]

God's justifying work also sends us as emissaries of peace into the world. Luther argued that God 'loves sinners, evil persons, fools, and weaklings in order to make them righteous, good, wise, and strong. Rather than seeking its own good, the love of God flows forth and bestows good'.[21] As justified sinners, we participate in God's work of valuing those whom the world regards as weak, worthless or unattractive. Eberhard Jüngel has recently argued that the doctrine of justification therefore has direct significance for

[19]John Calvin's phrase. See *ICR* (4.17.43).
[20]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible* (trans. Daniel Bloesch and James H. Burtness; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), pp. 31–34, 93–107.
[21]'Heidelberg Disputation', in *Luther's Works* (ed. Harold J. Grimm; vol. 31; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1957), pp. 57–58 (proof 28).

how we treat socially devalued people, such as prisoners and the elderly. Because of what God has done in Jesus Christ, we will affirm 'the absolute primacy of persons over their works'.[22]

Baptismal practice today should better represent these communal dimensions of justification. The baptismal liturgy might incorporate a corporate confession of sin, declaration of pardon and sharing of the peace. Another possibility would be to shape the baptismal liturgy as a service of commissioning, to demonstrate that God sends the baptized into reconciling service to church and world.

Third, baptismal identity in Christ should lift up more clearly than it usually does that God makes right the human relationship with the larger created order. Here the Eastern Orthodox tradition may be instructive to Protestants.[23] Orthodoxy closely links the baptism of Christ with his epiphany. When Christ enters the Jordan, he manifests his power over the forces of evil and chaos. The waters no longer represent a threat to human well-being, but rather become a witness to God's gracious provision for life. When the church baptizes, it too declares that in Jesus Christ God has blessed the larger creation to be our home.

God's reconciliation of humans and the larger creation does not remove all tragic conflict. As with the self or the self in relation to others, Christians live daily by the forgiveness of sins. We and the larger creation await the consummation of God's purposes. But even now in Christ we see the world in a different light. It is no longer just a threat to be eliminated or a resource to be exploited, but rather a luminous witness to God's beauty and goodness.

In one of the most remarkable passages of early Christian literature, Augustine captures nature's witness to God's reconciling purposes. To be sure, Augustine does not hesitate to enumerate the ways in which the natural world remains a threat to humans: 'extremes of heat and cold, storms, floods, inundations, lightning, thunder, hail, earthquakes . . . countless poisons in fruits, water, air . . . painful or even deadly bites of wild animals'.[24] Today we would add the numerous ways in which humans threaten the larger creation, such as the insecticides and herbicides that have killed so many songbirds that, as Rachel Carson lamented, spring is now silent.[25]

Augustine, however, goes on to say that God has also showered us with countless blessings in the natural world: 'the manifold and various loveliness of sky, and earth, and sea . . . the plentiful supply and wonderful qualities of the light . . . the sun, moon, and stars . . . the shade of trees . . . the colours and perfume of flowers . . . the multitude of birds, all differing in plumage

---

[22]Jüngel, *Justification*, pp. 269–71.
[23]See Alexander Schmemann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988), pp. 72–73.
[24]St Augustine, *The City of God,* trans. Marcus Dods, in *Great Books of the Western World* (vol. 18; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952), p. 607 (XXII.22).
[25]Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).

and in song . . . the variety of animals, of which the smallest in size are often the most wonderful'.[26] These natural wonders console us even now under the conditions of sin and point us to even greater blessings that we shall enjoy in life eternal.

How might baptismal practice give more vigorous witness to this peaceable kingdom? Early Christian fonts often included nature motifs – vines, luxurious vegetation, and wondrous animals – that set baptism within the context of the larger creation. Moreover, the hexagonal shape of these fonts alluded to that 'eighth day' on which Christ redeems not only his people, but the entire world. While recent liturgical renewal movements have encouraged making water and imagery of water more prominent in the baptismal service, we can do much more to lift up the universal, eschatological horizon of baptism. Baptism does mark one's entry into a welcoming community, but even more than that, it marks one's entry into the New Jerusalem in which 'the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, (flows) from the throne of God and of the Lamb' (Rev. 22.1–2). Baptism should deepen our longing for restoration of the creation that we have so severely abused.

Practising our justification

Baptism dramatically expresses the reconciliation that God's justifying work offers us through Jesus Christ. As one contemporary baptismal liturgy states, 'In baptism God claims us, and seals us to show that we belong to God. God frees us from sin and death, uniting us with Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection. By water and the Holy Spirit, we are made members of the church, the body of Christ, and joined to Christ's ministry of love, peace, and justice.'[27]

The ways of love, peace and justice take practice. Indeed, we will work at them for a lifetime. Peace with the self, others and the larger creation will often seem elusive. We will doubt its possibility or be tempted to impose on the world one or another human notion of peace. But God's peace cannot be imposed, it can only be received. The resurrected Jesus declares, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you' (Jn 20.21). When we receive God's peace and offer it to the world, we practise our justification. We become God's partners in reconciling all things in heaven and on earth and making them right again.

---

[26]Augustine, *City of God*, p. 611 (XXII.24).

[27]Presbyterian Church (USA), *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993), pp. 404–5.

7

Redemption and victory

Christiaan Mostert

The Christian life is conceivable only as ecclesial. Except in the rarest circumstances, it will involve some degree of involvement in, or connection with, a Christian community, however small or distant. It is scarcely imaginable as a life from which worship, corporate and private, is absent. In some sense every day, but in a special sense on the 'first day of the week' (Acts 20.7), when Christians assemble for worship, they celebrate the 'mighty acts' of God, who has called us out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Pet. 2.9). These are the events in which our salvation is grounded, culminating in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. Because the Christian faith is inescapably eschatological, looking forward in hope to the consummation of all things as much as looking back in grateful remembrance to these great salvific acts of God, we await and already anticipate here and now the final victory of God, when the one who *has* come *will* come 'in glory to judge the living and the dead', as the great ecumenical creed declares.

If the weekly worship of God includes the service of Holy Communion, the worshippers will at some point say or sing the memorial acclamation: 'Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.'[1] These three affirmations are the 'co-ordinates of the dynamic structure of the economy of salvation',[2] God's great work of healing, redeeming and liberating the world from its

[1]There are also other versions of this acclamation, for example 'We remember his death; we proclaim his resurrection; we await his coming in glory.'

[2]I owe this idea to Stephen K. Pickard.

brokenness and estrangement. They are the points by reference to which we can know where we are in *theological* 'space'. Just as no Christian doctrine can fail to stand in some relation to this threefold affirmation, so no theology of the Christian life can be articulated without taking its bearings from this condensed central conviction.

'Redemption' as a Christian term is situated in a wider semantic world in which it denotes release or deliverance, usually by virtue of some payment made or some obligation performed. In a Christian context it refers to the deliverance brought about by Jesus Christ, the Redeemer.[3] It is one of the major metaphors for salvation,[4] referring first to that which Jesus Christ has done in his death (and resurrection), often in conjunction with the idea of the ransom paid by him on the cross to secure our release. It then refers, second, to the Christian experience of being set free for a new life, of which the life, death and resurrection of Jesus are the presupposition. The term 'victory', is very common in everyday speech in the context of a battle or a contest of some kind, whether in sport, politics, debate, the law or military battle. In a Christian context it denotes the victory of God – more typically the victory of Christ – over sin or the 'powers' hostile to the loving purpose of God, supremely death and the shadow it casts over the whole of life. On the basis of this victory, Christians may experience the fruits of this victory in their lives, especially in the face of adversity, suffering or death (1 Cor. 15.57).

The key in which the entire discussion is set is the immeasurable and ungraspable grace of God. Here one can only repeat the Reformation's emphatic *sola gratia*, together with the *solus Christus*. This is the core of the matter: the utter grace, 'beyond all the goods and graces' that flow from this centre, as Barth wrote already in the early 1920s.[5] But from this centre everything in the life of faith is transformed. When everything within and around us speaks of brokenness and alienation, there is 'this uncreated light whose broken rays shine on all things, this miracle, this new and inconceivable but also inexhaustible fact'.[6] On the other side of the Western church's division, Rahner speaks of the 'absolute gratuity of God's self-communication' to creaturely beings, giving as gift nothing less than Godself and effecting within them their own fulfilment as creatures.[7] This

[3]The New Testament does not actually use this term as a title for Jesus Christ, but it is not uncommon in Christian literature, including hymnody.

[4]For a discussion on the relation of the words 'salvation' and 'redemption' see Gerald O. O'Collins, *Jesus our Redeemer: A Christian Approach to Salvation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 1–10.

[5]Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion* (ed. Hannelotte Reiffen; trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1st English edn, 1991), p. 464.

[6]Barth, *Göttingen Dogmatics*, p. 465.

[7]Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (trans. William Dych; New York: Crossroad, 1987), chapter 4, esp. p. 123.

self-communication of God is experienced as grace, a grace which 'gives evidence of itself in human existence and is operative in that existence'.[8]

To speak in these terms is to begin the discussion at the point where it *must* begin, and so to echo the accent of the essays in the first part of this volume: 'The gracious one', the God who has come among us as one of us, as the Redeemer, not only of Israel but, through and from Israel, of the world. In section 2 we discuss that feature of creation, especially the human creation, to which redemption corresponds as solution to problem, as answer to question and as healing to brokenness. This is to speak of the reality of sin, a problematic but irreplaceable term in Christian vocabulary. This is followed in section 3 by an intensive exploration of the two metaphors which form the title of this chapter: redemption and victory. What light do they throw on our understanding of Jesus Christ's death and resurrection as salvific? Section 4 poses the question what all this means in the concrete reality of life in a broken and fragmented world, in which our lives as Christians are determined by both sin and grace. How can we speak of the victory of grace? The concluding section sets the tension in an eschatological light: we can speak of redemption and victory because Christ *has* come and because the Holy Spirit *has* been given to the church. The taste of victory is already in our mouths.

The inescapable human predicament

To speak of redemption presupposes a situation of captivity, loss of freedom or the failure of human possibilities, finally in death, which overtakes and overpowers all living creatures. The consciousness of being trapped in this impotence or bondage has nowhere been more powerfully expressed than by the apostle Paul, who, not able to do what he wanted to do and doing what he actually hated to do, wrote about being 'captive to the law of sin', rhetorically asking who there was to rescue him 'from this body of death' and giving thanks to God for deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 7.14–25). If our concern is with 'victory' or 'redemption', something must be said about that condition or power over which the victory is won or from which there is a redemption. This is necessarily to speak of sin or, more comprehensively, of 'sin, death and the devil', the powers to which creaturely life has often been regarded as subject.[9]

Sin has a range and depth of meaning which goes far beyond actual evil. As well as denoting the brokenness of human life, it also (and especially) connotes a power to which we are in thrall, the power to destroy, to disrupt

[8]Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 130.

[9]It is worth noting, in passing, that the baptismal liturgy of many churches includes a vow by candidates for baptism (or the parents/sponsors of children brought for baptism) to turn to Christ, to repent of sin and to renounce Satan and all evil, or similar phrases.

and distort even the best of what we can achieve. 'Sin' is a religious or theological word; it cannot be understood apart from humankind's relation to God. Outside this context it is typically trivialized or moralized. Attempts to define it or explain its origin – the narrative of Gen. 3 notwithstanding – are invariably unsatisfactory. Genesis 3 should not be disjoined from the total narrative of Gen. 1–11, which registers both the divine judgement that the creation is good and the universal experience of division: within ourselves, within families, within and between nations and between humankind and God. What Jenson aptly calls 'history's entire tedious smorgasbord of sins' is there for all to see,[10] and an honest examination of our own experience should put the reality of sin as a fundamental shaper of every human life beyond any doubt.

The patristic period saw the gradual development of both a theology of sin and a taxonomy of sins. Of all the patristic writers, Augustine wrestled most persistently with sin as a spiritual reality and a theological idea. He has been described as the 'incomparable master' of the theology of sin.[11] From the introspective recollections of the *Confessions*[12] to the more technical discussion of *De Libero Arbitrio* (On the Free Will), Augustine was deeply preoccupied with sin as basically a turning away from God, a choice for darkness rather than light, for flesh rather than spirit. Sin is therefore at its core a perversion of the will, the will wrongly directed, setting worldly goods over the supreme good, God. Aquinas would later echo these ideas: the will turns away from God and chooses disorder rather than order. In the sixteenth century Luther would speak of the human heart or soul being turned in upon itself (*incurvatus in se*) rather than turned towards God. In the twentieth century Barth wrote of the human person wanting to be 'as God, himself lord, the judge of good and evil, his own helper, thus withstanding the lordship of the grace of God . . .'[13]

Jenson summarizes what is prominent in all these analyses by describing sin as idolatry or unbelief.[14] Ironically, nowhere are human beings more prone to setting up idols in the place of God than in the sphere of religion. 'Idolatry is our persistent and ingenious and even noble attempt to use deity for our own ends . . .'[15] 'Sin is idolatry. We are sinners in that we revolve in our own self-reference and do so piously.'[16] The essence of sin is not exhausted in its characterization as idolatry. It may equally be described

[10]Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology* (vol. 2; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 133.
[11]Hugh Connolly, *Sin* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002), pp. 50–51.
[12]See especially Book 3.
[13]Karl Barth, *CD*, IV/1, p. 358.
[14]Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, pp. 134–38.
[15]Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, p. 137.
[16]Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, p. 138.

as concupiscence or lust, not in narrowly sexual terms but in the desire to possess, to draw everything towards oneself.[17] Or we may think of sin in its aspect of injustice, another form of refusing to honour God in our life in the world. Finally, we may think of sin as essentially despair: the unwillingness to reckon with the future, especially as it offers us hope, finally in our union with God in Christ, our participation in his victory over sin and death, and our redemption from the destructive, disempowering enslavement to 'sin, death and the devil'.

Redemption and victory: Past event, present reality and future hope

The bulk of the New Testament is written from the conviction that there is redemption from this condition or a victory over the powers which hold us down. The sharp antithesis between sin and righteousness, between the failure to obey the requirements of the law (*Torah*) and the freedom of forgiveness, between death and life is poignantly described by Paul, most conspicuously in chapters 5–8 of his letter to the Romans. Life 'under the law' becomes (in chapter 7) 'a negative foil against which to set all the more effectively the freedom and possibility contained in the gospel'.[18] It hinges on God's action in Jesus Christ (Rom. 7.25), in whom there is no longer condemnation (8.1). Christ has brought freedom from the law of sin and death (8.2). Sin has been condemned (8.3). The Spirit has been given to bring life and peace (8.6). As adopted children of God, new life is not only a possibility but an actuality; our lives can be reoriented, redirected, our wills can be converted, our relationships transformed and our entire outlook on life renewed.

Paul declares to his Corinthian congregation that they have been 'bought with a price' (1 Cor. 6.20, 7.23); they have been redeemed. Before them the Israelites had been 'redeemed' from their slavery in Egypt (Deut. 15.15, 24.18; 1 Chron. 17.21; Ps. 74.2). In the 'prophecy' of Zechariah God is blessed: 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favourably on his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a mighty saviour for us . . .' (Lk. 1.60–69) Paul writes that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law by himself becoming a curse for us (Gal. 3.13), in order to redeem those who were under the law (4.5). He has set us free for freedom (5.1). In the letter to the Galatians he condemns their reliance on the very thing from which Christ has set them free: the law. Through Christ we are

[17]There is much to be learned here from Tillich's discussion of sin. See Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (vol. 2; London: James Nisbet & Co, 1957), pp. 51–68. On concupiscence see pp. 59–63.
[18]Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), p. 209.

no longer slaves (to the elemental spirits of the world) but children of God and heirs of God's promises (4.7). God has sent 'the Spirit of his Son' into our hearts, enabling us truly to call on God as Father (4.6). With reference to the two women by whom Abraham had children, Paul describes their sons respectively as children of promise and slavery (Gal. 4.22–31). 'We', he reminds his Galatian friends, 'are children, not of the slave but of the free woman' (4.31). How can they possibly want to be enslaved to [the weak and beggarly elemental spirits] again (4.9)?

In the Old Testament God is declared to be Israel's redeemer. The Psalmist writes, 'they remembered that God was their rock, the Most High God their redeemer' (Ps. 78.35). Isaiah reminds his people that their Redeemer 'is the Holy One of Israel'.[19] The Psalmist prays that Israel may be redeemed out of all its troubles (25.22). With God there is steadfast love and great power to redeem. God will redeem Israel from its sins (130.7–8). Occasionally God is said to withhold deliverance; 'Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death' (Hos. 13.14)? But God *will* rescue and redeem them (Mic. 4.10), as he has done before (Mic. 6.4). Nowhere in the New Testament is Jesus Christ explicitly referred to as 'redeemer' but the Emmaus disciples expressed the hope that he was 'the one to redeem Israel' (Lk. 24.21). As noted above, Paul writes that God redeemed us from the curse of the law by being crucified (Gal. 3.13) and that God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law (Gal. 4.4). Paul's companion, Titus, speaks of our hope in Christ, 'who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity . . .' (Tit. 2.14).

The idea of redemption, of deliverance or release as a result of some payment, is firmly embedded in the biblical, liturgical and theological tradition of the church. In the New Testament it refers to the salvific death of Jesus Christ, but not apart from his healing, liberative and salvific ministry and his resurrection from the dead. In its referent, it cannot be separated from the more common term, 'salvation'. The early patristic text, *Apostolic Tradition,* written by the Roman presbyter, Hippolytus, uses the two terms as synonyms. The more common term is 'salvation'; O'Collins suggests that it is also a more comprehensive term, offering 'nuances of meaning and an interiority' that go beyond 'redemption'.[20] Clearly, the biblical background of 'redemption' is formative, but also in the background are the practices in the Graeco-Roman world of buying prisoners of war out of captivity and slaves out of their ownership by Roman citizens.[21] Redemption, like salvation, refers to a decisive past event, a present reality and a future hope. In the Christian life the focus will be on freedom *from* a life experienced as

[19]See esp. 41.14, 43.14, 47.4, 48.17, 54.5 and 54.8. There are variations on this in 44.6, 44.24 and 49.7, 49.26 and 60.16.
[20]O'Collins, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, p. 8.
[21]O'Collins, *Jesus Our Redeemer*, p. 3.

a form of slavery and freedom *for* a life in which to glorify and enjoy God and live in peace and harmony with others.

Reference to freedom from slavery is closely connected with the metaphor of victory over the powers that hold humankind in thrall. Our freedom can be understood as secured by a payment made by someone else, even as a ransom payment.[22] But it can also be conceived in terms of a victory achieved over the powers that keep us captive. Walter Wink has found the language of power (and the powers) pervasive in the New Testament, though unsystematic.[23] These powers are heavenly and earthly, divine and human, spiritual and political, invisible and structural. Paul explicitly employs the metaphor of victory to describe the effect of the resurrection of Jesus Christ on believers (1 Cor. 15.54–57). Even death, that final enemy to be overcome (15.26), will have been 'swallowed up' in the victory that has been won (15.54–55). Paul 'mocks death as already defeated, and no longer able to exercise its old sting'.[24] In the present overlap of the new age and the old, the defeat of sin and death is incomplete but not illusory.

The victory is essentially God's, in Jesus Christ. The idea of a divine victory is a common theme in the Old Testament, mostly in the straightforward sense of God's promise or gift of victory to the Israelites over their enemies. Any number of texts, notably from the historical books, illustrate the point.[25] The Psalmist prays for victory (60.5) or rejoices in God's victory (98.1). The prophet Zephaniah promises that God will be present among them as a warrior to give them victory over those who have been the instruments of God's judgement on them (3.17). The return of Jews from exile to their own land would have been seen as a divine victory over those who had removed them from their land. But Israel's restoration could never have been felt as complete. Wright claims that most Jews of the time would have thought of themselves as being still in exile. 'They believed that, in all the senses which mattered, Israel's exile was still in progress.'[26] He argues that at the time of Jesus it was widely believed that God, who had been and still was Israel's

---

[22]This idea occurs only five times in the New Testament (Mt. 20.28; Mk 10.45; 1 Tim. 2.6; 1 Pet. 1.18 and Rev. 5.9). It occurs not less than 22 times in the Old Testament.

[23]Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), pp. 7–12. Further analysis follows in a second volume, Walter Wink, *Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

[24]C. K. Barrett, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968), p. 383.

[25]A small selection of examples includes 1 Sam. 14.23; 2 Sam. 8.6; 1 Chron. 11.14 and 2 Chron. 20.17.

[26]N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), pp. 268–69. Wright's argument is disputed by some; see Craig E. Evans, 'Jesus and the Continuing Exile of Israel', in Carey C. Newman (ed.), *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), pp. 77–100.

king, would *become* king in a tangible way and win a decisive victory over God's enemies. According to Wright,

> monotheism and election, the Jews' twin beliefs, focused themselves into a story which issued in a great hope: there was one god, he was Israel's god, and he would soon act to reveal himself as such. Israel would at last return from exile; evil (more specifically, paganism, and aberrant forms of Judaism) would finally be defeated; YHWH would at last return to Zion.[27]

Did Jesus himself think in these terms? For more than a century it has been accepted by the majority of scholars that Jesus shared this vision and this hope and understood his own life and ministry within this framework of hope and expectation.[28] Jesus' words about the kingdom of God and his actions, signs of the kingdom's anticipatory presence, show that he saw his own activity as instrumental in it. His action in, and words about, the Temple and his words at the last Passover meal strongly suggest that he saw his death as part of the battle that was being waged and that he believed it would end in the victory of God. His messianic claims, though ambiguous, attracted serious opposition.[29] In the end he did not engage in the battle that messianic figures were expected to fight, nor in the manner many hoped for and the Romans feared. On the contrary, it was to involve the loss of his life, not the effort to save it, as he had said before (Mk 8.35).

In the event, Jesus' death on a cross looked anything but a victory over the enemies of God. The disciples' disillusionment is expressed in the words spoken to the 'stranger' on the Emmaus Road: 'We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel . . .' (Lk. 24.21). But, as the Gospels testify, the crucified one made himself known as the risen one. In the vision of John, the glorified Christ declares, 'I am the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades' (Rev. 1.17–18). Death and hell have been conquered. In the light of the resurrection, Jesus' death was not seen as a defeat but was proclaimed as the decisive victory over sin, death and the devil. Jesus had not just been a victim of the secular and religious powers; he had taken up his own cross. The way of defeat was read as the way of victory, and the cross as the symbol of victory, 'not the victory of Caesar, nor of those who would oppose

---

[27]N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), p. 204.

[28]More recently the North American 'Jesus Seminar' has rejected completely that Jesus was an apocalyptic figure. See Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision*, papercover edn (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), chapters 6 and 7, in which Jesus is described as 'a sage, a teacher of wisdom' (p. 97) and as 'a revitalization movement founder' (p. 125). E. P. Sanders, among others, situates Jesus in Jewish restoration eschatology, which would involve 'the redemption of Israel'. See *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), p. 335.

[29]Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 538.

Caesar with Caesar's methods. It [became] the symbol, because it [was] the means, of the victory of God'.[30]

In the history of theology Jesus' death has been understood as a redemptive death in various ways, each centring on a key metaphor. Most commonly it has been understood as a great act of sacrifice, as meeting the requirements of God's justice, as the decisive victory over the hostile powers or as a great act of love which inspires love in others.[31] The third of these is the subject of a famous study some decades ago by the Swedish theologian, Gustaf Aulén,[32] an account of three major views of the atonement, especially the 'dramatic' view: that in Christ God is engaged in a cosmic battle with the powers of evil and wins a decisive victory over them on the cross. Aulén regards this as the 'classic' view, very prominent in the patristic writings and at the centre of Luther's theology.[33] Although other views of the atonement have displaced this classic view, he finds solid grounds for it in the New Testament.[34] In these other interpretations of Jesus' death the accent is on what Christ has offered to God on behalf of others. In this classic account it is God who, in Christ, achieves the victory over 'sin, death and the devil' and effects our salvation. The resurrection underscores the victory. In both East and West this victory is celebrated in the Easter anthems. In the *Troparion* the choir sings: 'Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.' In the *Exultet* the cantor sings: 'Christ has conquered . . . this is the night when Jesus Christ broke the chains of death and rose triumphant from the grave.' The metaphor of victory has an unshakeable position in Christian faith and theology, indeed in the Christian life.

Grace before and above all else

The life of Christians has a double determination: empirically it is set in time and space, with all the particularities of culture and politics, ethnicity

---

[30]Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 610.

[31]For a good account of these see Paul S. Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1989), especially the middle four chapters of the book.

[32]Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement* (trans. A. G. Hebert; London: SPCK, 1953).

[33]Aulén, *Christus Victor*, esp. chapters 2, 3 and 6.

[34]Prominent texts here are those in Paul which refer to the dominion of sin and death and even to the way the Law has become a curse (1 Cor. 15.56 and Gal. 3.10). But Christ has delivered us from this tyranny (Rom. 6.10–11, 7.4 and Gal. 3.13), or from this evil age (Gal. 1.4). Colossians testifies to Christ's victory over the 'rulers and authorities' (2.15). Ephesians describes readers as 'following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient' (2.2–3). But Christ has saved us from these 'principalities and powers' (Eph. 6.12 and Col. 2.15, RSV). In Rev. 5.5 Christ is described as 'the Lion of the tribe of Judah' who has 'conquered'.

and social networks that belong to life in the world, and theologically it has its place in the salvific 'economy' of the triune God, who has 'elected' humankind for fellowship with Godself. Our concern in the last part of this chapter is with the latter as it takes concrete shape in the former. If life in the world is marked by brokenness and enslavement, under the dominion of death (Rom. 5.17a), 'much more surely' will life under the new dispensation, under the dominion of the free gift of righteousness received in the abundance of grace (Rom. 5.17b), be marked by healing and freedom. In life as it is experienced and observed, this stark contrast is muted. The victory won by Christ seems often to make less discernible difference than it might to the lives of those who believe this death to be redemptive for them. They are aware of the truth of Paul's words in Rom. 7.15–20 about the reality of sin within, about not doing the good he wants to do but doing the evil he does not want to do. Yet for those who have heard the Gospel and understand something of the grace which frames the whole of life, it is to be expected that Christ's victory on the cross will find some real resonance in their lives. Subjective experience, of course, is at best ambiguous, variable and fleeting. One day's joy in the good news of Christ crucified and risen is followed quickly by another day's lament over failure, brokenness and lack of growth in grace.

We can speak truthfully of redemption and victory in the Christian life only if we find the right point of entry and begin with what has chiefly occupied us in the earlier parts of this chapter (particularly section 3). To draw up a list of occasional victories over temptation, the force of habit or besetting sins would be to start at the wrong end. It is not uncommon to hear stories of the difference that faith has made to people. But this must be seen in perspective. For Paul it meant nothing compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ, of having a righteousness not his own but through faith in Christ (Phil. 3.7–9). There is, however, enough exhortation (*paraenesis*) in the New Testament to warrant serious thought about the shape and dynamics of the Christian life, always under the overarching concept of God's grace. In this matter Barth is as Christocentric as he is in the rest of his theology. 'If we wish to see our righteousness before God, our true Christian life, its true glory and its true merits, then we must not consider ourselves apart from Jesus Christ but in him and in him alone.'[35] Paul had said nothing less himself: '. . . it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me' (Gal. 2.20). In short, the tension between the natural tendency to focus on ourselves, especially our own achievements, and the theological imperative to focus on the righteousness of Christ is

[35]Karl Barth, *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God According to the Teaching of the Reformation* (trans. J. L. M. Haire and I. Henderson; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938), p. 147.

often acute. Yet the logic of the Gospel is clear: the grace of God trumps every other consideration.

As an ethical proposition this is not unproblematic. Webster observes that 'language about grace and language about human morality seem to pull in quite contrary directions', so much so that grace, as Kant recognized, is 'a morally subversive concept'.[36] If Christian theology requires this strong emphasis on grace, so much the worse, one might say, for ethical theory. In Christian understanding, life in the world is not simply the sphere of moral (and spiritual) effort, though it does call for strenuous and sustained effort. But it can only be construed as operating within a grace that *precedes* and *surpasses* it, *critiques* and *perfects* it. Webster, commenting on Barth's 'radically anti-modern moral ontology', remarks, 'his map of the territory in which human action occurs is fundamentally different from those of his predecessors in the recent or more distant traditions of Western theology and moral philosophy'.[37] On the face of it, there may be considerable overlap between the way Christians and others live in the world but the way believers frame their lives theologically may be as chalk and cheese to all non-theological understandings of life. Kathryn Tanner has argued persuasively that it only makes *theological* sense to assert human freedom, human powers and capacities, as modernity has done to an unprecedented degree, if these are understood as dependent on God's enabling, God's creative agency and God's grace.[38] We are what we are in God, 'in Christ', in the covenant of grace.[39]

The power to create a new life does not reside in human beings but in the word of God. It effects things, brings about changes, makes history and sets people into a new state in which the promises of God have become actual. In Barth's view, the Word 'creates not only a new light and therewith a new situation, but also with the new situation a new [person] who did not exist before but exists now, being identical with the [person] who has heard the Word'.[40] The doctrine of reconciliation comprises justification, sanctification and vocation, all achieved in Christ, to which one responds in faith, love and hope. In respect of our sanctification, the unifying theme of Barth's discussion is the idea of participation in Christ (*participatio*

[36]John Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 15.

[37]Webster, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation*, p. 17.

[38]Kathryn Tanner, *God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), chapter 4, esp. pp. 160–62.

[39]Elsewhere Kathryn Tanner writes that 'receiving God's grace [is] a requirement for simply being a human being fully alive and flourishing'. Kathryn Tanner, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 60.

[40]Karl Barth, *CD,* I/1, p. 153. A fine introduction to the theme of the Christian life as a participation in Christ may be found in Adam Neder, *Participation in Christ: An Entry into Karl Barth's CD*, Columbia Series in Reformed Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).

Christi).[41] It has two aspects: as an active participation, everything depends on faith; as an objective participation, it depends entirely on grace. The former depends on the latter.[42] Hunsinger notes that faith does not transfer us from being outside this participation to being inside: 'we are rather all insiders by grace whether we recognise it yet or not.'[43] There is an objective universalism here which is the hallmark of Barth's entire theology; for him the emphasis is always on the primacy of the objective reality. What takes place salvifically in and through Christ is the basis of what is effected in our existence here and now. Christ is the righteous and holy one, who has 'clothed us with his righteousness'; precedence is given 'to the royal man Jesus, as the only One who is holy, but in whom the sanctification of all the saints is reality!'[44]

In Barth's view, faith adds nothing to the efficacy of the redemption accomplished in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Faith is the acknowledgement, reception, anticipation and proclamation of this redemption.[45] In faith people understand themselves differently, as belonging to Christ, as claimed by him and as being under his direction. Although he is the Lord of all, he is now quite particularly *their* Lord. 'He has reached and touched them in the quickening power of His Holy Spirit.'[46] Barth accentuates the radical newness of this situation of faith; there is 'a real alteration of their being';[47] they become true covenant-partners of God, 'placed where [they belong], at the side of God, made . . . partisan[s] of God even against [themselves] and the world'.[48] They are still sinners – Luther's *simul iustus et peccator* is strongly affirmed – but now disturbed sinners. They have been set free for this new life: free to be the living children of the living Father, free to thank and praise God, free to call upon God, free to be part of the fellowship of the church and to bear witness to the Gospel.[49] This is a freedom to respond positively to the call of Jesus to discipleship, a freedom for obedience.[50] All this is their sanctification, the objective *participatio Christi* towering over the subjective *participatio Christi*, but without depriving the latter of its rich significance.

---

[41]Daniel L. Migliore, 'Participatio Christi: The Central Theme of Barth's Doctrine of Sanctification', *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* 18 (2002), p. 288.
[42]George Hunsinger, 'A Tale of Two Simultaneities: Justification in Calvin and Barth', *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* 18 (2002), p. 326.
[43]Hunsinger, 'A Tale of Two Simultaneities: Justification in Calvin and Barth', p. 326.
[44]Hunsinger, 'A Tale of Two Simultaneities: Justification in Calvin and Barth', p. 329 and Karl Barth, *CD*, IV/2, p. 515.
[45]Hunsinger, 'A Tale of Two Simultaneities: Justification in Calvin and Barth', p. 333.
[46]Barth, *CD*, IV/2, p. 522.
[47]Barth, *CD*, IV/2, p. 529.
[48]Barth, *CD*, IV/2, p. 525.
[49]Karl Barth, *The Christian Life: CD*, IV/4, *Lecture Fragments* (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), pp. 85–109.
[50]Barth, *CD*, IV/2, pp. 533–53.

One question arising from Barth's emphasis on objective participation in Christ is whether it allows sufficiently for growth in grace. He is opposed to the idea of a quantification of grace, in particular its accumulation in our lives. Grace is ever new; it is again and again the act of the God who is gracious. Being set free for new life – being redeemed *from* slavery *for* true freedom – is a matter of the constantly new work of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is ever afresh the act of the risen Christ. Hauerwas, though acknowledging a great debt to Barth, thinks that the idea of the formation of Christian character receives insufficient recognition. In this view, freedom is 'a quality that derives from having a well-formed character', and character is 'the form our agency takes through our beliefs and intentions'.[51] Here there is a stronger accent on our *subjective* participation in Christ. The accent can also fall on our being, rather than just on our doing, our knowing and our understanding. In Roman Catholic theology grace has tended to be understood as a healing, transforming, sanctifying reality within a person, divine help to overcome the flaws and limitations of our natural condition.[52] Barth's accentuation of the objective aspect of the *participatio Christi* and on the sovereign freedom of God is in part a reaction against this tradition. Hunsinger acknowledges that Barth did not say enough about the possibility of growth and progress in the Christian life and, one might add, in the formation of Christian character. Barth thought in terms of large lines and sharp contrasts: to be *simul iustus et peccator* is to be *totus iustus et totus peccator*. So, in Hunsinger's words, 'we are sanctified not by the gradual growth of Christ into us, or of us into Christ . . . but by the perpetual operation of grace in the life of faith, which breaks the dominion of sin'.[53] Without losing sight of Barth's point, more could be said about the gradual effects of grace in the Christian life.

May we then speak of victory in the Christian life? The idea of Jesus' death as a victory over the powers of evil is dramatic and cosmic in its scope. How does this take effect in the Christian life here and now? Several aspects of the reality of this victory may be mentioned. Gunton suggests that the language of the demonic and of victory can powerfully convey both the human experience of enslavement, alienation or depravity and the Christian experience of salvation in and through Christ.[54] There is an

[51]Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 37 and 39. He also makes freedom contingent on 'being initiated into a truthful narrative' (p. 43).

[52]It must be said that in the twentieth century 'Protestant and Catholic traditions converged in grounding the entire economy of salvation in divine grace.' The discussion of grace was re-centred on God and God's gracious sovereignty. See Janette Gray and Christiaan Mostert, 'Grace in Two Theological Traditions', *Immense, Unfathomed, Unconfined: The Grace of God in Creation, Church and Community* (ed. Sean Winter; Melbourne: Uniting Academic Press, 2012), chapter 6.

[53]Hunsinger, 'A Tale of Two Simultaneities: Justification in Calvin and Barth', p. 337.

[54]Colin E. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), chapter 3.

objectivity about evil which is lost in the rhetoric of the psychological and the sociological, as if naming the dynamics displaces the notion of the moral and the metaphysical. The old language of 'possession by demonic forces', Gunton suggests, is 'irreducibly metaphorical' expressing the sheer fact that people can be taken over by the desire for power, by rage, sex, ambition or other things in the face of which they can be helpless.[55] If metaphor is a kind of 'category mistake that clears the way to new vision', the metaphor of victory enables us to reframe our lives and live in new ways.[56] It is a standing challenge to our basic assumptions about life in the world. As Barth says, 'we refuse respect and obedience to all the generally recognised and cultivated authorities and deities, not lifting our hats to the different governors set over us. We know that the battle against them is already won . . . that their power is already broken.'[57]

Wink urges Christians to confront the powers as they manifest themselves in social, economic and political institutions and dynamics.[58] In a powerful image he writes, 'Jesus' death on the cross was like a black hole in space that sucked into its collapsing vortex the very meaning of the universe, until in the intensity of its compaction there was an explosive reversal.'[59] Engagement with the powers is undertaken in the Christian life in the power of the victory of Jesus Christ over them. Fiddes emphasizes the great cost of suffering at which the victory over the powers came. This is not the conquest of the Superman of modern mythology or of Nietzsche's *Übermensch,* who transcend normal human limits but 'do not take human weakness seriously'.[60] Jesus Christ came in weakness, having humbled himself, and taken the form of a slave (Phil. 2.7–8). He promised his disciples not only rewards but also persecution (Mk 10.29–30)! In weakness will we know the power of Christ within us (2 Cor. 12.9), empowering us to confront the 'powers'. Martin Luther attests to this in his great hymn, 'A mighty Fortress', where he speaks of the foes against whom the Word shall stand. He concludes with these lines: 'Though they cause distress, / take all we possess, / though they hurt and kill, /we are victorious still; / the Kingdom's ours for ever.'[61] The world is different because of this victory and human beings who receive the grace of union with the crucified, risen, victorious Christ are different because of it.

---

[55]Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, pp. 67, 70–73.
[56]Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement*, p. 77. He borrows this idea from Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 230.
[57]Barth, *CD*, IV/2, p. 546.
[58]Walter Wink, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).
[59]Wink, *Engaging the Powers*, p. 143.
[60]Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation*, pp. 125–26.
[61]These lines are from a composite translation edited by David Schubert; see *Together in Song: Australian Hymn Book II* (Melbourne: HarperCollins Religious, 1999), Hymn No. 103.

The taste of victory now

In addition to 'redemption' and 'victory', the key terms in this discussion have been 'sin', 'salvation' and 'sanctification'. 'Redemption' is mostly used as a synonym for 'salvation', though it is really a different metaphor by which to describe 'salvation'; strictly speaking, 'salvation' is also a metaphor, from the Latin word *salus*, meaning health, wholeness and well-being. These words all express the richness of the Christian experience of new life in and through Christ crucified and risen. 'Victory' is another key metaphor to describe the effect of this 'salvific' event. It marks the division between the old aeon, marked by sin and death, and the new aeon, marked by freedom and life. To speak in this way is to highlight the radical contrast between the two dispensations, the two 'testaments'. But the relevant verbs in the New Testament also mix up the tenses: past, present and future. We *have been* saved (Eph. 2.5 and 8 – Greek perfect passive participle), we are *being* saved (1 Cor. 1.18 – Greek present passive participle) and we *will be* saved (Rom. 5.9 – Greek future passive indicative). The New Testament recognizes an overlap between the two ages. There is much to be said for Cullmann's World War II analogy of D-day and V-day.[62]

The death and resurrection of Jesus are 'the already concluded decisive battle', as were the Normandy landings of June 1944. But, on the analogy of V-day early in May 1945, the conflict continues until the end of the age. Christians in every generation have known both the power of sin and death *and* the reality of Christ's victory over the 'powers'. The tension between past achievement and future completion, between what has *already* decisively taken place and what has *not yet* been empirically manifest, cannot be dissolved. This gives the Christian life its eschatological character, as Hütter has noted.[63] A theology of the Christian life must reckon with this and give a theological account of it.

As the church lives and witnesses in the world between Pentecost and Parousia, so the Christian life is lived between the victory of Christ and his coming in glory to judge the living and the dead. Always aware of what is in part a matter of promise and hope, the focus is on the *already* of life here and now. The Christian life is lived on the strength of a victory won in the past. But it is lived also in the power of the Holy Spirit, in whom Christ accompanies his church on the way to the promised end, constitutes it as God's people, and directs and renews it in faith, love and hope. It is the particular 'mission' of the Spirit to bring the eschatological future into the present; the Christian life is therefore lived not only *towards* the future

[62]Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (trans. Floyd V. Filson; London: SCM Press, 1951), p. 84.
[63]See Richard Hütter, 'The Christian Life', *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner and Iain Torrance; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 285–305.

but also *from* the future. With one eye on the present and the other on the future, Christians can never be unaware of the discontinuities between their present life and the promised reconciliation of all things. But there are also continuities between the present and the future, since Christ has come and the Spirit has been given to the church. Therefore, in addition to everything else that has to be said about the Christian life now, it is also an anticipation of eschatological life. Indeed, the church is the eschatological community, anticipating the life of the kingdom of God in its fullness.[64] Pannenberg has used the concept of anticipation, in its strong ontic sense rather than the everyday noetic sense, to connect and at the same time to differentiate present experience and future fulfilment. Our redemption in and through Christ lies in the past and awaits us in the future, transforming our life in the present. Victory over the 'powers' has been won by Christ on the cross and will be ours fully when the kingdom of God comes in its fullness; but it renews and empowers us now, each day that is graciously given to us.

[64]See Christiaan Mostert, 'The Kingdom Anticipated: The Church and Eschatology', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 13 (2011), pp. 25–37. See also my *God and the Future: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Eschatological Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002), esp. pp. 51–52 and 112–26.

8

Communion with Christ: Mortification and vivification

John Webster

The Christian Gospel is instruction about how, by the goodness of God, creatures may pass from deadly corruption to fullness of life: 'you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sin in which you once walked' (Eph. 2.1–10). The passage from death to life may be explained in this way . . .

