

Foundations

An International Journal of
Evangelical Theology

No 73
AUTUMN 2017

Contents

Editorial	1
Ralph Cunnington	
<hr/>	
Exploring the Unfinished Task: Priorities for Mission Locally and Globally	5
Keith Walker International Strategic Development Director, SIM	
<hr/>	
Martin Luther and Evangelical Mission: Father or Failure?	21
Thorsten Prill Vice-principal & Academic Dean, Edinburgh Bible College	
<hr/>	
Nature, Person, and Will	51
Thomas Brand Minister, Binfield Heath Church (EFCC)	
<hr/>	
Review Article:	
Cross-Currents in Muslim Ministry	65
Mark Pickett UFM Worldwide, teaching cross-cultural ministry	
<hr/>	
Book Reviews:	73
Divided We Fall: Overcoming a History of Christian Disunity (Whitlock) Nathan Pomeroy	
How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets (Gentry) Norman Wells	
Making All Things New: Restoring Joy to the Sexually Broken (Powlison) Gareth E. Williams	
The Benedict Option (Dreher) Ted Turnau	
Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: Critical Questions and Answers (Newheiser) Natalie Brand	
The Christ of Wisdom: A Redemptive-Historical Exploration of the Wisdom Books (Robertson) Timothy J. McGlynn	
Covenant and God's Purpose for the World (Schreiner) Oliver Gross	
Transforming Homosexuality: What the Bible says about Sexual Orientation & Change (Burk & Lambert) Mostyn Roberts	
Living Life Backward: How Ecclesiastes Teaches Us to Live in Light of the End (Gibson) Chris Hawthorne	
Calling on the Name of the Lord: A Biblical Theology of Prayer (Millar) Graham Nicholls	
J. C. Ryle: Prepared to Stand Alone (Murray) Guy Davies	

Foundations

Foundations is an international journal of evangelical theology published in the United Kingdom. Its aim is to cover contemporary theological issues by articles and reviews, taking in exegesis, biblical theology, church history and apologetics, and to indicate their relevance to

pastoral ministry. Its particular focus is the theology of evangelical churches which are committed to biblical truth and evangelical ecumenism. It has been published by Affinity (formerly The British Evangelical Council) from its inception as a print journal.

It became a digital journal in April 2011.

The views expressed in the articles published in Foundations do not necessarily represent the views of Affinity or its partners although all content must be within the bounds of the Affinity Doctrinal Basis.

Foundations is published twice each year online at www.affinity.org.uk

It is offered in two formats:

PDF (for citing pagination) and HTML (for greater accessibility, usability, and infiltration in search engines).

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EDITORIAL

Recently I have been reading *The Road to Somewhere* by David Goodhart, the founding editor of *Prospect* and a writer for *The Guardian* and *The Times*. The book is an attempt to provide a general explanation for the two upsets of 2016 – Brexit and the election of Donald Trump – by showing divisions that exist in developed democracies, which are rarely given the attention they deserve.

Goodhart contends that there exists a sizeable minority within society of highly educated and mobile people. They are the “exam-passing class” who usually move from home to a residential university in their late teens and often end up in a professional career. They are mobile and have portable, “achieved” identities based on attainment and success. This group, which Goodhart labels “Anywheres”, make up approximately 25% of the population and dominate the media and politics. They follow the ideology of “progressive individualism” valuing autonomy, openness, equality (although not necessarily economic) and meritocracy. They are comfortable with immigration and human rights legislation and often see themselves as citizens of the world. Because of their position in society, “where the interests of Anywheres are at stake – in everything from reform of higher education to gay marriage – things happen.”

Somewheres are, by comparison, a much larger group making up nearly half the population. They are more rooted and have “ascribed” identities based upon group cohesion and particular places, e.g. Northumberland farmers, Cornish housewives. They are generally less well educated and value security and familiarity. Somewheres are less adaptable to change and have been disadvantaged by changes in the labour market and the bias against domesticity in family policy. They are more socially conservative by instinct and uncomfortable with various aspects of cultural change, e.g. mass immigration, an achievement society in which they struggle to achieve, and more fluid gender roles. They feel moderately nationalistic and oppose openness that disadvantages them.