In his work of creation, God bestows a particular kind of life: life which is not the creature's product or possession, and which flourishes only as it is exercised in dedicated fellowship with its creator. To this gift and condition, the Gospel teaches us, the creature will not consent. Spurning from and with the creator, the creature pursues a course of self-origination and self-government, whose promises of aliveness prove illusory, leaving the creature 'dead through trespasses' (Eph. 2.5). But, the Gospel continues, the creator's determination to love and bless the creature is not overturned by creaturely treachery and repudiation of the divine gift of life. God is 'rich in mercy' and 'out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead . . . made us alive together with Christ' (Eph. 2.4–5). At the Father's behest, God the Son takes to himself the creature's wasted nature and bears (carries and suffers) its mortal corruption. In him, death runs its full course; his death – because it is *his* death, the death of one appointed by the Father to take away the sins of the world – is the death of death, the termination of death's regime. Overcoming death, he manifests himself to be limitlessly alive and so the undefeated divine giver of life. Dying for us, he sets aside

our old, hopelessly compromised, nature; rising again, he sets in motion our new – regenerate – nature. Like the first created nature before its fall into ruin, this new form of creaturely being and activity is not autonomous or separate from its author. Regenerate life means being 'alive together with Christ'; it is life 'in him'.

The definitive setting aside of the old nature and the institution of the new are to be confirmed in the lives of regenerate creatures. The Son's death and resurrection are the wholly sufficient, perfect work of divine grace from whose accomplishment creatures are excluded: they are 'not your own doing' (Eph. 2.8). Yet they also provide the pattern of regenerate living as, by the moving power of the Holy Spirit, those who are in Christ appropriate the condition in which they have been placed by divine grace. In the course of this appropriation, the regenerate must address themselves to an aspect of their situation which, more than any other, threatens to disrupt the tranquil unfolding of the new nature: though overwhelmed and set aside, the corrupt nature and its habits linger. Regenerate life in Christ is not simply a received and completed condition, but a summons actively to reiterate the death of the old nature and to perform the new, to die and rise again not only once for all but also continually. Evangelical obedience – reverent enactment of the creaturely life which the Gospel manifests – entails mortification and vivification. There are, the Heidelberg Catechism tells us, two parts to the renewal of human life, 'the mortification of the old, and the quickening of the new' (Q88). Mortification is compunction over and resolute flight from sin – 'sincere sorrow of heart, that we have provoked God by our sins, and more and more to hate and flee from them' (Q89). Vivification is joyful and active compliance with God's commands – 'with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works' (Q90). In sum, because we are incorporated into Christ, we may and must obey the summons: 'put off your old nature . . . put on the new nature' (Eph. 4.22, 24).

Mortification and vivification are commonly treated in the course of moral and ascetical theology, those exercises of Christian intelligence which consider the conduct and discipline required and made possible by the Gospel. As with any topic in the theology of the Christian life, a treatment of mortification and vivification talks about these human undertakings by talking about *God* and *God's work*. This is necessary for two reasons. First, more formally expressed, moral and ascetical theology treat the actions of *creatures*, and so trace those actions back to their causes or first principles. All creaturely acts are to be understood by first considering the divine works which cause creatures to live and move. It is of the essence of creaturely activity that it is derivative, action which is set in motion and continues by virtue of antecedent principles. Because of this, the theology of the Christian life is an extension and application of the doctrine of the triune God. 'The nature and being of God', says John Owen, 'is the foundation of all true religion and wholly religious worship

in the world'.[1] Second, in more material terms, Christian theology does not talk of mortification and vivification by turning directly to depiction of those human works. It must first portray the regenerate nature and condition to which mortification and vivification give active expression. Regenerate works follow the regenerate condition, and to consider that condition we must consider God its author and source.[2]

Moreover, Christian practice is often marred by self-absorption, in the form of excessive confidence in human powers of self-realization, or in the form of restless anxiety about performance. Both threaten the flourishing of the Christian life, because both manifest mistrust in the condition in which God's grace has placed the believer, and both are tempted to detach mortification and vivification from the original grace of regeneration. One of the instruments for correcting these disorders in Christian living is attention to Christian teaching about God's being and works, for such teaching draws the mind away from preoccupation with Christian practice and invites contemplation of God. It is, says Basil of Caesarea, 'appropriate and necessary to set forth first the sound faith and sacred doctrine respecting the Father and Son and Holy Ghost, and then to add the morals'.[3]

The regenerate condition

'It is now our only wisdom to understand our new state aright, to let its goods and ends take possession of our hearts, and conduct ourselves by the principles of our redemption': so William Law in his *Practical Treatise Upon Christian Perfection*.[4] Christian conduct is directed by right understanding of the Christian condition. As we come to know God in the Gospel, we also come to know ourselves, our nature and vocation as *regenerate* creatures. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy we have been born anew' (1 Pet. 1.3). God's regenerating work effects the renovation of all the elements of the believer's nature, situation and course of life. It is, accordingly, a divine work of such scope and originating force that its only analogy is God's first creative act: 'if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation' (2 Cor. 5.17).

In its newness, the Christian condition opposes, excludes and replaces an old condition. 'The old has passed away, behold the new has come' (2 Cor. 5.17). The old condition consists in corruption of nature and

---

[1]J. Owen, *Pneumatologia, or a Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit* in *Works* (vol. 3; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967), p. 64.

[2]On God as *auctor* and *fons* of the Christian life, see J. Calvin, *ICR*, III.6.3.

[3]Basil, *Preface on the Judgement of God* in *Ascetical Writings* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1962), p. 55.

[4]W. Law, *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection* in *The Works of the Revd. William Law* (vol. 3; London: Printed for W. Innys and R. Manby, 1726), p. 14.

depravity of action brought about by the creature's defiance of God and of the right order and ends of creaturely nature. Sin does not destroy that nature: after the fall, creatures remain creatures. But sin corrupts our nature, breaks it down, disintegrates it and spoils its proper operation. The mind is darkened and loses its capacity to know God, to direct the creature's course with constancy, and to reason and judge well. The will is impotent in relation to God, but ungovernably eager in driving the creature to sin. The creature's appetites and affections are thrown into chaos, grossly over-extended towards temporal things and incapable of sustained desire for God or good. The old nature is ineffectual, carnal and averse to God, and it is this nature which corrupt creatures enact in their course of life or 'walk' (Eph. 2.1–3). Corruption of nature and course are deadly: 'we were dead through our trespasses' (Eph. 2.5). This death is not non-existence but the condition of being dead while alive: the ever-advancing destruction of the creature's moral and spiritual vitality, the absence of the aliveness which creatures enjoy by enacting their nature in fellowship with God.

Regeneration sets an end to this old nature and course. The regenerate 'once' existed and walked in them (Eph. 2.2–5, 5.8; 1 Pet. 2.10), but 'now' do so no longer. The author of regeneration is the triune God. God the Father purposes that there be a new creature; God the Son procures regeneration, recovering fallen creatures from destruction in his death and resurrection; God the Holy Spirit makes regeneration a creaturely reality, imparting new life, quickening creaturely powers and directing creatures to the fulfilment of their new nature.

God is the first cause of the Christian condition; its instrumental cause is Christian baptism. '[B]y baptism a man dies to the old life of sin and begins to live the newness of grace.'[5] Pietist Christians may worry that this attributes to the church's action of baptism what ought to be attributed to God alone, encouraging reliance on rite at the expense of personal faith. But because baptism is the instrumental cause – not the source – of regeneration, its efficacy is derivative. Baptism, Aquinas goes on to say 'works through the power of the passion of Christ'.[6] God alone effects regeneration, and does so applicatively through baptism, by means of which the divine gift of new life in Christ is distributed.

Because baptism unites us to Christ and dispenses the benefits of his saving work, its effect is comprehensive; it is 'the universal medicine'.[7] Baptism makes the Christian's unregenerate past into finished business: all sins are remitted, all pollution cleansed, all obligations to render satisfaction for past wrongdoing are discharged. Further, the baptized enter into a new state and are given a new nature with new capacities from which arises a new course of life. Baptism signifies both 'the washing of regeneration' and 'renewal in

[5]Aquinas, *ST,* IIIa.69.1 resp.
[6]Aquinas, *ST,* IIIa.69.1 ad 3.
[7]Aquinas, *ST,* IIIa.69.1 ad 3.

the Holy Spirit' (Tit. 2.5), and bestows new powers of life and activity: 'the grace of the Holy Spirit and abundance of virtues are given in baptism'.[8]

Regeneration establishes (though it does not complete) a new order of being from which there comes a new course of life. The sequence is irreversible, regenerate nature preceding regenerate conduct. Regeneration is principally a 'physical' work – the establishment of the new nature or *physis*,[9] and only by consequence a moral summons. The Spirit does not elicit the new nature by commending it to us as an object which we create by exercising it. Rather, the Spirit imparts the new nature by uniting corrupt creatures to Christ's death and resurrection, in which the sinful self is crucified and the new self brought into being. This gift of the new nature includes a gift of powers and habits: 'power' in the sense of the 'ability given unto us of living unto God',[10] 'habit' in the sense of the orientation, inclination or disposition of our new nature to regenerate living. Such powers and habits are not acquired by practice but infused by the Spirit, laid into the mind, will and affections, and preserved by God. Their presence indicates that regeneration entails obligation to a course of life, among whose chief acts are mortification and vivification.

Dead to sin and alive to God

Mortification and vivification are necessary because the regenerate condition, irrevocably established, awaits completion. Bestowing the new nature in baptism, God introduces the baptized into a new condition and sets in motion a new manner of life. Baptism thus effects the alteration of our nature and state and constitutes the point at which the regenerate person '*begins* to live the newness of grace'.[11] Baptism founds and initiates the Christian life in which, over time, the image of God in the creature is steadily renewed. 'This renewal', Augustine writes,

> does not take place in the single moment of conversion itself, as that renewal in baptism takes place in a single moment by the remission of all sins . . . But as it is one thing to be free from fever, and another to grow strong again from the infirmity which the fever produced, and one thing again to pluck out of the body a weapon thrust into it, and another to heal the wound thereby made by a prosperous cure; so the first cure is to remove the cause of infirmity, and this is wrought by the forgiving of all sins; but the second cure is to heal the infirmity itself, and this takes place gradually by making progress in the renewal of that image.[12]

---

[8]Aquinas, *ST,* IIIa.69.4 s.c.
[9]On this, see Owen, *Pneumatologia*, pp. 307, 316.
[10]Owen, *Pneumatologia*, p. 491.
[11]Aquinas, *ST,* IIIa.69.1 resp.
[12]Augustine, *On the Trinity,* XIV.17; Augustine finds the distinction of 'first' and 'second' cures in Ps. 103.3, which speaks of a double work of God who 'forgives all your iniquities' and 'heals all your diseases'.

Baptism communicates the remission of sins and inaugurates and empowers – but does not perfect – the fallen creature's movement towards complete renewal. In Augustine's attempts to check the perfectionist impulse of Pelagianism, much turned on the distinction between remission and perfect renovation. 'It is not from the moment of a man's baptism that all his old infirmity is destroyed, but renovation begins with the remission of all his sins . . . All things else, however, are accomplished in hope, looking forward to their being also realized in fact.'[13] The 'fault' of fallen human nature is 'already remitted' by God's healing grace, but 'under the hands of the same physician nature as yet strives with its sickness'.[14] The medical metaphor of a decisive intervention followed by extended recovery indicates both the alteration effected by baptismal cleansing and remission of sins, and the progressive, prospective character of perfection. Regeneration cannot be collapsed into an instant and does not render moral history superfluous. Our renewal, Augustine writes elsewhere, 'awaits perfection', our sanctification 'is at present only growing day by day'.[15] Or again: 'not only all the sins, but all the ills of men of what kind soever, are in course of renewal by the holiness of that Christian laver whereby Christ cleanses his church, that he may present it to himself, not in this world, but in that which is to come, as not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing'.[16]

This movement of the Christian life towards perfection is not the easy enlargement of the condition of regeneration: it is conflictual, a matter of warfare or combat. 'Whoever wishes to please God and truly make himself an enemy against the adversary must wage battle.'[17] Why so?

After baptism, the Christian exists in a mixed condition, under a double determination of old and new, Adam and Christ.

> In so far as we are born of God we abide in him who appeared to take away sins, that is, in Christ, and sin not – which is simply that 'the inward man is renewed day by day'; but in so far as we are born of that man 'through whom sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death passed to all men', we are not without sin, because we are not as yet free from his infirmity, until, by that renewal which takes place from day to day . . . that infirmity shall be wholly repaired, wherein we were born from the first man, and in which we are without sin.[18]

---

[13]Augustine, *Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sin, and on the Baptism of Infants* in *Anti-Pelagian Writings* (Peabody: Hendriksen, 1994), II.9.
[14]Augustine, *On Continence* in *Anti-Pelagian Writings*, XVIII.
[15]Augustine, *On Man's Perfection in Righteousness* in *Anti-Pelagian Writings*, XVIII.
[16]Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence* in *Anti-Pelagian Writings*, I.39.
[17]Pseudo-Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1992), XXI.9.
[18]Augustine, *On Man's Perfection in Righteousness*, XVIII.

Moreover, because these two states are not intermittent but simultaneous, the Christian cannot escape internal division, the discord which Barth calls 'a quarrel or falling out [*Auseinandersetzung*] with himself':[19] 'already the new man . . . he is still the old'.[20] Even after baptism unites us to Christ, concupiscence – inordinate desire inclining us to evil – 'is not removed all at once . . . for not even to those who are of riper years is it given in baptism . . . that the law of sin which is in their members, warring against the law of their mind, should be entirely extinguished, and cease to exist'.[21] Vestiges of corruption remain: and what vestiges they are! Compelling and persistent enough to drive the Christian into a wretched frame, harassed by contrary impulses and the proximity of wickedness; 'I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am!' (Rom. 7.21–4).

Nevertheless, in this conflicted state the unregenerate and the regenerate do not possess equal power; they are simultaneous but *incommensurate*. Christians may be miserably in contention with themselves, but the dispute is not ambiguous or undecided so that Christians can enjoy no certainty about its final issue. Christians are conflicted, not because they still await the conclusive alteration of their condition, but because it has already been made and communicated to them, and is now realizing itself and moving towards consummation. No inner division by which the baptized are afflicted can call into question the Father's work of determination, the Son's work of reconciliation, the Spirit's work of transformation. Paul vends his list of sinful persons in 1 Cor. 6 – idolaters, the sexually depraved, thieves, drunkards and the rest – with: 'such were some of you' (1 Cor. 6.11). *But*, he goes on, 'you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and in the Spirit of our God' (1 Cor. 6.11). The Son and the Spirit bring about an entirely changed relation to our fallen nature even as its vestiges remain. Delight in the law of God is the Christian's 'inmost self' (Rom. 7.21, 25); whatever 'other law' may be 'at war with the law of my mind' (Rom. 7.23), however determinedly it may harry the Christian and cause the Christian to stumble is already ruined and marked for condemnation.

A portrayal of the regenerate condition as 'intermediate'[22] – unalterably instituted by God, conflicted, and yet on the way to perfection – is very

[19]K. Barth, *CD*, IV/2, p. 570.
[20]K. Barth, *CD*, IV/2, p. 571.
[21]Augustine, *Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sin*, I.70.
[22]Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*, I.32.

different from a perfectionist picture which maintains the possibility of the completion of renovation and the end to a Christian before death. Is sinlessness possible in this life? Augustine hesitates before returning a negative answer: the possibility should be allowed, lest we expect too little of divine grace, but, though there could be such sinless persons, in actuality there are none. 'There are . . . on earth righteous men, there are great men, brave, prudent, chaste, patient, pious, merciful, who endure all kinds of temporal evil with an even mind for righteousness' sake . . . but they are not without sin.'[23] Perfectionism simplifies the regenerate condition by holding out the attractive but theologically and spiritually dubious prospect of early resolution of its mixed, conflict-laden character. Regeneration does not affect cessation of sin but the alteration of the Christian's relation to the sin which continues, by establishing a new principle of existence with which sin is out of conformity. This constitutes what P. T. Forsyth calls 'the difference between the saint's sin and the sinner's sin'.[24] 'No one who abides in him sins' (1 Jn 3.6) – not in the sense that the regenerate cease to commit sin, but in the sense that the sins which they commit have no deep ground since the regenerate are 'in him'. Perfectionism treats regeneration as a visibly completed accomplishment rather than as a divine transformation which anticipates a conclusion. The cost of this early resolution of Christian conflict is not only a diminished sense of the Christian life as temporal process involving repeated confession and absolution (1 Jn 1.8–10), but also a failure to grasp that sanctification no less than justification is inseparable from faith, that is, from reliance upon an extrinsic life-principle which is not identical with our persons and conduct.

The present course and future outcome of Christian conflict are conditioned by the super-eminent reality of Jesus Christ 'who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father' (Gal. 1.4). This deliverance comprehends both an objective change in condition and the renewal of creaturely nature and capacities. Christians engage in moral and spiritual conflict according to their regenerate nature, freed from accusation by the remission of all wrongdoing, and having the drive to sin diminished by Spirit-bestowed habits of holiness. Further, Christian conflict is the arena for exercising the capacities which regenerative grace confers on those who are united to Christ at baptism. In their struggle to enact the new nature, Christians are not powerless.

> By baptism a person is reborn in the life of the Spirit which is proper to the faithful of Christ . . . But there is no life if the members are not united to the head from which they receive feeling and motion. Thus it is necessary that a person be incorporated by baptism into Christ as a

[23]Augustine, *Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sin*, II.18.
[24]P. T. Forsyth, *Christian Perfection* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899), p. 30.

> member of his. But as feeling and motion flow from the natural head to the members, so from the spiritual head, which is Christ, there flow to his members spiritual feeling, which is the knowledge of truth, and spiritual motion, which results from the impulse of grace . . . It follows, then, that the baptised are enlightened by Christ in the knowledge of truth, and made fruitful by him in the fruitfulness of good works by the infusion of grace.[25]

The principal forms of these good works are mortification and vivification.

God is at work in you

What kind of creaturely practices are mortification and vivification? They may be described in terms of (1) their formal features, and (2) their material content.

(1) Mortification and vivification are practices in the state of regeneration, enacting the regenerate nature. They must to be understood in relation to their ground in the works of God and the conditions, benefits, movements, requirements and prohibitions to which these works give rise. Mortification and vivification do not effect regeneration (how could creatures cause themselves to be born anew? Jn 3.5 . . .) but endorse the regeneration which has already been instituted.

Mortification and vivification are therefore bound up with recollection of Jesus Christ and fellowship with him. The daily dying and rising again which are the shape of Christian conduct begin with recall of the principal elements of the Son's achievement into which Christians are incorporated: 'Do you not know' writes Paul with some exasperation to those who ought to know, 'that all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life' (Rom. 6.3–4). By recollection Christians return to the foundation of their conduct and hold communion with Christ. John Owen speaks of believers continually 'eyeing' Christ, looking upon him, contemplating him and the efficacy of his regenerative work: 'they roll it in their minds and spirits'.[26] Recalling and studying Christ, believers set themselves and their practices in a right relation to their source.

The practices of mortification and vivification are also bound up with wakefulness to the Holy Spirit, by whom the Son's work of regeneration is applied and advances to completeness. It is of the essence of mortification and vivification that they are human undertakings authored and animated

---

[25]Aquinas, *ST,* IIIa.69.5 resp.

[26]J. Owen, *Of Communion with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost* in *Works* (vol. 2; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965), p. 203.

by God, practices whose energy and issue and not intrinsic but derived from the Spirit whom Owen calls their 'great efficient' or 'great sovereign cause'.[27] These practices are duties for whose fulfilment only the divine Spirit is sufficient. 'All other ways of mortification are vain, all helps leave us helpless; it must be done by the Spirit . . . Mortification from a self-strength, carried on by ways of self-invention, unto the end of a self-righteousness, is the soul and substance of all false religion in the world.'[28]

Deriving from and continually referred to Christ and the Spirit, mortification and vivification are, like all sanctified works, practices of *faith*, having their rise in knowledge of and trustful assent to the divine attainment. They are not a frantic struggle to maintain fellowship with God: that struggle lies behind the believer, finished on Easter Day. Christians do not persevere because they put off the old nature and put on the new; they put of the old nature and put on the new because in faith they trust that they will persevere. Faith refers creatures and their practices to the divine work which precedes them and brings them to life.

Mortification and vivification are also *practices* of faith. To have faith in God's regenerative work is not only to know and trust the new condition and nature, but also to recognize that this condition and nature have their telos in the renewal of creaturely life and activity. The Spirit heals our disrupted and weakened nature, restoring created powers of life and directing them in obedience to God. Mortification and vivification are the active unfolding and extension of the new nature in the exercise of its capabilities.

Because this is so, mortification and vivification are creaturely movements moved by God, in two senses. First, they are not self-initiated movements but movements which are consequent upon Christ's death and resurrection. Second, they are proper creaturely movements whose integrity is not compromised but upheld by the work of the Spirit who causes them, invests them with power, accompanies them and brings them to fulfilment. In a mid-seventeenth-century treatise on the Christian life, *The Trial of a Christian's Growth*, Thomas Goodwin wrote that, though mortification is

> a work of God upon us . . . in this work of mortification . . . we are not mere passives . . . So as those means whereby God purgeth us are not to be imagined to do it as mere physical agents, like as the pruning-hook cuts off branches from a tree, as when a surgeon cuts out dead flesh; but these means do it by stirring up our graces, and quickening them, and by setting our thoughts, and faith, and affections, a-work against sin, and so to cast it forth.[29]

---

[27]J. Owen, *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers* in *Works* (vol. 6; Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967), p. 16.
[28]J. Owen, *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers*, p. 7.
[29]T. Goodwin, *The Trial of a Christian's Growth* in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* (vol. 3; Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1861), pp. 474–76.

Cultural and spiritual bad habit incline us to oppose God's moving and prefer our moving of ourselves, fearing that acts caused by God are not properly ours. But 'God is at work in you, both to will and to do' (Phil. 2.13). God works 'interiorily', animating and preserving the exercise of created will and aptitudes; grace does not devastate creatures but rectifies them and sets them to work.

Mortification and vivification are works of 'evangelical obedience', again in two senses. First, the obedience is *evangelical* because its root is lively apprehension of and attachment to what the Gospel announces about God's renovation of creatures. There are moralist counterfeits: natural habits of temperance and decency, laudable enough and in some respects formally similar to evangelical obedience; but they do not derive from Christ, 'the head of influence, the spring and fountain of spiritual life'.[30] Second, mortification and vivification are practices of evangelical *obedience*, because they are dutiful, loving compliance with the law which the Gospel entails. The Gospel is both declaration and exhortation: declaration first, but also – because it is the declaration of the rebirth of creaturely vocation – exhortation to walk in newness of life.

In sum: mortification and vivification are good works: human practices which proceed from trust in 'the completed good work of God',[31] which observe the law of the Gospel, which have God's honour as their end and which cause creaturely nature to flourish.

(2) Mortification and vivification are practices which conform to the pattern and follow the example of Christ's death and resurrection into which believers are incorporated by baptism. His dying and rising again provide both the principle and the basic shape of Christian conduct. The regenerate are 'dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 6.11) and their continuing course of life has the corresponding form of putting to death the vestiges of the old nature and walking in newness of life.

Is this correspondence between Christ's saving work and the Christian life suitably designated 'imitation of Christ'? The language may prove Christologically hazardous. It may elide the distinction between Christ and the Christian, envisaging Christ as merely the first in a series, as a dispenser of moral instruction, as a lawgiver or a model for emulation. It may detach Christian moral and ascetical practices from their ground in Christ's office as redeemer, and may fail to grasp the drastic redrawing of the believers' relation to their moral lives which redemption entails. Yet the language of imitation may still serve to indicate that Christology is both dogmatic and moral. Christology is dogmatic contemplation of Jesus Christ in his eternal deity, his divine humanity and his saving offices. As he fulfils his offices, he is both wholly outside and beyond us and also for us and in us, the cause

[30]J. Owen, *Pneumatologia*, p. 514.
[31]K. Barth, *CD*, IV/2, p. 589.

and archetype of moral renovation. In his treatise *On Perfection*, Gregory of Nyssa notes that 'our good master, Jesus Christ, bestowed on us a partnership in his revered name', so that Christological questions and questions about the Christian life, though they ought not to be confused, may not easily be separated. We must, he suggests, both 'understand reverently what we believe [Christ] is when he is called upon by this name' and 'learn clearly what sort of persons we should be shown to be as a result of our zeal for this way of life and our use of his name as the instructor and guide for our life'.[32] Calvin, similarly, suggests that Scripture's moral teaching commonly proceeds by enumerating divine works and blessings and finding in them materials for exhortation.

> Scripture derives its exhortations from the true source, when it not only enjoins us to regulate our lives with a view to God its author to whom it belongs; but after showing us that we have degenerated from our true origin – viz., the law of our creator – adds, that Christ, through whom we have returned to favour with God, is set before us as a model, the image of which our lives should express.[33]

Acquitted by Christ and conformed to him, the regenerate are summoned to creaturely reduplication of the moments of his redemptive work, without compromising its uniqueness and finality. In their conduct, Christians may 'become like [Christ] in his death' (Phil. 2.10) because (and only because) Christ 'gave himself' for them and they 'have been crucified with Christ' (Gal. 2.20). Because 'Christ lives in' them (Gal. 2.20), they may 'live to God'. 'He himself' – unsubstitutably – 'bore our sins in his body on the tree' (1 Pet. 1.24), but in so doing he also left 'an example, that you should follow in his steps' (1 Pet. 2.21), 'that we might die to sin and live to righteousness' (1 Pet. 2.24). How may these practices of dying and living be described?

Put to death what is earthly, walk in newness of life

First, by mortification is meant the disciplined practices in which renewed creatures, reconciled to God by Christ's meritorious death and moved by the Holy Spirit, repudiate, resist and do away with the remnants of the old 'earthly' nature which has been disqualified but which nevertheless persists 'in' us (Col. 3.5). By vivification is meant those habits of life in which renewed creatures made alive and empowered by the Spirit, amplify their

[32]Gregory of Nyssa, *On Perfection* in *Ascetical Works* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1967), p. 96.
[33]Calvin, *ICR*, III.6.3.

new nature, actively disclosing, confirming and exercising it. Mortification and vivification are simultaneous, not sequential. Mortification is not an initial stage which at some point in this life is left behind, for our mixed state will persist until paradise. Vivification, however, has material priority, because mortification is a practice of negation, opposing old habits of life, traces of which remain in the present but have no future, having been condemned and terminated by God. Mortification is not a permanent, essential practice of the regenerate nature but an interim necessity, and once its goal of clearing away the diseased remainders of the old nature is reached, it will no longer be required. Vivification, by contrast, is the implementation of the new nature and stretches out to perfection. In vivification we begin to perform the new nature which will endure and so complete and resolve itself that there will be no necessity for mortification.

Second, 'Put to death what is earthly in you.' The object of mortification is the sin which remains in regenerate persons. 'Sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, [God] condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom. 8.3); by virtue of this divine work, the regenerate are 'not in the flesh' (Rom. 8.9). But though sin is wholly alien to the new nature, it continues to 'cling closely' (Heb. 12.1). Sin is not simply external to the regenerate: it intrudes upon them and inhabits them, 'dwells in [their] members' (Rom. 7.23). Mortification directs itself against this illegitimate and persistent intrusion by that which God has proscribed.

Because it is directed against what trespasses upon the renovated creature, mortification is not an assault on created nature but precisely the opposite: an assault on the sin which opposes created nature's regeneration. Against the Manichees, Augustine argues that in Christian conflict, mortification does not take up arms against nature but against 'the fault' (*vitium*).[34] Christian conflict 'is not a mingling of two natures caused by contrary principles, but a division of one against itself caused by the desert of sin'.[35] And so mortification is not hatred of embodied life but opposition to death-dealing vice, its purpose being not nature's destruction but the ordering and forming of regenerate conduct. It is not 'hostile persecution' but 'healthy chastening' which intends the recovery and flourishing of nature.[36]

The first act of mortification, undergirding and accompanying all other acts, is faith in Christ, consideration of his completed work and his infinite present resourcefulness as the merciful and faithful high priest (Heb. 2.17–18, 4.14–16). John Owen's treatise on mortification is deeply stirred by the thought that Christ's priesthood is fundamental to ascetical practice, reassuring believers with the expectation that mortification takes place in the domain of Christ's mercy, tenderness, fidelity and assistance. 'I shall freely say, this one thing of establishing the soul by faith in expectation of

[34]Augustine, *On Continence*, p. 19.
[35]Augustine, *On Continence*, p. 21.
[36]Augustine, *On Continence*, p. 26.

relief from Jesus Christ, on account of his mercifulness as our high priest, will be more available to the ruin of thy lust and distemper, and have better and speedier issue, than all the rigidest means of self-maceration that ever any of the sons of men engage themselves unto.'[37]

Mortification is a work of continence. Continence is much broader than sexual abstinence; it is restraint of all sinful appetite and the setting aside of wicked practice.[38] By continence, the regenerate resist the propensity of vestigial sin to continue to rule conduct. Sin's persistence depends upon consent. Sin is not natural, some irresistible element of creaturely life, but an interpolation which holds out the prospect of pleasure in order to win compliance. Mortification refuses to acquiesce, and by withholding consent it despoils sin of its pretended power and clears a space for the operation of the new nature. 'When through continence consent is withheld, the evil of the lust of the flesh, against which the lust of the spirit fights, is not suffered to harm . . . Continence also itself, when it curbs and restrains lusts, at once both seeks the good unto the immortality of which we aim, and rejects the evil with which in this mortality we contend.'[39] Continence puts to death patterns of life in which the regenerate once walked but do so no longer: immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, covetousness, anger, wrath, malice, slander, foul talk (Col. 3.5–8; cf. Gal. 5.19–21). And this, because regenerate life is governed by a relation to Christ which already excludes such practices. The regenerate 'belong to Christ Jesus' and so 'have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires' (Gal. 5.24).

The enactment of this attachment to Christ is as yet imperfect. Continence operates in the situation in which regenerate persons are divided against themselves, and so it takes the form of self-denial, that is, denial of that which the Christian once was and is no longer, but which, despite its abolition, continues to disturb. 'If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me' (Mk 8.34). An invitation to pathological self-destruction? No, because self-denial derives from faith's contentment with and joy in the new nature bestowed by divine love. The 'self' which is denied is worthless, and can be lost without peril; indeed, to lose it is to save one's life (Mk 8.39) by ridding oneself of an enemy.

Christian self-denial entails the renunciation of created goods when they serve as instruments for the persistence of sin and the occlusion of the new nature. Despite their new condition and nature, the regenerate continue to love evil things, or to love good things immoderately, and as they do so they

---

[37]J. Owen, *Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers*, p. 82.

[38]Classical fourth-century ascetical writers such as Basil or Gregory of Nyssa consider the Christian life a kind of virginity, understood as a way of conducting life in the world which 'pertains to all things' (Nyssa, *On Virginity* in *Ascetical Works*, p. XV). 'Our whole life, conduct and moral character should be virginal, illustrating in every action the integrity required of the virgin' (Basil, *Ascetical Discourse* in *Ascetical Writings*, p. 208).

[39]Augustine, *On Continence*, pp. 5, 6.

consent to the falsehood that they will only be fulfilled, at rest and intact, if they maintain these loves. Renunciation breaks such attachments, freeing believers from the entanglements which may be contracted by the use of the world, and so freeing them for service of God. Renunciation severs 'the bonds of this material and transient life' and by it 'we render ourselves more fit to set out upon the road leading to God'.[40] Because its spring is contentment with God and God's gift of the new nature, renunciation is pursuit of happiness. But because we are not converted in an instant, we need to be unfastened from what leads to sorrow. This detachment from cherished goods and deep-seated habits is rarely painless. Regenerate life involves the bearing of the cross and brings affliction. 'Renunciation is nothing but the evidence of the cross and of mortification', Cassian instructs the 'renunciants'.

> And so you must know that today you are dead to this world and its deeds and desires, and that, as the apostle says, you are crucified to this world and this world to you. Consider therefore the demands of the cross under the sign of which you ought henceforth to live in this life . . . We must therefore pass our time in this life in that fashion and form in which he was crucified for us upon the cross so that . . . piercing our flesh in the fear of the Lord, we may have all our wishes and desires not subservient to our own lusts but fastened to his mortification.'[41]

Self-denial may deal with aggravated attachments by cultivating indifference. 'Let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it' (1 Cor. 7.29–31). Indifference is not numbness; still less is it absolution from the duties of life in common. Paul's 'as though' is not selfish inviolability, but refusal to ascribe such unconditional value to created goods and relations that our welfare becomes unthinkable without them.

In practice, mortification takes the form of a regime of training, disciplining and forming bodily, intellectual, affective and social life so that regenerate conduct eradicates the vestiges of the old nature and amplifies the new. Mortification is not simply directed to the body, for 'bodily training is of some value', but instrumental to growth in 'godliness' which 'is of value in every way' (1 Tim. 4.8). Training in godliness pertains to intelligence, emotions and social relations as much as to bodily life. Although the anatomies of mortification found in early ascetical manuals such as Basil's *Long Rules* or Cassian's *Institutes*, deal with bodily concerns (sleep, dress,

[40]Basil, *The Long Rules* in *Ascetical Works*, IX.
[41]Cassian, *ICR*, IV.34.

sex, food, posture, possessions, use of medicine and the like), they are more concerned with regulating elements of common life (speech and silence, keeping promises, laughter, gossip, relations between old and young, hospitality, engagement in trade, the conduct of disputes), and with the properly formed exercise of emotions like anger, sorrow or pride.

Such training requires habits of self-examination, since the persistence of the old nature makes us complacent, careless or quick to justify failure. 'Let each one test his own work' (Gal. 6.4). Self-examination is not compulsive scruple, driving us further inside ourselves and inhibiting gladness at God's gift of new life. It begins by looking beyond the self and its performance. The regenerate do not know themselves or judge themselves well, and can examine themselves only if first they 'look into the perfect law, the law of liberty' (Jas 1.25). Self-examination is acknowledgement and repetition of and consent to the divine judgement upon our conduct, and so an instance of the proper use of conscience.

Though mortification requires engagement in conflict, its end is peace, that is, the disposition of our persons and life-course in a way which is orderly, collected and harmonious, enabling easy, unhindered enactment of the new nature beyond encumbrances and opposition. Sin disperses and perturbs us, keeping us 'anxious and in a state of nervous motion'.[42] The movement of mortification reaches out beyond present discord to rest and the full tranquil enjoyment of our new nature. 'We shall then have perfect peace when, our nature cleaving inseparably to its creator, we shall have nothing of ourselves opposed to ourselves . . . that we may reign, in his perfect and eternal peace, without any strife of evil, and with the highest delight of good.'[43]

Third and finally, as mortification proceeds, so does vivification, in the undivided and concurrent two-fold course of regenerate life. Cassian lays out the process:

> 'The beginning' of our salvation and 'of wisdom' is, according to Scripture, 'the fear of the Lord'. From the fear of the Lord arises salutary compunction. From compunction of heart springs renunciation, i.e., nakedness and contempt of all possessions. From nakedness is begotten humility, from humility the mortification of desires. Through mortification of desires all faults are extirpated and decay. By driving out faults virtues shoot up and increase. By the budding of virtues purity of heart is gained. By purity of heart the perfection of apostolic love is acquired.[44]

If mortification eradicates the old nature, vivification enacts the new, which is mortification's 'meaning and intention'.[45] Like mortification,

---

[42]Pseudo-Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies* V.2.
[43]Augustine, *On Continence*, p. 17.
[44]Cassian, *ICR*, IV.43.
[45]K. Barth, *CD*, IV/2, p. 577.

vivification flows from knowledge of and consent to the Christian condition: 'consider yourselves . . . alive to God' (Rom. 6.11). It is intelligent, practical compliance with the aliveness conferred on creatures by God, and with the imperative presented by that gift: 'walk in newness of life' (Rom. 6.4). Regenerate aliveness is aliveness '*to* God' (cf. Gal. 2.19) – that is, wakeful relation to God – by virtue of being 'in Christ Jesus'. The regenerate 'live to the Lord' because they are 'the Lord's' (Rom.14.8). Existing in the Christian condition, believers are set free from evil self-possession; they no longer live 'to themselves' (Rom. 14.7), and so engage in true creaturely conduct, acting out the gift of life in intelligent moral movement.

Vivification is not moral-ascetical self-cultivation. It begins from the confession that the regenerate are those 'who have been brought from death to life', and its most basic movement is 'yielding to God' (Rom. 6.13). Yet this yielding is not mere resignation; it is surrender to a divine movement which sets creatures in motion. This creaturely movement extends into human existence in its entirety: the domains of religion, charity and justice. Religion is relation to God, the one 'to whom we ought to be bound as to our unfailing principle, to whom, also our choice ought to be resolutely directed as to our last end, and whom we lose when we neglect him by sin, and should recover by believing in him and confessing our faith'.[46] Sin neglects God; religion is aliveness to God, devotion active in contemplation, praise and confession. Charity and justice are rightly ordered relations in the Christian community and in the civil and domestic sphere. Sin damages relations between creatures, in part by habitual inattention to the good of others, in part by using our social nature as an opportunity for wickedness. Vivification takes a different course. 'We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren' (1 Jn 3.14). Much New Testament exhortation is dedicated to commendation of the various parts of love, by which creatures are bound together in perfect harmony (Col. 3.14): compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, patience, forbearance, forgiveness and much else (Col. 3.12–17; Gal. 5.22–26; 2 Cor. 6.6–10; Eph. 4.25–32; 1 Pet. 3.8–12). To walk in newness of life is to 'walk in love' (Eph. 5.2).

Love life

In a culture ensnared by tawdry and ignoble conceptions of human flourishing, dedicated to hurtful appetites and unsure how to relieve its sorrow, mortification and vivification bear testimony to the gift of different

[46]Aquinas, *ST* IIaIIae.81.1 resp.

possibilities by which creaturely life may be healed and enlivened. Dying and rising with Christ, believers exemplify a way to love life and see good days (Ps. 34.12; 1 Pet. 3.10–12). 'Let us, therefore, pray that we may be put to death by his power and die to the world of the wickedness of darkness and that the spirit of sin may be extinguished in us. Let us put on and receive the soul of the heavenly Spirit and be transported from the wickedness of darkness into the light of Christ. Let us rest in life forever.'[47]

[47]Pseudo-Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies*, I.9.

PART THREE

The means of grace

9

Scripture

Donald Wood

The task before us is to reflect theologically upon Holy Scripture as the prime textual product and instrument of God's sanctifying grace. It is not self-evidently a task for which we are capable. If we are enabled to grasp – even in some small measure – the mystery of the Holy Spirit's movement upon the cultural processes of writing and reading, that is itself a divine gift and victory, the generous bestowal of a knowledge that we cannot claim as a creaturely entitlement and the conquest of our culpable ignorance of God's ways and works. Like all exercises in theological reasoning, then, what follows stands under divine judgement and looks to God's promise: 'my people do not understand' (Isa. 1.3); 'I will instruct you and teach you' (Ps. 32.8). And so it proceeds as an act of confession and prayer: 'for God all things are possible' (Mt. 19.26); 'Make me understand the way of your precepts, and I will meditate on your wondrous works' (Ps. 119.27).

This confession and prayer takes form here in a proposal – neither particularly novel nor intentionally controversial – first simply stated as a thesis, then briefly elaborated in broad doctrinal terms, and finally unfolded at more length by way of two soundings in the theological tradition. The thesis, in its simplest form: God calls his people to holiness; he issues that call through Holy Scripture; scriptural reading thus is a central and abidingly significant element in the church's growth in holiness.

God calls his people to holiness. 'Indeed the whole earth is mine, but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation' (Exod. 19.5–6); 'You shall be holy, because I the Lord your God am holy' (Lev.

19.2). Applied to God, the term 'holy' denotes in a distinctive way the perfection of the divine nature. To acclaim God as holy – to acknowledge the intrinsic holiness of the Father, Son and Spirit that shines forth as the divine glory – is to confess at once the perfect singularity and the entire purity of the divine life. God is wholly and simply himself, utterly at peace with himself, needing no other to be himself, and so fully himself also in his relations with his creation, to which he turns in incomparable liberty and unbounded love. The holiness of God is, then, both an attribute of the divine life and a quality of God's relating to creatures: God is and acts as the holy one.

Applied to creatures, 'holiness' denotes a state of creaturely existence and centrally a quality of human being and action. It is not best used of creation as such. Creation is originally good as the product of the creative act of the holy God who calls all things into being *ex nihilo* in an act of perfect power, goodness and wisdom. But creation as a whole is not properly said to be holy. Creation is not sanctification; sanctification presumes creation and confirms it. And the work of sanctification announces a distinction within creation. Not a distinction *from* creation: sanctified creatures ever remain creatures. But when a creature is sanctified, it is thereby publicly distinguished from all other creatures who are not yet or are no longer called holy.

In concrete creaturely reference, the term 'holiness' bears a dual resonance, signifying an intensity of self-identity both under the aspect of relational distinctiveness and of purity. Sanctification, first, secures and announces created difference, the blessing of the seventh day confirming the work of distinction that unfolded over the previous six. And in a fallen creation, second, sanctification cleanses, removing the pollution that obscures created distinctions and introduces false oppositions, thus poisoning creaturely relations. A creature made holy is set apart, called away from the futility of an impure and lawless life (cf. Rom. 6.19), commissioned and equipped for the embracing and the defining work for which it originally was destined (cf. Jer. 1.5; Gal. 1.15). In outline: sanctification is realized in vocation, which in turn rests in and gives expression to divine election, which resides in the infinitely wise and benevolent will of the triune God.

These rough conceptual formulations emerge from and intend nothing more than a formed attentiveness to Holy Scripture, *through which God issues his call to holiness*. Scripture is the principal textual reflex and medium of God's enacted will to have for himself a people that will be distinctly and purely his. It exists as an ingredient within and in service of God's will, in virtue of the fact that God acts towards a determinate end. That end of God's ways is not inscripturation: God wills a 'people', not simply a book. But texts – *these* texts, the texts of the Old and New Testaments – properly have a place in the divine economy. 'There is a literature which, in contrast to the writing that emerged from the world's natural course, is holy – that is, which has arisen in virtue of the action through which God has brought it

into being as an element in his world-renewing work.'[1] And in attending to Scripture – the gathered literature of those prophets and apostles distinctly placed and equipped to announce the promise of God fulfilled in Jesus Christ – the Christian church encounters the holy God and finds itself impelled and drawn by the Spirit of God into a life of holiness.

Scriptural reading thus is a central and abidingly significant element in the church's growth in holiness. Just how this is so has of course long been contested, not least in the churches of the West, whose early modern doctrinal disputes over the nature and authority of Scripture continue to shape contemporary theological and political discourse and to haunt any attempt to confess the unity and holiness of the church. We should not allow ourselves to be discouraged by this fact: whatever else we might say of the conflicted church, it has a Lord who intends its peace. But we may well be instructed and chastened by it. Most Christian communities, it seems, instinctively correlate sanctity and scriptural interest; but no meaningfully textured description of the role of Scripture in the communion of saints will command anything like universal assent. In such a situation, there is a particular value in continual, expectant engagement with the exegetical and doctrinal tradition of the church – a return to the sources in hope of receiving counsel from our forebears in the faith. In what follows, we will turn our attention to two relatively neglected texts from a pair of foundationally important figures: Aquinas' inaugural lecture-sermon 'Rigans montes' and Schleiermacher's sermon 'On the Public Ministry of the Word of God'.[2] Each retains interest not only in its own right but also as an unusually instructive point of orientation for any contemporary reflection on the nature and function of Holy Scripture as an instrument of God's sanctifying self-communication. The readings of these sermonic lectures offered here seek not primarily to situate them in their proximate historical settings or to explore their significance for our understanding of their authors' self-understanding as holders of a teaching office within the church[3] but to reflect on the reality to which each in his own distinctive way attends: the inclusion of creaturely elements – and particularly of Scripture, its authors, ministers and hearers – in the sanctifying and perfecting movement of divine grace.

---

[1]J. C. K. von Hofmann, *Der Brief Pauli an der Römer* (Nördlingen: Ch.H. Beck, 1868), p. 3.

[2]Thomas Aquinas, 'Principium Rigans Montes de Superioribus', *Opuscula Theologica* (vol. 1; Taurini: Marietti, 1954), pp. 441–43; *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings* (ed. and trans. R. McInerny; New York: Penguin, 1998), pp. 13–17. Friedrich Schleiermacher, 'Vom oeffentlichen Dienst am goettlichen Wort', in *Predigten* (vol. 2; Berlin: G. Reimer, 1834), pp. 613–758; Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Reformed but Ever Reforming: Sermons in Relation to the Celebration of the Handing Over of the Augsburg Confession (1830)* (trans. Iain G. Nicol; Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1997), pp. 109–25. References below are to the English translations, which I have occasionally tacitly revised.

[3]On which see, J.-P. Torrell, O. P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas. Volume 1: The Person and His Work* (trans. R. Royal; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), esp. pp. 54–74; K. Nowak, *Schleiermacher: Leben, Werk und Wirkung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2nd edn, 2002), esp. pp. 390–400.

Sacred Scripture and the communication of divine wisdom

Rigans montes de superioribus suis: de fructu operum tuorum satiabitur terra.

> You irrigate the mountains from your heights. The earth will be sated by the fruit of your works. (Ps. 103.13)

Sometime in 1256, having received his *licentia docendi* from the chancellor of the University of Paris, Thomas Aquinas set about undertaking the duties of a *magister in sacra pagina*. Among his first tasks, it seems, was to deliver a pair of inaugural sermon-lectures.[4] In the first, a meditation on Ps. 103.13, he set forth his understanding of the office to which he had been appointed and the work upon which he was embarking.

Thomas opens his reflections with a statement of remarkable comprehensiveness and explanatory power: 'From eternity, the king and Lord of heaven has established this law: that the gifts of his providence should come to the lower creatures through intermediaries.'[5] This is, of course, an articulation of (Pseudo-)Dionysius' *lex divinitatis*, the principle of hierarchical mediation according to which all created reality exists in a movement of outward procession from and return to its perfectly simple and good divine source. Thomas' formulation of this principle draws particular attention to the first, generative motion of providence, the 'outward' and 'downward' movement of the divine benevolence; the corresponding upward motion of return is captured in a citation from Dionysius' *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*: 'The most sacred law of divinity is that things in the middle are led to the most divine light through first things.'[6] In introducing this rule – one that exerts a pervasive and abiding influence in his thought – Thomas notes that it pertains first in the communication of spiritual gifts to rational creatures, those beings whom God directs to direct themselves to their own proper end, and so to God's governance of both angels and human beings. But the rule also applies – as is fitting, Thomas holds, since the bodily is inferior to the spiritual and governed by it – *in corporalibus*. So the Lord who has eternally established 'this law observed in the communication of spiritual wisdom' can recommend the dynamics of mediated providence

[4]See Torrell, *Saint Thomas Aquinas*, pp. 50–53, 338.

[5]'Rigans montes', p. 13.

[6]Cf. 'The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy', in *Pseudo-Dionysius. The Complete Works* (trans. C. Luibheid; New York: Paulist Press, 1987), p. 504C. On the complex background to Thomas' reception of the Dionysian principle, see W. J. Hankey, '"Dionysius dixit, Lex divinitatis est ultima per media reducere": Aquinas, Hierocracy and the "augustinisme politique"', in *Tommaso D'Aquino: proposte nuove di letture* (ed. I. Tolomio; Padova: Editrice Antenore, 1992), pp. 119–50.

to our attention in Scripture by way of corporeal metaphor: 'You water the hills from your upper rooms.'[7] And the scriptural text is to be read anagogically, the reading intellect being led through the text's literal sense to a contemplation of higher realities. So the water that refreshes and satisfies signifies the divine wisdom that restores and perfects God's creation;[8] it falls from the heights upon the mountains (the *mentes doctorum* – the minds of the learned); and thence it flows in rivers to the plains below (the minds of those who receive the instruction of the learned) so that they may bear fruit. As in the physical processes available to ordinary perception, so in the spiritual movement visible to faith: the goods of created life exist in a satisfying and fructifying movement from above to below, and creatures flourish in the reception and use of these goods, which set them in motion towards their proper end.

In seeking understanding of the communicative dynamics of grace, Thomas undertakes an analysis of his passage from the Psalms in four concise movements. He considers, first, the characterization of divine wisdom as being and proceeding forth from 'on high'. A grasp of the eminence of sacred teaching leads, second, to a reflection on the corresponding dignity of its teachers. Third, he reflects on the condition of those who receive instruction. And fourth, he traces the order of divine teaching, considering the measure, mode and motive power of the communication of divine wisdom.

1. *On the height of divine wisdom:* When Scripture characterizes wisdom as 'on high', it relates its eminence to its origin, its subject-matter and its end. Wisdom properly so called – not the cunning and calculation engendered by envy and ambition that masquerades as worldly prudence, but pure wisdom, robed in peace, gentility, pliability and mercy – is wisdom that comes to us 'from above' (Jas 4.17).[9] This divine wisdom is, Thomas holds, available in some measure to all human creatures, for God has naturally implanted in human beings knowledge of his existence. Some few ascend higher, attaining a comprehension of God's eternal power and divine nature from his manifestation in the works of creation. Yet the heights of divine wisdom are not measured by human ingenuity: the most elevated matters

[7]For Pseudo-Dionysius' understanding of scripture's employment of perceptible symbols to enable and guide our contemplation of divinity, see, for example, 'Ecclesiastical Hierarchy', 376D–377A.

[8]See the discussion of divine wisdom in the prologue to Thomas' commentary on Lombard's *Sentences*, the first of his large-scale works, one on which he was working when he assumed his position as master: *Per sapientiam enim Dei mainifestantur divinorum abscondita, producuntur creaturarum opera, nec tantum producuntur, sed etiam restaurantur et perficiuntur,* so that each creature attains its appointed goal (*In 1 Sent*. prol.). The coherence of God's creative work with his restorative and perfecting activity is distilled in the rule that the reparative principle should be identical with the creative principle. Thomas refers in this connection to Wisdom 9.19: *Per sapientiam sanati sunt qui tibi placuerunt ab initio*.

[9]'Rigans montes', p. 13. Thomas has in mind here also Ecclus. 1.5: *Fons sapientiae verbum Dei in excelsis et ingressus illius mandata aeterna* ('The source of wisdom is God's word in the highest heaven, and her ways are the eternal commandments').

'completely transcend human reason'. It is in this sense that Scripture teaches us that 'wisdom is hidden from the eyes of all the living' (Job. 28.21). This is the wisdom of which Paul speaks: God's wisdom, secret and hidden, but known to the Holy Spirit, who searches the depths of God (1 Cor. 2.6–10). And this wisdom is bequeathed to us in the text of sacred Scripture, which is the written instruction of those sacred teachers who have been taught by the Spirit. This spiritual tutelage does not simply intend the equipment of Scripture's readers for a set of determinate tasks; the end of spiritual teaching is nothing less than eternal life (cf. Jn 20.31). And to this vision of the sublimity of wisdom's end corresponds a conception of spiritual tuition as intellectual ascent: the Christian life is an extended exercise not principally in learning judiciously to negotiate and inhabit the social-political structures of the world, in balanced appraisal of contemporary cultural dynamics, and so on. Christian reasoning does not terminate in the perceptible. Its horizon is, rather, spiritual, established and maintained by the Holy Spirit, who has been given to the church 'so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God' (1 Cor. 2.12). These gifts are given in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1.4–7), with whom we have died and been raised to life (cf. Col. 2.12). Accordingly, we are called to seek (*quare*) and to discern (*sapere*) the things that are above, where the risen Christ sits enthroned, and not to attend to things on earth (Col. 3.1–2).[10]

2. *The dignity of wisdom's teachers*: 'Because of the height of this doctrine, there is required dignity in those who teach it.'[11] Here *dignitas* denotes both the official and personal distinction of the teacher of sacred doctrine. As a term of interpersonal relation, it indicates a certain priority of the teacher to the student. As the mountains, rising above the plains below, receive the first of the sun's morning rays, so the teacher enjoys a certain proximity to the source of the mind's illumination. But the teacher properly enjoys this privilege precisely for and in the act of instruction. A teacher is, simply, one who is in a position to teach, and who – being in that position – does so. In this sense, the dignity of a teacher may be understood as the occupancy and exercise of an office.[12] This office is threefold, requiring the teacher to preach, to lecture and to engage in disputation – to provoke the heart to desire wisdom and firmly to claim its affections for the good; to illuminate the minds of Christian believers through exposition of the scriptural text;

[10]'Rigans montes', p. 14. This is not, of course, to advocate an inattentiveness to the proximate historical situation of the Christian life. 'The *vita christiana* is always related to its time and context' (J. Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life. A Universal Affirmation* [trans. M. Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992], p. 171). But a proper understanding of this relation begins with the confession, enabled by the Spirit, that our 'time and context' belong to Christ. And precisely here the church must seek the Spirit's instruction if it is to know our situation as *his*. If the *vita christiana* is life 'hidden with Christ in God' (Col. 3.3), it cannot be exhaustively identified with the visible forms of the church's activity and plotted on the church's cultural coordinates.

[11]'Rigans montes', p. 14.

[12]For discussion of positions of dignity, see, for example, *ST,* IIa IIae q.102 aa.1–3.

and to defend the church from the deviation from or unauthorized addition to the faith.[13] Crucially, the efficacy of these acts is not accidentally related to the character or deportment of one who undertakes them. Teachers teach well only when they live well. Or, phrased negatively: 'It is inevitable that the preaching of those whose life is despised will be held in contempt.'[14] The 'dignity' of the teacher thus also indicates a quality of life that renders a teacher suitable or 'fit' [*idoneus*] for office and so capable of effectively undertaking its constituent tasks.[15]

3. *The condition of those who hear*: The *conditionem auditorum* is portrayed under the figure of the earth, which is satisfied by the water that flows upon it from the mountains. As the earth is 'below' the heavens and the mountains, so the students of divine wisdom should be humble in receipt of instruction; as the earth is stable and firm, so should Scripture's students be characterized by a 'rectitude of the senses'[16] – an ability decisively to render and constantly to inhabit the judgements of the faith (cf. Eph. 4.14); and as the earth stands under the divine command to bear fruit, so also (cf. Lk. 8.4–15) good listeners are precisely those who make productive use of what they have heard.

4. *The act of divine teaching*: Thomas begins his analysis of the communicative process (Thomas speaks of the 'generative order' – the *ordo generationis*) by observing some scriptural markers (Job 26.14; 1 Cor. 12.4) of a certain restriction in divine revelation and apostolic instruction, a restriction he renders in quantitative terms: 'not everything that is contained in the divine wisdom can be grasped by the minds of the teachers . . . not everything that the teachers grasp is passed on to the hearers'. The regulation in the first communicative step differs, of course, from that in the second.

---

[13]This tripartite conception of the pedagogical task is, of course, a variation on Augustine's maxim that the well-formed Christian teacher should 'should speak in such a way as to instruct, delight, and to change' (Augustine, *On Christian Teaching* [trans. R. P. H. Green; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997], p. 117). The second of Thomas' inaugural lectures ('Hic est liber') begins with reference to this Ciceronian–Augustinian principle, and Thomas proceeds there to show how the speech of Holy Scripture accomplishes these three tasks with supreme efficacy, commending scripture for the authority with which it changes, the eternal truth with which it instructs and the fruitfulness with which it entices.

[14]*Cuius vita despicitur, necesse est ut eius praedicatio contemnatur* ('Rigans montes', p. 14). The source is Gregory's homily on Mt. 25, in which he glosses Mt. 5.19 thus: 'anyone who preaches in words what he does not fulfil in his life is breaking a commandment and so teaching others. . . . The teacher who breaks a commandment is called least in the Church since his life is contemptible and therefore his teaching is despised' (Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies* [trans. Dom Hurst, OSB; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009], p. 69).

[15]On the polemical force of these observations in their immediate cultural context, see S. Tugwell, *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1998), p. 270. For more wide-ranging analysis of the concept of dignity in Thomas, M. Lebech, *On the Problem of Human Dignity. A Hermeneutical and Phenomenological Investigation* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2009), esp. pp. 74–79.

[16]'Rigans montes', p. 16.

The first marks a difference between the creator and creature, omniscience and (genuine but necessarily limited) creaturely knowledge; the second is a difference between the teacher and student, relatively more and relatively less knowledge. And for Thomas, following Gregory, the character of the first step is determinative for the second: 'For the teacher should not preach to the simple as much as he knows, *because* he himself is unable to know how many divine mysteries there are.'[17]

The second stage in the analysis touches upon the 'mode of having'. God has wisdom naturally; teachers share in wisdom 'abundantly'; listeners participate in it 'sufficiently', so that they are satisfied. The satiety of the earth is not diminished by recognition that the communication of divine wisdom is doubly accommodated, and that the movement of divine instruction involves a certain priority of one to another, a distribution of role that involves a quantitative difference. This order is not the occasion of creaturely resentment but of the church's satisfaction.

This point is secured when Thomas moves to treat the power of communication. God communicates wisdom by his own power. 'But the teachers do not communicate wisdom except as ministers';[18] and so the fruit that their teaching bears in their students is not attributed to them but to God as the one who works in and through them (cf. 1 Cor. 3.4–5).

Sed ad haec quis tam idoneus (2 Cor. 3.16)? But who is worthy of (or suitable for) these things? God requires *innocent* ministers (Ps. 101.6: 'Whoever walks in the way that is blameless shall minister to me'). He requires ministers with *understanding* (Prov. 14.35: 'A servant who deals wisely has the king's favor'). Ministers who serve *fervently* (Ps. 104.4: 'You make the winds your angels and burning fire your servants'). And ministers who serve *obediently* (Ps. 102.21: 'Bless the Lord, all his hosts, his ministers that do his will').

No one, Thomas concludes, is sufficient of himself for such a ministry. But (2 Cor. 3.5) one 'can hope to have this sufficiency from God'. And so (Jas 1.5), one must *pray* for wisdom, turning to the God of all wisdom, goodness and power, 'who gives abundantly to all men, and does not reproach'.

Thus we see in this lecture Thomas exhibiting and recommending to his students both a particular conception of Christian teaching and a distinctive style of scriptural engagement. In seeking to portray its Scripture's origins and ends, its theological basis and its ecclesial benefits – Thomas traces a movement of divine instruction from its source throughout its creaturely course. The activities of teaching and learning in the Christian church have a determinate setting and shape. They are centred on the reading of Holy Scripture. And so Scripture itself is rightly conceived as having its place in a complex of ecclesial actions that themselves are explicated in terms of the order of the communication of divine wisdom.

---

[17]'Rigans montes', p. 16.
[18]'Rigans montes', p. 17.

As we have seen, the mediatorial scheme that Thomas sets forth touches upon two relations. The first is between the creator and creation, between the ruler of heaven and – *a fortiori* – of earth and all those who live within them. The second relation pertains between the 'higher' and 'lower' elements of creation: between those creatures more proximate to the uncreated fountain of created goods and those more distant; between those creatures originally appointed to active involvement in the providential care of inferior things and those whose particular destiny is to be nourished and governed by God through superior powers. The distinction between these two sets of relations is inviolable: the relation between the creator and the creature must not be confused with distinctions between creatures. But if all creatures belong together precisely as creatures, creation is not internally undifferentiated. To be a creature is not only to stand in an immediate relation to the creator; it is also to stand in a nexus of creaturely relations, an order of created being and agency in which some are 'above' and others 'below'.

Thomas regards both relations under the aspect of the eternal divine resolve to provide for and to rule lower creatures through superior created means. This is not an obligation imposed upon God but a law eternally instituted as the settled determination of his creative will. In this law, God declares that he will not act costively or capriciously towards creation, but will attend to it in limitless generosity and perfect wisdom. Again, divine providence does not involve a negotiation of terms between God and the creature. It is, rather, a wholly gratuitous economy of giving, an extended display of the divine largess. And God does not give the gifts of his providence haphazardly or indiscriminately but according to a certain order. Scripture belongs to this order and commends it to our attention. And in just this way, it refreshes and satisfies.

The immediacy of faith and the ministry of the Word

> *Und er hat etliche zu Aposteln gesetz, etliche aber zu Propheten, etliche zu Evangelisten, etliche zu Hirten und Lehren: daß die heiligen zugerichtet werden zum Werk des Amts, dadurch der Leib Christi erbauet werde.*
>
> And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for ministry, for building up the body of Christ. (Eph. 4.11–12)

In the summer of 1830, the tercentenary of the publication of the Augsburg Confession, Schleiermacher preached a sermon series in the Dreifaltigkeitskirche that celebrated the act of confession (not principally its doctrinal content) and took up a number of scriptural themes broadly

at issue in the text of the confession.[19] Taken as a whole, the sermon series represents an important statement of some central features of Schleiermacher's conception of the Christian faith.[20] The sermon 'On the Public Ministry of the Word of God' provokes a set of questions with which any contemporary constructive account of the abiding significance of Scripture for Christian faith must reckon.

The central problematic: Does the promise of divine instruction render superfluous the public ministry of the Word? The problem is acutely felt in Protestant theologies that seek, under Scripture's guidance, to correct a perceived over-emphasis on the dignities and privileges of church ministers in the Roman Catholic tradition while avoiding, on the other, the individualistic, enthusiastic spirituality of some more radical reforming movements.

Why apostles and prophets if the divine Word already lives in all of us? Why evangelists if we can everywhere call to mind the life of the Redeemer and the fullness of his holy image from the written Word of God? Why pastors and teachers if everyone shares in the divine Spirit through whom 'all' are 'taught by God' just as the Lord himself represents this to us as the full and complete glory of the new covenant?[21]

The last of these questions is the most pressing, for of the several offices mentioned in the biblical text, only the pastoral-teaching office, Schleiermacher suggests, still actively is exercised in its original distinctiveness. And the presenting issue – whether the public ministry of the Word of God is necessary under the conditions of the new covenant, in which God himself is to teach his people – opens up to some fundamental questions about the way in which we conceive of the relation of divine and human action. 'Does our evangelical [Protestant] teaching office presuppose that we are not all taught by God, or perhaps the very reverse? And if all are taught by God, has this office then become superfluous, or in this case too can the opposite also be maintained?'[22]

Schleiermacher rightly resists the temptation directly and negatively to correlate divine and human teaching. More generally, he refuses to think that divine and human action take place, as it were, on the same level, so that God must make room for himself to act by displacing or overriding human action, or that human beings meaningfully act only if God is absent or idle. Rather 'true Christian perfection' requires the

[19]See *Reformed but Ever Reforming*, pp. vii–xxv.

[20]'Schleiermacher's more than thirty years of preaching in the Trinity Church in Berlin are just as important for understanding his theology as is his view of *Dialektik*' (C. Welch, 'The Problem of a History of Nineteenth-Century Theology', *The Journal of Religion* 52.1 (1972), pp. 1–21 (p. 15). More centrally to our interest, his sermon series on the Augsburg Confession is a valuable counterpoint to the other major theological productions of 1830/31 – the second edition of the *Glaubenslehre* and of the *Kurze Darstellung*.

[21]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, p. 109.

[22]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, p. 110.

divine and human factors to be conjoined [*beides sich mit einander vereinigen muß*].[23] This may be illustrated with reference to the religious education of the young: God implants 'the living seed of the knowledge of good and evil' and gives to them 'the spiritual eye to which God is manifested through his works'; but this is precisely the condition for their spiritual training, first at home by the parents and latterly by an ordained minister, who bears the responsibility 'to educate them properly in the understanding of Scripture and to bring them to clear consciousness of the divine order of salvation'.[24] And thus those deliberately raised in the church rightly are said to be taught by God, 'for whatever good we accomplish to their benefit is nevertheless not our work but the work of the divine Spirit upon them'.[25] Thus far, we might say, there is despite the significant differences in approach and idiom a fundamental note of agreement between Schleiermacher and Thomas. Each holds that God evokes and sustains benevolent human action; and that these actions may accordingly be ascribed – with the necessary precisions – to God. But here Schleiermacher continues, opening up a further line of thought: 'If they have been properly instructed in the understanding of the divine Word, and if it has been committed to them for their free and conscientious use, none of the brethren should have to give them further instruction, for now they have their teacher within themselves.'[26] This is the point at which Schleiermacher's position may appear to veer towards an individualism that would seem to render the public ministry of Word superfluous. Christian maturity then could be rendered as a movement towards independence from the visible church, in which one might retain a lingering interest in Scripture but would no longer rely upon the preached Word: sanctification as liberation from the church and its ministers.

Of course that is not Schleiermacher's interest. He seeks, rather, fully to affirm the abiding necessity of a living relation to the community of faith, but to do so without cultivating an enduring reliance on a legally authorized ecclesial teaching office. To be sure, '[t]he time of immature dependence on human precepts is certainly over and done with'.[27] But the relation of the individual and the church remains vital, and its character is to be brought out by reference to an innate human capacity for and tendency towards relations of mutual expression and common commitment.

---

[23]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, p. 110.
[24]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, p. 111.
[25]Cf. Schleiermacher's application of this thought to the relation of Christ and the apostles: Through the 'words of Christ . . . faith was indeed produced in the apostles, and faith was the ground of their proclamation, so that their proclamation really consisted of the words of Christ that passed through it' (letter to K. H. Sack, 9 April 1825, as cited in M. Weeber, *Schleiermachers Eschatologie. Eine Untersuchung zum theologischen Spätwerk* (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser, 2000), p. 63.
[26]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, p. 112.
[27]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, p. 75.

Is it not natural for human beings to have to articulate their thoughts in the presence of others, especially on those matters that are of greatest importance to them? Even if we had the most complete certainty about our undisturbed, ever more beautifully renewed communion with the Redeemer, indeed even if as such a natural accompaniment of this we were united with others in various shared acts and works of devotion, would we not still sense some significant deficiency?[28]

We naturally desire, Schleiermacher argues, not merely to worship alongside others but to enjoy genuine spiritual fellowship with them. Nothing must come between the individual soul and Jesus Christ: the reformational *sola fide* stands or falls with the *solus Christus*.[29] 'Whenever we place anything between Christ and ourselves, no matter where it comes from, the power of faith is always thereby diminished.'[30] And yet this immediate, inward, free relation of the soul and its redeemer tends towards publicity. This is true in every Christian; but not every Christian is equally able to give voice both to his own individual experience and to the interconnection of all experiences of God in Christ. Therefore, although all are equal before Christ, not all are equally fitted to speak in the assembly, and unregulated speaking – spiritual self-expression motivated by vanity or resentment or spite – leads only to division. It was for just this reason that the Holy Spirit moved the framers of the Augsburg Confession to 'hold firm to the good, original order that provided for the office of pastors and teachers, and indeed to do so in such a way that the dignity of this office was not overrated on that account'.[31] We need not dwell at length on Schleiermacher's diagnosis of the causes and effects of the inflated valuation placed upon the teaching office in the Roman Catholic Church and his articulation of the reformational corrective. Our interest rather draws us to note especially his positive portrayal of the spiritual conditions enabled by 'the good, original order' of which Ephesians speaks.

This order presumes the existence of a gathered community in which the Spirit is present and active. Active, to be sure, in *all* those who are gathered: the passage from Ephesians does not support the claim that those called to the teaching office 'would alone be the proprietors and possessors of the Spirit whereas the other Christians should receive it only through them'.[32] The Spirit dwells in all those who confess Christ as Lord; and the Spirit is active through the Word in every believer also when they are alone. But the Spirit does act in a distinctive way in the event of the community's gathering; and it is in this event that the grace of the teaching office is realized and manifest.

---

[28]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, pp. 112–13.
[29]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, p. 87.
[30]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, p. 63.
[31]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, p. 114.
[32]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, p. 114.

[J]ust as the Spirit does not activate the same gifts in all those in whom the Spirit dwells, but different gifts in different people, so this is now the gift on account of which some are made pastors and teachers in the congregations, so that they may revive the witness of the Spirit as it was proclaimed in the words of the apostles and teachers of old, and, in the hours of calm and withdrawal from the business of everyday life, to bring the joy of Christians in being God's children to a new radiance in their minds and hearts, but equally also so that they may speak openly and individually wherever the Holy Spirit is aggrieved and then evoke that grief which no one regrets.[33]

Here the outlines of Schleiermacher's conception of Scripture and of scriptural preaching begin clearly to emerge. Scripture is best conceived as 'the witness of the Spirit' first proclaimed by the apostles and teachers of the early church;[34] the central task of the pastoral teaching office is to 'revive' this witness: preaching is responsible to Holy Scripture, speech drawn along by the Holy Spirit, who is the common spirit of the assembly;[35] and the effect of Spirit-moved scriptural preaching in the church is nothing less than the communal life of the children of God, bound together in filial sorrow and joy.

In all this the pastor-teacher is, Schleiermacher insists, never to be regarded as occupying a place of superiority; the language of 'above' and 'below' has no place in his portrayal of the teaching office. 'The power of one's calling', he stresses, 'does not lie in any inequality between the shepherd and the sheep that must first be artificially created; it rather lies in the parity wherein the two are united with each other, so that they should fulfill the same duties, resist the same temptation, be bound to the same ordering of life, and so that they share in the same sufferings and rejoice together through the same source'.[36] And if the purpose for which the teaching office was established is the equipment of the saints for ministry and thus the common edification of the body of Christ, 'the whole course of our task can . . . be nothing other than our common growth in sanctification, we through you and you through us'; and 'how can we doubt that whenever this task should be accomplished you and we are to attain the same perfection?'[37] Accordingly, the evangelical minister is to 'dispense not only with the semblance of greater sanctity, which could only originate in separation from normal human relationships, but also with the more severe authority of command that arose from dominion

[33]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, p. 115.
[34]Schleiermacher did not embrace the widespread convention of speaking of scripture's authors as the 'prophets and apostles'; this is not unrelated to his well-known (and widely controverted) claim that the term 'Holy Scripture' properly referred to the New Testament, to which the Old Testament was appended as an exegetical auxiliary.
[35]Cf. Nowak, *Schleiermacher*, p. 393.
[36]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, p. 123.
[37]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, p. 124.

over consciences'.[38] In *this* way, the evangelical church can not only assert but experience the truth that 'the Lord has established some to be pastors and teachers and that all should be "taught of God", so that the body of the Lord should be built up through the ministry of individuals and that these can nevertheless accomplish nothing apart from the cooperation of those they are placed to serve'.[39]

Conclusion

We set out to speak of the role that the Bible plays in the life of the Christian church; we have produced an unlikely diptych, crudely drawn. What have we discovered along the way? First, rightly to perceive and fittingly to portray the elevating and purifying power of God in the production and reception of Holy Scripture requires of us spiritual insight and discursive powers that we sinful creatures do not have at our disposal and for which we must continually ask. The study of Holy Scripture and the history of its effects in the church belongs to this invocation; it belongs to God alone to answer our prayer, and to test and assess and reward the work that it encloses. We may at our best be unprofitable servants; but we are *his*.

How happy and grateful we are when the Head of the community comes and bends down to us in our anxiety and says to us, 'You are not in charge of the business! Its success or failure does not rest on your shoulders; your shoulders are far too narrow. You just be quite simply a faithful worker who stands at his appointed place and does his little job properly, and leaves everything else to the management at the very top.'[40]

Second, to speak well of Scripture and of scriptural reading demands of us broad schooling in the doctrinal tradition of church. A doctrine of Scripture and a theology of scriptural interpretation are not self-supporting and are not best treated in isolation from other tracts of Christian teaching. These doctrinal relations may be variously drawn. Here, in attending particularly to the relation between Scripture and sanctification, we have sought to learn, with the aid of Thomas and Schleiermacher, how we may speak of Scripture as the product and instrument of God's instruction of his people.

In following this path, third, we have encountered two enormously compelling and influential conceptions of the way in which God governs and teaches the church through creaturely realities appointed to and formed for his service. The commonalities and diverges between Thomas and

---

[38]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, p. 124. Cf. Nowak, *Schleiermacher*, p. 393: Schleiermacher's mature sermons – as already the *Speeches* – presume that 'religion is necessarily companionable and tends toward mutual communication'.

[39]*Reformed but Ever Reforming*, p. 124.

[40]W. Lüthi and R. Brunner, *The Sermon on the Mount* (trans. K. Schoenenberger; Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1963), p. 153.

Schleiermacher may again be portrayed in several ways. We might speak, for example, of what in another connection has been called 'two thoroughly distinct models of the communication of divine rule to humanity, the one founded upon a principle of Christocentric immediacy and the other on a principle of cosmic, hierarchical mediation'.[41] On this reading, they relate as two representatives of a grand tradition of Christian Neoplatonism, with Thomas drawing freely both on Augustine's christocentrism and Pseudo-Dionysius' doctrine of hierarchy, while Schleiermacher deploys the former against the latter. Such schemes provoke questions about the cultural-philosophical entanglements of the Western theological tradition and may in their very bluntness press us to nuanced and agile engagement with the tradition. But we may also and perhaps to greater effect view Thomas and Schleiermacher as readers and preachers of Scripture – two figures in long-standing exegetical conversation, each attempting to learn what it means that Christ both binds his disciples to himself as their teacher, claiming the prerogatives and the responsibilities of that title solely for himself (Mt. 23.8–10) and also sends his disciples into the world with the standing directive: go and teach (Mt. 28:19). They did, and we must. That is the truth that the church – one, holy, catholic and apostolic – confesses in the doctrine of Scripture.

[41]W. J. Torrance Kirby, *Richard Hooker: Reformer and Platonist* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 39.

10

Church and sacraments

Tom Greggs

The church is a sanctified community that bears witness to the salvation of God. This means that it is not only a society made up of individuals who are sanctified by the activity of God in their lives (as is articulated in John Wesley's theology);[1] but the church is also *in itself a community* which God creates and sanctifies in the person of the Holy Spirit. In this chapter, we seek to give an account of that community.

In some ways there are no theological themes which exist outside of speech about the church. We should note, for example, that Karl Barth's *magnum opus* was a *Church Dogmatics* which sought to engage in the scientific self-examination of the *church's* proclamation.[2] But there is also a profound sense that any speech about God is meaningful only within the context of the worship of God by the community of faith: the meaning we attach to the word 'God' is determined by the way it is used by the community. Bonhoeffer in his earliest work is wise to remind us, therefore, that '*[t]he concepts of person, community, and God* are inseparably and essentially interrelated'.[3] Thus, it is important that we understand the nature of the community (or church) appropriately not simply for the sake of this single doctrinal *locus*, but also for theology more broadly. It is important to understand the condition that God creates in which proclamation of the Christian Gospel takes place (i.e. the church) so as to understand the very

[1]See, for example, John Wesley, *Sermons III. The Works of John Wesley Volume III* (ed. Albert C. Outler; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986), pp. 46–57.
[2]Karl Barth, *CD*, 1/1 (London: T&T Clark, 2004), p. 3.
[3]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, DBWE 1 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), p. 34 (italics original).

conditions in which we undertake the theological task, as a task orientated on reflection on the proclamation of the church. Put simply: there is no Christian theology which does not begin with the church in terms of the order of knowing.

In seeking to describe the church, two principal options are open to us: the theological and the social-scientific. This could be stated otherwise as the view from above and the view from below respectively. Should an account of the church begin by seeking to understand the operation of God in forming a community in time to bear witness to the world? Or should an account of the church begin by describing the phenomenon of the church through empirical study and description? In this chapter, we shall seek to take the first option so as to answer the former question. We will thus ask: what theological account can we give of the church in relation to the sanctified life? However, in so doing, we seek to give a theological account of the very existence of the empirical church in phenomenal space and time: what is the operation of God that creates this community in the world in history?

There have been many different attempts at answering these questions, and different typologies and catalogues of typologies exist in relation to the responses: models of the church which are ontological (as is often the case in Roman Catholic theologies); mystical (in the Orthodox tradition); actualist (in the Reformed tradition); historical (in Anglican accounts); and so on.[4] The account given in this chapter, in relation to the overarching theme of the sanctified life, might be considered to be 'actualist pneumatological' in its attempt to consider the nature of the church and its sacraments in relation to the sanctifying activity of the Holy Spirit. The church has in its creeds traditionally taught that the church which says 'We believe' does so only as it exists by the activity of the Spirit. It is under its third article (on the Holy Spirit) that the following is listed in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed: '[we believe] in one holy catholic and apostolic church; in one baptism for the forgiveness of sins'. As with its other articles, in its third article the creed offers a dense coda on the teaching of Scripture. Scripture is clear that the Spirit is given to the community for its upbuilding and growth (1 Cor. 12), and for the production of fruitful and holy lives (Gal. 5.22–23). Scripture is also clear that it is only by the Spirit that we can say 'Jesus is Lord' (1 Cor. 12.3), and that the Spirit of God bears witness to our spirit that we are children of God (Rom. 8.16). The activity of the Spirit, therefore, is the basis by which the church is created, built up, able to teach and worship and able to know the assurance of salvation.

---

[4]Daniel W. Hardy, *Finding the Church: The Dynamic Truth of Anglicanism* (London: SCM, 2001), pp. 30–32. Cf. Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, Word and the Christian Life: Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 27–51; and Avery Dulles, SJ, *Models of the Church: A Critical Assessment of the Church in All Aspects* (Towbridge: Gill and Macmillan, 1981), pp. 27–51.

In reflecting further on what an actualist pneumatological account of the church and sacraments might be in relation to the sanctified life, this chapter will consider the event of the Spirit as the condition for the existence of the church; outline the significance of the church as a community in history; describe the features of the visible church in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments; consider the relation of the church to the sanctified life; and discuss the identity of the church as a community which exists for the world.

The condition of the church: The activity of the Holy Spirit

God's Holy Spirit alone gives life to the concrete historical church in time. Properly speaking the church is primarily invisible or hidden, since God alone sees it and since it is created only by God through the event of the coming of His Spirit. The church is in the first instance an object of faith and not of sight.[5] A properly ordered account of the nature of the church should, therefore, give priority to the person and activity of the Spirit, whose active presence alone is the condition of the church's existence. We see the importance of this proper ordering in the opening two chapters of the Book of Acts.

In the first chapter of Acts there is what seems to be an account of the church. It is a phenomenological account of the form of the church which describes its officers, liturgy and polity. Acts 1.12 seems to present the beginnings of the church, as the disciples return to Jerusalem and gather together. There is the identification of the church's leadership and officers with the reading of the list of the disciples in v. 13. We then get a description of worship (v. 14). We have count of membership in v. 15 (a pastoral roll, almost), then a sermon and readings led by Peter. After that, there is even an equivalent to a parish or church council meeting, with an election of officers (vv. 23–26), and Matthias taking the new position.

The description of Acts 1 looks as though what we are dealing with is ecclesiology. But it is not. In Acts 1 all that we are dealing with is something with the semblance of a church – an empirical description of the form of a human society, but something that is not yet the church. The church begins in Acts 2:

> When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of

[5]For a discussion of the dominical ordinances of baptism and holy communion, see below.

> them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability. (Acts 2.1–4)

The church begins at Pentecost with the coming of the Holy Spirit. The primary condition of the church is not ecclesial form, patterns of worship or structures of ministry. The primary condition of the church is the event of the coming of the Holy Spirit, who is present within the variety and plurality of the community in all its diversity, and acts upon the community to make it the church. The church is made holy (is sanctified) from without by an event of the *Holy* Spirit.

We will consider below what this means in terms of the visible community which is created. However, we should pause to consider this issue in greater depth, since it has profound effects on the way in which ecclesiology, as a discipline which studies the life of the church, is pursued. There is wisdom in the words of Robert Jenson: 'If the church understands herself as founded in events prior to Pentecost and not also in the event of Pentecost *as* a divine initiative commensurate to the Resurrection, she will be tempted to seek her self-identity through time in a sanctified but still worldly institutionalism . . .'[6]

The vast majority of engagements in contemporary ecclesiology fall prey to precisely the problem of locating the identity of the church in the institutional organization of the church to which Jenson points. This has become all the more acute a problem in a situation of de-Christianization, in which many people have posed the question of Bonhoeffer to his own (somewhat different context): 'What does a church, a congregation, a sermon, a liturgy, a Christian life, mean in a religionless world?'[7] In seeking to offer a response to this, many accounts of the church have sought to focus on form, and to concern themselves with the question of whether the church ought to be countercultural or culturally relevant. We see this in the ecclesiology behind the emergent or emerging church, or in fresh expressions of church, as much as we see it in so-called classical accounts of the nature of the church in movements such as anglo-catholicism: Being a 'true' church comes to be associated with being organized into a particular form, be that culturally responsive, episcopal, liturgical, etc. In seeking to answer the question of what the church means in the current age, much ecclesiological investigation has descended, in the words of the Michael Jinkins, into 'the hyperactivity of panic'. This manifests itself in clutching for any and every programmatic solution and structural reorganization in the desperate hope that survival is just another project or organizational chart away.[8]

---

[6]Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology* (vol. 2; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 180.

[7]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, DBWE 8 (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), p. 364.

[8]Michael Jinkins, *The Church Faces Death: Ecclesiology in a Post-Modern Context* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 9.

As a result, there has been a propensity in many ecclesial settings to think about the church in resolutely non-theological categories; and this runs deep. Much discussion of the church has focused on aping the church of Acts 1, and not attending to the condition of the existence of the church in Acts 2 – the event of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God. Much ecclesiological discussion has become obsessed with questions of *how* to be church, sometimes at the expense of thinking about the question of what the church actually is.

However, in accounting for the nature of the church, we should observe that in the first instance the church is a dynamic community of the Holy Spirit of God. In terms of theological ordering, we need to attend to the pneumatological priority over ecclesiology if we are to have any hope of being a church which is meaningful to the world, because it is the Holy Spirit who makes God present in the contingent situations in which we find ourselves in the here and now. Calvin writes that there is no reason to 'pretend . . . that God is so bound to persons and places, and attached to external observances, that he has to remain among those who have only the title and appearance of a church [Rom. 9.6]'.[9] If, as I suggest, that is true of the players in Acts 1, then it is no less true today – whatever those external observances might be (whether contemporary or traditional, low or high church). It is the Holy Spirit of God alone who gives life to the church. While the church is formed into the body of Christ, it is the Holy Spirit who does this. The order is important. We pray 'Come Holy Spirit' in order that we may learn what it means to say 'Jesus is Lord'; we pray 'Come Holy Spirit' because the Spirit is the one who makes present the reality of Christ in the multiplicity, diversity and plurality of the communities which form the universal church, as the body of which He is the Head. This plurality and diversity is important, lest we should confuse our own preferred style of worship or community with *the best* style or even *the* worship or community.

How we are a true church (rather than something with the semblance of a church) is related to the presence of the Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ and who makes the Word known to us in present historical contexts in all their contingency. Seeking not only to have the semblance of a church is not under any circumstances about focusing on one form of church practice or liturgy or worship which trumps all others. It is not about that claim that one's own form of worship is true worship because it is low church and modern, and other forms of worship are only the worship of a community which has the semblance of a church because they are high, formal and traditional; or vice versa. Identifying the event of the Spirit as the basis for the existence of the church should prevent us from confusing ecclesial form or cultures of any kind, which can all have the semblance of a church,

[9]McNeill (ed.), *ICR*, 4.2.3, p. 1044. These discussions concern Roman Catholicism polemically. However, outside of that polemic, the dogmatic content remains helpful and can usefully be redirected back to the Protestant church as itself an *ecclesia semper reformanda*.

with the reality of the event of God the Holy Spirit which is the primary condition for the presence of the church as the Spirit makes Christ known to communities of peoples in all their variety in the present. This ordering can only enrich and deepen (rather than homogenize) the church today, and challenge both the old and new semblances of the church to focus on what it really means to be church. The priority of pneumatology over ecclesiology should remind the church that its holiness does not come from within its own form, organization and structures; the holiness of the church comes from without the church, as God who alone is holy creates a community by God's Holy Spirit for God's own purposes.