Goodhart’s thesis is that, although Somewheres are more numerous than Anywheres, their views have been under-represented in the media and within the echelons of political power. Their more socially conservative intuitions have been excluded from the public sphere and this has led to the political backlash witnessed in the Brexit and Trump votes. It is a fascinating analysis and, although readers are bound to disagree at various points, it provides an incredibly helpful insight into the forces at play in society today. The book stimulated a number of thoughts for me.

Firstly, Christians are Anywheres in terms of their geographical mobility and identity. As the apostle Peter affirms, we are “aliens and strangers” in the

world (1 Peter 2:11). Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20) and one of the things that has marked the church down through the millennia is how its geographical centre has shifted. Beginning in the Near East it moved to Asia and North Africa and then on to Europe, the Americas and more recently South America and sub-Saharan Africa. Unlike Islam, Christianity's identity and culture is not geographically tied. Moreover, Christ's missionary call demands that his disciples go into all nations with the hope that one day people from every "nation, tribe, people and tongue" will gather to worship the Lamb (Rev 7:9). Christians also share Anywhere values of openness and equality. The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches an expansive notion of neighbour (although see debate in Issues 61 and 64 of Foundations) and Christians are implored to "do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal 6:10).

Secondly, however, Christians are Somewheres in terms of their status and identity. The gospel is antithetical to the Anywhere insistence upon achieved identity. Our righteous deeds are filthy rags (Isa 64:6) and our works achieve nothing but judgment and condemnation. The Christian's identity is most certainly ascribed, not acquired. We are counted righteous in Christ who is for us "wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor 1:30). Christians also insist upon the intrinsic (not acquired) value of all human beings based upon their being made in the image of God. This means that we react against the Anywhere insistence upon a strict meritocracy, recognising the oppression and injustice that it causes. Duty is owed to God and, derivatively, to all human beings who are made in his image, rather than just to those who deserve our help.

Thirdly, Goodhart's analysis overlooks the distinctive contribution of Christians to society. He recognises this in the Introduction to the 2017 edition, noting that "friendly critics pointed, rightly, to the absence of religion in the book". As I have already shown, Christians do not straightforwardly fall into either of the two categories (although background and upbringing might mean that we have a propensity to one or the other). Christians in either group also don't manifest the values and priorities to be expected. For example, Goodhart argues that Somewhere values on gender roles, sex outside marriage and homosexuality have changed much more quickly than attachment to ethnicity. That may be true of the group as a whole but one would expect a very different movement to be reflected among Bible-believing Christians (especially those who hold to complementarian convictions).

Fourthly, the book challenged me to consider what groups of people I tend to overlook. That was the burden of the book after all. Goodhart's thesis is that Anywheres have over-reached and that populism has arisen, in various shapes and forms, to counter-balance Anywhere dominance in the developed world. Looking at my own context, two things gave me cause for

concern. Firstly, the vocal and widespread support for the Remain campaign within my own church. I was careful to remain neutral in conversations with church members and usually simply offered the counter-argument to help people make an informed decision. To this day, not even my wife knows which way I voted in the referendum. Nevertheless, there was a sense that the majority of the church would vote for Remain and I knew of at least one Leave voter who didn't express his views for fear of the response. This was concerning, especially in a church where Somewheres are better represented than in most Reformed churches. This brings me to my second observation: given that the vast majority of churches within Affinity are led by university educated ministers (and Goodhart argues that universities are the main drivers for Anywhere values), we must be mindful of the danger that we might overlook or worse still denigrate Somewhere values and priorities. This may lead to exclusion and division and will undermine the Somewhere / Anywhere beauty of union with Christ which should be visible in the church and of great apologetic appeal in our divided society.