Furthermore, this should open up the community of the church, rather than close it down, to the belief that God's Spirit may be active outside the walls of the institutional church. Since the church is a subset of the activity of the Holy Spirit, the appropriate order here teaches us that the Holy Spirit is not only confined to the church: while the Holy Spirit is the *sine qua non* of the church; the church is not the *sine qua non* of the Holy Spirit.[10] The condition for the existence of the church is the presence of the Spirit; the condition for the presence of the Spirit (who blows wherever He wills) is not the church, nor located only within the church.

The historical church: The time and continuity of the Spirit

Although the church is an event of the Holy Spirit of God, it is nevertheless an event of the Holy Spirit of God *in time and history*. More precisely, it is an event of the Holy Spirit of God in the time between the resurrection and the return of Jesus. The coming of the Spirit at Pentecost marks the beginning of the time of the church, and the activity of God in history before the close of the age and the coming of the *parousia*. The time of the church is, therefore, a time of the patience of God with the world in history, before the coming of the Kingdom. There are a number of implications to this reality.

First, the church is a contemporary, time-bound and contingent reality, and not a romantic, timeless ideal. The church is a community which exists in the 'not yet' and in its 'becoming'. It is important to note that the church is not the Kingdom of God, and nor will the Kingdom of God be the church: the imagery of the Kingdom involves political and not ecclesial imagery – a city where there is no temple as God Himself is the temple (Rev. 21.22). However, the church remains the event of God by God's Spirit in this 'not yet'; the church's penultimacy does not reduce its significance. In its penultimacy and historical contingency, the church is nevertheless an

[10]Cf. Tom Greggs, *Theology against Religion: Constructive Dialogues with Bonheoffer and Barth* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).

anticipation and a sign of the coming kingdom, a sign which signifies God's salvation of the world. As Pannenberg puts it: 'The church must distinguish itself from the future fellowship of men and women in the kingdom of God in order that it may be seen as a sign of the kingdom by which its saving future is already present for people in their own day.'[11] Its role as a sign is a real role in the history of God's patience with the world before the *eschaton*. But as a sign, the church is not the thing it signifies: the church is not the salvation or kingdom to which it points, but is the sign that as an event of the Holy Spirit points to them proleptically in history.

As a sign of the kingdom and not the kingdom itself, the church must always remember, second, that it is still historical and human. Although it is an event of the Holy Spirit, the church which is made holy in time and space is still historical, contingent and creaturely. The church is created as a divine reality in time, but this is an operation of God with human beings and creation which does not nullify the creatureliness of the church. The existence of the church as an event of the Holy Spirit should make the church less, rather than more, confident of its own authority – questioning its own propensity to ignore or disobey God's action, and remembering that it is still only a sign (in all of its creatureliness) of the ultimate. Colin Gunton argues wisely:

> Sometimes it has appeared that because a *logical* link has been claimed between the Spirit and institution, the institution has made too confident claims to be possessed of divine authority. The outcome . . . has been too 'realised' an eschatology of the institution, too near a claim for the coincidence of the Church's action with the action of God. Against such a tendency it must be emphasised that, as christology universalises, the direction of pneumatology is to particularise. The action of the Spirit is to anticipate, in the present and by means of the finite and contingent, the things of the age to come.[12]

As we were reminded by Calvin in the above section, we should not forget the danger of the human community having only the semblance of a church (as in Acts 1), rather than being a true event of the Holy Spirit. Indeed, Calvin also points to the fact that the church's holiness (which comes from God) is one in which the church advances but is not yet perfect:[13] the creed's affirmation of the communion of saints is followed immediately by its affirmation of the forgiveness of sins.

---

[11]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* (vol. 3; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), p. 32.
[12]Colin E. Gunton, 'The Church on Earth: The Roots of Community', in Colin E. Gunton and Daniel W. Hardy (eds), *On Being the Church: Essays on the Christian Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), p. 61.
[13]Calvin, *ICR*, 4.1.17 (p. 1031).

A third issue arises in relation to the historical form of the church in terms of its continuity and constancy. If the church is an event of the Holy Spirit, which cannot be guaranteed by any human activity *ex opere operato*, how can we account for the ongoing presence of the witness of the church on earth in time? Is the church so contingent on the event of the Spirit that one cannot have faith in its ongoing presence and existence? This is certainly a concern, but we should be careful that such concerns do not force us back to engaging in ecclesiology by describing the human phenomenon of the community rather than the action of God. Since the church is an event of the Holy Spirit in time, its constancy comes not in its own forms, which are historical, contingent and passing, but in the constancy and holiness of God the Holy Spirit: it is the holiness and constancy of the Spirit that provides the faithfulness of the church. This is why the church is a subset of the communion of saints of all times and places: the church of each age and place is preserved by God's faithfulness. Because of the promise of Jesus to send His Spirit, and because of the holiness, constancy and faithfulness of God the Holy Spirit, the church in time exists dependent upon God and sustained by God.

The visibility of the church: Word and sacraments

Having considered the activity of God's Spirit in establishing the church ever anew and sustaining the church in time, we may now ask what the visible church looks like as a sign of the kingdom and of salvation. The visible church exists in a community (of whatever size) where the Gospel is preached and the sacraments (baptism and holy communion) are celebrated. It is these two identifiers which mark both the possibility and the boundary of the existence of the church. As Calvin succinctly puts it: 'Wherever we see the Word of God purely preached and heard, and the sacraments administered according to Christ's institution, there, it is not to be doubted, a church of God exists.'[14] It is these two features which provide the base-level descriptor of the visible church formed by the activity of the Holy Spirit of God.

The visibility that exists in the church's preaching is the operation of the Holy Spirit, without whom no-one can say 'Jesus is Lord', in the life of the community. The first action of the disciples after the coming of the Spirit is to 'speak about God's deeds of power' (Acts 2.11) in the languages of all of those in Jerusalem. This is followed by a sermon delivered by Peter. The visible presence of the Holy Spirit is known, therefore, in the hearing and in the proclamation of the Lordship of Jesus Christ, in the receiving and preaching of the good news, in the public listening to and speaking of God's

[14]Calvin, *ICR*, 4.1.9 (p. 1023).

Word. A primary marker of the existence of a church is a community in which the scriptures are read publically, and preached. The church is, therefore, a community which proclaims (in its sermons and worship) the Gospel, and a community which instructs in the faith. This involves both an outwards expression of the Gospel to those who do not know it; and an inward-facing teaching for the purpose of growth into maturity of faith. In this latter way, the church aids the believer as she seeks to live out the sanctified life, as in its preaching, the church enables the believer to encounter the words of the Living God and to grow in faith and maturity. Thus, the very existence of the church as an act of the Holy Spirit, reminds the believer that her faith is not simply a single momentary conversion: her faith is a schooling in the ways of God, which she is taught in unity with her Christian sisters and brothers through the proclamation of God's word. The public component of this proclamation is important: it is an attestation of the unity of the faith of believers in the church. It is for this reason many churches recite one of the ecumenical creeds in worship. Furthermore, the public nature of bible reading and teaching means that believers are to seek the wisdom of the community in the interpretation of Scripture, so as to prevent misguided private interpretation. In this way, the church's apostolic function comes to be expressed through the passing on of the *regula fidei* through the church.

It is by baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit that an individual believer becomes a member of this visible community. In baptism, a believer dies to self and sin, and is raised to a new sanctified life, as she becomes incorporated into the body of Christ. Although it is a visible and public act, the belief in one baptism that the creeds express demonstrates that we are baptized into the universal and catholic church. Baptism is not into a particular denomination or into a particular expression of Christianity. It is, instead, in the first instance a visible expression of belonging to an invisible community of God. In Scripture, baptism is the first act that follows repentance, and it is the way the first community in Acts 2 identified and included the earliest converts into the church (Acts 2.38), as the mark which denoted confession of Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sins and reception of the Holy Spirit. In being baptized, the Christian enters a communion with those earliest members of the church, and with the saints of all ages. As Paul teaches, 'There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all' (Eph. 4.4–5).

In sharing in the act of holy communion, the church attests visibly its continued unity. Holy communion is an event in which the reciprocity of the community's relationship with God and between its members is attested. Coming together (in communion with one another), members of the church come into communion with God; coming in communion with God, the church comes together. In this act, the church is reminded, in the words of Dan Hardy, that 'human sociality arises in (is given with) relationship with God – as a necessary part of it, not as a *post facto*

addition to it. Therefore human sociality is inseparable from community with God; human and human-divine community are mutually necessary'.[15] In this way, holy communion sustains the community of the church in its communion with God. In receiving bread and wine, and following the instruction of Christ, the church looks back in memorial to the saving activity of God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and forwards to the future salvation awaiting creation. As such, communion is a visible promissory act in history which is a sign to the church of its temporal purpose as a sign to the world of God's communion with and in the community before the return of Christ. In holy communion, the believer receives in humility a sign of God's gracious forgiveness of sins and the new life promised through the death and resurrection of Jesus, remembering and sustaining her baptism in her ongoing life of faith and the ongoing life of the church.

The church and the sanctified life

Having described the features of the visible church, it is necessary to ask what the purpose is of this particular operation of God in creating the church through an act of the Holy Spirit beyond gathering people together to form community. It is here, particularly, where this volume's focus on the sanctified life comes to the fore; for in the church (in all its humanity, temporality and contingency), we see in God's act a sign of the restoration of God's plan for creation. The church is an anticipation of future salvation in its reversal of human fallenness. This has both a vertical dimension in relation to God, and a horizontal dimension in relation to creation, since in the fall humans are led into a state of solitude in relation both to God and to each other. In the fall narrative, the immediate response of Adam and Even to their fallen situation is to hide from God; to cover themselves from each other in shame; and to blame each other and creation (Adam blames Eve; Eve blames the serpent).

In terms of its vertical relation, the church is a community in which God by God's grace through the Holy Spirit makes Godself immediately available to His people. As the Spirit enables people, they are able to proclaim the Lordship of Jesus and to direct themselves to the activity of glorifying God in worship and praise. In sermons and bible readings, the church is able to hear God speaking. In confession, the church is able to ask forgiveness of God and to be assured in its thanksgiving of God's pardoning of sins. In prayer, the community is able to petition God and to intercede on behalf of the world. In holy communion, the church is able to receive the sign of the promise of God's salvation in the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

[15]Daniel W. Hardy, 'Created and Redeemed Sociality', in Gunton and Hardy (eds), *On Being the Church*, p. 38.

In benediction, the church is able to bless the community and the world. It is this immediacy of relation to God that the classical Protestant traditions speak of when they articulate the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers: each person is able to go in praise, confession and prayer directly to God without the need of another mediator. That there is no need for a mediator determines that before anything is said of the polity and orders of ministry in the church, it is necessary to say something of the equality of believers in their immediate relation to God: as Paul teaches, 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3.28).

The equality of immediate relations with God in the church determines secondly, therefore, that there is a reordering in the church of the horizontal relations that exist between individuals (and more generally in creation). Bonhoeffer puts this well: 'when God restores community between human beings and God's own self, community among us also is restored once again, in accordance with [the] proposition about the essential interrelation of our community with God and human community.'[16] These horizontal and vertical relations should not be thought of as two distinct moments, but should be thought of as a simultaneous moment – a single event of God's grace in which God reverses human sinfulness by reordering human lives in relation to Godself and to creation. As a community of vast differences between individual believers, the church (in the broadest geographical and historical sense) is enabled to become a community in which individual members are freed to be for one another only as the Spirit works within it to create the community: the church is not a gathering of aligned human wills, but a gracious act of God that creates a community so that our neighbour can become a gift to be loved in order to fulfil the command of Christ (and it is here where accounts of the different ministries of members of the church might be appropriately discussed). The church is, thus, a community of people orientated simultaneously on God and on other humans – a community of people freed from hearts turned in upon themselves. In this much, the church is a saving and sanctifying activity of God for the individual believer.

An outward facing witness: The reason for the visible church

This orientation away from the self and towards God and other human beings forms the internal structural sociality of the church. However, this internal structure within the church is also reflective of the structural relation of the church in its external relations beyond its own walls. The church is created as an event of the Holy Spirit not for its own ends in the

[16]Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp. 145–46.

time between the ascension and the return of Christ, but as a sign for the sake of the world.

Lots of the imagery surrounding the foundation of the church by the Holy Spirit in Scripture is imagery that we might think of as being *intense*. In Acts 2, we have a picture of this deep intensity: the language concerns the sound of rushing violent winds, tongues as if on fire, every nation under the sun, fulfilment of prophecy and so forth. The immediate relation to God which the church provides is a relation of intensity: worship is of the *holy* God, and – whether high church, charismatic or formal – reflects something of God's holy intensity. However, this intensity is not to be confused with interiority, or with a self-understanding of ecclesial purity which is such that the church understands itself as being sanctified over and against the world. The church's holiness, brought about by the intense presence of the Holy Spirit of God in the present in the communities He creates, is a holy intensity created *for* the world. The event of the proclamation of the Gospel which accompanies the coming of the Spirit in Acts and the foundation of the church is an event which reflects the outwards movement of the church to all the world – a point emphasized in the long list of nations who heard about God's acts in their own languages (Acts 2.5–11). The intensive presence of the Spirit in the church is an event of God for the sake of the extensity of the world;[17] the intensive presence of God's Spirit in the community orientates the community beyond its own bounds and out towards the world to which the community is a sign of the salvation of God. The Spirit, who leads church into deep worship and love of God and each other, leads us outwards to the world.

Karl Barth wrote:

> The work of the Holy Spirit in the gathering and upbuilding of the community . . . cannot merely lead to the blind alley of a new qualification, enhancement, deepening and enrichment of this being of the community as such. Wonderful and glorious as this is, *it is not an end in itself even in what it includes for its individual members*. The enlightening power of the Holy Spirit draws and impels and presses beyond its being as such, beyond all the reception and experience of its members, beyond all that is promised to them personally. And only as it follows this drawing and impelling is it the real community of Jesus Christ.[18]

The Spirit who creates the church as a sanctified community is the same Spirit who leads the church at once ever deeper into the world, for the world. These two operations cannot be pried apart since the church exists in this time as a sign of the coming salvation. A church with a singularly inwards

[17]Language of 'intensity' and 'extensity' is borrowed from Daniel W. Hardy, *God's Ways with the World: Thinking and Practising Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).
[18]Karl Barth, *CD*, IV/3, p. 764.

concern for its community, even a good community of praise and of love of God with preaching and administration of sacraments, is not a church in the theological sense; it is only a church in a sociological sense – to end where we began, it is only the society of Acts 1 and not the church created by the Holy Spirit in Acts 2. As the church is created by the Spirit, it presses beyond its own existence for the world both through the narration of the salvific events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus *and* in the life of a community formed by the teaching of Jesus. As Acts 2 makes clear, there are political, social and economic implications to this outwards orientation of the church. Politically, the church is a sign of a society in which cultural and national differences do not lead to a breakdown of communication (through the tongues which the disciples speak).[19] Socially, the church is a sign of a society in which age, gender and social status do not express themselves in hierarchical power relations (through the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel 2). And economically, the church is a sign of graciousness and generosity (through the sharing of all things in common and the breaking of bread together). As an event of the Spirit, the church is able not only internally to live beyond its individualism in relation to God and to other humans, but is also made able to live beyond its own internal concerns. As Bonhoeffer asserts:

> The space of the church does not, therefore, exist just for itself, but its existence is already always something that reaches far beyond it. . . . [T]he space of the church is the place where witness is given to the foundation of all reality in Jesus Christ. . . . The space of the church is not there in order to fight with the world for a piece of territory, but precisely to testify to the world that it is still the world, namely the world that is loved and reconciled by God.[20]

The church receives the Spirit of God in deep and intense ways to enable it to exist for the world in all its extensity, plurality and diversity. As the Spirit creates the church in this way, the church is able to become the body of Christ – a body which lives not for itself but for the sake of God and the rest of the world. In this way, the church is sanctified community – not by being cut off from the world, but by being for the world.

---

[19]Cf. Stanley Hauerwas, *Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001), p. 53.
[20]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), p. 63.

PART FOUR

The practices of grace

11

Discipleship

Philip Ziegler

Those who had been redeemed from the earth. . . .
who follow the Lamb wherever he goes . . .

Rev. 14.4

Discipleship and its discontents

Discipleship is a category with which theology denotes the dynamic form of Christian life resulting from the gift of God's gracious salvation in and through Jesus Christ. Its semantic range encompasses much of what traditional accounts of the *ordo salutis* consider variously under the rubrics of sanctification, regeneration, mortification, vivification and perseverance. Distinctively, to talk of discipleship is to consider how the shape and direction of the Christian life may be illuminated by specific reflection on the patterned relations between Jesus and those he gathered to himself during his ministry as this is depicted in the biblical witness. It sets the question of Christian life in particular relief against the backdrop of Jesus' preaching and teaching, his summons and service, and requires that we reckon with the significance of all this in substantiating our understanding of holiness and that freedom for whose sake Christ sets people free (Gal. 5.1). At stake in an account of discipleship is thus recognition of the designs which saving divine grace has upon those it overtakes, the nature and claim of the 'better righteousness' which befits the advent of God's reign upon and among his people (Mt. 5.20), and the contours of that 'newness of life' into which Christians are raised on the other side of their participation in Christ's death (Rom. 6.4). As such, discipleship can also recommend itself as a watchword

beneath which to articulate the lineaments of a distinctly *Christian* ethic. In short, when we make discipleship our theme we ask the following question: how ought we to characterize a human life which, having been justified, redeemed and reconciled to God *by* Jesus Christ, is now given time and place in which to live anew *in* and *with* Christ?

The Christian tradition displays many and varied answers to this question, not all of which explicitly adopt the idiom of 'discipleship'. In teaching about the cultivation of the Christian life, early apologists and theologians readily spoke of Christianity as a *philosophia*, adapting the tradition in pagan antiquity which conceived of philosophy as a set of intellectual and physical practices aimed at attaining to a distinctive way of being in the world, a way of life keyed ever more perfectly to guiding truths.[1]

Such pedagogical emphases were extended in subsequent centuries, finding particular expression within mediaeval monastic rules – paradigmatically, that of Benedict – charters of order, piety and discipline for communities whose very purpose was education into exemplary religious life. Recurrent mediaeval monastic reforms consciously sought renewed forms of Christian existence that more immediately reflected the evangelical summons to poverty and purity of life in conformity with Christ.[2] The traditional Catholic delineation of 'evangelical counsels of perfection' – those of poverty, chastity and obedience into which religious life is especially consecrated above and beyond the precepts of the 'new law' which are binding on all Christians – arises out of this history. By the practice of these counsels, monastic Christians may 'devote themselves in a special way to the Lord' and 'spend themselves increasingly for Christ' as they strive to 'follow Christ more freely and imitate him more nearly' within their religious life.[3] As such, the vocation of ordered religious life has long been understood to be a distinctive, and perhaps even exclusive, site of Christian discipleship. The emergence of the *devotio moderna* during the fifteenth century sought to extend the franchise of such discipleship – to conceive of Christendom as '*a single monastery, as it were*', as Erasmus once put it[4] – by re-connecting lay existence with the dispositions and practices of *sequela Christi*, that exceptional striving to

[1]See Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (trans. M. Chase; Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 126–43. On the adoption of the discourse of *paideia* (education as formation) into Christian self-descriptions, see Werner Jaeger, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 86–102 where the example of Gregory of Nyssa is concisely discussed.

[2]See Ulrich Köpf, 'Mendicant Orders', in *Religion Past and Present* (ed. H. D. Betz, D. S. Browning, B. Janowski and E. Jüngel; vol. 8; Leiden: Brill, 2012), c.v.

[3]From *Perfectaecaritatis*, the decree on the renewal of religion life, *The Documents of Vatican II* (ed. W. M. Abbott; trans. Gallagher; Piscataway, NJ: America Press, 1966), §1, pp. 466–67. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *ST,* I.2ae, 108.4, II.2ae, 184.3 and 186.

[4]Erasmus, *The Correspondence of Erasmus* (trans. R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson; vol. 2; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), p. 297.

follow Christ. This spirit is paradigmatically distilled in the opening lines of the fifteenth-century work, *The Imitation of Christ*, by Thomas à Kempis:

> '*He who follows me, walks not in darkness,*' says the Lord (Jn 8.12). By these words of Christ we are advised to imitate his life and habits, if we wish to be truly enlightened and freed from all blindness of heart. Let our chief effort, therefore, be to study the life of Jesus Christ.[5]

Zealous for the evangelical truths of *sola gratia* and *sola fides,* and eager to reform ecclesiastical traditions *sola scriptura*, the magisterial reformers repudiated the notion that the discipleship represented by pursuit of the 'counsels of perfection' was elective and supererogatory. They argued that all Christians are 'commonly bound' by a single rule of life 'committed by God to the whole Church', and called to perfect an existence marked by a faith that stirs fervent love expressed in service, and a freedom that fears nothing of this world, including death.[6] These Protestants commended as normative a single pattern of Christian life, characterized as the free and priestly service of all believers in the power of the Spirit (Lutheran), or Spirit-afforded grateful obedience to the law of grace (Reformed).[7] Such accounts – variously developed and amplified in particular by later Puritan and Pietistic theologies during subsequent centuries – typically emphasized the conformity of Christian life to the shape of Christ's own humility and self-giving by stressing motifs like self-denial, neighbour love, cross-bearing and submission to Christ 'living and reigning within'.[8] Yet, they rarely

---

[5]Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ* (trans. A. Croft and H. Bolton; Milwaukee: Bruce Publications, 1949), p. 5. For other examples cf. *Devotio moderna: basic writings* (ed. J. H. VanEngen; New York: Paulist Press, 1988).

[6]The quotation is from John Calvin, *ICR*, IV.8.12 (cf. II.8.56 and IV.8.11). A paradigmatic presentation of this position is given by Martin Luther, 'The Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows' (1521), *Luther's Works* (ed. and trans. M. Atkinson; vol. 44; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), pp. 243–400.

[7]Calvin's characterization of the positive function of the biblical law within the Christian life as its third, principal and proper use (*ICR*, II.7.12) became a Reformed commonplace. Lutheran teaching formalized a distinction between the 'works of the law' and those 'fruits of the Spirit' which Christians perform 'as if they knew no command, threat, or reward' and only thereby 'walk according to the law of God' as 'children of God' – 'The Formula of Concord', VI, in *The Book of Concord* (ed. R. Kolb and T. J. Wengert; trans. C. Arand et al.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), p. 503.

[8]The last phrase is from Calvin, *ICR*, III.7.1. This whole passage (III.6–7) is indicative of the Reformed approach. On the Lutheran view, see Martin Luther, 'The Freedom of a Christian', in *Selected Writings of Martin Luther* (ed. G. Tappert; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), pp. 9–53. Here we see the basis for Max Weber's observation that a consequence of the Reformation was to make 'every man a monk' in whatever state of life – Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1958), p. 121. For examples of pietistic developments see William Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1978) and *John and Charles Wesley: Selected Writings and Hymns* (ed. F. Whaling; Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1981).

spoke of 'discipleship'. Indeed, as they developed, these lines of thinking increasingly emphasized that while Christ's own self-giving and love may provide a distinct measure for conduct within the various orders, relations and stations of life, these creaturely givens themselves constitute a 'primeval divine order that shapes human life' which continue to provide the primary points of reference for a Christian ethic. Discipleship occurs fully 'within the household of the world' in sober recognition of the overriding claims of the orders of creation and preservation as creaturely conditions of possibility, as it were, for Christian life.[9] Most radically, it became possible to identify without remainder the content of Christian discipleship with the fulfilment of the duties of natural creaturely life.[10] In any case, leading Protestant accounts settled on the understanding that the Christian life cannot be solely one of evangelical discipleship, but must always somehow combine discipleship *and* the prudential ethics suited to negotiating life in the world that is. The alternatives – either 'homeless discipleship or a home without discipleship' – were adjudged unthinkable and unworkable, overzealous or impious.[11]

Historically, Anabaptists have also opposed any 'two tier' vision of Christian discipleship, but they were also impatient with 'compromises' between the Gospel and the order of things. Their distinctive commitment to recover an apostolic church marked by public conversion, visible holiness and voluntary membership drew fire from other Protestants as a 'new monasticism' whose 'angelic zeal' imposed baptism as a fresh 'monastic constraint' rather than a 'friendly exhortation to the Christian life'.[12] While repudiating such criticisms, Menno Simons could grant the analogy with monasticism in as much as 'children of God and disciples of Christ' they acknowledge Jesus as the sole 'Abbot' and 'Prior' over the assembly of the saints called out from the world.[13] It has been suggested that discipleship – with

[9]The phrase is from Oswald Bayer, *Freedom in Response – Lutheran Ethics: Sources and Controversies* (trans. J. F. Cazyer; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 117. Cf. Armin Wenz, 'Natural Law and the Orders of Creation', in *Natural Law: A Lutheran Reappraisal* (ed. R. C. Ehlke; Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), pp. 91–93.

[10]See Gustaf Wingren, *The Flight from Creation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1971), pp. 52–53, where the life of faith is a life returned fully to the 'natural duties' of creaturely existence.

[11]Bayer, *Freedom in Response*, p. 129. Cf. p. 136. Bayer discusses how Luther 'walks a tightrope' in his efforts to co-ordinate the *ethos* of creaturely life with the claims of the new life of Christian freedom: 'our thought must reckon with a radical ethic of discipleship and a sapiential code of household duties, with wisdom and the cross. *That* tension is not resolved so long as we are on our pilgrimage!' (p. 115). The abiding role of 'natural law' or its surrogates in Protestant ethics is one of marks of this tension.

[12]The phrases are from Calvin, *ICR*, IV.12.12 and U. Zwingli, 'Of Baptism', in *Zwingli and Bullinger* (trans. G. W. Bromiley; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), p. 152. Abraham Friesen, 'Anabaptism and Monasticism: A Study in the Development of Parallel Historical Patterns', *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 6 (1988), pp. 174–97, provides an informative historical investigation of these charges and their substance.

[13]Menno Simons quoted in Friesen, 'Anabaptism and Monasticism', pp. 187, 193.

special emphasis on the immediacy of the example and leadership of Jesus and its social consequences – is *the* chief identifier of the distinctively Anabaptist vision.[14] For this reason, Anabaptist theologies of the Christian life have been key in bringing the discourse of discipleship into wider ecumenical theological discussion during the past century.

With these compressed historical remarks in mind, we must reckon at the start with the thought that the doctrine of the Christian life – and perhaps especially the discourse of discipleship within it – is potentially one of the most 'seductive' and 'dangerous' dogmatic *loci*.[15] Why should this be so? As Gerhard Forde has observed, it is sorely tempting to think of discipleship, and of sanctification generally, as the properly 'serious business' of reflecting upon our own role and contributions to salvation on the far side of God's justifying grace. He identifies the twin dangers of *moralism* and *unreality* which attend every anxious effort to demonstrate that the Christian life is 'different, vital, relevant, abundant, and obviously superior to every other kind of life'.[16] As regards *moralism*, extended discussions of the active life of Christians can – whether by design or by drift – corrode our grasp of the permanent priority and prevenience of gracious divine agency, entangling us in the perverse business of attempting to become 'work-saints' off in pursuit of an 'ethical adventure'.[17] As regards *unreality*, in a manner akin to what Nicholas Healy has called 'blueprint ecclesiologies', normative accounts of discipleship can foster paralysing disjunctions between reality and ideality, which while they may stir up ardour at times can also entrap Christian life in a desultory oscillation between hypocrisy and despair.[18] Other theologians untroubled by such worries, or even anxious that cautions such as these threaten to deflate properly extensive treatment of Christian discipline and holiness, contend that the only thing dangerous about discipleship is its pervasive

[14]Howard S. Bender, 'The Anabaptist Vision', in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* (ed. G. F. Hershberger; Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1957), pp. 29–56, and in the same volume also J. Lawrence Burkholder, 'The Anabaptist Vision of Discipleship', pp. 135–51. Cf. Howard S. Bender, 'The Anabaptist Theology of Discipleship', *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 24 (1950), pp. 25–32.

[15]For what follows see Gerhard Forde, 'Christian Life', in *Christian Dogmatics* (ed. C. Braaten and R. Jenson; vol. 2; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), p. 295. Cf. also, his 'The Lutheran View', in *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification* (ed. D. L. Alexander; Downers Grove: IVP, 1988), pp. 15–17.

[16]Forde, 'Christian Life', p. 295.

[17]Luther, 'The Freedom of a Christian', p. 31, then Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, p. 73. Writing from prison in 1944, Bonhoeffer worried that the struggle to 'acquire faith by trying to live a holy life' – to which he dedicated his own work *Discipleship* – could be co-opted by an aspirant religiosity alien to the Gospel, and so undermine the proper immersion of the Christian life in and for the world for which Christ suffered. See Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, *DBWE* 8 (ed. J. W. de Gruchy; trans. L. Dahill et al.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), p. 485. Yet importantly, he also says: 'I stand by what I wrote in that volume.'

[18]Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 36–37.

neglect. They consider discipleship to be the long neglected 'stepchild' of Protestant theology and ethics, whose ongoing neglect within contemporary Christian proclamation and self-understanding constitute a 'great omission' that effectively renders much contemporary Christianity merely nominal.[19] They charge that it is the church's balking at the rigours of discipleship that has to answer for the apparent dissolution of 'real' Christianity within a decadent, compromised and disintegrating Christendom; what is needed, they suggest, are renewal programmes aimed to recover the authenticity, purposefulness and integrity of Christian life.[20]

I suggest that if we are to discern the promise of discipleship while forestalling the attendant perils, we need a clear assertion and tenacious defense of the fact that the form and substance of discipleship is entirely derivative of the identity and saving work of the living Lord Jesus Christ. Discipleship is a practical reflex of Christology, the persistent work of registering what it means *hic et nunc* that 'we are the ones who are reached and affected by the existence of the Son of Man Jesus Christ . . . that we are recipients of the direction of this Lord'.[21] The dynamism involved is not provided by the movement between theory and praxis, neither is it a function of the fact that the discourse of Christology 'emerges from Christian living and leads into Christian living', however true that may be.[22] More than any methodological commitment, what proves singularly decisive here is the real dynamic presence and activity of the living Lord Jesus Christ himself, eloquent in the power of the Spirit to announce with effect the forgiveness and sovereign claim of God, the advent of the Kingdom. Whether there is discipleship in the church, and in what such discipleship will consist, will be answered by attending to the reality of Christ's sovereign presence to faith, or not at all. The hope for avoiding debilitating abstraction and moralism in a theology of discipleship, as well as for repudiating any illegitimate curtailment of the freedom of the Christian life, similarly rests here. As Bonhoeffer put it, discipleship 'has no other content than Jesus Christ himself, being bound to him, community with him'.[23]

---

[19]Ernst Wolf, *Sozialethik: Theologische Grundlagen* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 3rd edn, 1988), p. 150; Dallas Willard, *The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2006) and, concisely, his entry 'Discipleship' in *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology* (ed. G. McDermott; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 236–46.

[20]To echo Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity* (trans. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 228–31.

[21]Karl Barth, *CD,* IV/2, p. 266. Cf. John Webster, 'Imitation of Christ', *Tyndale Bulletin* 37 (1986), p. 116: 'To talk of human "correspondences" to Jesus Christ is to make a *Christological* statement.'

[22]Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ* (trans. M. Kohl; London: SCM Press, 1990), p. 43.

[23]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, *DBWE 4* (ed. G. B. Kelly and J. D. Godsey; trans. B. Green and R. Krauss; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), p. 74.

To heed the call of the one who goes on before

The function of the discourse of discipleship is to recollect the living lordship of Jesus Christ – crucified, risen and ascended – as the principal matter of the Christian life, and thus to ensure that such a life is suffused with and animated by the militancy of the eschatological Gospel of God. Christians are disciples of Christ in as much as they serve and attest his lordship in the present time during which 'he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet' (1 Cor. 15.25). The relationship between the Christian and Jesus Christ is a profoundly asymmetrical one, which far exceeds the ordering of the relations between teachers and pupils generally. The nature of this excess is displayed in the paradigmatic Gospel stories of Jesus' calling of the first disciples.[24] Shorn and abrupt as they are, these narratives emphasize the absolute authority and liberty of Jesus' summons to follow him; they signal that his call inaugurates something urgent and unanticipated, something radically new; they also make plain that the call disrupts and dislocates the disciple from the world as he has known it; finally, they show that the call of Jesus issues a writ of allegiance to him and is to secure service for him: there is from the very first, an intimate relation between the call to discipleship and commission to service: '*I will make you fish for people*' (Mt. 4.19); '*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few*' (Lk. 10.2). Those who fall in with this master are not being schooled for as long as it takes for them to train up as religious teachers in their own right, as was commonly the case with the pedagogical relationship of teachers and pupils in antiquity. Rather, they are recruited to a permanent position as a follower of Jesus and enter into an 'unqualified community of life and destiny' with him as a saved servant in his train.[25] For Christ's disciples '*have but one master, the Christ*' (Mt. 23.10).

Jesus calls his disciples, then, not finally as an exemplar, religious sage or teacher of the law, but in his unique and unsubstitutable identity as the Son and Christ of God.[26] This reality places any naive notion of discipleship as 'imitation' under rather severe strain. In order to characterize the 'fit' between Christ and disciple we need to conceive of it in ways that register the abiding 'conspicuous discontinuity' between the identity and activity of

[24]See Mk 1.16–20, 2.14, and parallels.

[25]M. Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (trans. J. C. G. Greig; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), pp. 86, 87. Walter Brueggemann sees this pattern closely reflected in the pattern of the Lord's call to Israel – 'Evangelism and Discipleship: The God who Calls, the God who Sends', *Word & World* 24:2 (2004), pp. 121–35.

[26]For discussion of this see Eduard Schweitzer, *Lordship and Discipleship* (London: SCM Press, 1960), pp. 11–21; Cf. Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), pp. 179–86, 224–32, as well as the important study of M. Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, especially pp. 38–83.

Jesus and that of his disciples. The metaphorical extension of the language of 'following' is well suited to do so. First, it acknowledges that the identity of Christian disciples is conferred *ad extra* by the call of Jesus as eschatological Lord and Saviour; the disciple is drafted into service. Second, it points up that Christ's disciples must ever 'follow at a distance', always subject to his active governance, always displaying in their own lives the consequences of his singular salutary life and lordship.[27] The disciple is not in pursuit of an ideal, not even of an embodied ideal. She is, rather, labouring in the Spirit to remain in the wake of Jesus' own singular work and way with an eye on the difference that the dawning of the reign of God makes. To be seized by divine grace in this way is to be bound in solidarity to Christ, to track his course and to serve his cause in the world. The essential business of the life of the congregation – listening incessantly for the Word in Scripture and sermon, honouring the dominical ordinances of baptism and the lord's supper, the worship and praise of God's goodness, invocation of God's mercy and salvation upon the community and the world, and taking responsibility for all that for which we pray in humane practical action – can rightly be thought of as the 'easy yoke' (Mt. 11.30) which tethers Christians to their living Lord, aids for discerning his governing presence and movement on the way.

We may further specify the nature of this discipleship by considering another suggestive valence of the biblical language of 'following'. It is notable that the semantic range of the biblical concept of 'following' used in connection with the call of Jesus includes reference to the movement of warriors who have been called up to accompany their leader into the fray, an image also extended into the depiction of Israel 'going out after the Lord' (e.g. Hos. 11.10).[28] Suggestively, the same language of following (*akoloutheo*) – rarely used in relation to Jesus out with the Gospels – appears in the Apocalypse (Rev. 14.4) where the Lamb of God is depicted as 'Christ the King . . . on the move, marching out to meet his enemies' together with his followers who are 'utterly available to the Lord'.[29] This text provides an amplified apocalyptic echo of both the risen Christ's 'going on before' his disciples into Galilee (Mk 16.7), and the scenario of the act of gathering of the first disciples. For this first call is closely connected in the Gospels with Christ's own royal struggle with anti-God powers (beginning with the Satan

[27]Gene Outka, 'Following at a Distance: Ethics and the Identity of Jesus', in *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation* (ed. G. Green; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), pp. 149, 154. Bultmann stresses that the farewell discourses in John's Gospel serve to establish precisely this difference and so, as James Kay puts it, forefend any 'mawkish eagerness to fraternize with Jesus' – James F. Kay, *Christus Praesens: A Reconsideration of Rudolf Bultmann's Christology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 80–81.

[28]M. Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, pp. 18–20; Cf. Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, pp. 183–84.

[29]Joseph Mangina, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), p. 173.

in the wilderness) who, plainly see that Jesus has come to destroy them (Mk 1.24). In this context, we are compelled to understand Jesus' promise to make of the disciples 'fishers of people' in light of its eschatological and explicitly marshal meanings in the background literature of the Old Testament. As Joel Marcus observes, this image casts all the disciples' future endeavours 'as a participation in God's eschatological war against demonic forces', a contest which, moreover, 'recapitulates God's redemption of Israel from Egyptian bondage'.[30] This is because in the advent of the Son, 'God has turned the world into hotly contested territory' and 'those enslaving powers do not peacefully yield their turf to God, as every parish minister knows well'.[31]

This suggests that an account of Christian discipleship would do well to emphasize the reality of the royal office of Jesus Christ, and to call out those characterizations of Christian existence which comport with the reality of our redemption by his sovereign victory.[32] To this end, we might usefully rehabilitate the figure of Christ as 'captain' as essential to the discourse of discipleship. Taking his cue from texts of Hebrews – which speak of Jesus as 'the captain of salvation' (2.10) and call upon the faithful to 'look to Jesus the captain and consummator of our faith' (12.2) – the Swiss reformer Huldrych Zwingli frequently spoke of Christ as 'the captain and the ensign under which we serve [*militamus*]'.[33] Overreaching Erasmus' humanistic appropriation of the image of the Christian life as *militia Christi*, Zwingli's figure of the captaincy of Christ has as its central concern the public significance of the lordship of Christ in the midst of life.[34] The soubriquet connects with and helps to concentrate much of what we have discerned of discipleship to this point. Disciples are those 'enlisted' into Christ's service and stand at his disposal, rallied to him in the cause of his reign; faith in the captain takes the form of loyalty to his direction in the midst of the fray; and the order and movement of the Christian community, like the order of a

[30]J. Marcus, *Mark 1–8*, pp. 184–85. The illustrative texts in view are Jer. 16.16; Amos 4.2; Ezek. 19.2–5 and Hab. 1.14–17.

[31]J. L. Martyn, 'World Without End or Twice-invaded World?', in *Shaking Heaven and Earth: Essays in Honor of Walter Bruggemann and Charles B. Cousar* (ed. C. Roy Yoder et al.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), p. 125.

[32]For valuable discussion of Christ's royal office, see Robert Sherman, *King, Priest and Prophet: A Trinitarian Theology of Atonement* (London: T&T Clark/Continuum, 2004), pp. 116–68. Sherman also contends that the royal account of Christ's saving work should govern systematic discussion of soteriology, see pp. 158–62. I have argued this same point elsewhere – '"Christ Must Reign" – Ernst Käsemann and Soteriology in an Apocalyptic Key', in *Apocalyptic and the Future of Theology* (ed. D. Harink and J. Davis; Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), pp. 202–20.

[33]*Christuset dux et signumest, sub quo militamus*. See Gottfried W. Locher, '"Christ Our Captain": An Example of Huldrych Zwingli's Preaching in Its Cultural Setting', in *Zwingli's Thought: New Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), pp. 72–86.

[34]For the text of Erasmus' influential, *Enchiridion militischristiani,* see *The Erasmus Reader* (ed. E. Rummel; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).

troop of combatants, arises from the commanding presence of their captain in their midst. In sum,

> . . . here we have it – graphically portrayed in a picture that comes alive for every hearer and reader – still the same living Christ, and everything in the Christian warfare relates to him – believing and living, trusting, obeying and dying, finding comfort and serving. In all these things . . . our captain, Christ Jesus, never leaves us comfortless.[35]

The overarching fact that the life of discipleship is permanently contingent upon the living call and command of Christ is sharply displayed here: Christians are recruited 'to a condition in which the disciples walk in the wake of Jesus, pulled along by his movement, set in motion by him but always *unlike* him and so *behind* him'.[36]

Crucially, however, Zwingli's figuration of Christ as captain drives time and again to a single point: Christ is our captain, because he 'demands that we should risk our life in his battle', he is our captain, 'because Christianity is something for which one must be prepared to die'.[37] The turning point in the eschatological contest to which Christ recruits is undoubtedly the cross. This fact is made patent time and again in the Gospel narratives when the meaning of discipleship is inseparably welded to the advent of the kingdom of God *and* the passion of Christ. The cross thus provides one of the essential coordinates of discipleship: it represents the defining norm of the meaning and course of Christ's captaincy, and thus also to the shape of any disciplined following, even 'at a distance'.[38] The Gospels relentlessly link Jesus' teaching about his fate – in which the reality of the cross features starkly – to his instruction concerning the nature of discipleship. Mark once again provides a particularly sharp instance, embedding Jesus' most concentrated teaching on what solidarity with him as one of his company involves within a threefold series of passion predictions (Mk 8.31–10.45). Drawn together finally under the culminating rubric of 'taking up the cross' (Mt. 10.38, 16.4; Mk 8.34; Lk. 9.23), the evangelists make plain that discipleship shares in the movement of the Saviour to the cross: the existence of every believer is to be conformed to the life of the Crucified, to own him.[39] It does so in as much as it takes shape in lives of service, lives of humble self-giving for others, and as such, lives marked by suffering. For in the service of the Master who is the servant of all, and whose life is given over for all,

---

[35]Locher, 'Christ Our Captain', p. 85.
[36]Webster, 'Discipleship and Calling', p. 141.
[37]Locher, 'Christ Our Captain', pp. 84–85. Cf. 'We notice that Zwingli only speaks of "Captain Christ" when it is a question of dying; or, to be more precise, of being ready to die – of martyrdom' (p. 84).
[38]Richard B. Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996), p. 84.
[39]Roy A. Harrisville, 'Christian Life in Light of the Cross', *Lutheran Quarterly* 23 (2009), p. 228.

the epitome of faithful following can only take the shape of dispossession for the sake of others (Mk 10.42–45). As concepts of kingship and captaincy are here subjected to radical redefinition in view of the actuality of the cross, so too is the meaning of that marshal struggle into which the Christian is drawn.[40]

The substantive pattern of this witness is at once distilled and expanded in the early Christian hymn Paul cites in Philippians in a passage (2.5–11) that proves a touchstone for any account of the Christian life as discipleship. There are good reasons to be wary of a reading of the passage as a straightforward invitation to *imitatio Christi*.[41] This does not hinder the point to be made here: namely, that Christ's singular movement of *exianitio* is a movement of utter gratuity, the magnitude of which catches up those it unseats from the situation of sin and leads them to purpose (φρονέω) only that which Christ purposes, to submit to Christ's own purpose as their decisive context. In conformity with the *exianitio* of the Son of God for us – the apocalypse of the Father's limitless love – discipleship takes the form of self-giving for the neighbour in the dizzying freedom of the Gospel. In binding us to himself, Christ binds us to go with him where he goes and to those to whom he goes, namely, the hopeless, outcasts and sinners whom he makes our brothers and sisters. We do well to note that the humiliation of following Christ – the cost of discipleship – is not an end in itself. Rather, as Jesus' own way in the world is not the denial, but the affirmation and progress of eschatological life, correspondingly, the humility and sacrifice of the Christian life is but the shape freedom takes for those who live by grace, as they serve and live for others.[42] Just as the suffering of Jesus is the form divine *promeity* takes onto the cross, so too the manifold and varied 'sharing in the suffering of God in Christ' which discipleship involves is but the form assumed our own, now radically eccentric existence for others.[43] As Luther summarized the matter, explicitly glossing Phil. 2.5–8, a Christian 'like Christ his head . . . should be content with this form of God which he obtained by faith' and in evangelical liberty 'take upon himself the form of a servant . . . serve, help, and in every way deal with his neighbour as he sees that God through Christ has dealt and still deals with him'.[44]

---

[40]On the thoroughgoing redefinition of 'kingship' here see Sherman, *King, Priest and Prophet*, pp. 142–51.

[41]For concise discussion of this matter see Gerald F. Hawthorne, 'The Imitation of Christ: Discipleship in Philippians', in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (ed. R. N. Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 163–79.

[42]On this point, see Karl Barth, *Ethics* (trans. G. W. Bromiley; New York: Seabury Press, 1981), pp. 328–30. David Kelsey discusses reconciled human life under this very rubric in the second volume of his *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology* (2 vols; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).

[43]Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, DBWE 8, p. 48.

[44]Martin Luther, 'The Freedom of a Christian', p. 42.

For this reason, to speak of the holiness or sanctity of the band of Christian disciples, is to confess that in conformity with the movement of its lord, its very life lies in its 'openness to the street and even the alley, in its turning to the profanity of all human life'.[45] Only in such active service and openness to the world for whose sake Christ came low to save does the life of the Christian church tell the truth about the way things actually are. Only in such ways do Christ's disciples own him before the world, refusing in the power of the Spirit to repeat Peter's denial. To exercise the alarming evangelical freedom of a disciple in discrete times and places is to herald the advent of the kingdom. The life of discipleship is an answer to the question, 'Who is lord of the world?' Such a life – moved by the Spirit to live in freedom *from* sin and *for* both God and neighbour – can provide a powerful 'practical commentary' on the proclamation of the Gospel of God.[46] The credibility of this witness is intrinsic to the structure of discipleship: as one follows Christ 'without trying to become Christ, at a distance rather than from too nearby', one thereby manifests what Hans Frei styled an 'intimacy of total contrast which is paradoxically one with total identity'.[47] Following Jesus is no rigid mimicry. It is rather a 'participation in the quality that characterized his political being',[48] but this is so only because it is already a form of life – like Jesus' own – made possible by, and conformed to, the humiliation of the Son of God, who in coming low to save, brings the very reign of heaven with him.

Conscripted to service

To reflect upon the Christian life *qua* Christian, is to consider a human existence as it 'stands in a particular relationship to Jesus Christ, and to that extent with the subjective realisation of the atonement'.[49] In this, as we have endeavoured to show, both the identity of Jesus Christ and the distinctive relation – the character of salvation – he establishes with us prove decisive. Precisely because the advent of God in Christ involves the eruption of the Kingdom of God – the apocalypse of divine rampant grace – the provision of new life through faith in Christ 'does not aim at passivity but, on the

[45]K. Barth, *CD,* IV/1, p. 725.
[46]K. Barth, *CD,* IV/4, *The Christian Life* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), p. 270. The life of discipleship thus hopes to offer a 'persistent and joyful witness concerning Christ's present lordship in all realms of life' (Wilhelm Visser't Hooft, *The Kingship of Christ* [London: SCM Press, 1948], p. 17).
[47]Hans Frei, *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), p. 80. For discussion of Frei's contributions to understanding the 'Christological governance' of ethics, see Gene Outka, 'Following at a Distance: Ethics and the Identity of Jesus', in *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation* (ed. G. Green; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), pp. 144–60.
[48]John Howard Yoder, *The War of the Lamb: The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking* (ed. G. H. Stassen et al.; Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010), p. 80.
[49]Barth, *CD,* IV/1, p. 644.

contrary, at activity'.[50] The sterile opposition between understandings of Christian righteousness as a 'legal fiction' and as the achievement of 'work-saints' is surmounted only where salvation is seen in an eschatological perspective, where the invasion of divine grace in Christ does not merely 'remove' sin while leaving the person intact, but rather removes the person from the sin-ruled world by inaugurating a new creation.[51] One may rightly speak of the permanent relocation of disciples which Christ's eschatological claim and summons effects.[52] To be drafted into the company of Jesus' followers is to have been made, as Paul attests, a veritable 'new creation' (2 Cor. 5.17). This is to say, that the summons of Jesus – because it is the summons of the Christ, the harbinger of the reign of God – does not just instruct or inspire. Rather, it brings about a radically new situation, a place beyond the 'enmity between law and gospel'; the overwhelming assault of grace dislocates the disciple from the old world, such that Christ, as it were, becomes one's very context.[53]

It is because this is so that the life of discipleship is marked by a distinctive evangelical militancy. Indeed, to characterize the Christian life as a life of discipleship is specifically to recall that it is lived out only and ever as one is 'member of the Church militant'.[54] The Spirit-driven struggle of discipleship embraces both an inward mortification of the old Adam and an outward insurgency against the powers of the age. Enlisted by Christ – and thus also always instructed and directed afresh by his word – his disciples may exercise their evangelical freedom 'in an active dedication of their lives to [Christ's] service, and to preparation for it'; in so doing, they heed a particular call 'to engage in a specific uprising' against the perverse and unrighteous disorder which still besets and disrupts human life, the wreckage caused by the lordlessness of the anti-God powers of sin and death unleashed in the order of the fall.[55] While defeat of these powers is the very work of

[50]Helmut Gollwitzer, *Introduction of Protestant Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), pp. 151, 168.

[51]Forde, 'The Christian Life', p. 436.

[52]Cf. J. Webster, 'Discipleship as Calling', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 23 (2005), p. 134 speaks of an abiding 'dislocation'.

[53]Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, pp. 59, 62–63; Yoder, *Politics of Jesus*, p. 228, contends that the accent in the Pauline 'in Christ', falls 'not on transforming the ontology of the person (to say nothing of transforming his psychological or neurological equipment) but on transforming the perspective of the one who has accepted Christ as his context'. The claim is ecumenically acknowledged – see Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-drama* III (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), p. 385: 'Thus the "sphere" in which the Christian lives . . . is summed up by the term *en Christoi*.'

[54]Kierkegaard, *Practice in Christianity*, p. 232.

[55]K. Barth, *The Christian Life*, *CD*, IV/4 fragment (trans. G. W. Bromiley; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), pp. 211–13. The treatment of the 'lordless powers' which follows (pp. 213–33) must be read in connection with Barth's earlier discussion of the strange unreality of 'nothingness' which arises and empowers sin and evil in God's good creation, *CD,* III/3, pp. 289–368; Cf. Wolf Krötke, *Sin and Nothingness in the Theology of Karl Barth*, Studies in Reformed Theology and History ns. 10 (Princeton: Princeton Theological Seminary, 2005).

Christ himself, he graciously constitutes his company of disciples an *ecclesia militans*, a body gathered, upheld and commissioned to 'act for the dawning of the rule of God', a struggle in which they must 'rebel and fight *for* all men, even, and in the last resort precisely, for those with whom they may clash'.[56] Here, as ever, it is the character of their lord and captain which decides the identity and activity of his followers: 'if Christians were not the *militia Christi*, the *ecclesia militans*, engaged in a struggle with the human plight, it would not be Christianity or the church of Jesus Christ.'[57] In the service of the 'man for others', disciples know a kind of spiritual insomnia, a patient and sleepless attention to the movements of their Lord, the insurgency of divine love. To 'watch' with Christ and so to remain alert to his ceaseless salutary movement and direction, that is, to accompany his royal progress with *prayer* (Mt. 26.41), is the essential labour of those he has recruited to his service.

In sum, the Christian life knows the governance and direction of the risen and ascended Christ, the blessing of his captaincy. As we have seen, key to any account of Christian discipleship is full appreciation of Christ's lordship, his unique and exclusive claim upon the life of the Christian *en route* to that time when everything yet arrayed against God's graciousness will be trampled and put under foot and, like the Christian herself, will have been killed and made alive. Recognizing the eschatological character of the kingdom as that which is *coming upon us* (rather than our seeking it out) makes possible a distinctive understanding of the 'progress' of our discipleship. Whatever faithfulness we know in the matter of discipleship is a function of our being ever more fully shaped by the grace that is coming upon us in the form of Christ's love and lordship, that is, by our being overrun by 'the steady invasion of the new'.[58] In another biblical idiom, we can speak of discipleship arising only from our communion with Christ the head who directs the body, the vine who supplies life to the branches: as Yoder reminds us, 'following Jesus really means basing our action on our participation in Christ's very being. . . . We are already part of his body; we do not become so through following him. Following Jesus is the result, not the means, of our fellowship with Christ.'[59] The theological reality in any case is but one: discipleship is and remains solely an eschatological possibility arising from the gracious call and command of Christ. And as such, it is also a militant reality during the time that remains.

---

[56]Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, p. 88; Karl Barth, *Christian Life* (*CD,* IV/4), pp. 208–10.
[57]Barth, *The Christian Life*, p. 211.
[58]Forde, 'The Lutheran View', p. 39.
[59]John Howard Yoder, *Discipleship as Political Responsibility* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2003), p. 61.

12

Prayer

Ashley Cocksworth

'Christianity is dogmatical, devotional, practical all at once.'[1] So Newman wrote in his acclaimed essay on the development of Christian doctrine. One of the curious features of the way Christian doctrine has developed in much of modern theological discourse, however, is just how separate the dogmatical has become from both the devotional and the practical. Put differently, there is too often too sharp a distinction between theology and prayer. What was once an organic and intrinsic relation, which took with utmost seriousness the guiding principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi* (the law of prayer is the law of belief), has gradually been pried apart and pushed into two discrete disciplines – each of which can seem to conduct its own internal conversations.[2] This risks a rather uneasy situation: a theologically unsatisfying account of prayer and a spiritually thin understanding of

[1]John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989), p. 36.

[2]The idea that those on the hunt for a book on prayer will likely be directed to the 'devotional' section of a Christian bookstore and not to the systematic theology sections, and that many introductory textbooks on Christian doctrine rarely include sections on prayer and its associated themes, demonstrates something of the problems we face. An example of a recent attempt to reinstate 'spirituality' can be found in the 2005 edition of *The Modern Theologians*. This third edition includes for the first time a section on 'Theology, Prayer and Practice'. Of particular interest is Mark A. McIntosh, 'Theology and Spirituality', in David F. Ford and Rachel Muers (eds), *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918* (Oxford: Blackwell, 3rd edn, 2005), pp. 392–407. Two further exceptions to the trend include: Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (eds), *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) and David F. Ford and Daniel W. Hardy, *Living in Praise: Worshipping and Knowing God* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, rev. edn, 2005).

theology and the nature of its task. As Gavin D'Costa argues in his bold reimagining of a prayerful theology in the public square: 'theologians need to learn to pray, as part of their vocation as theologians'.[3] That theologians might attempt to do theology without prayer would have been unthinkable for much of Christian history.

A number of different narratives are told to suggest how, why and when this breakdown between theology and prayer might have occurred. The narratives are as complex as they are varied: for some, the divorce was the product of a long and drawn-out process reaching as far back as the twelfth century with the recovery of a certain form of Aristotelian logic;[4] for others, it was due to the migration of the centre of learning from monastery to cathedral school and to its final resting place in the secularity of the modern university;[5] and for others still, it had a lot to do with the Enlightenment's shunning of prayer as insufficiently *wissenschaftlich* (or at least as intellectually incredible) from doctrinal and ethical discourse.[6] All this is reinforced by the current (over-)organization of university faculties that distinguish too heavily practical theology departments from departments of theology and also by the stark separation of seminaries and universities.[7] Much more could be said on all of this.

One reaction is to begin a process of *ressourcement*, of returning to some of the patristic, mediaeval and reformation sources that get behind the modern tendency to sharpen the distinction between theology and prayer in order to inculcate a spiritually rich understanding of theology.[8] Over the last few years, there has been a number of key studies that shake up and enrich existing scholarship on Calvin, for example.[9] One of the fascinating features of these suggestive re-readings is not only that a concern for spiritual

---

[3]Gavin D'Costa, *Theology in the Public Square: Church, Academy and Nation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), p. 112.

[4]See Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd), p. 39; and Miroslav Volf, 'Theology for a Way of Life', in Volf and Bass (eds), *Practicing Theology*, pp. 245–63.

[5]See McIntosh, 'Theology and Spirituality', p. 394.

[6]See Immanuel Kant, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings* (ed. and trans. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 181, 184.

[7]See Edward Farley, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983).

[8]See Rowan Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to St John of the Cross* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2nd edn, 1990); Sarah Coakley, 'Deepening Practices: Perspectives from Ascetical and Mystical Theology', in Volf and Bass (eds), *Practicing Theology*, pp. 78–93; and Anna Williams, 'Mystical Theology Redux: The Pattern of Aquinas's *ST*', *Modern Theology* 13.1 (1997), pp. 53–74.

[9]Each in their own way has pushed this same concern: see J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), esp. chapter 4; Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010); and Matthew Myer Boulton, *Life in God: John Calvin, Practical Formation, and the Future of Protestant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

formation is established beyond dispute as central to Calvin's doctrinal convictions but also that these concerns uncover a renewed appreciation of the Reformer's nuanced sense of participation in Christ. A relationship therefore is revealed between the practice of prayer and participation in the divine life. The attention to prayer and spiritual practices, then, goes someway to relieve Calvin from the well-worn charge of betraying a weak grammar of participation that undercuts any active reciprocity of the divine–human relation. The complaint that Calvin produces an unhelpfully 'unilateral' account of the agential exchange has been waxed often and forcefully in the reception of his thought and most recently, perhaps, by the proponents of Radical Orthodoxy.[10]

The underlying concern of this chapter, however, is to arrive at an affirmation of the integrity of prayer and theology by way of twentieth-century theology to suggest that there is a spiritual theology to be found in an unlikely figure from the *evangelical* tradition: Karl Barth. The argument unfolds in two sections. The first looks in more detail at the interrelation between prayer and theology. The second section borrows resources from Barth's theology to consider what might be called the *sanctification of prayer*: what does Christian prayer, sanctified by grace, look like?

Theology: Sanctified by prayer

Barth's contribution to Christian dogmatics is well documented; his contribution to the tradition of Christian spirituality, however, is less obvious. Barth not only has a surprising amount to say about issues of prayer and produces a strong and vibrant theology of prayer in its own right, but more importantly, he produces a *liturgical* theology.[11] Throughout his writings, prayer provides Barth with a theological methodology. Fresh out of the liturgical environment of his Safenwil pastorate, he began his first cycle of dogmatic lectures with a prayer from Thomas;[12] he insisted at the very beginning of his *Church Dogmatics* that 'prayer is the attitude without which there can be no dogmatic work';[13] in *The Humanity of God*, in which Barth reflects on his theological development, he admitted that 'the old saying, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, far from being a pious statement, is

[10]See Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), pp. 156–57. For a persuasive correction see Billings' *Calvin, Participation and the Gift*.

[11]For the most recent treatment of the subject see Ashley Cocksworth, *Karl Barth's Theology of Prayer* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, forthcoming).

[12]Karl Barth, *The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion* (trans. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 3.

[13]Karl Barth, *CD*, 4 volumes in 13 parts (ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956–75), I/1, p. 23 – hereafter, *CD*, followed by volume, part and page references.

one of the most profound descriptions of the theological method';[14] and he included a chapter on prayer in his *Evangelical Theology*, which forms his most mature reflections on the task of theology.[15]

But Barth goes further than beginning and ending his theology in prayer. In the text cited above, he insists that 'theological work must really and truly take place in the form of a liturgical act, as invocation of God, and as prayer'.[16] Singled out by Barth as the prayerful theologian *par excellence* is Anselm who, in his *Proslogion*, 'actually unfolded all that he had to say concerning God's existence and essence in the form of a direct address to God, as a single prayer from beginning to end'.[17] The same complex interrelating of prayer and theology can be famously found in Augustine's *Confessions*.[18] In a similar way, the *Church Dogmatics* can be seen to play with the boundary of theology and prayer and the effect is quite powerful, if not immediately obvious: Barth's theology, undertaken in prayer, leads the reader to a position of prayer. Prayer is both where his life's work literally ends (with a sustained but incomplete engagement with the petitions of the Lord's Prayer) but also more generally the overall implication of his theology. Therefore, owing much to the narratival structure of the fourth volume, the *Church Dogmatics* was written in such a way as to draw the reader into that story of reconciliation so that the very act of reading the *Church Dogmatics* is spiritually formative. Barth's theology, Mark McIntosh argues, 'is truly designed to be transformative, to be truthful in orientating the reader towards the abiding mystery of God's love'.[19] The curious confusion of genres becomes explicit in the final lectures with which Barth ended his long and industrious lecturing career, published posthumously as *The Christian Life*.[20] At once, this is a dogmatical text on the Lord's Prayer and an act of devotion; at points, Barth even bursts into praise and prayer.

For Barth, then, the relation between the practices of prayer and theology is one of deep and messy entanglement. Theology and prayer are inextricably and complexly intertwined and any temptation to tidy up that relation or iron out the complexities, so that prayer and theology assume some independence from one another, produces distorted understandings of both. One possible distortion is the risk of prayer slipping into some sort of heavily

---

[14]Karl Barth, *The Humanity of God* (trans. J. N. Thomas and T. Weiser; London: Collins, 1961), p. 90.

[15]Karl Barth, *Evangelical Theology: An Introduction* (trans. Grover Foley; London: Collins, 1965), pp. 159–70.

[16]Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, p. 164.

[17]Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, pp. 164–65.

[18]See Denys Turner, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), chapter 3.

[19]See Mark A. McIntosh, 'Humanity in God: On Reading Karl Barth in Relation to Mystical Theology', *Heythrop Journal* 34.1 (1993), pp. 22–40 (22–23).

[20]Karl Barth, *The Christian Life: CD,* IV/4, *Lecture Fragments* (trans. G. W. Bromiley; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981) – hereafter, *ChrL*.

spiritualized and undefined devotional ghetto that is comfortably safe from critical theological scrutiny and distanced from the type of serious inquiry that holds to account any other Christian doctrine. Under these conditions, the most overwhelmingly 'ec-centric' action of all the things we can do is in danger of becoming a purely private matter and reduced to something that 'I' do in set times of formal ritual.[21] This distorted understanding of prayer is underwritten with an insatiable expectation to 'succeed' in what I am doing, which has the knock-on effect of leaving the doctrine of prayer vulnerable to being testable and its success measurable in crude ways.[22]

The consequence of severing theology from the concrete practices of prayer is even more serious. Following Augustine and Anselm, Barth demands that our 'thought and speech cannot be *about* God, but must be directed *toward* God, called into action by the divine thought and speech directed to men, and following and corresponding to this work of God'.[23] In other words, a theologian who has forgotten how to pray does not simply produce something spiritually stale and disconnected from the Christian life of discipleship, but is doing something other than theology. Theological work, without losing its claim to what Rowan Williams calls 'theological integrity',[24] should be fundamentally unembarrassed about the fact it 'does not merely begin with prayer and is not merely accompanied by it; in its totality it is peculiar and characteristic of theology that it can be performed only in the act of prayer'.[25] If the glorification of God is to be our chief aim in all that we do, as the Westminster Catechism famously has it, then this must include our doing theology.

The very practice of describing God's ways in the world, before all else, is an act of glorification. Our understanding of God, and also the self, emerge precisely out of the startlingly transformative relationship with the God into whom we are drawn in prayer. This is a point Barth knew well. Part of Barth's allergy to natural theology, of course, had to do with determining the right ordering of thought and protecting the axiomatic priority of God's self-revelation. No knowledge of God or the self, Barth insisted, can be gained by bypassing the revelation of God in Christ. To do theology, then, is to do it *nachdenklich* ('thinking-after'). In other words, theology is the critical thinking that takes place *after* (and not before) an experience of contemplating the actuality of God's self-disclosure and the encounter of 'being reconciled' in the grace of the God about whom theology tries so hard to speak.[26] In this sense, theology has already begun and all our speech-

[21]See Barth, *ChrL*, p. 94.
[22]For example, Candy Gunther Brown, *Testing Prayer: Science and Healing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).
[23]Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, p. 164.
[24]Rowan Williams, 'Theological Integrity', in *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 3–15.
[25]Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, p. 160.
[26]Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge*, p. 2.

about-God takes place in obedient and humble 'following and corresponding' to this prior divine act.[27] Whatever we say about God gains truth only as it is said within the graced site of the divine–human encounter. The very practice of theology is absolutely dependent, then, upon being addressed by the reality of a prior agency in such a way that does not extinguish but invites a subsequent human response in the form of a faith that seeks not only understanding but also holiness, love and, above all else, wisdom (as Ellen Charry draws out well in this volume).

At this point a dialectic can be detected. Performing theology on our knees is a confession of the brokenness of human speech about God: theology can only ever be undertaken in that most humble and penitential of postures and in fear and trembling. A theologian on her knees, like the great Christian saints, is characterized by a 'readiness to be questioned, stripped naked and left speechless by that which lies at the centre of their faith'.[28] As Nicholas Lash argues, prayer means 'to *give back* our language, and our understanding and ourselves' to be radically reshaped and transformed, overturned and refilled with new meaning and significance.[29] At the very same time, however, and this is when the other side of the dialectic kicks in, prayer imbues us with an unshakable confidence to proceed dogmatically with strong speech about God. In the bold humility of prayer, we can talk about God precisely because our thought and speech is 'directed *towards* God'.[30]

This volume is an important contribution to the on-going task of reinstating the intrinsic relation between the practices of the church and its theological knowledge. This fourth part, which considers the practices of discipleship, prayer, theology, proclamation and, finally, forgiveness and reconciliation, demonstrates that the particular practices of the Christian life are far from disconnected from traditional doctrinal *loci* but inform, and in turn are informed by, the doctrines that we normally associate with the intellectual pursuit of theology. This means that although this chapter on 'Prayer' precedes one on 'Theology', the distinction is in place only materially for there is no formal separation between the task of theology and the practice of prayer – both aspects follow the chief practice of grace: 'Discipleship' (Chapter 11). It is entirely appropriate, therefore, that Philip Ziegler also finds in prayer an answer to his guiding question of how the life of discipleship should be characterized.[31]

---

[27]Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, p. 164.
[28]Williams, *The Wound of Knowledge*, p. 1.
[29]Nicholas Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God* (London: SCM, 1992), p. 81.
[30]Barth, *Evangelical Theology*, p. 164.
[31]There is an ethical and political dimension to the theology of prayer being pushed in this present chapter that is strong but cannot be developed here. Two good examples include Stanley Hauerwas and Samuel Wells (eds), *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004) and Bernd Wannenwetsch, *Political Worship: Ethics for Christian Citizens* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

There is a temptation, however, to imagine that doctrines precede (either in chronological or normative terms) practices. It could be thought that a doctrinal position is determined, say on the divinity of the person of Jesus Christ, which then (and only then) finds its liturgical expression in practice, say in the practice of praying *to* the Son and the Father. Here the dogmatic groundwork on the consubstantiality of the Father and Son is then applied to practices of praying.

However, Geoffrey Wainwright, Maurice Wiles and others have undercut some of the neatness of this narrative by rightly arguing that the development of Christian doctrine in general (and early Christological doctrine in particular) was a rather messy affair.[32] On these readings, since the early Christians gained their identity as much through what they did as in what they believed, practices and belief were much more tangled together to provide a complex point of departure for theological reflection. Part of what practices of prayer do, therefore, is to push and challenge Christian doctrine. No more so than, as David Ford and Daniel Hardy argue, in terms of beginning a 'revolution' in the doctrine of God. 'The explosion of thanks and praise in the early church unavoidably raised the question of God and especially of the relation of Jesus to God.'[33] Rather than proceeding with the confidence of doctrinal security, practices of praying to the Son as well as the Father, to keep with our example, invited doctrinal reflection on the divinity of the Son.[34]

But there is a further sense in which doctrine is unthinkable without prayer. Many of the New Testament descriptions of the Trinity occur in doxological contexts – the baptism of Jesus, the farewell discourses in John, the baptismal formula of the Great Commission (Mt. 28.19) and, perhaps most suggestively, in those tantalizing verses in Rom. 8, especially vv. 16–18: 'When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ – if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.' A trinitarian grammar regulates our talk of God and our prayerful practices long before it received any sort of formal doctrinal expression. There is something, therefore, iconoclastic about prayer. As Williams suggests, prayer determines that our talk about God is the talk about the true triune God and not some product of our own projection.[35] Indeed, the very first claim this particular volume makes about

---

[32]See Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life* (London: Epworth, 1980); Maurice Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine: A Study in the Principles of Early Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967); and, more recently, James J. Buckley and David S. Yeago (eds), *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

[33]Ford and Hardy, *Living in Praise*, p. 68.

[34]For more on the humanity of Christ as a crucial part of liturgical prayer see the classic work J. A. Jungmann, *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer* (London: Chapman, 2nd edn, 1989).

[35]In Williams, 'Theological Integrity'.

God is that God is Trinity (Chapter 1) and this must regulate *all* that we say about God's action in the world and all else that we do as those elected to participate in God's action in the world. Everything must be reconceived in light of the Trinity. A trinitarian account of God also contains within it a particular way of thinking of God's relation to and activity in creation; and (as we shall see below) a poorly conceived trinitarian grammar leads to misunderstood assumptions about the very nature of prayer.

This chicken and egg discourse is unresolvable, however: how can we really pray to God without knowing at least something about the triune God to whom we pray? But how do we know anything about the God to whom we pray without being drawn precisely into the relationship with that God in prayer? It is unresolvable because it conceives the relationship wrongly. How so? Theology and prayer are not separable items that now need to be brought back into a 'closer' relation but rather the two practices are best understood as so totally reciprocal that they cannot properly be thought apart from one another. Any competition for methodological priority is based on false assumptions. This is getting to the heart of what is meant by *lex orandi, lex credendi* and we are beginning to arrive at a position at which the advancement of theological understanding and the deepening of a spiritual life of prayer are seen as one.[36] The particular practice of prayer is grounded in the self-giving freedom of the triune God, and, in turn, Christian doctrine is developed, stretched and advanced through a commitment to an unashamedly prayerful life.

Prayer: Sanctified by grace

Part of theology's task of being for the service of the church is to hold Christian practices to some sort of theological account. In that spirit, we now turn to some of the theological mechanics involved in what we do when we gather to pray and ask one of the key questions in the theology of prayer: how is it possible to pray and, moreover, to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17) while being unable to pray as we ought (Rom. 8.26)? What resources are available in expressly doctrinally orientated material to help us think through this issue? With Barth as our guide, this section explores the *sanctification of prayer* and how prayer, the paradigmatic human work, is made holy by the Spirit to participate in nothing less than the prayer of Jesus Christ. But before we can reveal what prayer sanctified by grace might look like some groundwork is necessary.

First, as mentioned above, some of the richness of what is meant by prayer is denied if it is confined to a momentary or episodic ritualistic performance.

[36]This theme, and many of this chapter's interests, are developed further in Ashley Cocksworth, *Prayer: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, forthcoming).

If it is truly to be the 'underlying note and basis of all human action', as Barth envisions, then prayer happens all over the place and undergirds, in some way or another, everything that we do.[37] Second, prayer is best understood in terms of *movement*, and a cosmic one at that. In the broadest possible terms, the mysterious movement of prayer is part of the much larger story of salvation. This story is imaginatively narrated in Barth's Christological retelling of the story of the prodigal son, around which the fourth volume of the *Church Dogmatics* is organized: the Son of God journeys into the far country (*CD*, IV/1) and the Son of Man returns home (*CD*, IV/2). We can apply the same conceptuality onto the movement of prayer to say that prayer begins with an action of the priestly office of Christ (*CD*, IV/1), and therefore with a divine action that takes place on our behalf; and then our human response to this prior divine act is gathered up by the Holy Spirit, or better sanctified, in Christ's kingly office (*CD*, IV/2).[38] At this point the mode of participation shifts from a divine action that takes place for us to a divine action in which we participate actively: Christ's homecoming is our homecoming; Christ's movement upwards is our *sursum corda*. And, as the part-volume corresponding to the prophetic office of Christ (*CD*, IV/3) reveals, these two movements – the divine movement downwards and the divine–human movement upwards – are two sides of the same story of salvation.

Earlier we stated the truism that the doctrine of God matters to the way we pray. Now we can show why this is the case. James Torrance sets up a distinction between two views on worship. First, the 'unitarian' view. This is the idea that prayer is 'something which we, religious people, do – mainly in church on Sunday'. Torrance continues, 'this view . . . has no doctrine of the Mediator or sole priesthood of Christ, is human-centered, has no proper doctrine of the Holy Spirit, is too often non-sacramental, and can engender weariness'.[39] This is rejected, of course, on the grounds that it

---

[37]Barth, *CD,* III/4, p. 89.

[38]If we follow Jüngel's analysis of the architectonics of *The Christian Life*, it appears that the central paragraphs of the volume accord with the central paragraphs of the doctrine of reconciliation. This means, then, that Barth's theology of prayer, as developed in the ethics of reconciliation, should be read alongside volume IV/2 – and it is there, of course, that Barth not only develops his theology of the Office of Christ the King but also his theology of sanctification. This is merely to note, then, that if Jüngel is right, there is already an intrinsic relation between the doctrine of sanctification and the practice of prayer. See Eberhard Jüngel, 'Invocation of God as the Ethical Ground of Christian Action: Introductory Remarks on the Posthumous Fragments of Karl Barth's Ethics of the Doctrine of Reconciliation', in *Theological Essays I* (trans. John Webster; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), pp. 154–72. It should be noted that an intrinsic relation between the doctrine of sanctification and the practice of prayer is also detectable in Calvin's positioning of his long chapter on prayer in the *Institutes* within the broader context of sanctification.

[39]James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), p. 7.

leads, among other things, to the exclusion of participation. Under these conditions, which miss the trajectory of priestly mediation, prayer ends up becoming the tiresome task of trying, at a distance, to gain heavenly attention, to rouse God into action or to provide God with certain already-known information. 'No', Herbert McCabe writes, 'for traditional theology, prayer is not our attempt to gain the Father's attention, prayer is not in fact primarily a human activity, it is something we do in virtue of being divine, it is, to use the traditional language, the work of grace in us, the expression of our trinitarian life'.[40] We pray aright not at distance from God but in the closest possible participation; in fact, we pray 'in union with what Jesus Christ is doing for us at the right hand of God', as Barth claims.[41]

Herein lies the somewhat counter-intuitive claim that prayer is not something that *we* autonomously do but instead the action of another, of the trinitarian God, upon us. For Barth, in prayer 'all masks and camouflages may and must fall away' and one of these masks is that the human agent is the engine of initiation and therefore capable of praying by herself.[42] The prayerful unmasking reveals the ethical agent as being absolutely dependent on a prior agency which is not her own. Prayer is not something we do precisely because prayer is not something we *can* do. That we cannot pray as we ought is not, however, a curse but a blessing. Moreover, the realization of our inability to pray marks the beginning of *true* prayer. But all this needs spelling out further.

As soon as we imagine that prayer is something we can do then Christ's mediatory work is rejected and replaced with a vaunted assessment of human potential. Torrance describes this situation aptly: 'the only priesthood is our priesthood, the only offering our offering, the only intercessions our intercessions'.[43] Under these conditions, Feuerbach's suspicion of prayer is proved right and prayer becomes a sort of cathartic therapy that aims to alter the state of the inner consciousness.[44] To prevent these Feuerbachian tendencies from bubbling over into a full-blown subjectivism of prayer, what is needed is a strong theology of the priesthood of Christ and an unflinching commitment to the doctrine of the Trinity. The 'unitarian' view of prayer, then, is critically contrasted by Torrance with a second model, one this time regulated by a properly trinitarian grammar. An understanding of prayer which is parsed through a robustly trinitarian doctrine of God produces a very different theology of prayer and makes prayer to be less something that we do and more

---

[40]Herbert McCabe, *God Still Matters* (ed. Brian Davies; London: Continuum, 2005), p. 71.
[41]Barth, *ChrL*, p. 91.
[42]Barth, *CD*, III/4, p. 98.
[43]Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace,* p. 7.
[44]See Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* (trans. George Eliot; Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1957), pp. 162–69.

> the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father. It means participating, in union with Christ, in what he has done for us, once and for all, in his self-offering to the Father, in his life and death on the cross. It also means participating in what he is continuing to do for us in the presence of the Father and in his mission from the Father to the world.[45]

In other words, we are relieved from the anxiety of being unable to pray as we ought because prayer is now understood in terms of an activity that is happening within the trinitarian God and in which we are graciously invited to participate. And on this basis we genuinely partake in the life of the triune God. Barth writes that 'in Him we are set at God's side and lifted up to Him and therefore to the place where decisions are made in the affairs of His government'.[46] Make no mistake, though, this strong sense of participation, genuine though it is, does not usurp the traditional Reformed emphasis on the radical distinction between God and humanity: the divine and human do not fuse in prayer. Barth writes that God and humanity are 'two partners of different kinds, acting differently, so that they cannot be exchanged or equated. God cannot be compared, confused, or intermingled with man, nor man with God. They are totally unlike . . . Any reversal or obscuring of the distinction between the two is impossible'.[47] So although prayer even 'moves the heart of God', we do not in prayer become God.[48]

Any partaking in the triune life of God is based, then, on at least two doctrinal assumptions: first, that it is rooted firmly in the doctrine of creation, which insists on the correct Creator–creature relationship and secures the human particularity of prayer; and second, that this participation follows God's chosen means of ascent – and for Barth this means that we do not participate alone but that 'we are set there; we are lifted up to that place' by the work of the Holy Spirit.[49] Here the Reformation principles of *sola gratia* (prayer is about grace, not achievement) and *solo Christo* are never far from sight: the Son's union with the Father is for our participation and for our bold inclusion, through the work of the Spirit, into the life of the triune God.

This is where the type of theology of prayer pushed by someone like Barth is fundamentally opposed to the type of prayer understood by much of that which passes for a theology of prayer found in the devotional sections of Christian bookstores. Instead of marketing ways of praying better and ways of making prayer easier, Barth's theology of prayer works from the very opposite assumption: prayer is actually difficult, nay, impossible. Therefore,

---

[45]Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace,* p. 8.
[46]Barth, *CD,* III/3, p. 287.
[47]Barth, *ChrL*, p. 27.
[48]Barth, *CD,* III/3, p. 288.
[49]Barth, *CD,* III/3, p. 287.

'the invocation "Our Father," and all the Christian life and ethos implicit in this invocation, can never at any stage or in any form be anything but the work of beginners'.[50] If prayer is not something we do then it is certainly not an activity in which we can improve in the same way that we get better at, say, playing the flute.

> What Christians do becomes a self-contradiction when it takes the form of a trained and mastered routine, of a learned and practiced art. They may and can be masters and even virtuosos in many things, but never in what makes them Christians, God's children. As masters and virtuosos they would not live by God's grace.[51]

There is something refreshing about Barth's magisterial confidence in the sheer difficulty of prayer, even if it can be seen to impact negatively on aspects of his doctrine of sanctification.[52]

That we cannot pray as we ought is the most overwhelming gift because it leads to the good news that 'He, Jesus Christ, is properly and really the One who prays.'[53] 'This man prayed', Barth writes; he prayed in his earthly life and continues to intercede for us as he sits at the right hand of the Father.[54] The Gospels frequently depict Jesus alone in prayer, praying early in the morning and withdrawn from others (see Mk 1.35, 14.32–42 and 15.34).[55] Whatever else human prayer might be, therefore, it is first and foremost a response to the great high priest's vicarious prayer: 'I am asking on their behalf' (Jn 17.9). However, the movement of prayer does not end with this Christological movement downwards but is complemented and completed by a pneumatological movement upwards that brings the human prayer into participation with Christ's prayer (Gal. 4.6). This priority of Christ's prayer does not extinguish or remove but rather engenders, awakens and empowers a human response.

At this point we must pause to show more clearly the two modes of participation involved in the movement of prayer: (i) Jesus Christ is the one who prays, and the one who prays on our behalf as our representative before the Father. However, in so doing Christ provides an example of how

---

[50]Barth, *ChrL*, p. 79.
[51]Barth, *ChrL*, p. 79.
[52]I am thinking here of George Hunsinger's critique that 'Barth knew how to highlight the "once-for-all" and the "again and again" aspect of our dying and rising with Christ, but unfortunately failed to do justice to the "more and more" aspects as well.' See *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), pp. 274–75.
[53]Barth, *CD*, III/4, p. 94.
[54]Barth, *CD*, III/3, p. 276.
[55]David Crump even suggests that in Luke Jesus' prayers take on a self-revelatory significance. In praying, the disciples gained a greater awareness of who Jesus was, particularly through Jesus' regular and daring address to God as *Abba*. See his *Jesus the Intercessor: Prayer and Christology in Luke-Acts* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1992).

to pray aright: he is the one who 'teaches it [the creature] to pray'.[56] As the disciples ask Jesus how to pray he says 'pray, then, like this' and prays the Lord's Prayer (Mt. 6.9–13). At this point Christ's action is broadly examplarist: he gives us an example of what prayer looks like so that we can pray for ourselves. And there are many references to Jesus teaching his disciples how to pray (Mt. 6.5–8; Lk. 3.21, 5.16, 6.12, 9.18, 28–29).[57] This is something quite different to the assumption that we can now pray *by* ourselves, however. Christ is not just our teacher and our example but also our saviour. 'As our *Saviour* Christ has commanded and taught us', so runs the traditional liturgical formula. Grace is understood, then, not only in terms of information (in this case, in the transmission of otherwise unknown information about prayer in the form of the Lord's Prayer) but also in the more radical terms of *transformation*. What this means is that (ii) by praying in the unsubstitutable name of Jesus (and precisely not in *our* name) our prayers are taken up by the Holy Spirit so that what is fundamentally fallen and sinful is transformed within to participate in Christ's own ongoing prayer. This is the sanctification of prayer: taking what is unholy and making it aright.

These two moments (of Christ's action for us and with us) produce a very strong Christology of prayer. 'He is not just one who prays, not even one who prays best. He is sheer prayer', writes McCabe.[58] Part of what McCabe means here is not simply that Jesus is the pray-er *par excellence* who committed himself to ritual practices of prayer, but that Christ is the perfect expression of the union of divine and human agency – and this is exactly what prayer is about. Prayer is 'heaven in ordinarie, man well-drest' as George Herbert has it.[59] This is surely part of what Barth, young in his lecturing career, meant by his insistence that 'prayer is the actualization of our eschatological reality'.[60] Therefore, if Christ is sheer prayer, then prayer is even more than participating in Christ's prayer, it is to participate in that intimate relationship of oneness that exists between the Father and the Son. Prayer is the flooding of earth with the unceasing prayer of heaven. It is an anticipation of the time when we can finally pray as we ought and when perfect communion between the triune God and his glorified people finally is restored. Consequently, prayer is much more than asking God for this and that: it is to do the very thing than enacts our humanity most fully, it is to participate in the very relationship the Son shares with his Father,

[56]Karl Barth, *Prayer* (ed. Don E. Saliers; trans. Sara F. Terrier; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), p. 17.
[57]See I. Howard Marshall, 'Jesus – Example and Teacher of Prayer in the Synoptic Gospels', in Richard N. Longenecker (ed.), *Into God's Presence: Prayer in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), pp. 113–31.
[58]McCabe, *God Still Matters*, p. 69.
[59]George Herbert, 'Prayer I', in Helen Wilcox (ed.), *The English Poems of George Herbert* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 178.
[60]Karl Barth, *Ethics* (trans. G. W. Bromiley; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), pp. 272–73.

made available to us through the Holy Spirit in the here and now. McCabe continues, 'our stance in prayer is not simply, or even primarily, that of the creature before the creator but that of the Son before the Father. . . . Our praying is an expression in history of our eternal trinitarian life'.[61]

This human participation in Christ's prayer is the means by which our prayers are sanctified. Torrance writes: 'Christ takes what is ours (our broken lives and unworthy prayers), sanctifies them, offers them without spot or wrinkle to the Father . . . He takes our prayers and makes them his prayers, and he makes his prayers our prayers.'[62] However, at risk at this model is that prayer becomes subsumed so much into the work of the Son that there is no longer any room for human agency and human prayer therefore loses some of its humanness. In this sense prayer would be reduced to a *divine* monologue and the human agent to a passive bystander. Agentially, then, there is an unhelpful objectivism detectable in Torrance's account. But, for Barth, 'above all, let us not begin by believing that humankind is passive, that we are in a sort of *farniente* ["do nothing"], in an armchair . . . Never! Humankind is impelled to pray. We must do it'.[63] Barth can avoid this problem by parsing his account of the sanctification of prayer with appeal to the idea of 'transformation'. It is worth pushing this idea of transformation further: the transformation of what, exactly?

There is indeed something of the Augustinian notion that prayer involves the transformation of desire in Barth.[64] However, while human desire is certainly transformed by the practice of prayer, the transformation Barth has in mind is something more radical. He describes a 'transformation of the prayer itself'.[65] God participates in us, enters into our life and transforms us from within, so that we can participate in the life of the triune God. Consequently, he imagines that the 'whole of human egoism, the whole of human anxiety, cupidity, desire and passion, or at least the whole of human short-sightedness, unreasonableness and stupidity, might flow into prayer (and that by divine commandment!), as the effluent from the chemical factories of Basel is discharged into the Rhine'.[66] But so long as these prayers are prayed in the name of Jesus, there will be a 'transformation, of the prayer itself. God's hearing begins when he receives the prayer as he himself has transformed'.[67] There is a Eucharistic undertone implicit in this action: similar to the way Jesus takes bread and wine, the stuff of everyday, and makes them holy there is a sanctification of the domestic as Christ takes

[61]McCabe, *God Still Matters*, p. 70.
[62]Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*, p. 2.
[63]Barth, *Prayer*, p. 20.
[64]For an interesting outworking of this theme see James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009).
[65]Barth, *ChrL*, p. 107.
[66]Barth, *CD*, III/4, pp. 100–1.
[67]Barth, *ChrL*, p. 107.

what is everyday and hallows it, makes it holy and aright. The trinitarian movement of prayer is now complete.

The intervention of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit . . . makes our human asking a movement in the cycle which goes out from God and returns to God. And this means that although what we do is in itself very unholy, even when we pray, it will not fail to be sanctified.[68] Or to put it in the negative, the claim Barth is making is that the divine descent is incomplete without the divine–human ascent in prayer.

This story of prayer's movement upwards to be made aright by God's sanctifying grace is a retelling of the story that has been retold by many writers in the Christian tradition of spirituality: it is Barth's way of retelling the story of 'the ascent of the soul'.[69] Barth's rendition of this celebrated story is both entirely Christologically disciplined and includes a strong doctrine of the third article. Human prayer is sanctified not merely to relate externally to Christ's prayer but precisely to participate, through the Holy Spirit, in the here and now of Christ's present praying and therefore to partake in God's very life.

Conclusion

It is hoped that this chapter, along with the overall intentions of this volume, has gone some way to blunt the sharp distinction between theology and prayer. It has suggested that Karl Barth is an example of someone who stands in the tradition of *lex orandi, lex credendi*: he places prayer at the centre of his theological and ethical vision and conducts all his theology in the posture of prayer. The chapter has also applied some of the rich dogmatic resources available in Barth's theology to investigate the sanctification of prayer by the grace of God. The centrality of prayer in Barth's writings means that, for Barth, Christian theology will always be dogmatical, practical and devotional and must lead, therefore, to the transformation of character, personal and corporate. And it is on a practical note that these reflections on the sanctification of prayer will close: a responsible theology of prayer takes us to the actual practice of prayer and to the recognition that the practice of theology was prayer all along. As McCabe writes, 'prayer (like loving) is something you only begin to understand . . . if you do it'.[70] And as we do it, we find ourselves participating in the life of God, Father, Son and Spirit.

---

[68]Barth, *CD*, III/4, p. 101.
[69]See Barth, *ChrL*, p. 153.
[70]McCabe, *God Still Matters*, p. 215.

13

Theology

Ellen T. Charry

The craft of theology is often captured by the phrase 'faith seeking understanding' implying that theology is a purely intellectual activity. On this view, the modern concern to articulate the cognitive coherence of doctrines so that they appear as a smooth pattern or picture intends to demonstrate their 'truth' and so compel assent that may be thought to effect 'salvation' or at least hope in one's personal escape from divine wrath. This construal of the theological craft was a response to the theological crisis of modernity that occurred when Christian claims could no longer be credibly believed to refer to the objects of which they speak. With the referential criterion of truth dissolved, theologians adopted a different criterion of truth. If empirical evidence could not be marshalled to support Christian claims perhaps support for their coherence could be demonstrated and suffice instead. Arguing for truth as the coherence of ideas became the chief concern of systematic theology, a craft that took shape in the seventeenth century.

Yet a volume that asks about practices of the Christian life as means of grace that sanctify believers challenges the modern view that understanding alone suffices to empower a godly life. It is one thing to press doctrines to display feasibility, another to press them to *edify* and *enlighten* believers morally and psychologically for practical wisdom for daily living. Pressing Christian beliefs beyond cogency turns theology in quite another direction – from ideas to the psychological and moral effects they may have on believers. In what follows, I articulate theology as a sanctifying practice of

the Christian life, one that integrates understanding with love for practical wisdom. To illustrate the problem to be overcome I begin by considering two revered systematic theologians who hold the modern intellectualist vision of theology, Wolfhart Pannenberg (b. 1928) and B. B. Warfield (1851–1921). Their understanding of the theological craft and its limitations will enable us to identify a missing piece in the modern theological vision. In contrast to their purely intellectualist vision of the theological task I consider how St Bonaventure construed theology as a sanctifying practice: faith seeking *holiness*. Then, to fill in the vision of theology that engages the moral imagination, I turn to Augustine, Calvin and Paul for whom the theological craft is faith seeking love for practical wisdom. Finally I offer two examples of theology as a means of grace for a holy life.

Faith seeking understanding

In his *Introduction to Systematic Theology*, Wolfhart Pannenberg argued that the task of his craft is to determine 'the truth' of Christian doctrines flowing from and supported by the doctrine of God by demonstrating their coherence which he claims 'provides the final criterion of truth'.[1] 'The reason' for relying on coherence 'is that truth itself is systematic, because coherence belongs to the nature of truth'.[2] To assuage the unclarity of that statement, Pannenberg offers examples. The claim that all finite reality depends on the God of Israel who is the God of Jesus Christ is to be made plausible by 'present[ing] a coherent model of the world as God's creation'.[3] The doctrine of divine power and goodness that can defeat the challenge of evil 'should be able to nourish and substantiate the confidence that the world of finite reality is indeed susceptible of a coherent interpretation as being created by God'.[4] Again, the task of substantiating 'the truth claims of Christian language about God [are] met by attempting a comprehensive and coherent account of the world as God's creation, including the economy

[1]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), p. 6.

[2]Pannenberg, *Introduction,* p. 8. The statement is tautologous. That 'the truth' is systematic is an unprovable guiding presupposition of this field that must be taken on faith. Pannenberg seems to believe that demonstrating the intellectual coherence of the doctrines is the only form of coherence and that the need for such intellectualist demonstration has always been the theological task that he attributes to Origen and Aquinas for example. But relying on an intellectualist criterion of truth is a modern suggestion and indeed, the theological task of model building, or identifying a comprehensive pattern that unites the doctrines like pieces of a jig-saw puzzle, is a modern strategy that emerged as promising after a referential criterion of truth gave out in modernity. Be that as it may, for our purposes, Pannenberg represents the widely held view generated in early modernity that adherence to Christian beliefs was foundering on intellectual grounds and so it was on those grounds that it had to be defended.

[3]Pannenberg, *Introduction*, p. 10.

[4]Pannenberg, *Introduction*, p. 10.

of God's action in history'.[5] Perhaps these tidbits suffice to show that demonstrating the intellectual coherence of Christian doctrines in order to ward off criticisms of incredulity from outside the Christian community is the task of modern systematic reconstruction. It is an apologetic undertaking. Obviously missing from such an intellectualist view is the question of whether the doctrines make sense morally and psychologically. The bottom line is that Christian commitment turns on being persuaded that its doctrines are credible. At stake is the matter of assent to 'the truth' of the various doctrines especially as they relate to one another. Pannenberg's commitment to rationalism typifies the systematic theological task as 'faith seeking understanding' in modern terms. Intelligibility is understood to be both necessary and sufficient for Christian commitment and devotion.

Before commenting on this view, let us hear from a master of systematic theology of just the sort Pannenberg is advocating who voiced his opinions exactly 80 years earlier. B. B. Warfield was the Charles Hodge professor of theology at Princeton Theological Seminary for 34 years until his death in 1921. Warfield addressed the students of the Seminary as the academic year opened in 1911, urging them not to neglect their spiritual life, although he never defines or explains what that is.[6] He readily admits that it is easy for students to neglect their spiritual development under the press of their academic studies and raises his voice at the idea – not at all secret – that the intellectual life and devotional life may be antagonistic to one another, naturally concluding that such thinking is absurd and that students 'must' (a word that recurs frequently throughout the address) hold these two together, lest their work as ministers dry out. Calling on the Reformed affection for the doctrine of vocation, he urges students to treat their theological studies as 'religious exercises', remembering to perform mundane duties with heartfelt zeal. He exhorts the students to attend prayer meetings regularly and to attend church (perhaps off campus) twice on Sabbath because the local congregations would benefit from the presence of their ministers-in-training. He implores students not to complain about boring sermons or about getting up early on cold winter mornings. He urges them to be 'religious men', 'men of God' (of course they were all men). It is a duty-driven piety.

We can hear the stern tones of an elder chiding the young who he thinks are shirking their responsibilities and imagine the young men shifting uncomfortably in the bare wooden pews of Miller Chapel. They are not as serious as theology students used to be, Warfield scolds them. The students seem to have a bad attitude if they put their studies and perhaps their grades before their prayer life. Warfield believes that the problem of the separation

[5]Pannenberg, *Introduction*, p. 13.

[6]Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, 'The Religious Life of Theological Students: An Address Delivered at the Autumn Conference at Princeton Theological Seminary, Oct. 4, 1911', in *Alumni Collection* (ed. Princeton Theological Seminary; Princeton, 1911).

of the intellectual life from the spiritual life is the students' fault and that they should try harder. He offers no examination of cognitive piety or experiential piety or evidence that there is even anything to talk about here. He is content to blame students for being remiss in not being present at common worship or for failing to perform various menial tasks of daily life with adequate verve, apparently believing that enhanced effort will bridge the gap between academic pursuits and religious verve.

Warfield is himself a masterful practitioner of precisely the sort of rationalist theology commended by Pannenberg eight decades later. Perhaps Warfield's cognitive piety expressed through his devotion to his scholarship suffices for him spiritually. If so, it prevents him from realizing that systematic theology itself – precisely because of its intellectualism is complicit in the problem that he tells the students they 'must' overcome. The heart of the problem is this: the address fails to recognize the difference between the intellectual satisfaction that comes from seeing the doctrines fit together beautifully and the psychological and moral nurture that these same doctrines should provide. Thinking that intellectual coherence is both necessary and sufficient for Christian devotion ignores the fact that devotion involves *more* than intellectual assent. It includes emotional attachment to the object of devotion and self-reflection on the commitments that flow therefrom. That is, the Christian life includes but is bigger than theology's cognitive content no matter how persuasively presented. There are psychological and moral dimensions to Christian commitment that elude the province of cognition that requires persuasion based on the coherence of ideas.

In short, Warfield is disappointed that his students have psychological and moral hungers that the joy of discovering the elegance of integrated ideas simply cannot fill because he is unable to distinguish enjoying the coherence of ideas from loving God. The distinction is important. Enjoying the coherence of ideas is a form of self-enjoyment. We may be tickled at having discovered the beauty of the ideas or pleased at having worked out an intellectual puzzle. Finding pleasure in intellectual achievements is surely good – we have been given minds and charged to use them well – but it is also isolating and can be cause for precisely the vanity that Christian theology deplores. Loving God on the other hand is an emotional experience with moral overtones that creates relationship by attaching us to an object outside ourselves. Loving God is a *social* activity, although that has not always been appreciated. Those who wisely press Christian theology on to moral reflection and action based on love for God grasp the social import of the moral and psychological claims Christian doctrines make on their adherents.

Inadvertently, Pannenberg and Warfield point out that an intellectualist or scholastic approach to propping up Christianity's appeal under modernity's challenge may be too narrow to be widely satisfying because it engages our rational capacity (to the extent that we can flex it) but not our emotional and moral capacities. Even if systematic theology can succeed at providing

faith with understanding – an 'even' that is no longer self-evident under the terms of postmodernity – it does not aim to arouse love. Indeed, on the terms of modern scholarship that weighed heavily on both Warfield and Pannenberg, interest in the emotions was inappropriate.[7] To put the point concisely, neither Warfield nor Pannenberg grasps the *sapiential function* of Christian theology that integrates understanding with love and moral reflection. They labour under a truncated understanding of the soul.

Faith seeking holiness

Warfield is not the only seminary teacher to observe the problem of spiritual dryness among theology students. Charles Carpenter worries about this problem for Roman Catholic seminarians, but rather than scold his students he turns for help to St Bonaventure (1221–74). Bonaventure was a mediaeval Franciscan who mastered the rationalist art of scholastic argument but saw it in service to the further spiritual end of sanctity that he framed as psychological union with God. He recognized that the goal of theology is not understanding as an end in itself as the venerable phrase 'faith seeking understanding' might suggest, but to the further end of holiness that is effected when understanding is transformed by love to yield wisdom that unites us with God. Good Franciscan that he was, Bonaventure taught that understanding is in the service of love and wisdom for the sake of happiness. He practised scholastic argument, but saw emotional satisfaction that promotes moral maturity as essential, even the goal of that practice.[8]

Speaking for Bonaventure, Carpenter worries that theologians who do not understand the sapiential goal of theological reflection beginning with their own sanctification and subsequently that of others are in spiritual danger. 'At bottom is the idea that the study of theology, as well as the study of any human discipline, cannot be undertaken without preparation on the part of the one who approaches this study. . . . Cautious self-examination . . . with some amount of disdain for our own opinions' is needed. 'How is it that so many philosophers and theologians have disagreed on fundamental

[7]Systematic theology's disdain for the emotions is one reason 'pastoral theology' developed on separate presuppositions that did acknowledge the importance of the affections and is usually housed in a different division of the seminary curriculum as a way of separating theoretical from practical theological pursuits. The assumption that systematic theology does not have practical goals lies behind the malaise Warfield saw in his students. Seminary students still ask how systematic theology on Pannenbergian terms contributes to living the Christian life. With the modern proliferation of subdisciplines, ethics too established itself on separate presuppositions so that we now have separate academic guilds for Christian ethics, pastoral theology and systematic theology (in Britain) while systematic theology is negligible enough not to warrant its own guild in the United States.

[8]Charles Carpenter, *Theology as the Road to Holiness in St. Bonaventure* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999).

positions unless their perspectives initially were hindered by unsuspected self-seeking, subliminal blindnesses, and cultural and social prejudices commonly accepted in their historical context?'[9] The problem is more serious than Warfield realized. Not only is the academic study of theology liable to lead to religious insouciance, it can breed vanity as noted above, precisely the sin that Western Christian piety is most eager to destroy.

For a variety of reasons, our modern theologians, B. B. Warfield and Wolfhart Pannenberg were unable to appreciate the psychological and moral (or we might say existential) dimension of wisdom for holiness towards which the intellectual theological project aims. By focusing on bare understanding to the end of humility alone they reduced the theological task to pure cognition as if love for God were detachable from personal engagement. Modern concern for the autonomy of reason in hope of objectivity that would rid knowledge of subjective judgement robbed systematic theology of the desire to shape desire as the basis of a holy life in which energizing exuberance powers a God-guided life.

Their focus on humility as the key experience of transformation into holiness is an essentially negative one. The believer needs to be brought low. But how does that negative experience engage our energy and affection? It aims to create self-distrust and self-alienation as if self-disdain were tantamount to loving God and the concomitant positive emotions attaching thereto. There is a certain logic to the turn from self and towards God. Yet disdaining self does not itself accomplish the desired transformation into holiness. There must be a way to a revitalized self on the other side of disdain that is energized and equipped for a holy life. Neither bare humility nor bare understanding can accomplish that. Breaking down the inordinately self-sufficient personality may be necessary in some cases but it must be abetted by building up a morally skilled and socially adept person who confidently engages the world in godly ways.

Prior to the intellectual crisis of modernity in which theology lost its intellectual footing and was pressed to discount emotion from its repertoire of spiritual resources, theology was to sanctification rather than to remission of sin as it became in the late Middle Ages and Reformation. God's hope in offering us a way beyond the fall was to rebuild us unto godliness. On this view, theology is a sapiential practice that uses emotional experiences to jolt people into fresh ways of envisioning themselves inspired by biblical teachings and shaped by Christian practices. Sapiential theology does not overtly implore people to be loving, humble, or generous but works indirectly showing people that the activities of God (in the cases of Paul and Augustine) and the identity of God (in Calvin's case) arouse emotional responses that cultivate character traits that constitute a counter-intuitive foundation for social and political engagement. The Christian revelation

[9]Carpenter, *Theology*, p. 49.

gets our attention and arouses emotions so that we begin to see ourselves and others from a distinctly godly and perhaps subversive perspective and to readjust our values and behaviour appropriately.

To return to St Bonaventure, Charles Carpenter identified sanctification or holiness as the goal of Bonaventure's theology.[10] Here the craft of theology, like the goal of interpreting Scripture that Bonaventure inherited from Augustine, is not only to enable us to appreciate the cogency of Christian doctrines but to make us good or at least better human beings morally and socially. As I shall illustrate later in conclusion, it aims far beyond the intellectual reach of the ideas involved to the end of our moral enhancement and thereby that of the society of which we are a part. In order to do that it may help that the doctrines cohere elegantly, but Bonaventure also recognized that an unpastoral application of doctrinal formulations to church governance may in some cases harm people. He believed that 'another radiance [than that of reason] is needed, namely that of the knowledge of grace. . . . This science is the holy knowledge of truth as believable and as lovable'.[11] Pannenberg would certainly agree that holy knowledge of truth must be believable but it did not occur to him that it must also be *lovable*, that is, psychologically appealing. Bonaventure realized that the former without the latter produces precisely the spiritual dryness against which Warfield preached. Understanding may help, it may even be necessary for devotion at least for the inquisitive, but it is not sufficient. It may even be that unless holy knowledge is lovable it is not true. That is, the moral beauty of knowledge of God is a criterion of its validity.

This raises the further question of how these dimensions of devotion, understanding, love and wisdom for moral vision relate to one another. This question is perhaps best tackled not deductively but inductively by examining cases brought by theologians who integrate these elements into a supple engine powering the Christian life. Before turning to that question we do well to define sanctification as understood here.

Sanctification, meaning becoming holy or dedicated for special use or belonging, is the noun form of the transliterated Latin verb *sanctificare* that combines *sanctus* 'holy' and *facere* 'to make'. In the two biblical religions – Judaism and Christianity – to be made holy is possible because God, the source of all that is, is holy, set apart from all that God has made. As Isa. 6.3 famously teaches, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.' The second half of the verse, 'the whole earth is full of his glory', finds divine splendor suffused throughout creation suggesting that the world is illuminated by the divine presence. At the same time, in order to enjoy that splendour fully creation

[10]Carpenter, *Theology*, pp. 16–20. Tellingly, the references are all from Bonaventure's scholastic works: the Prologue to his *Commentary on the Sentences of Lombard*, his *Breviloquium* and his *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*.

[11]Bonaventure, *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (ed. Robert J. Karris, Works of St. Bonaventure; St. Bonaventure, NY: Saint Bonaventure University, 2008), p. 99.

must be dedicated to that purpose. Thus, things can be sanctified (Lev. 8.9), places can be sanctified (Exod. 3.5), time can be sanctified (Exod. 35.2) and people can be sanctified (Lev. 10.3). From the biblical perspective reflected in these few verses (and many others like them), theologians have concluded that although God is the only inherently and utterly holy reality, creation may be oriented towards divine holiness and sanctified thereby for its own fulfilment.

Christians long for this fulfilment but from an assumed starting point of moral and psychological alienation from God read off from Gen. 3. The problem pertains only to people because they are the only creatures having a moral life and able to experience psychological alienation and attachment. Sin, read as a ubiquitous moral disease, is the great obstacle believed to inhibit people from becoming illumined by the divine glory and dedicated to enjoying it. How then, if – as Gen. 1 tells us – creation is good and not only things and time but also people can be sanctified; can they jump the chasm to obtain the holiness their maker intends for their enjoyment and glorification, and indeed, for God's own enjoyment of creation? In short, what makes godly living possible?

If godly living is beyond our ken and made possible only by the gift of divine grace given by the Holy Spirit how do we receive it? The power of the Spirit may be understood as either given sacramentally at baptism or spontaneously and individually quite apart from the gift of sacramental grace. When the spontaneous gift of the Spirit is expected although it is unpredictable it is often connected with the gift of faith, conversion or the sense of being saved from divine wrath. Sacramental grace is the power of the Holy Spirit gifted to individuals in baptism and nurtured regularly through other sacraments, especially the Eucharist. It is available to all who present themselves or who are presented by others to the ministry of the church. More on this further one, for it is the foundation of Bonaventure's vision of the means of grace needed for a holy life.

Predestining grace, so important to Augustine and Calvin in their doctrine of election, is the freely bestowed will of God to some who are what Paul called vessels of mercy while it is withheld from others whom he calls vessels of wrath (Rom. 9.15–22) 'So then he has mercy on whomever he chooses, and he hardens the heart of whomever he chooses' (9.18). Because predestining grace is determined solely by the divine will on this model, there is nothing we can do to alter God's judgement on us. What we can do, however, is to believe ourselves to be among the vessels of mercy to a trusting faith that God loves us and wants us to flourish. To be sure that the power of grace is not undermined, some theologians will stress that faith that we are beloved of God is itself a gift of the Holy Spirit. So, whether the Spirit works through the sacraments or spontaneously, strength and energy for a sanctified life

come from the grace of the Holy Spirit. Whether and if so how that strength guides desires and emotions in daily life in another matter.

Both those who believe themselves to be gifted with strength for a holy life by the Holy Spirit in baptism and those who believe themselves to be recipients of divine favour by election have a secure starting point that orients their thinking about themselves and their life. They are already set apart by God for a way of life guided by Scripture and interpreted by the theological tradition. This doctrine of election claims that in one way or another, Christians are set apart for or placed in a way of life under divine guidance. Theology as reflection on this circumstance already determines holiness as the *goal* of the exercise. Let me hasten to acknowledge that theology *is* an intellectual activity. The difference with Pannenberg is not on this point but rather that theology as intellectual activity must account not only for the question of the coherence of the doctrines but also their lovability and the moral vision, that is, the practical wisdom they enable. Let us return to our narrative at the point at which we experience ourselves as graced with divine strength and favour.

To believe ourselves to be divinely favoured, especially if we also believe ourselves to be unworthy of that favour is formative on three levels – intellectual, psychological and moral. First, on the level of understanding that most interests Pannenberg, it vivifies the repeated biblical confession of the character of God: 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness' (Exod. 34.6; Num. 14.18; Neh. 9.17, 31; Ps. 103.8; Jon. 4.2). At this level, the systematic point is that sacramentology and the doctrine of election cohere with the explicit biblical teaching of divine graciousness and forbearance so that we can be sure that we understand God rightly, that is that these doctrines are 'true' in Pannenberg's sense of the word. Second, on the psychological level, this knowledge of God's graciousness naturally arouses reciprocal love at the affection coming from God. It is easy to love those who love us because they have reached out first. These doctrines give psychological heft to the biblical command 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might' (Deut. 6.5). Finally, on the level of moral vision, the discerning believer in divine favour will see God setting an example of what love looks like, on the ground so to speak, and use it self-reflectively.[12] Believing ourselves to be unworthy recipients of love invites us to practise an equally durable love on the horizontal plane where we are likely to run into others who are as difficult to love as we are. The point at which reflection on love becomes reflexive is what Bonaventure recognized

[12]The examples of sacraments and election are used because they explain the source of divine grace in the believer's life not because they are definitive doctrinal loci of love for God. The full narrative of the second article of the creed is often exegeted as the locus of divine activity that stimulates at least gratitude if not love for God.

as wisdom. Here we see theology functioning in all three dimensions simultaneously with faith seeking understanding, holiness and love for the Christian life. It is sapiential theology whose goal is sanctification.[13]

In sum, theology seeking holiness may include faith seeking understanding but if theology seeks to reshape us unto holy living by reshaping our moral inclinations, the understanding that faith initially seeks cannot be an end itself but must engage our affections. Holy living requires holy loving and the creative employment of holy desires. While distinguishing holy from unholy loves may be a cognitive activity, coming to embrace holy desires as our own may be more challenging than realizing that we ought to embrace them. Here is where the gift of the Holy Spirit is required. Finally, Warfield's spirituality of duty, following Kant, will not suffice. The chief Pauline virtue is indeed love not duty; how to love effectively requires more than mere cognitive understanding.

Faith seeking love

The Christian life has often been thought to revolve around the cultivation of virtue or the virtues, particularly the Pauline virtues of faith, hope and love (1 Cor. 13). Augustine, closely following Paul, singled out love as the greatest of these three and often contrasted it with *cupiditas* (greed). In one of his early works, Augustine Christianized, or better Paulinized the four classical virtues found in Book 4 of Plato's *Republic* – self-restraint (temperance), discretion (prudence), stamina (fortitude) and fairness (justice) as forms of love. Self-restraint is 'love giving itself entirely to that which is loved'. Discretion 'is love distinguishing with sagacity between what hinders it and what helps it'. Stamina 'is love readily bearing all things for the sake of the loved object'. Fairness 'is love serving only the loved object, and therefore ruling rightly'. He summarizes:

> The object of this love is not anything, but only God, the chief good, the highest wisdom, the perfect harmony. So we may express the definition thus: that temperance is love keeping itself entire and incorrupt for God; fortitude is love bearing everything readily for the sake of God; justice is love serving God only, and therefore ruling well all else, as subject to man; prudence is love making a right distinction between what helps it towards God and what might hinder it.[14]

Although Augustine focused love on love of God, his absorption of the classical virtues into it suggests that he did not intend us to take love of

[13]See Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Carpenter, *Theology*, pp. 24–27.
[14]Augustine, 'De Moribus Ecclesiae', 1.15.25.

God apart from loving the things of God. Reading self-restraint, discretion, stamina and fairness in terms of love of God then would mean that these personal strengths infuse in all the interstices of life's reach. This is love of God, for to love the things of God is to love God.

Augustine took care to show how the Christ-story shapes love. In *De doctrina Christiana* 1.9 he observes that people are stuck in bad habits and that the Incarnation can cleanse us so that we grow strong in Christ.[15] The resurrection and ascension give us hope for life beyond death igniting love for God while the thought or perhaps threat of the second coming frightens the negligent into paying attention to their moral life, that is, their ability to love adeptly. The Gospel narrative inspires both love and fear as the medicines of social formation that press us to attend to our moral life. Similarly, believing that one's sins are forgiven boosts our love for God. Doctrines that elicit emotional attachment to God become instruments of moral growth when we reflect sufficiently on them so that we learn to love others in godly ways.

To return to the question of how understanding, love and moral wisdom are related we see here that Augustine argues that doctrines derived from article two of the creed arouse hope that ignites love for God. At the same time, threat of divine rejection, is believed to be morally useful by arousing fear of divine punishment. The arousal of these contrasting emotions and virtues renders the doctrines psychologically potent so that they gain persuasive force. Here it is not the ideas per se but the emotions that they arouse that shape holiness.

Although Augustine strongly advocated humility as key to a godly life, he was careful to balance love and fear. Once Luther subordinated love to faith, Calvin did not focus on love as strongly as Augustine, and humility – a strong contender for first place among the virtues in mediaeval spirituality – came to the fore more or less on its own terms as the means to a holy life. Calvin was taken with the idea that focusing on human poverty before divine awesomeness would engender humility as the signature virtue of what we might call a Christian personality. He impressed his readers with human weakness, limitation and dependency compared with divine strength, power and self-sufficiency so that people would cower. The contrast between human and divine capacity is evident from the opening sentences of the *Institutes*.

> Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves; no one can look upon himself without immediately turning his thoughts to the contemplation of God. . . . For, quite clearly, the mighty gifts with which we are endowed are hardly from ourselves; indeed, our very being is nothing but subsistence in the one God. Then, by these benefits shed

[15]Augustine, *Teaching Christianity* (ed. John E. Rotelle; trans. Edmund Hill, O. P.; Part 1, vol. 11, *The Works of St. Augustine*; Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1996).

> like dew from heaven upon us, we are led as by rivulets to the spring itself. Indeed, our very poverty better discloses the infinitude of benefits reposing in God. The miserable ruin, into which the rebellion of the first man cast us, especially compels us to look upward. Thus, not only will we, in fasting and hungering, seek thence what we lack; but, in being aroused by fear, we shall learn humility.[16]

Here knowledge of God and of us in relation to God is key to formation in holiness that grows out of the virtue of humility that Calvin sees as the sure result of this knowledge. Knowing God's beauty and holding it up as a mirror to reveal the unflattering truth about ourselves humbles and thereby corrects us. Humility is an acquirable trait reached when confronted by the vast moral chasm that separates us from God. The key step between seeing the chasm and being humbled by it is chagrin or embarrassment that Calvin calls mortification. We must be discomfited, see ourselves as paltry and be brought down from whatever self-concept we have hidden in heretofore. Being humbled is a transforming experience. It must go far beyond assent to the truth that God is, let us say, perfect while we are ugly and weak. The idea must become psychologically debilitating so that we are seized by a new and far more realistic self-understanding and hold to it so that we see our self as fit for menial tasks. It is not a very encouraging means of grace.

Augustine and Calvin are both pointing to ways in which emotional experiences of love, hope, fear, and embarrassment stimulate assiduous self-reflection to equip the self socially and morally. These challenging and inspiring emotions support precisely the sort of dedication to a way of life that either enables hope and love to flourish or when needed sparks personal about-face that excites self-restraint, discretion, stamina and the discerning ability to act fairly. Embedded in this pastoral function of theology is the assumption that without experiencing salutary emotions – God as Christ going before us so to speak – we might experience hope, fear, love, embarrassment and so on, but we would not really understand their power or appreciate their purpose for a holy life. The issue here *is* understanding as the systematicians claim, but it is not based on the coherence of the ideas but on their psychological and moral impact.

A salient example of sapiential theology that integrates thought, feeling and wisdom is Paul's great reversal of conventional values wrought by the message of the cross at 1 Cor. 1.18–31. Here the contrast is not between love and greed, or humility and vanity, or God and us, but between wisdom and foolishness, the contrasting terms that Proverbs uses to distinguish those who live cautiously from those who live recklessly (Prov. 9 and 10).

Paul (and Tertullian after him) acknowledged that some Christian claims are patently absurd. Christian theological conversation is strewn with

---

[16]John Calvin, *ICR*, p. 35.

responses to objections that doctrines like the Trinity and the Incarnation are not rational perhaps with the implication that trying to present them as if they were is of limited value. Paul stood at the head of that conversation attempting to make a virtue of the apparent absurdity that the death of Christ signals victory. In 1 Cor. 1 he acknowledges that the cross is both culturally and religiously offensive. In a culture that adored its military heroes, a defeated messianic leader is a sure loser. Adding the idea that God emptied himself and assumed human form, and that of a 'slave' no less (Phil. 2.5–8) did not help and additionally offended Jewish theology. Paul was an educated and sophisticated bi-cultural Jew who easily straddled both Greco-Roman and Jewish worlds. Yet against both he valiantly upended intuitive reasoning that military might displays strength and that humiliation indicates weakness and failure, offering those who read him a radically moral place to plant their feet. Here is one of the most powerful bits of moral writing ever penned. Those who can see God acting counter-intuitively by making a fool of himself in the degrading death of Christ learn that suffering as a gift to others is truly an expression of power. The shock reverberates in the voluntary death of Syndey Carton in Charles's Dickens's novel *A Tale of Two Cities* and palpably until our own day.

Christ's voluntary death demands physical and psychological strength, just as military prowess does, but it is in the service of love that seeks the well-being of the beloved not domination of others for the sake of personal or national glory. Conversely, conventional symbols of power – class status, education and wealth – are morally vacuous when used for personal advancement or even for advancement of national interests. Physical, military, and even political risk-taking for the sake of the nation are emptied of honour by a totally different understanding of moral strength, courage and confidence. At this point, Paul might have planted himself in the biblical heritage and cited Zech. 4.6: 'Not by might, or by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts.' Yet even this contrast is not yet to the point, for Paul has not rejected might and power but redefined them in terms lifted high above politics, class, and even national interest creating a transcultural moral framework that binds races, ethnic groups and disparate cultures into a moral community that lives from dedication to a radically counter-intuitive vision of power, strength and wisdom. Here again, when theology seeks to explain what appear to be ridiculous claims it is ultimately to sanctify those persuaded by the argument. As Paul handles the three dimensions of understanding – intellectual, psychological and moral – it is only when the psychological and moral dimensions are clear that the message of the cross makes sense.

Paul perceives divine wisdom amidst noxious events to lure us away from conventional ways of thinking and draw us into the company of those who find their emotions and values utterly transformed by a dramatically different vision of power, wisdom and strength that draws many aspects of life together into a fresh pattern of meaning. It is noteworthy that while

Paul exalted faith, hope and love later in 1 Corinthians, at the outset of the letter he did something quite different. Rather than proposing specific Christian virtues in contrast to pagan ones he transposed classical virtues into a completely different key, thereby inviting his readers to transpose themselves accordingly and assume a new vantage point from which to assess their own moral stature and that of their society. Paul intended the value structure that the wisdom of the cross teaches to subvert social norms and construct a new society on the basis of the reversal of power from power over others to self-mastery for the well-being of others.

Another biblical precedent for theology as faith seeking love is Mk 10. 32–45. By this time in the narrative the characters know what is happening. Jesus was leading the way up to Jerusalem where his followers would not only witness but participate in his death and they were afraid. Jesus minces no words. He is voluntarily going to Jerusalem knowing that he faces death. Brothers James and John get the message and want to be martyred with him, one at his right hand and one at his left, perhaps seeking the places to be occupied by the two bandits instead who are apparently more worthy (Mk 15.27). Jesus does not think they are up to the task, but they insist that they are and with a harsh word to these would-be martyrs agrees that they may share in his suffering but that the places at his right and left hands have been reserved for others. What a blow, to be willing to make the ultimate sacrifice and be told that it will not be accepted. They are consigned to live on after Jesus to take up the leadership ministry of founding the Christian church. Upon learning of this interchange the other ten disciples are angry with the would-be martyrs. Jesus, ever the wise teacher even facing into his own demise intervenes to teach them how truly demanding being his follower is, for even martyrdom does not suffice. Rather, they must forge a new way of life that will shine as a light before pagans whose moral system has been based on obedience to tyrants (Mk 10.42). Jesus advises not that his friends follow him into martyrdom but that they serve one another in life to build the future. Dying for the cause would thwart not advance it!

Living the Christian life is more demanding than dying for Jesus; it means living in a way that enhances the well-being of others day by day and thereby being a moral light to transform them by that light. Following Jesus is to have faith in this way of life modelled by Jesus and articulated by Paul and being so convicted by its beauty that one refocuses one's self to further its end of mutual service in which case one does indeed reside with Jesus in glory everlasting.

Conclusion

If the theological craft involves engaging the emotions in the training of love of God and the things of God for practical wisdom, in conclusion we do well to offer specific applications of that training. Here I offer two examples,

one deriving from Paul's teaching on baptism and one deriving from the doctrine of the Incarnation as used by Paul for a holy life.

The Nicene Creed acknowledges 'one baptism for the forgiveness of sins'. But Paul in Rom. 6 connects it more with 'newness of life'. These may slide into each other, but some strands of later Western theology so focused on remission of sin that newness of life came to be seen as simply following in its wake organically. For Paul, however, the point of baptism into the death of Christ is not simply forgiveness of sin but the death of sin that enables another way of life to take shape. Paul has no awareness of the anxiety mediaeval Christianity struggled to overcome in light of a fearsome image of punishing divine wrath. No, Paul believed that psychological union with the resurrected Christ through baptism into his death is psychologically empowering. It enables us to envision for ourselves a resurrected or re-formed life that is 'alive to God in Christ Jesus' (Rom. 6.11). Paul has already told his readers that 'God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us' (Rom. 5.5), and it is the power for a sanctified life.

Believing that the power for a holy life resides in us is perhaps the most energizing gift one could receive. The spirit of holiness is not something that the Christian must seek or discover. Paul does not say here exactly how that power is given but insists in other places in his writings that it has been (see also Rom. 8.9–11; 2 Cor. 5.5). Whether by Jesus breathing on his disciples (Jn 20.22) that they perhaps transmit to others by the laying on of hands (Acts 8.17), or by signing the person with oil in chrismation, or whether the Spirit is received by faith has never been formally determined by church teaching or practice. Still, that people believe the Spirit of God that raised Jesus will enable them to rise from sin to righteousness is a powerful motivator. It is a 'we can' teaching that augers success because the person is not thrown on her own resources, although she must employ the resource she has been gifted and wisely remember it constantly.

The idea here is that the Holy Spirit is the means of grace necessary for a holy life the shape of which may be clear to us but the energy to enact it requires divine assistance. In those traditions where this gift comes through the sacramental ministrations of the church the recipient need not struggle to muster the faith necessary to summon the Spirit but merely present herself or be presented in order to receive it. In those traditions where the Spirit is received spontaneously or through faith in Christ, the recipient must do more on her own to rest assured of the gift. In either case, however, the individual must understand that the power for a joyously righteous life is hers although it does not originate with her. So clothed, equipped and accompanied for practical wisdom, the Christian is both prepared and energized to meet each situation in life and what it calls for knowing that she is not alone in the discernment process, even when it is fraught with difficult decisions and confusing circumstances that pull in different directions.

The second example of doctrine shaping love for practical wisdom is the doctrine of the Incarnation. It is captured in the words of the Nicene Creed: 'by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary and was made human'. While the statement on the face of it is difficult, the point is that in Jesus of Nazareth heaven and earth met. As difficult as the idea is on a purely cognitive level, if we think of human beings as being both body and spirit it is a bit easier to grasp. At least from a theological perspective the materiality of the human body does not exhaust what it means to be a person. What was traditionally called the soul or the spirit that is immaterial is as important as the body to being a person. Without the spirit or life force, the body alone, even if the involuntary nervous system is working perfectly, does not constitute a whole person. The spirit includes the personality, the variability of emotions, temperament and a variety of other individual factors that are integrated into the body.

The early church saw the whole person, body and spirit, as a way to understand the Incarnation that integrates the material realm with the spiritual realm. The view that the human spirit links us to the Spirit of God in Christ is Pauline: 'But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you' (Rom. 8.9–11).

Now, this passage is not talking about physical but spiritual life and death of the body that is the moral life that transpires through the physical body. The same vision of the relationship of the spirit to the body is offered by 1 Cor. 3.16–17: 'Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person(!). For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.' The physical Temple in Jerusalem still standing in Paul's time is psychologically replaced by God dwelling in individuals! Again the moral well-being of the body depends upon the person's spiritual well-being and we are responsible for both.

Paul's vision is designed to arouse both hope and desire for the moral responsibility the body carries is entrusted with the Spirit of Christ that lives in it for those who are 'in Christ'. 'For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit' (Rom. 8.3–4).

The intimate relationship Paul draws between spirit and body honours and exalts the body as a powerful instrument of both righteousness and sinfulness. Here Paul is inviting us to love ourselves well knowing that the Spirit of God resides in our very body. I think Paul is offering us a

theological foundation for godly self-love by acknowledging that the human body is an instrument of the spiritual life. Protecting one's self from harm by living carefully and tending to one's medical, dietary and physical needs is an expression of love of God. To employ the Spirit of God rightly for the life-enhancing end for which the Son was sent in human flesh glorifies God. But glorifying God with the body is not limited to physical self-care. It extends to care for other people's bodies as well, and that in turn calls for the self-restraint, discretion, stamina and ability to act fairly that Augustine recognized as expressions of love. Such godly care for one's own and other people's bodies is life in the Spirit that is genuinely pleasing so that harmful behaviour and habits that characterize what Paul considers the death of the living person given over to sin become less attractive and can be abandoned without fear of loss or a sense of deprivation.

14

Preaching

William Willimon

Christianity is a 'revealed religion' which means that it is based upon the conviction and the experience of a loquacious God. How could we devise thoughts of a trinitarian God on our own? The truth about God is revealed to us, spoken to us as a gift of a God who refuses to be vague or coy, indistinct or silent. It is of the nature of the Trinity to be communicative, revelatory – the Father speaking to the Son, the Son speaking to the Father, all in the power of the Holy Spirit.

A primary means of God's revelation is preaching.

The Christian life is characterized as address and response and listening is one of the primary obligations of a practicing Christian because Christian existence is subservient to and dependent upon the speech of a relentlessly self-revealing God. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being' (Jn 1.1–3).

Thus begins John's Gospel. In this majestic, poetic beginning we hear an echo of an earlier text, Gen. 1.1, 'In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth. . . .' There are gods who create by having sex with other gods, or through a primal, cosmic battle between evil and good, darkness and light, chaos and order. But this God creates through nothing but a word. All this God has to do is to say the word, 'Light!' and there is light, something where before there was nothing but formless void. God's first recorded sermon in Scripture is preached not to us but to the threatening, chaotic void. 'Light!' And it was good.

On a cloudless night this creative God called Abram – a nomadic desert sheik – out of his tent and promised to make a great nation from this childless old man and his aged wife Sarah. Though the world considered the old couple to be 'barren', God promised Abram that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars, constitute a nation that would be a 'blessing to all the nations' (Gen. 18). And all this would be on the basis of nothing more than a promise, only words. Words are the way this God works.

When that promised people became numerous, they found themselves as slaves in Egypt, under the heel of the most powerful empire in the world. Moses the murderer is out in Midian, watching over his father-in-law's sheep. Before an astounded Moses, a bush bursts into flame, but is not consumed. Even more astounding, the bush speaks! 'I am the Lord your God. . . . Now you go to the Pharaoh and say, let my people go' (Exod. 3)!

Is that all? God proposes to free the Hebrews on the basis of nothing but a verbal command from a none-too-talented and untrained speaker like the tongue-tied Moses. As Moses wants to know, 'Who am I that I should go to the Pharaoh and say . . . ?'

But that is the way this God works, creating something out of nothing, a people out of nobodies, free women and men out of slaves, all on the basis of words.

Those people, now free, are given a land 'flowing with milk and honey', just as God had so sovereignly promised. But they wandered. They consorted with other gods, forgot their origins, forgot the God who had liberated and blessed them. So God sent a peculiar set of preachers called 'prophets'. These God-obsessed individuals were personally chosen by God to give the people of Israel the bad news of their coming exile, then to sustain them through the horrors of their Babylonian captivity, then to announce that they were going home, then to direct how they would reconstruct themselves as God's people – all on the basis of nothing but words. The prophets of Israel were poets who were preachers, preachers who were poets. They deconstructed old worlds and envisioned the new, with some of the pushiest, poetic, figurative, and powerful speech ever uttered, divine work done through words.

Thus, in a 1551 sermon series on the prophet Micah, reformer John Calvin said that the whole purpose of the church is to preach. The reign of Christ is established, not by swords, says Calvin, but by the preaching of the Word. Calvin bases this assertion on the words of the prophet:

> And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more; But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree, and none shall make them afraid; For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. (Mic. 4.3–4 RSV)

Peace on earth, deadly swords transformed into life-giving plows, all on the basis of words from the 'mouth of the LORD'. As a contemporary commentator said of the preaching of Martin Luther, 'By the power of his mouth hearts were melted like snow by the breath of spring as he showed the way to heaven's goods which had been closed for centuries.'[1]

In the Bible, word precedes world. Reality is linguistically constructed. God preached to the formless void, 'Let there be light.' And there was. Yahweh allowed the earthling, Adam, to enjoy a bit of divine creativity by naming some of the cattle and birds (Gen. 2.20). Creativity is a word-derived, word-dependent phenomenon. Everything between us and God begins with, 'And God said . . .' What God wants to do in the lives of individual Christians, God chooses to do with words.

The New Testament opens with John the Baptist standing in the Jordan, calling people to get washed. John tells those who take comfort in the old order, 'God can raise up a people out of the stones in this river if God must' (Mt. 3.9). God had made something out of nothing with words; God can do it again.

And then there came One among us, born as we are born, named Emmanuel, God with us, Word Made Flesh. And how was he God with us? He came preaching (Mt. 4.17). 'Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "the Time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel"' (Mk 1.14–15, RSV). Luke records Jesus' first great assault upon the world-as-it-is in a Synagogue, in a pulpit, quoting his favourite prophet, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me to preach the good news to the poor . . .' (Lk. 4.18–21).

The Word Made Flesh was the embodied, active Word, healing the sick, embracing the untouchable, enlightening the blind, turning over the temple tables and riding into Jerusalem in triumph. But mostly he spoke. He assaulted the world, not with violent deeds but with a barrage of non-violent words – parables that shocked, evoked, amused and disclosed; sermons that often ended with a riot; blessings, curses, proverbs and prophesies. He said he brought a new kingdom and some – not that many, few of the wise and powerful, but enough to attract the worried attention of the authorities – called him 'King'. He talked a great deal about the present and coming 'Kingdom of God', but that was about all he did to inaugurate his reign. He just talked.

His talk was enough to get him tried, tortured, and horribly, publicly, humiliatingly executed. His metaphors were sometimes obscure, his parables hard to follow, and his meaning elusive, but he spoke clearly enough for the governmental and religious authorities to get his point. They crucified him in their attempt to silence him.

For three days the silence was deafening.

---

[1]Quoted by Hughes Oliphant Old, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Church* (vol. 4; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 11.

Resurrection induced discourse

The accounts of what happened on the third day after his crucifixion, the first day of the week, are diverse and confusing, as if the witnesses did not know how to bring to speech what they had seen and heard after the Eighth Day. Some women who loved him came to his tomb in the early morning darkness in grief and there they were met by an angel. 'Why do you seek the living among the dead?' the angel impudently asked. 'He is not here. He is risen. He has gone on before you to Galilee' (Mk 16.7).

And the startled women race all the way back to the male disciples to announce, 'He is risen!' They thus became the first witnesses to the resurrection, the first evangelists to spread the good news, 'He is loose! The story is not over; it is just beginning!'

Why Galilee? It is an undistinguished location by any account. Why, on the first day after his resurrection, go there? Galilee is where his preaching began. He has gone back home, back to the hinterland to preach, this time as resurrected Christ.

Luke says that while a couple of the disciples were walking that very afternoon, from Jerusalem to a little village of Emmaus, a stranger appeared and walked with them. The stranger 'opened the scriptures to them', revealing all that the prophets had said (Lk. 24). That evening, seated around the dinner table, when the stranger took the bread, broke it and gave it, they saw. The stranger vanished and they ran all the way back to Jerusalem shouting, 'The women were right! He has appeared to us!'

John says that very evening the disciples where gathered 'behind locked doors for fear'. They had reason to fear, having witnessed what the authorities did to Jesus. And now that they were alone, Jesus entombed, and they themselves as his betrayers, fear is what they felt (Jn 20).

The risen Christ stood among them and said, 'Peace.' He spoke to them. He blessed those who believed on the basis of nothing but hearing, though he offered those who needed tactile validation, his risen body as proof of his resurrection. He gave them power to forgive sins, and then he vanished.

Why would the risen Christ appear first to these fearful ordinary men and women, his disciples, who had demonstrated so conclusively their failure to follow him? Why would the risen Christ not appear to a powerful, influential, public figure like Pilate or Augustus?

He came to the ones who had fled the conversation once the going got rough. He came to the very ones who had so misunderstood and then disappointed and forsaken him. He came and said, in effect, 'Let's talk. As I was saying . . .'

And thus was the church born, and explosion of pushy, Easter-induced speech into all the world, and thus were we made witnesses of resurrection and preachers of Good News. Easter says: The sermons are not over. They are just beginning. Now is the time for all you to speak up to the world what you now know about Jesus.

Easter is the resumption, by God, of a conversation we, in our sin, attempted to end. Time and again in our history with the God of the Church and Israel, when we have betrayed God's love with our infidelity, when we have misunderstood, when we have fled into the darkness, stopped up our ears or hardened our hearts, this God has returned to us and has resumed the conversation. Thus Paul prayed that God might 'open for us a door for the word' (Col. 4.3), acknowledging that the means of this conversation are at God's initiative, not ours.

In that divine–human dialogue, this God has proved to be remarkably resourceful and imaginative interlocutor, full of stratagems and devices – the Incarnation, Word Made Flesh, being of all the most imaginative. There is a relentlessness about the speech of this God, an effusive loquaciousness, a dogged determination not to be silenced, not to cease striving until all are part of the conversation.

Therein is our hope. Here is a divine–human dialogue that is initiated, and at every turn in the road sustained by a living, resourceful, long-winded God, thank God.

If God should stop talking, if God should withdraw, even for a moment, into apophatic, empty silence, then the mountains would fall, chaos would overwhelm, the light would become darkness and death would have the last word. Yet God's creative, life-giving, people-forming, intrusive Word keeps creating, keeps being made flesh, keeps pushing in, keeps having the last say potentially every time the church gathers, opens the scriptures and listens to a preacher.

The prophet Isaiah hears a divine promise related to the divine Word:

> So shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; It shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isa. 55.11)

This is the only basis for the Christian life; our only hope. This is the Good News, the only basis for the sustenance of a way as countercultural as the Christian Life. So when Paul's preaching authority was challenged by some in Galatia, Paul mounted no other defense for himself than this:

> For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. (Gal. 1.11–12)

To be sure, Paul is defending himself as an apostle, but Paul's defense is that which applies to every follower of the Gospel. Our authority and authorization rest not upon our personal, orthodox, faithful reiteration of church tradition, not upon the ecclesiastical confirmation by officials of the church. It is 'through a revelation of Jesus Christ'. It is a bodacious claim,

a claim that could lead the clamant to self-delusion. Yet it is the scandalous affirmation of faith upon which preaching rests: 'Whoever listens to you listens to me' (Lk. 10.16).

On the basis of this story, as well as their own experience, the Protestant Reformers were able to link our speaking and listening in sermons with God's own discourse. In a sermon on 1 Samuel, John Calvin dared to speak of contemporary pastors as prophets, like Samuel, who are 'the very mouth of God'. As Bullinger asserts in the Second Helvetic Confession: 'The preaching of the word of God *is* the Word of God.'[2] This is an astounding claim to make for the speaking of mere mortals like us preachers and for the hearing of mere mortals like our congregations. Yet it is no more astounding claim than that made by Jesus: 'Whoever listens to you listens to me' (Lk. 10.16). It is a claim that rests upon faith in a gracious God who condescends to us mere mortals through preaching. It is faith that is born of the story that begins with, 'And God said . . .'

> By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear. (Heb. 11.3 RSV)

Sanctification through sermons

Preaching begins not with talking but with listening. Most of a preacher's skills in biblical exegesis and hermeneutics are the hard-earned pastoral skills of listening to a biblical text. A Christian sermon is interesting when the preacher has heard something that is worthwhile to say. Christians in the pews, listening to a sermon, gain skills in holy attentiveness simply by overhearing a preacher's attempts to listen to a biblical text, by noting those moments in sermons when a preacher appears to have listened to Scripture in a particularly keen way as well as when a preacher, unfortunately, appears to have read something into the biblical text rather than being humbled by being addressed by the text. Listening skills like humility, attentiveness, self-knowledge, intellectual engagement, focus, patience and openness are all valuable Christian virtues. Few of them occur naturally and nearly all of them can be cultivated and augmented over time.

A primary way that the Christian life is formed and sustained is by listening to sermons. Both Luther and Calvin therefore reclaimed the Christian faith as an auditory, acoustical phenomenon. 'The ears alone are the organ of the Christian', said Luther.[3] Preaching is not only the free speech of the church, our way of bringing to speech the odd, true story that is called 'gospel', the

[2]William H. Willimon, *Proclamation and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), p. 16.
[3]Quoted by John H. Leith in, *John Calvin & the Church: A Prism of Reform* (ed. Timothy George; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990), p. 212.

story of our justification to God through the words and work of Christ. Preaching is also formative upon those who hear, God's way of sanctifying those who listen to the truth about God who is Jesus Christ.

Indeed, one might characterize the whole of the Christian's life as lifelong training in listening to God more than we listen to ourselves, taking God a bit more seriously and ourselves a little less so. While Scripture constantly demonstrates that God speaks, Scripture also reiterates that humanity has many resources for 'hearing but refusing to hear'. Martin Luther famously spoke of the Word of God, and preaching that is subservient to that Word, as the *verbum externum,* the 'external word', a word that we could not have spoken to ourselves, a word that comes to us from outside ourselves.

In so many ways contemporary culture indoctrinates us to listen solely to our own psyches, the voice of our alleged 'conscience', or the imperial demands of the crowd, to governmental press releases, or the slick slogans of advertising. The modern world is, in part, a widely held, governmentally sanctioned and subsidized belief that the only voices worth listening to are those that are self-derived. The government has found that lone individuals are easier to manage than those who expect to be addressed by someone outside their own egos.

In this cultural context the faithful hearing of sermons is bound to seem unnatural and abnormal. A consumer economy trades by way of distraction. Advertising drowns out more subtle, complex communication. Discourse becomes reduced to snappy snippets, slogans and proverbs. Prose, that claims to be easily accessible by speaking straightforwardly on the basis of simple 'facts', is privileged over metaphorical, poetic speech. In such a cultural climate, Christian preaching is charged with being authoritarian, archaic, one-way communication; the dominant voices of the state, the economy or the psyche are intolerant of rival ways of characterizing reality.

Therefore it takes time for Christians to learn to be appropriately attentive to preaching. An array of practices is required, few of which are innate and none of which are supported by the dominate culture. A pressing task for today's church, particularly in a North American culture that is in (active, though not always evident) rebellion against submission to the Word of God, is inculcation of the practices required to listen to a sermon without wanting to kill the preacher (Lk. 4).

Every preacher preaches in the conviction that the Gospel is able to gather the listeners whom the Kingdom of God requires. God not only calls people to preach to God's people but also provides a congregation enabled to hear a theme so strange and wonderful, a word so demanding and odd as the good news of Jesus Christ. As Martin Luther reassured preachers of his day, God will not only give them words to preach but, 'will surely also supply and send listeners who will take this instruction to heart'.[4]

[4]Willimon, *Proclamation and Theology*, p. 20.

Practise listening

Due to the peculiarity of the Christian faith as a matter of speaking and listening, of giving and receiving, participation in the life of the Christian church becomes a matter of training in the disciplines of discipleship. Modern people have been led to believe that our lives are our creations rather than gifts of God. Life with a loquacious God demands disciplines of listening. God the Father speaks a new world into being, speaks definitively in God the Son, all in the power of the Holy Spirit. How then ought we to live in light of the God we know as the Trinity? Our existence as listening, responsive recipients of revelation does not come naturally. Therefore one of the challenges of the Christian life is cultivation of and obedience to the sanctifying disciplines required for faithful listening to sermons. Among the sanctifying disciplines required of contemporary Christians who would listen to sermons are:

- A conviction that these ancient Jews and first Christians know more than we about the true and living God. It is unnatural for modern, Western people to submit ourselves to an ancient text that arose in a culture and is written in languages quite different from ours. And yet all faithful Christian preaching is also biblical – sermons talk about what Scripture talks about in the ways that Scripture talks. Christians are those who, at least on a weekly basis, bend their lives towards the living, God-breathed, Word of God that demands to have authority over all of our life.
- A weekly willingness to be surprised by a sermon's revelation that God is other than we might have believed God to be, that God's ways are not our ways (Isa. 55.9), and that part of the adventure of Christian believing is the joy of being corrected by a sermon. Preaching is the bold, risky speaking of God's truth; not merely comfortable, deferential confirmation of our truths. Conversion, transformation of heart and mind is a normal, expected aspect of sanctification in the truth which is Jesus Christ. Therefore it is not enough simply to respond to a sermon by asking, 'Do I agree with this?' or 'Is this congruent with what I have always assumed?' Rather, faithful listening requires questions like, 'How must my life change in order to be better conformed to this truth?'
- An expectation that, in listening to a sermon one's life may be caught up into purposes grander and more dangerous than one's personal projects, namely a life commandeered by God. Preaching is not only the explication of a biblical text but also the text's application. Every biblical text tends to imply an imperative, moving naturally from proclamation to praxis. Therefore to listen to a sermon is to place oneself at risk for a potential summons, a

vocation. Jesus almost never asked, 'Do you agree with what I'm saying?' rather more typical was Jesus saying, 'Follow me!' The truth, biblical truth that is the provenance of preaching, is more engaging than mere intellectual affirmation; preaching expects active engagement. Sermons are meant to be enacted, performed, embodied. The test of good preaching is less a matter of orthodoxy of ideas and more in its effects among the faithful in preaching's equipment and encouragement of active discipleship. Preaching means to 'equip the saints for the work of ministry' (Eph. 4.12). Listening to sermons would be harmless activity were it not for Christians' well-founded anticipation that God might use a sermon to call our names.

- The expectation that a sermon could disrupt one's received world by verbally rendering the coming Kingdom of God. A primary mode of Jesus' communication was parable – short, disarming, dislocating stories, often without neat conclusions, relating to everyday life yet also mysterious, opaque and befuddling. When Jesus spoke of the Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven, he usually did so in parables, analogously, as if there were little about God's kingdom that was self-evident or obvious, particularly to those of us more accustomed to living by the values of the kingdoms of this world. Confusion and consternation are expected byproducts of faithful preaching. True, Jesus said that the truth would make us free (Jn 8.32), but most lifetime listeners to sermons would add that the truth often makes one miserable before it makes one free. In such painful attentiveness to the truth about God is our salvation. If you hear a sermon and respond, 'Yes, that's what I've always thought', then listen again; you probably heard it wrong.
- A willingness not to receive an immediate, practical, pay off from the sermon. Scripture always and everywhere speaks primarily about God and only secondarily, and then often derivatively, about us. Our first reason for being in worship is to focus upon the God who, in Jesus Christ, has risked focus upon us. We are therefore not present in worship first of all to receive our list of helpful hints for easier living, principles for a more purpose-driven life, motivation to a higher ethic, or keys to personal happiness. Sometimes we do receive such gifts from a sermon, but they are not the main point. The main point is the worship, adoration, praise and submission to the God who has spoken to us. An always useful God, an instantly applicable sermon is often a sign of idolatry, making ourselves and our endeavours more significant than the Trinity. Moralism from the pulpit, presenting the Gospel as some sort of human obligation rather than a divinely bestowed gift, something the listener is to think, feel, or do, is usually an indication that the preacher has jumped too quickly to the, 'What's

in this for me?' rather than first to ask the more pressing and faithful, 'Is there any word from the Lord?' (Jer. 37.17)

- A patient willingness not to have every single sermon speak to you. The truth that is articulated in a given sermon may not be the truth of which you are in desperate need right now. Sometimes Jesus' 'love your neighbor' (Mt. 19.19) means a humble willingness to allow a sermon to speak primarily to your neighbour and not to you. Be patient, give thanks to God that your neighbour heard something in the sermon that you did not, and come back next Sunday in expectation of a sermon that God may more directly address to you.
- A vulnerability to the mysterious comings and goings of the Holy Spirit. Grace, an essential requirement for the hearing of a sermon's truth, is not grace if it's predictable and programmed. Only God can speak of God. So all faithful preaching requires the descent and intervention of the Holy Spirit in order for the Word of God to be received and responded to. John Calvin noted how after the preaching of the same sermon, 'twenty receive it with ready obedience of faith while the rest hold it valueless, or laugh, or hiss, or loathe it.'[5] Delivery of a sermon is the preacher's job; receptivity to a sermon is the self-assigned task of the Holy Spirit. 'So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth' (1 Cor. 3.7). It is therefore customary to pray a Prayer for Illumination before the reading and the exposition of Scripture, asking the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds to the Word. It is impossible to hear a sermon unaided and alone.
- An understanding that preaching is a communal activity. A sermon is public speech. The gathered congregation – with people convened to hear and then to enact the Word – is the natural habitat for the exposition of God's Word. A sermon begins, rather than ends, with the preacher's last words, taking on a life of its own within the congregation's cares and concerns, as well as the determination of the People of God to be not only receptive but also obedient. The effects of sermons are cumulative, over a lifetime gradually drawing us out of ourselves and into the life of God. A sermon often waits to bear fruit in the lives of the faithful long after the sermon has been preached. Listening for the Word is an activity that permeates all of the church's life as insights on the significance of the preached word are shared, corrected, challenged, and encouraged within the conversation and the living of the congregation.
- A desire for a preacher, a pastor, who cares more for the right division of the Word of God (2 Tim. 2.15) than for the love or

[5]John Calvin, *ICR*, III.24.12.

the ire of the congregation. Pastors must stir up in themselves a more passionate desire to be truthful than their typical pastoral longing to be popular. Though a pastor must love a congregation, a faithful pastor loves the Word of God even more so. Sermons tend to be boring when they want to tingle the ears of the faithful (Jer. 19.3) rather than please a truth-telling God. Listeners must give the preacher encouragement, praising a preacher who tries to be courageous more highly than a preacher who, in sermons, wants merely to be kind. Some congregations get the equivocating, inconsequential, tedious and trite sermons they deserve.

- A joyful submission to the language of Zion, learning how to use the peculiar speech of the church, rather than demanding that the preacher attempt to translate our faith into language that is more acceptable to the culture. Listening to a sermon today is somewhat akin to learning French. In order to be Christian, one must learn how to use the language, calling all things by their proper names. What the world calls 'mistake', 'a lapse in judgement', the church teaches us to name as 'sin'. Much that the world calls 'creative', we label as 'idolatry'. The world seeks 'justice', we are bold to attempt 'love'. A Christian is someone who knows how to use the speech that God has given us through Scripture and Church rather than jettisoning that speech for talk that is designed by the world to keep the world's reality afloat.
- Joy in a preacher who attempts, on Sunday, to help us pay attention to matters we try to avoid all week long. A faithful preacher beguiles us, through various homiletical stratagems, into being attentive to matters (sin, death, grace, righteousness, salvation) that we think are too painful or too overwhelming for us to consider. One reason why we often have stained glass windows, or bare interiors in our churches is in order to lessen worldly distractions so that, in listening to a sermon, we are attentive to reality (the Kingdom of God) and less concerned with the sham that is presented to us, in daily life, as 'the real world'. By God's grace, we can stand more truth, and put up with more reality than we think. We find that our self-defenses against the Word are unwarranted. Having been justified by grace, we enjoy the sanctification that comes through growing in grace through listening to the truth: 'Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ . . . ' (Eph. 4.15). It takes guts to listen closely to a sermon but, in receiving the truth gladly, we discover that we are not as cowardly as we first presumed.
- A relinquishment of our prerogative to talk about what we are obsessed with discussing (sex, family, security, health) and a docile

> willingness to engage in a conversation with a living God, talking about what God wants to talk about. John Calvin spoke of Scripture as the 'lens' which God gives us to view and review the world. A lens brings some things into focus that were previously overlooked and puts some things out of focus that we previously considered to be all important. Preaching can have similar optical effects.

In all these ways preaching assists in our sanctification. Week-in-week-out, in the practice of listening to sermons, Christians are being steadily drawn more closely to the heart of God. We are being formed, transformed into the people God has created us to be. If we can be courageous enough to be attentive to a truthful sermon on Sunday, then we may be more courageous in living out the consequences of the sermon on Monday.

Most preachers can testify to the sanctifying effects of submitting one's life to God and the People of God in our weekly sermon preparation, disciplining oneself to listen for the Word of God rather than to anxiously serve competing words, loving the truth more than popular acclaim. In serving the Word, we preachers find that, over time we become better people than we would be if we had not been called to preach and had been left to our own devices. Listeners to preaching can find the same salubrious results from practices required to listen to a sermon.

Today some attempt to follow the Christian faith without the regular sustenance of listening to sermons. The result is bound to be a flagging of zeal, a diminishment of commitment because the Word of God is the constantly needed nourishment of the Christian who lives, not by bread alone, but by the Word (Mt. 4.4). Faith, Paul says, comes through hearing (Rom. 10.17). Faith is an acoustical, auditory phenomenon. The weekly rehearsal and reiteration of the Word gives substance to our faith, rescues our faith from the insubstantial 'spirituality' of this age and keeps making the Christian life as difficult as it ought to be.

Luther said that preachers preach on Sunday so that all Christians are prepared to preach all week long.[6] All Christians listen, like all their preachers, so that they may preach:

> But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people; *that you may declare the wonderful deeds* of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Pet. 2.9, emphasis added)

In listening to a sermon we listeners become emboldened to proclaim the Gospel, inculcating the skills necessary to bring the Gospel to speech in an unbelieving, but still God-beloved world. Having witnessed the Holy Spirit empowering a frail, ordinary spokesperson like your pastor, you gain confidence that the Holy Spirit might use you. Having heard free, untamed,

---

[6]Willimon, *Proclamation and Theology*, p. 29.

godly speech from the pulpit, you are given the guts to dare to speak up and to speak out in the classroom, the courtroom or boardroom:

> When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious how or what you are to answer or what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say. (Lk. 12.11–12, RSV)

It might be possible to reduce our love of God to a vague, apophatic feeling, an emotional inclination if Jesus had never preached. His words specify the boundaries of the Kingdom of God and the peculiar, quite specific demands of discipleship. When we listen to a sermon and allow the Holy Spirit to enliven the Word in our lives, we are participating in the primal practice of the faith. A new world is taking shape before our very eyes. Our old self is being crucified in order that a new self might rise. Our name is being called, our summons is being issued, and even in our doubt and cowardice, we feel ourselves ascending by a power not our own, and we hear ourselves cry out, 'Here am I; send me' (Isa. 6.8–9)!

15

Forgiveness and reconciliation

D. Stephen Long

Jesus proclaims the Gospel by announcing, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand, repent and believe in the gospel' (Mk 1.14–15). This inaugurates a basic, and yet contested, practice in the Christian life: repentance. The practice of repentance is not unique to Christianity; it was inherited from Judaism. Both traditions assume a call to holiness. Jews and Christians are to make God's name holy through their lives. Repentance assumes something is amiss with creaturely fulfilment of holiness such that creation must be redirected in order to achieve its proper end. The first moment towards fulfilment is to repent, to turn towards God and away from all that resists God. Exodus depicts a turning from slavery to the freedom God bequeaths Israel, a freedom that comes through the Law and God's 'tabernacling' with Israel in the Ark of the Covenant and the Temple. Leviticus lays out conditions for reestablishing holiness for both intentional and unintentional sins. Sin was understood not only as moral failure but also as impurity. Jesus' mission is unintelligible without the Jewish summons to holiness. He may have reinterpreted or reordered Judaism's concern for 'religious purity', but he did not reject it.[1] He was as concerned for holiness as was Leviticus. His concern for holiness is why he called for repentance. Because the Kingdom of God came near, repentance was necessary. Christians understand Christ's body as God's tabernacle uniting divinity and humanity and bestowing upon creation its proper end, holiness. Turning from sin and evil and towards God by participating in Christ's body makes God's name

[1]Markus Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), p. 10.

holy, which is the central task and prayer of the Christian life – 'hallowed by thy Name'.

The first moment towards the fulfilment of holiness is baptism, which is the taking on of Christ's life. Before receiving baptism, the recipient must repent. This first act of repentance is non-controversial. Every church requires repentance before baptism, a practice that repeats the history of Israel. Just as they passed through the waters to follow God through the desert to the Promised Land, so every baptism is a mini-exodus where the initiates leave behind slavery and sin to follow God.[2] Through this initial movement God forgives sin and reconciles creatures to God and to each other effecting holiness. In order to accomplish this, discernment and rejection of those ways of life that must be left behind is necessary.

The early Jewish-Christians continued practices of repentance already present within Judaism in order to seek holiness. The Apostolic Council at Jerusalem (Acts 15) set forth judgements on eating and sexual activity in order to address what Gentiles 'must *do* to be saved' so that Jews and Gentiles could be reconciled in the new Christian community.[3] The Jewish-Christians did not reject the law and set in its place grace, but established a 'new law' written on the initiate's very being based on the teaching of the prophets (2 Cor. 3.2–3; Heb. 10.15–18). Jesus affirmed the law (Mt. 5.17–20, 23.1–3; Lk. 18.18–21) even as he challenged its interpretation by the Pharisees (Mt. 12.1–8). Sometimes Jesus relaxed prohibitions, especially when it came to some food laws and washing requirements. Sometimes he strengthened them, as he did in the Sermon on the Mount.

Discerning how forgiveness and reconciliation will take place after Jesus inaugurates the new law is complicated. This complication is double once the Christian tradition developed a second moment of repentance. It occurs when sin reappears after its initial forgiveness in baptism. If participation in Christ's body through baptism renders the faithful holy, what should be done when their lives do not embody this holiness? If God makes holy through the waters of baptism, why would there be need for repentance after baptism? Answers to this vexing question eventually led to a second moment of repentance – repentance after baptism – that has been more controversial within Christian tradition because it raises important theological questions.

In order to lessen the complexity and show the significance of forgiveness and reconciliation for the Christian life, the following essay unfolds through three stages. First it traces a brief history of the practices of repentance after baptism showing how they give shape to the Christian life. Second it addresses dogmatic issues by comparing the similar yet different approaches to forgiveness and reconciliation by two influential Protestant and Catholic

[2]Gerhard Lohfink, *Does God Need the Church?* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazer Books, 1999), p. 253.
[3]Bockmuehl, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches*, p. 164.

theologians, Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar. Third it draws some conclusions about forgiveness and reconciliation based on traditional practices and the dogmatic issues Barth and Balthasar raised.

Brief history of the practices, and the shape of the Christian life

Some early Christians assumed Christ inaugurated a new age such that certain actions were unthinkable, or if they were committed, unforgiveable. The author of Hebrews set forth this kind of rigorist position: 'For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they then commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt' (Heb. 6.4–6). Needless to say this caused deep consternation throughout Christian tradition. Rigorists such as Tertullian and Novatian taught there were sins after baptism for which repentance and forgiveness were impossible. The dominant tradition did not follow their lead. Augustine and Aquinas taught that Heb. 6 referred not to repentance per se, but to baptism. Christians can repent even for apostasy, but they cannot be re-baptized.[4] One baptism suffices, but it does not exclude the repetition of repentance. Those ongoing acts of repentance can even contribute to the reconciliation effected by baptism.

Although no uniform teaching on forgiveness and reconciliation was present throughout the first few centuries of Christianity, it was assumed that baptism would bring a change of character such that certain ways of life were no longer conceivable. The practical dilemma arose that, in fact, baptized Christians conceived of, and executed, those very ways of life. What was to be done? Given the reality of postbaptismal sins, the expectation for holiness could have been diminished, but it was not. Instead practices of forgiveness and reconciliation developed that acknowledged both the call to holiness and the reality of postbaptismal sin. Two concerns animated many of the early church leaders: restoration of the sinner and safeguarding the holiness of the church in its witness. To attend to both concerns many leaders permitted repentance for grave postbaptismal sins, but under diverse conditions. The second-century *Shepherd of Hermas* allowed a single repentance after baptism, although he denied repentance for adultery.[5] Tertullian (160–225) followed suit, granting one repentance except for sins of idolatry, unchastity and homicide. Like other church fathers, he did not

[4]Aquinas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ed. and trans. Chrysostom Baer and O. Praem; South Bend, IN: St. Augustine's Press, 2007), p. 127.
[5]http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/shepherd-lightfoot.html. (1[29]:10 and 3[31]6).

understand the three prohibitions in Acts 15 ('abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, from what is strangled, and from unchastity') within the context of Jewish purity laws, but as three unpardonable sins – idolatry, homicide and unchastity. Although there were other rigorists, such as Novatian in the third century, who emphasized the church's purity such that repentance after baptism was nearly impossible, the dominant tradition thought of the church along the lines of Callistus (bishop of Rome 217–22), who saw it akin to Noah's Ark where two of every kind are taken in, both sinners and saints.

The mixed composition of the church did not mean sins after baptism were ignored. They still had to be forgiven. Although baptism was unrepeatable, repentance was understood as a repeatable 'second plank' that could still save sinners once sin wrecked the ark of baptism. Baptism as the ark, and repentance as a second plank, became common images throughout Christian tradition. Repentance depended upon baptism like a plank from a broken ship. Sin broke the ark of baptism and threw people into the deep, but all was not lost. The plank of repentance remained available. Whereas ancient penance (prior to the third century) tended to be public and communal and repentance after conversion was the exception, canonical developments of penance increasingly privatized and regularized it. Shifting expectations and forms resulted from a change in baptismal practice. The church shifted from the dominant (although not exclusive) practice of adult baptism in the early church to the dominant (although not exclusive) practice of infant baptism after Constantine, a shift Hans Urs von Balthasar called, and Barth subsequently echoed, 'the most momentous of all decisions in Church history'.[6] Once infant baptism became the standard, postbaptismal sin became the expectation. Nonetheless, it still had to be remedied for the sake of holiness.

From the late fifth and early sixth centuries, Welsh and Irish monks began the practice of private oracular confession and imported this practice throughout the European continent.[7] Confession became private, but penance remained public. Manuals listing sins and appropriate penances, known as *Penitentials*, developed.[8] Confessors could use them to determine the gravity of sins and the proper penances. We do not know how such penances were actually carried out in everyday life. We do know the arbitrary character of the *Penitentials* posed problems of continuity in different regions. A penance for a sin might be harsh in one area and lenient in another. The

[6]Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Spouse of the Word: Explorations in Theology* (trans. A. V. Littledale with Alexander Dru; vol. II; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), p. 17. Barth, *CD,* IV.4, p. 164.

[7]John T. McNeil, *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1951). John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Paperbacks, 1990), pp. 1–37.

[8]John McNeill and Helena Gamer, *Medieval Handbooks of Penance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

Carolingian reforms in the late eighth and ninth centuries regularized penances, producing a 'tariff system' where what mattered most was a complete confession, the performance of penances and priestly absolution. The priest's role increased throughout the Middle Ages as can be seen in the shift from Lombard (1096–1164), who emphasized more the contrition of the penitent than the priest's absolution, to Aquinas (1225–74), who taught a 'causal unity' between the penitent's contrition and the priest's action, to Scotus (1265–1308), who so emphasized the priest's role that he spoke of 'the sacrament of absolution'.[9]

Martin Luther and John Calvin's protests and reforms are unintelligible without this historical background. Luther found mediaeval practices of penance leading to a 'gallows sorrow' that failed adequately to trust in baptism. Although he originally affirmed penance as a third sacrament along with baptism and Eucharist, he later collapsed penance into baptism. Luther did not reject confession; he had a confessor to whom he confessed all his life, Bugenhagen, but the works of penance were not the source of our reconciliation with God; trust in the promises proclaimed upon us at our baptism were. Likewise, Calvin thought the 'Schoolmen' had turned things inside out. Full contrition and confession cannot precede absolution or it will only lead to despair. Contrition and confession still mattered to him, but they followed forgiveness. The radical Reformer Menno Simons (1496–1561) held a different concern. He thought Catholic practices of reconciliation, especially with respect to who came to the Eucharistic table, were too lax. Only the truly regenerated should come. Roman Catholicism erred by admitting 'the avaricious, the proud, the ostentatious, the drunkards, the hateful, the idolatrous ones, those who frequent houses of ill fame, yes, harlots and scamps'.[10]

The complex and contested character of the doctrine and practice of repentance still divides the church. Although all Christian traditions acknowledge the centrality of forgiveness and reconciliation, and the need for repentance after baptism, how it is practised differs widely. Anabaptists follow Mt. 18 in binding and loosing. Roman Catholics follow Mt. 16, finding the power of forgiveness to be located in the see of St Peter, which is then distributed through the bishops to priests who grant absolution. For the Orthodox churches, like the Catholic, penance is a sacrament. The priest plays an important role, but it is not as direct as in the Catholic tradition where the priest uses the words, 'I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.' Protestant practices of confession and reconciliation vary widely. Ministers do not play the central role they do

[9]T. N. Tentler, *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 22.

[10]*The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* (trans. Leonard Verduin; Scottdale Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1956), pp. 134, 142. 'For where there is no renewing, regenerating faith, leading to obedience, there is no baptism' (p. 139).

in the Catholic or Orthodox churches, but many Protestant churches still have an absolution prayed by the minister. The Wesleyan tradition began by recovering public confession. People were brought together in small bands and asked publicly, 'What known sins have you committed since last we met.' Can any common doctrine be found among these diverse practices?

Let me suggest that despite the varied and contradictory practices there is a basic movement to the Christian understanding of forgiveness and reconciliation that should find broad agreement. First is baptism, which is preceded by repentance and rejection of sin. Like Israel's Exodus, what binds us from following God must be decisively, once for all, rejected and a new way of life taken up. Of course for this reason baptism is unrepeatable.[11] Baptism culminates in Eucharist, which is the feast of reconciliation. It is the feast God throws for his elect, in which God's purposes for creation come to fulfilment, a fulfilment that is already but not yet realized. The purpose is found in communion: God dwells with creatures and creatures dwell with God (Exod. 24.9–11; Rev. 21.1–5). Only communion between God and creatures produces holiness. The Christian life is a constant movement from baptism, in which the baptized is made initially holy, to Eucharist, where that holiness is restored and completed. However, the Christian movement from the unrepeatability of baptism to the repeatable feast that is the Eucharist constantly passes through repentance, the ongoing practice of confession, forgiveness and reconciliation by which the faithful live into their baptism so that it might be completed in the Eucharist. The Christian life is a life of repentance, a gift of continual growth in grace so that the baptized live into the vows and promises pronounced at their baptism. In the Anglican tradition, this threefold structure became known as a virtue (penitence), a discipline (penance proper) and a sacrament (absolution as the completion of a good penance).[12] The threefold structure is integrally related to the doctrines of justification and sanctification. The doctrine of justification concerns the initial holiness brought on by baptism. The doctrine of sanctification concerns the completion of holiness through the repetition of living into one's baptism that the Eucharist and practice of repentance produces.

Dogmatic issues

The movement from baptism through repentance to Eucharist provides the basic theme of the Christian teachings on forgiveness and reconciliation within most churches, but there are significant variations on that theme. Those variations can be discerned by how theologians relate the two

[11]The Ana-baptists (re-baptizers) did not reject this. They denied infant baptism was baptism.
[12]See K. E. Kirk, *The Vision of God: The Christian Doctrine of the Summum Bonum* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966).

doctrines integrally related to forgiveness and reconciliation: justification and sanctification. Take for instance the Reformed theologian Karl Barth, and the Roman Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar. Barth's 'Doctrine of Reconciliation' emphasized both justification and sanctification as essential for the Christian life, but he argued they must be kept separate. Christians are called to holiness, as the doctrine of sanctification affirms, yet this call in no way affects justification, which is by faith alone. The repetitive works that Christians must do for sanctification make no contribution to their justification. Barth did not deny the importance of these works, but they do not add anything to the reconciliation God effected in Jesus Christ, who alone is our reconciliation with God. Balthasar, however, links justification and sanctification more closely. Justification is by faith, but the holiness found in sanctification, including the perfection of the vows of celibacy, poverty and obedience, contribute to the reconciliation between God and the world.

The variations found in Barth and Balthasar trace back to the Council of Trent and the parting of the ways that occurred in its aftermath between Catholics and Protestants. On the one hand, this parting of the ways may have been a misunderstanding. Trent taught, as did the Protestant Reformers, that forgiveness and reconciliation are not found 'without divine grace through Jesus Christ'.[13] On the other hand, the meritorious nature of cooperative acts of repentance and forgiveness divide Catholics and Protestants.[14] As Canon 8, from the 'Canons on Justification', puts it, 'If anyone shall say that by faith alone the sinner is justified, so as to understand that nothing else is required to cooperate in the attainment of the grace of justification, and that it is in no way necessary that he be prepared and disposed by the action of his own will: let him be anathema.'[15] Immediately after the 'Canons on Justification', Trent took up the 'Canons on the Sacraments in General'. Those canons followed intentionally upon the previous ones on justification. The 'foreword' to the canons on the sacraments states, 'For the completion of the salutary doctrine of justification, which was promulgated in the last session with the unanimous consent of the Fathers, it has seemed fitting to treat of the most holy sacraments of the church, through which all true justice either begins, or being begun is increased, or being lost is restored.'[16] Justification and reconciliation begin, are augmented or restored by the sacraments.

In 1941 Karl Barth taught a seminar on Trent that addressed nothing but the 'Canons on the Sacraments in General'. One year previous to this

[13]*The Sources of Catholic Dogma* (trans. Roy J. Deferrari from the Thirtieth Edition of Henry Denzinger's *Enchiridion Symbolorum*; London: B. Herder Book Co.), canon 811, p. 298.
[14]Whether they still should is a matter of debate. Some Lutherans, Wesleyans and the Catholic church found agreement on these issues in the 'Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification' (2000). But not all Protestant churches agreed to its claims.
[15]Deferrari, *Sources*, p. 259.
[16]Deferrari, *Sources*, p. 262.

seminar, Balthasar moved to Basel and introduced himself to Barth. Barth invited Balthasar to attend his seminar and what followed was one of the most important theological friendships addressing the different variations on forgiveness and reconciliation in the twentieth century. Barth questioned whether the Catholic emphasis on the sacraments and their ability to 'begin, augment and restore' grace held fully to the fact that Jesus Christ is reconciliation. As early as *Church Dogmatics* I.1 (1932), Barth raised a question about the place of human institutions in Catholicism in effecting forgiveness and reconciliation. He reminds his readers that St Augustine 'prayed' (*oret*) for the Word to manifest itself in Christ's Church. He did not assume the Word could be guaranteed by ecclesiastical office. Barth put this question to Catholicism,

> Is Christ's action, real proclamation, the Word of God preached, tied to the ecclesiastical office and consequently to a human act, or conversely, as one might conclude from this *oret* are the office and act tied to the action of Christ, to the actualising of proclamation by God, to the Word of God preached? From the standpoint of our theses this question is the puzzling cleft [*rätselhafte Riss*] which has cut right across the church during the last 400 years.[17]

Because Jesus Christ is reconciliation, he provides its only conditions. The church with its ecclesiastical offices and sacramental structure, as well as acts of repentance by believers, cannot ensure or cooperate in reconciliation. It always comes as a gift, as a response to prayer. Barth called the breach between Catholics and Protestants a 'puzzling' or 'enigmatic cleft' because their lack of reconciliation is based upon their different teachings on, and practices of, reconciliation. How can reconciliation be the basis for division? It is puzzling.

For Barth, Jesus Christ is reconciliation because he is true humanity and divinity in one single acting subject. There is no account of reconciliation that is more universal than Jesus Christ. In other words, we cannot begin by understanding what reconciliation is and fit Jesus within that understanding. Christian theology must begin with Jesus and configure reconciliation within his life and history. No twentieth-century theologian clung as tenaciously to this dogmatic insight as Barth did. His *Doctrine of Reconciliation* (volume four of *Church Dogmatics*) laid out a threefold structure correlating this fundamental Christological insight with the doctrines of justification and sanctification as well as ethics. This had long been his plan. On 12 December 1930 Barth wrote a letter to Karl Stoevesand in which he first noted his plan to develop a 'five part work that includes an ethics dispersed over the doctrinal loci'.[18] *The Doctrine of Reconciliation* is the mature fruit of this plan.

---

[17]Barth, *CD*, I.1, p. 99.
[18]Cited in Gerhard Sauter, 'Vorwort zur Neuausgabe', to *Die Christliche Dogmatik*, p. xvi.

Barth positioned ethics within the doctrine of reconciliation because he recognized that a key temptation to modern theology was 'ethics'. It seems more universal, inclusive and accessible than dogma. 'Ethics unites, but dogma divides', as a common refrain proclaims. But for Barth if we first speak of forgiveness and reconciliation within the general domain of ethics, then Jesus Christ is not reconciliation but an instance of a greater category; he merely exemplifies what we always already knew on some other basis. Barth insisted reconciliation and forgiveness could not be had outside of Jesus Christ because he is the union of God and humanity. Barth expressed this through a repeating triadic form, which G. W. Bromily helpfully identified as constituting the three parts to volume four of the *Church Dogmatics*, the doctrine of reconciliation:

> IV.1: Christ's priestly work: 'very God humbling himself to reconcile', by which Christ's descent confronts our pride (justification), and produces faith.
>
> IV.2: Christ's kingly work: 'very man exalted and reconciled', by which Christ's ascent confronts our sloth (sanctification) and produces love.
>
> IV.3: Christ's prophetic work: 'God-man, guaranteeing and attesting reconciliation', through which Christ is our sanctification producing hope.[19]

The question Barth asks and addresses in this threefold structure is the significance of the unity of God and humanity in Christ for the world. This unity is found in the 'hypostatic union', which designates the single acting subject Jesus Christ. Humanity and divinity are 'hypostatically' united in him as the Second Person of the Trinity so that humanity and divinity commune in a unity that neither denies the difference between them nor divides them. When Christ acts, divine and human nature acts in his single Person. Barth asks, 'Was it [the hypostatic union] just the isolated history of this one man? This is certainly the case, for what took place and has to be noted as this communication between divine and human being and activity in this One was and is only, as the reconciliation of man with God by God's own Incarnation, His own history and not that of any other man.'[20] That Jesus Christ is reconciliation does not mean, however, that this history is his private history. Barth continues, 'But for all its singularity, as His history it was not and is not a private history, but a representative and therefore a public. His history in the place of all other men and in accomplishment of their atonement; the history of their Head, in which they all participate. Therefore, in the most concrete sense of the term, the history of this One is world history.'[21] Jesus' hypostatic union is unique. Only in him did divinity

[19]G. W. Bromiley, 'editor's preface' to *CD*, IV.I, p. vii.
[20]Barth, *CD,* IV.2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), p. 296.
[21]Barth, *CD,* IV.2, p. 296.

and humanity come together in a reconciled oneness by which divine and human actions and being are identified. But Jesus shares this union with all of creation, which is its reconciliation and sanctification. Barth set forth a similar position earlier in his work when he wrote, 'The creature is not self-existent. . . . The creature is no more its own goal and purpose than it is its own ground and beginning. . . . The creature's right and meaning and goal and purpose and dignity lie – only – in the fact that God as the Creator has turned toward it with His purpose.'[22] Barth considers world history within the context of Jesus' unique history and not Jesus within the context of world history. Reconciliation is given a definitive shape by Jesus, but that definitive shape makes possible a public representation of his history for all.

Balthasar was an attentive reader and listener to Karl Barth and his Protestant concerns about forgiveness and reconciliation. He thought he could affirm Barth's central concern that Jesus Christ is reconciliation, and still link Christ's actions to the human institution of the church and human actions. He wrote,

> Karl Barth, in defining the man Christ as 'man *for* men' and describing the rest of humanity as 'man *with* men', is undoubtedly making an extremely profound statement (that the human *nature* of Christ is totally monopolized by the redeeming *action* of God and must be understood in terms of it). But this does involve the danger of looking upon the oneness of Christ and mankind as merely analogical. It would lead on to the conclusion that the 'brothers' cannot, as is envisaged in Catholic teaching, participate in God's action in Christ – Incarnation, Cross, Resurrection. If the *analogy* between Christ's uniqueness and mankind in its multiplicity is not to annul the *identity* of their nature, then the ascent of human nature into God must be more deeply grounded in the descent of God into human nature. Only then does the inclusion of the redemption of the many within the uniqueness of Christ become intelligible. The humanity of Christ, as Saint Thomas says, is the *instrumentum conjunctum* for the salvation of human nature as a whole.[23]

For Balthasar, the fact that Christ is 'for' humanity entails that other human creatures can participate in Christ's humanity to effect God's reconciliation.

The argument against Barth, by Balthasar and other Catholic interlocutors, was that he denied Christ's redeeming work could be represented in his church through the Mass and among his saints without diminishing the uniqueness of Christ's work. Catholicism has a key role for human action in its Marian dogmas, which form the heart of Balthasar's theology. Mary,

---

[22]Barth, *CD*, III.1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), p. 95.
[23]Balthasar, *A Theology of History* (San Francisco: Ignatius Books, Communio, 1994), pp. 16–17.

after all, gives birth to God; what higher form of human agency could possibly exist? She is also one of the key forms for the evangelical counsels. Barth affirms this exaltation of human agency, but finds its Marian shape unnecessary and denies it can be represented in the saints or the Mass.[24] For Balthasar, Christ's full and sufficient work could, and must, be repeated. Its repetition constitutes the 'theodrama' that reconciles God and creation. Christ's work is repeated through the obedience of Christians, first and foremost through the obedience of those who take the way of perfection, who covenant to live Jesus' difficult teachings through celibacy, poverty and obedience. This way of perfection, Balthasar argued, should not be the unique province of the clergy but shared with, and encouraged among, the laity. He called them to take up this way to effect reconciliation between God and the world in modernity.[25] The way of perfection was also available to all who practise some form of obedience, even if it is obedience within marriage or between an individual and his or her conscience.[26] Obedience repeats Christ's mission, as well as his procession from the Father.

Barth and Balthasar represent different variations on a common theme. Both agree that Jesus Christ is reconciliation. Both agree that this dogmatic commitment entails social and political significance to all aspects of creaturely existence. They disagree on how the dogma gets mediated through history. For Balthasar, human agency can be freed to repeat Christ's reconciling activity; sanctification and justification are closely linked. Creatures cooperate in their justification by the sanctifying works of holiness they perform, even as those works are always the result and not the cause of justification. For Barth, sanctification matters, but it does not feed back into justification. Such cooperation would detract from the sufficiency of Christ's reconciling action in his threefold office as prophet, priest and king.

Barth never denied repentance and forgiveness were important human works. Baptism requires a 'renunciation and pledge'.

> We may thus say that it is in wholly free, conscious and voluntary decision that there takes place in baptism that renunciation and pledge, that No on the basis of the justification of sinful man effected in Jesus

[24]See *CD,* IV.1, p. 768. Balthasar cites this passage in his 1961 'Foreword' to the 1951 Barth book and uses it to 'show how deeply Protestant Barth's thinking really is' (*Theology of Karl Barth*, p. 398, n. 14).

[25]Balthasar, *The Laity and the Life of the Counsels: The Church's Mission in the World* (trans. Brian McNeil, C. R. V. with D. C. Schindler; San Francisco: A Communio Book, Ignatius Press, 1993).

[26]'Thus, what the monk lives out in obedience to an "abba" or superior as an "exemplary sign" has its real counterpart in the situational obedience of the mature layman who listens to his Christian conscience, to the summons of Christ that comes from within the secular moment: but in such a way that sign and reality in practice exclude one another. It is indeed very impressive when one man obeys another for the sake of the Gospel; it is an ascetic practice that continuously reminds the Christian in the world how demanding it can be to choose the path indicated by conscience in the "situation".' *The Laity and the Life of the Counsels: The Church's Mission in the World,* p. 169.

> Christ, that Yes on the basis of the sanctification accomplished in Him. If only it were enough merely to make what would seem to be so self-evident a statement! If only we could make this the conclusion to the second point in our description of the event of baptism! Unfortunately this is not so.[27]

More needed to be said because of infant baptism. The renunciation found in baptism is the 'No' that must be spoken to sinners. There is nothing a sinner can do to justify himself accept receive what Christ has done. The pledge is the 'Yes' of the sanctified life Christ makes possible. Although Barth affirmed 'renunciation', he was willing to rethink traditional practices of baptism and repentance to insure they maintained his basic insight, 'Jesus is reconciliation.'

How shall we go on? Tentative conclusions from practice and dogma

The question Barth put to Catholics is this: Who forgives? Is it the church with its institutional structures or Jesus? His answer is found in prayer. Christians must pray for forgiveness; it cannot be guaranteed by office or the mediation of any human agency. No institutional practice of repentance guarantees forgiveness. Office must always be tied to Jesus and not vice versa. Balthasar responded that Barth misunderstood the role of the church in Catholicism. He primarily saw it as usurping Christ, as an effort 'to lay hands on God', rather than being authorized by him. He too denied that office 'guaranteed' forgiveness. Balthasar wrote,

> Does the Church – knowing as she does that she has been founded by Christ – not have the right to regard herself as true? Can she relativize herself without abrogating her obedience to her Lord? And where would such a self-relativization ever come to an end? The 'absoluteness' that the Catholic Church must claim for herself really represents her obedience, her refusal to countenance any detriment or constriction to the sovereignty of the freedom of God's grace. The Church has never equated the place of her visibility with that of the elect and justified. And the certainty that she possesses depends entirely on her mission and charge. For every member of the Church, even for the infallible Pope, the essence of the Church is the *promise* of salvation and not its 'guarantee.' The Catholic knows nothing of this attempt 'to lay hands on God'.[28]

---

[27]Barth, *CD*, IV.4, pp. 163–64.

[28]Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth* (trans. Edward T. Oakes, S. J.; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), p. 54.

Like Barth, he emphasized the pledge or promise of reconciliation given to the Church by Christ. Unlike Barth, he argued this was *given to the Church* such that human actions can repeat, participate and cooperate in Christ's reconciling work.

Despite their three decades long conversation concerning the 'Unity and Renewal of the Church', the differences between Barth and Balthasar restate the enigmatic cleft that keeps Christians from reconciliation.[29] How shall we practise forgiveness and reconciliation? Barth often had an insufficient role for human agency in the realm of grace. Christ's human body was not a *instrumentum conjunctum* that allowed a cooperative role in grace for other human bodies. No priest would be authorized to say 'I absolve you.' But what practices of repentance would be possible if Christ's human nature is not an instrument connecting him to our nature and making it possible for us to participate and cooperate in his reconciling acts? How might we advance the practices of reconciliation so that it makes possible ecclesial reconciliation? Do we have any concrete means of mediating the dogmatic truth that 'Jesus is reconciliation'?

God invites creatures to share in his own perfection by summoning them to holiness. This summons requires institutional and cultural mediation of forgiveness inside and outside the church. Anthony Baker recognizes well what God's summons to holiness entails, and what it must reject.

> To conceive of the gap between heaven and earth as a barrier that protects the integrity of God from human incursion, or the integrity of humanity from divine incursion, is to conceive of it in a post-Christian way. Likewise, to conceive of the gap in a tragic situation that will make the human *telos* into a self-defeating one is to conceive of it in a pre-Christian way. The revolutionary anthropology that the Christ-event initiates orients itself on the diagonal, so that human cultural activity can become a mediation of divine grace.[30]

It would be a mistake to argue Barth had no place for 'human cultural activity' as a mediation of grace. After all his historical practice recognized the tremendous evil besetting the twentieth century long before others. But he could, on occasion, slip into a neokantianism that protected God's integrity 'from human incursion'. Balthasar overstated the case when he tells us that the 'certainty' of the Catholic Church 'depends entirely on her mission and charge'. If so, the hierarchical office of Peter would be more

---

[29]Barth's last public lecture was held in tandem with Balthasar on Ash Wednesday, 1968 for the *Swiss ökumenischen Gesprächskomissionen*. Both lectures were published as *Einheit und Erneuerung der Kirche: Zwei Vorträge Karl Barth und Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Freiburg, Schweiz: Paulusverlag, 1968).

[30]Anthony D. Baker, *Diagonal Advance: Perfection in Christian Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011).

subordinated to the Marian vocation to holiness than the historical practice of that office has demonstrated. True forgiveness and reconciliation cannot be had by hierarchical fiat, including God's. For this very reason, they also cannot be had without human participation, including human mediations of repentance and expressions of absolution. I am unsure if the appropriate words of that mediation should be 'In the Name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.' Or if they should be, 'I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.' But I am quite confident some such words must be spoken by one human to another. For as Augustine reminds us, '*qui ergo fecit te sine te, not te iustificat sine te*' (He who made us without ourselves will not justify us without ourselves).[31]

[31]See Baker, *Diagonal Advance*, p. 284.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aquinas, Thomas, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (ed. and trans. Chrysostom Baer and O. Praem; South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2007).

—'Principium Rigans Montes de Superioribus', in *Opuscula Theologica* (vol. 1; Taurini: Marietti, 1954).

—*Summa Theologiae* (ed. Timothy McDermott; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

—*Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings* (ed. and trans. R. McInerny; New York: Penguin, 1998).

Athanasius, *Contra Arianos,* in Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (eds), *NPNF*[2] (trans. M. Atkinson and Archibald Robertson; vol. 4; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994).

Augustine, *The City of God*, in *Great Books of the Western World* (trans. Marcus Dods; vol. 18; Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952).

—*Confessions* (ed. Michael P. Foley; trans. F. J. Sheed; Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2nd rev. edn, 2006).

—*De Moribus Ecclesiae*, in Philip Schaff (ed.), *Anti-Pelagian Writings*, *NPNF*[1] (vol. 4; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994).

—*Literal Meaning of Genesis* (ed. and trans. Johannes Quasten, Walter J. Burghardt and Thomas Comerford Lawler; 2 vols; Wahwah: Paulist Press, 1982).

—*On Christian Teaching* (trans. R. P. H. Green; Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

—*On Continence*, in Philip Schaff (ed.), *Anti-Pelagian Writings*, *NPNF*[1] (vol. 5; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994).

—*On Man's Perfection in Righteousness*, in Philip Schaff (ed.), *Anti-Pelagian Writings*, *NPNF*[1] (vol. 5; Peabody: Hendriksen, 1994).

—*On Marriage and Concupiscence*, in Philip Schaff (ed.), *Anti-Pelagian Writings*, *NPNF*[1] (vol. 5; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994).

—*On the Trinity*, in Philip Schaff (ed.), *NPNF*[1] (vol. 3; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994).

—'The Spirit and the Letter', in *Augustine: Later Works* (ed. John Burnaby; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955).

—*Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sin, and on the Baptism of Infants,* in Philip Schaff (ed.), *Anti-Pelagian Writings*, *NPNF*[1] (vol. 5; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994).

Aulén, Gustaf, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement* (trans. A. G. Hebert; London: SPCK, 1953).

Baker, Anthony D., *Diagonal Advance: Perfection in Christian Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011).

Balthasar, Hans Urs von, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, I. Seeing the Form* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982).

—*The Laity and the Life of the Counsels: The Church's Mission in the World* (trans. Brian McNeil and D. C. Schindler; San Francisco: A Communio Book, Ignatius Press, 1993).
—*Spouse of the Word: Explorations in Theology* (trans. A. V. Littledale with Alexander Dru; vol. 2; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991).
—'Theology and Sanctity', in *Word and Redemption: Essays in Theology 2* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1965).
—*A Theology of History* (San Francisco: Ignatius Books, Communio, 1994).
—*The Theology of Karl Barth* (trans. Edward T. Oakes; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992).
—*Theo-drama III* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992).
—*The Threefold Garland: The World's Salvation in Mary's Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1978).
Balthasar, Hans Urs von and Karl Barth, *Einheit und Erneuerung der Kirche: Zwei Vorträge Karl Barth und Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Freiburg, Schweiz: Paulusverlag, 1968).
Barrett, C. K., *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968).
Barth, Karl, *The Christian Life: Church Dogmatics IV/4, Lecture Fragments* (trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).
—*Church Dogmatics*, 4 volumes in 13 parts (ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956–75).
—*Dogmatics in Outline* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959).
—*Ethics* (trans. G. W. Bromiley; New York: Seabury Press, 1981).
—'Gespräch mit Evangelischen Buchhändlern, in Eberhard Busch', in *Karl Barth: Gespräche 1959–1962* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1995).
—*The Göttingen Dogmatics: Instruction in the Christian Religion* (ed. Hannelotte Reiffen; trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).
—*The Knowledge of God and the Service of God According to the Teaching of the Reformation* (trans. J. L. M. Haire and I. Henderson; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938).
—*Prayer* (ed. Don E. Saliers; trans. Sara F. Terrier; Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).
Basil, *Ascetical Discourse* in *Ascetical Writings* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1962).
—*The Long Rules* in *Ascetical Writings* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1962).
—*Preface on the Judgement of God* in *Ascetical Writings* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1962).
Bauckham, Richard, *The Bible and Mission: Christian Witness in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004).
Bayer, Oswald, *Freedom in Response – Lutheran Ethics: Sources and Controversies* (trans. J. F. Cazyer; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
Bender, Howard S., 'The Anabaptist Theology of Discipleship', *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 24 (1950), pp. 25–32.
—'The Anabaptist Vision', in G. F. Hershberger (ed.), *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* (Scottdale, PA: Mennonite Publishing House, 1957).
Billings, J. Todd, *Calvin, Participation and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union with Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Bockmuehl, Markus, *Jewish Law in Gentile Churches: Halakhah and the Beginning of Christian Public Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000).
Bonaventure, *Collations on the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit*, in Robert J. Karris (ed.), *Works of St. Bonaventure* (St. Bonaventure, NY: Saint Bonaventure University, 2008).
Bonhoeffer, Dietrich, *Discipleship*, in G. B. Kelly and J. D. Godsey (eds), *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (trans. B. green and R. Krauss; vol. 4; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001).
—*Letters and Papers from Prison*, in J. W. de Gruchy (ed.), *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (trans. L. Dahill et al., vol. 8, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009).
—*Life Together and Prayerbook of the Bible* (trans. Daniel Bloesch and James H. Burtness; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).
—*Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church*, in Clifford J. Green (ed.), *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* (vol. 1; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998).
Borg, Marcus J., *Jesus: A New Vision* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).
Boulton, Matthew Myer, *Life in God: John Calvin, Practical Formation, and the Future of Protestant Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).
Brand, Chad Owen, *Perspectives on Election: Five Views* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2006).
Brown, Candy Gunther, *Testing Prayer: Science and Healing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).
Bruggemann, Walter, 'Evangelism and Discipleship: The God who Calls, the God who Sends', *Word & World* 24.2 (2004).
Buckley, James and David S. Yeago, *Knowing the Triune God: The Work of the Spirit in the Practices of the Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).
Burgess, John P., *After Baptism: Shaping the Christian Life* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).
Burkholder, J. Lawrence, 'The Anabaptist Vision of Discipleship', in Guy F. Hershberger (ed.), *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* (Scottdale, PA: Herald, 1957).
Byrne, Brendan, *Romans* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996).
Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* Library of Christian Classics (ed. J. T. McNeill; trans. F. L. Battles; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).
Camus, Albert, *The Stranger* (trans. S Gilbert; New York: Knopf, 1967).
Canlis, Julie, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).
Carpenter, Charles, *Theology as the Road to Holiness in St. Bonaventure* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999).
Carson, Rachel, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).
Cassian, *Institutes*, in Philip Schaff and Henry Wallace (eds), *NPNF*^{2} (vol. 11; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994).
Charry, Ellen T., *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
Coakley, Sarah, 'Deepening Practices: Perspectives from Ascetical and Mystical Theology', in Miroslav Volf and Dorothy Bass (eds), *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).
Cocksworth, Ashley, *Karl Barth's Theology of Prayer* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, forthcoming).

—*Prayer: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, forthcoming).
Connolly, Hugh, *Sin* (London and New York: Continuum, 2002).
Crump, David, *Jesus the Intercessor: Prayer and Christology in Luke-Acts* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1992).
Cullmann, Oscar, *Christ and Time: The Primitive Christian Conception of Time and History* (trans. Floyd V. Filson; London: SCM Press, 1951).
D'Costa, Gavin, *Theology in the Public Square: Church, Academy and Nation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006).
Davidson, Ivor J., 'Salvation's Destiny: Heirs of God', in Murray Rae and Ivor Davidson (eds), *God of Salvation: Soteriology in Theological Perspective* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).
Deferrari, Roy J., *The Sources of Catholic* Dogma (London: B. Herder Book Co., 31st edn, 1957).
Dulles, Avery, *Models of the Church: A Critical Assessment of the Church in All Aspects* (Towbridge: Gill and Macmillan, 1981).
Dunn, James D. G., 'The New Perspective on Paul', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 65/2.
Edwards, Jonathan, 'Born Again', in Mark R. Veliri (ed.), *Sermons and Discourses, 1730–1733* in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (vol. 17; New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1999).
Eilers, Kent, 'Rowan Williams and Christian Language: Mystery, Disruption, and Rebirth', in *Christianity and Literature* 61/1 (Autumn 2011).
Emery, Gilles, *The Trinity: An Introduction to Catholic Doctrine on the Triune God* (trans. Matthew Levering; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2011).
Erasmus, Desiderius, *The Correspondence of Erasmus* (trans. R. A. B. Mynors and D. F. S. Thomson and Wallace K. Ferguson Estate; vol. 2; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975).
—'Enchiridion militischristiani', in E. Rummel (ed.), *The Erasmus Reader* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990).
Evans, Craig E., 'Jesus and the Continuing Exile of Israel', in Carey C. Newman (ed.), *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999).
Fairbairn, Donald (ed.), *Fulgentius of Ruspe and The Scythian Monks: Correspondence on Christology and Grace,* The Fathers of the Church (trans. Rob Roy McGregor and Donald Fairbairn; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2013).
—*Grace and Christology in the Early Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
Farley, Edward, *Theologia: The Fragmentation and Unity of Theological Education* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1983).
Farrow, Douglas, *Ascension Theology* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).
Feuerbach, Ludwig, *The Essence of Christianity* (trans. George Eliot; Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1957).
Fiddes, Paul S., *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement* (London: Darton Longman & Todd, 1989).
Ford, David F. and Daniel W. Hardy, *Living in Praise: Worshipping and Knowing God* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, rev. edn, 2005).

Ford, David F. and Rachel Muers (eds), *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology Since 1918* (Oxford: Blackwell, 3rd edn, 2005).
Forde, Gerhard, 'Christian Life', in C. Braaten and R. Jenson (eds), *Christian Dogmatics* (vol. 2; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).
—'The Lutheran View', in D. L. Alexander (ed.), *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1988).
Forsyth, P. T., *Christian Perfection* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899).
Frame, John, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life* (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2008).
Frei, Hans, *The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975).
Friesen, Abraham, 'Anabaptism and Monasticism: A Study in the Development of Parallel Historical Patterns', *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, vol. 6 (1988).
Gallagher, J., *Perfectaecaritatis*, in W. M. Abbott (ed.), *The Documents of Vatican II* (trans. J. Gallagher; Piscataway, NJ: America Press, 1966).
Gollwitzer, Helmut, *Introduction of Protestant Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982).
Goodwin, T., *The Trial of a Christian's Growth* in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin* (vol. 3; Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1861).
Gray, Janette and Christiaan Mostert, 'Grace inTwo Theological Traditions', in Sean Winter (ed.), *Immense, Unfathomed, Unconfined: The Grace of God in Creation, Church and Community* (Melbourne: Uniting Academic Press, 2012).
Greggs, Tom, *Theology against Religion: Constructive Dialogues with Bonheoffer and Barth* (London: T&T Clark, 2011).
Gregory the Great, *Forty Gospel Homilies* (trans. Dom Hurst, OSB; Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2009).
Gregory of Nyssa, *Commentary on the Song of Songs*, Homily 13, in Patrologia Graeca 44:1052A-B.
—*On Perfection* in *Ascetical Works* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1967).
—*On Virginity* in *Ascetical Works* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1967).
Gunton, Colin E., *The Actuality of Atonement* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988).
—'The Church on Earth: The Roots of Community', in Colin E. Gunton and Daniel W. Hardy (eds), *On Being the Church: Essays on the Christian Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989).
Gutiérrez, Gustavo, *Las Casas: In Search of the Poor of Jesus Christ* (trans. Robert R. Barr; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1992).
Hadot, Pierre, *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (trans. M. Chase; Oxford: Blackwell, 1995).
Hankey, W. J., '"Dionysius dixit, Lex divinitatis est ultima per media reducere": Aquinas, Hierocracy and the "augustinisme politique"', in I. Tolomio (ed.), *Tommaso D'Aquino: proposte nuove di letture* (Padova: Editrice Antenore, 1992).
Hardy, Daniel W., 'Created and Redeemed Sociality', in Colin E. Gunton and Daniel W. Hardy (eds), *On Being the Church: Essays on the Christian Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989).
—*Finding the Church: The Dynamic Truth of Anglicanism* (London: SCM, 2001).
—*God's Ways with the World: Thinking and Practicing Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996).
Harrisville, Roy A., 'Christian Life in Light of the Cross', *Lutheran Quarterly* 23 (2009).

Hauerwas, Stanley, *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).
—*Christian Existence Today: Essays on Church, World, and Living in Between* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2001).
—*The Peaceable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1983).
Hawthorne, Gerald F., 'The Imitation of Christ: Discipleship in Philippians', in R. N. Longenecker (ed.), *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).
Hays, Richard B., *The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (New York: HarperCollins, 1996).
Healy, Nicholas M., *Church, World and the Christian Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
Hengel, M., *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (trans. J. C. G. Greig; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981).
Hofmann von, J. C. K., *Der Brief Pauli an der Römer* (Nördlingen: Ch.H. Beck, 1868).
Hunsinger, George, *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).
—*How to Read Karl Barth: The Shape of His Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
—'A Tale of Two Simultaneities: Justification in Calvin and Barth', *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* 18 (2002).
Hütter, Richard, 'The Christian Life', in John Webster, Kathryn Tanner and Iain Torrance (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
Jaeger, Werner, *Early Christianity and Greek Paideia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961).
Jenson, Robert W., *Systematic Theology* (vol. 2; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
Jinkins, Michael, *The Church Faces Death: Ecclesiology in a Post-Modern Context* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
Jüngel, Eberhard, 'Invocation of God as the Ethical Ground of Christian Action: Introductory Remarks on the Posthumous Fragments of Karl Barth's Ethics of the Doctrine of Reconciliation', in *Theological Essays I* (ed. and trans. John Webster; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), pp. 154–72.
—*Justification: The Heart of the Christian Faith* (trans. Jeffrey F. Crazer; New York: T&T Clark, 2001).
Jungmann, J. A., *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer* (London: Chapman, 2nd edn, 1989).
Kaminsky, Joel, *Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007).
Kant, Immanuel, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason and Other Writings* (ed. and trans. Allen W. Wood and George Di Giovanni; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).
Kay, James F., *Christus Praesens: A Reconsideration of Rudolf Bultmann's Christology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).
Keating, Daniel, 'Trinity and Salvation', in Gilles Emery and Matthew Levering (eds), *The Oxford Handbook to the Trinity* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Kelsey, David, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology* (2 vols; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).
Kempis, Thomas à, *Devotio moderna: Basic Writings* (ed. J. H. VanEngen; New York: Paulist Press, 1988).
—*The Imitation of Christ* (trans. A. Croft and H. Bolton; Milwaukee: Bruce Publications, 1949).
Kiergkegaard, Soren, *Practice in Christianity* (trans. H. V. Hong and E. H. Hong; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).
Kirby, W. J. Torrance, *Richard Hooker: Reformer and Platonist* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).
Kirk, K. E., *The Vision of God: The Christian Doctrine of the Summum Bonum* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1966).
Köpf, Ulrich, 'Mendicant Orders', in H. D. Betz, D. S. Browning, B. Janowski and E. Jüngel (eds), *Religion Past and Present* (vol. 8; Leiden: Brill, 2012).
Krötke, Wolf, 'Gott und Mensch als "Partner." Zur Bedeutung einer zentralen Kategorie in Karl Barths Kirchlicher Dogmatik', in *Theologie als Christologie: Zum Werk und Leben Karl Barths* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1988).
—*Sin and Nothingness in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Princeton: Princeton Theological Seminary, 2005).
Lash, Nicholas, *Believing Three Ways in One God* (London: SCM, 1992).
Law, W., *A Practical Treatise upon Christian Perfection* in *The Works of the Revd. William Law* (vol. 3; London: Printed for W. Innys and R. Manby, 1726).
—*A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1978).
Lebech, Thomas M., *On the Problem of Human Dignity. A Hermeneutical and Phenomenological Investigation* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2009).
Leith, John H., *John Calvin's Doctrine of the Preaching of the Word and Its Significance for Today*, in Timothy George (ed.), *John Calvin and the Church: A Prism of Reform* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1990).
Levering, Matthew, *Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
Lewis, C. S., *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Macmillan, 1947).
Lindbeck, George, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1984).
Locher, Gottfried W., '"Christ Our Captain": An Example of Huldrych Zwingli's Preaching in Its Cultural Setting', in *Zwingli's Thought: New Perspectives* (Leiden: Brill, 1981).
Lohfink, Gerhard, *Does God Need the Church?* (Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazer Books, 1999).
Luther, Martin, *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (ed. and trans. Theodore G. Tappert; Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959).
—'The Formula of Concord', in R. Kolb and T. J. Wengert (eds), C. Arand et al. (trans), *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000).
—'The Freedom of a Christian', in G. Tappert (ed.), *Selected Writings of Martin Luther* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).
—'Heidelberg Disputation', in Harold J. Grimm (ed.), *Luther's Works* (vol. 31; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1957).
—'The Judgment of Martin Luther on Monastic Vows' (1521), in M. Atkinson (ed.; trans.), *Luther's Works* (vol. 44; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966).

—'Letter 99', in *Dr. Martin Luthers Saemmtliche Schriften* (ed. Johannes Georg Walch; vol. 15; St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), col. 2590.
—*Martin Luther: Selections from His Writings* (ed. John Dillenberger; New York: Anchor Books, 1962).
Lüthi, Walter and Robert Brunner, *The Sermon on the Mount* (trans. Kurt Schoenenberger; Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1963).
Mahoney, John, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Paperbacks, 1990).
Mangina, Joseph, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010).
Marcus, Joel, *Mark 1–8* (New York: Doubleday, 1999).
Marshall, I. Howard, 'Jesus – Example and Teacher of Prayer in the Synoptic Gospels', in Richard N. Longenecker (ed.), *Into God's Presence: Prayer in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).
Martyn, J. Louis, *Galatians* (New Haven: Yale, 1997).
—'World Without End or Twice-invaded World?', in C. Roy Yoder et al. (eds), *Shaking Heaven and Earth: Essays in Honor of Walter Bruggemann and Charles B. Cousar* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).
Mathewes, Charles T., *The Republic of Grace: Augustinian Thoughts for Dark Times* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).
McCabe, Herbert, *God Still Matters* (ed. Brian Davies; London: Continuum, 2005).
McCormack, Bruce L., 'Grace and Being', in John Webster (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
McDonald, Suzanne, 'Calvin's Theology of Election and Its Reception: Modern Reception and Contemporary Possibilities', in I. John Hesselink and J. Todd Billings (eds), *Calvin's Theology and Its Reception: Disputes, Developments and New Possibilities* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012).
—*Re-Imaging Election: Divine Election as Representing God to Others and Others to God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).
McFague, Sallie, *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).
McFarland, Ian A., *In Adam's Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).
McGowan, A. T. B., *The Divine Authenticity of Scripture: Retrieving an Evangelical Heritage* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007).
McIntosh, Mark A., 'Humanity in God: On Reading Karl Barth in Relation to Mystical Theology', *Heythrop Journal* 34.1 (1993).
—'Spirituality and Theology: The Questions at Issue', in *Mystical Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998).
McNeill, John T., *A History of the Cure of Souls* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1951).
McNeill, John and Helena Gamer (eds; trans), *Medieval Handbooks of Penance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).
Migliore, Daniel L., 'Participatio Christi: The Central Theme of Barth's Doctrine of Sanctification', *Zeitschrift für dialektische Theologie* 18 (2002).
Moltmann, Jürgen, *The Crucified God* (trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden; San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991).
—*The Spirit of Life. A Universal Affirmation* (trans. M. Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992).
—*The Way of Jesus Christ* (trans. M. Kohl; London: SCM Press, 1990).

Mostert, Christiaan, *God and the Future: Wolfhart Pannenberg's Eschatological Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2002).
—'The Kingdom Anticipated: The Church and Eschatology', *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 13 (2011).
Neder, Adam, *Participation in Christ: An Entry into Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009).
Newbigin, Lesslie, *The Open Secret: An Introduction to the Theology of Mission* (London: SPCK, 1995).
Newman, John Henry, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).
Nowak, K., *Schleiermacher: Leben, Werk und Wirkung* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2nd edn, 2002).
O'Collins, Gerald O., *Jesus Our Redeemer: A Christian Approach to Salvation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).
Old, Hughes Oliphant, *The Reading and Preaching of the Scriptures in the Worship of the Church* (vol. 4; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).
Outka, Gene, 'Following at a Distance: Ethics and the Identity of Jesus', in G. Green (ed.), *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).
Owen, John, *Of Communion with God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost* in William Goold (ed.), *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1965).
—*Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers* in William Goold (ed.), *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967).
—*Pneumatologia, or a Discourse Concerning the Holy Spirit,* in William Goold (ed.), *The Works of John Owen* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1967).
Pannenberg, Wolfhart, *An Introduction to Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991).
—*Systematic Theology* (trans. Geoffrey Bromiley; vol. 3; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).
Pickstock, Catherine, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998).
Presbyterian Church (USA), *Book of Common Worship* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1993).
Pseudo-Dionysius, 'The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy', in *Pseudo-Dionysius. The Complete Works* (trans. C. Luibheid; New York: Paulist Press, 1987).
—*The Fifty Spiritual Homilies and the Great Letter* (trans. George Maloney; Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1992).
Rahner, Karl, *Foundations of the Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity* (trans. W. V. Dych; New York: Seabury Press, 1978).
—'Observations on the Problem of the "Anonymous Christian"', *Theological Investigations* (trans. David Bourke; vol. 14; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1976).
—*The Trinity* (trans. J. Donceel; New York: Crossroads, 1997).
Richardson, Cyril C. (ed.; trans.), 'An Anonymous Sermon, Commonly Called Clement's Second Letter', in *Early Christian Fathers* (New York: Macmillan, 1970).
Ricoeur, Paul, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multidisciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977).

Rohls, Jan, *Reformed Confessions* (trans. John Hoffmeyer; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998).
Sanders, E. P., *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985).
Sauter, Gerhard and Hinrich Stoevesadnt, 'Vorwort zur Neuausgabe', in *Die Christliche Dogmatik im Entwurf* (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1982).
Schleiermacher, Friedrich, *Reformed but Ever Reforming: Sermons in Relation to the Celebration of the Handing Over of the Augsburg Confession (1830)* (trans. Iain G. Nicol; Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1997).
—'Vom oeffentlichen Dienst am goettlichen Wort', in *Predigten* (vol. 2; Berlin: G. Reimer, 1834).
Schmemann, Alexander, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1988).
Schubert, David, 'Hymn No. 103', in *Together in Song: Australian Hymn Book II* (Melbourne: HarperCollins Religious, 1999).
Schweitzer, Eduard, *Lordship and Discipleship* (London: SCM Press, 1960).
Seitz, Christopher, 'The Old Testament, Mission and Christian Scripture', in *Figured Out: Typology and Providence in Christian Scripture* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).
Sheldrake, Philip, *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd).
Sherman, Robert, *King, Priest and Prophet: A Trinitarian Theology of Atonement* (London: T&T Clark/Continuum, 2004).
Simmons, Menno, *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons* (ed. J. C. Wenger; trans. Leonard Verduin; Scottdale Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1956).
Smith, James K. A., *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).
Tanner, Kathryn, *Christ the Key* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
—*God and Creation in Christian Theology: Tyranny or Empowerment?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005).
Tentler, T. N., *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).
Tillich, Paul, *Systematic Theology* (vol. 2; London: James Nisbet & Co., 1957).
Torrance, James B., *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996).
Torrance, T. F., *The Ground and Grammar of Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001).
Torrell, J.-P., O. P., *Saint Thomas Aquinas. Volume 1: The Person and His Work* (trans. R. Royal; Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1996).
Tugwell, S., *Albert and Thomas: Selected Writings* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1998).
Turner, Denys, *The Darkness of God: Negativity in Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
VanEngen, John H., *Devotio moderna: Basic Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).
Vanhoozer, Kevin, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical Linguistic Approach to Christian Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).
Visser't Hooft, Wilhelm, *The Kingship of Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1948).
Volf, Miroslav, *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).
Volf, Miroslav and Dorothy C. Bass (eds), *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).

Warfield, Benjamin Breckinridge, 'The Religious Life of Theological Students: An Address Delivered at the Autumn Conference at Princeton Theological Seminary, Oct. 4, 1911', *Alumni Collection*, Princeton Theological Seminary (Princeton, 1911).
Weber, Max, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Schribner's Sons, 1958).
Webster, John, *Barth's Ethics of Reconciliation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
—'Discipleship as Calling', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 23 (2005).
—'Editorial' in *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 4/2 (July 2002).
—*Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
—'Imitation of Christ', *Tyndale Bulletin* 37 (1986).
—'Introduction: Systematic Theology', in John Webster, Kathryn Tanner and Iain Torrance (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007),
—'"It Was the Will of the Lord to Bruise Him": Soteriology and the Doctrine of God', in Murray Rae and Ivor Davidson (eds), *God of Salvation: Soteriology in Theological Perspective* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010).
Weeber, Martin, *Schleiermachers Eschatologie. Eine Untersuchung zum theologischen* Spätwerk (Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser, 2000).
Weinrich, Michael, 'Justified for Covenant Partnership: A Key Biblical Theme for the Whole of Theology', in Michael Weinrich and John P. Burgess (eds), *What Is Justification About?: Reformed Contributions to an Ecumenical Theme* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).
—'The Reformed Reception of the Joint Declaration', *Reformed World* 52/1 (2002).
Welch, C., 'The Problem of a History of Nineteenth-Century Theology', *The Journal of Religion* 52.1 (1972).
Wenz, Armin, 'Natural Law and the Orders of Creation', in R. C. Ehlke (ed.), *Natural Law: A Lutheran Reappraisal* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011).
Wesley, John, *John and Charles Wesley: Selected Writings and Hymns* (ed. F. Whaling; Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1981).
—*The Works of John Wesley* (ed. Albert C. Outler; vol. 3; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986).
Wiles, Maurice, *The Making of Christian Doctrine: A Study in the Principles of Early Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967).
Willard, Dallas, 'Discipleship', in G. McDermott (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Evangelical Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
—*The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus' Essential Teachings on Discipleship* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2006).
Williams, Anna, 'Mystical Theology Redux: The Pattern of Aquinas's *Summa Theologiae*', *Modern Theology* 13.1 (1997).
Williams, Rowan, *On Christian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999).
—*The Wound of Knowledge: Christian Spirituality from the New Testament to St John of the Cross* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2nd edn, 1990).
Willimon, William H., *Proclamation and Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005).

Wingren, Gustaf, *The Flight from Creation* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing, 1971).
Wink,Walter, *Engaging the Powers: Discernment and Resistance in a World of Domination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992).
—*Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).
—*Unmasking the Powers: The Invisible Forces that Determine Human Existence* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).
Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations* (trans. G. E. M. Anscombe; New York: Macmillan, 1953).
Wolf, Ernst, *Sozialethik: Theologische Grundlagen* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 3rd edn, 1988).
Wright, N. T., *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996).
—*The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992).
Yeago, David, 'Grace and the Good Life: Why the God of the Gospel Cares How We Live', in James J. Buckley and Michael Root (eds), *The Morally Divided Body: Ethical Disagreement and the Disunity of the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012).
Yoder, John Howard, *Discipleship as Political Responsibility* (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2003).
—*Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).
—*The War of the Lamb: The Ethics of Nonviolence and Peacemaking* (ed. G. H. Stassen et al.; Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010).
Ziegler, Philip, '"Christ Must Reign": Ernst Käsemann and Soteriology in an Apocalyptic Key', in D. Harink and J. Davis (eds), *Apocalyptic and the Future of Theology* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012).
Zwingli, Ulrich, 'Of Baptism', in *Zwingli and Bullinger* (ed. Geoffrey Bromiley; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953).

INDEX