This is my last issue of Foundations as Editor. Due to other commitments, particularly in mission and church planting, I have decided to hand on the reins to someone else (more on that below). Fittingly, this last issue has a focus on mission. In the first article, Keith Walker explores a framework for considering priorities in both global and local mission. He questions the helpfulness of the traditional emphasis upon the concept of "unreached people groups" and exposes problems with the theological and definitional underpinnings of such an approach. Walker argues that the focus should instead be upon reaching today's communities where Christ is least known. This will demand the development of fresh strategies for mission involving rejoicing in diversity and better understanding the dynamics of division and gospel reconciliation (the Anywhere / Somewhere divide is just one of many).

On the 500th anniversary of the Reformation it seemed fitting to publish an article on Luther and I was delighted to receive Thorsten Prill's defence of the mission theology and practice of Luther. Prill engages with the numerous critiques of Luther's missiology (or alleged lack of it) and shows how Wittenberg acted as a hub for a huge missionary enterprise. From Wittenberg, gospel preachers were sent out all over Europe, helping people to rediscover the gospel of justification by faith alone. Luther's emphases upon the personal character of faith in Christ, the priesthood of all believers, the *missio Dei*, and the importance of the Bible being available in the vernacular laid the crucial groundwork for future missionary endeavours.

In the third article, Tom Brand revisits the subject of the eternal subordination of the Son. In a previous review published in Foundations, Brand cautiously endorsed Mike Ovey's position that the Son is eternally subordinate to the Father. Further reading and reflection has led Brand to

reject that position and he seeks to set out his reasons in this short article. Relying upon various patristic sources, Brand argues for the orthodoxy of belief in one divine will. He uses Maximus the Confessor to advance the argument that volition is tied to nature rather than person, and thus argues that subordinationist statements ought to be read as examples of Christ's human will submitting to the single divine will, rather than God the Son submitting to God the Father.

The final article is a review of David Garrison's *Cross Currents in Muslim Ministry*. Mark Pickett highlights various methodological difficulties with Garrison's approach. Some of these are inevitable given the challenges to undertaking empirical research in the Muslim world but they nevertheless caution readers against over-reliance upon Garrison's conclusions. Pickett also challenges what he considers to be an overly-pragmatic approach to missiology in Garrison's book.

The issue also features eleven book reviews covering topics ranging from the Book of Ecclesiastes, to same-sex attraction, to prayer, to covenant theology. These are incredibly helpful in directing readers toward useful avenues for further study.

Finally, it is my pleasure to introduce the new editor of Foundations. When we began the process of identifying a new editor, Martin Salter was at the top of my list. I was delighted that he agreed to take on this role. Martin is on the leadership team at Grace Community Church in Bedford and has just completed his PhD in Missional Ethics. He is committed to combining rigorous theological engagement with practical application to ministry and mission. I look forward to seeing how he takes the journal forward and trust that the Lord will continue to use it to bless, equip and encourage his people.

Ralph Cunnington
December 2017

EXPLORING THE UNFINISHED TASK: PRIORITIES FOR MISSION LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

*Keith Walker**

*Facing a task unfinished
that drives us to our knees,
a need that undiminished
rebukes our slothful ease,
we who rejoice to know thee
renew before thy throne
the solemn pledge we owe thee
to go and make thee known.*

With their masterful musical and lyrical skill, Keith and Kristyn Getty have revitalised Frank Houghton’s missionary classic, making it once again a popularly sung missionary song. The hymn reminds us that the task is immense, it matters because people live and die without hearing of Christ, and it remains unfinished. The concepts expressed in the hymn have had an impact on global missionary priorities for many decades. Their application to local mission has often been less evident. This article aims to explore a framework for considering priorities in both global and local mission, which takes us beyond the concept of “unreached people groups” (UPGs) which for some decades became the standard driver for missionary strategies.

The task

The hymn was written at a time when the concept of the unfinished task was very live. For large swathes of the church, both the task and its unfinished nature were related to two thrusts – the urgency of need as people in many contexts continued to live and die without hearing of Christ; and the anticipation of his return.

The first is expressed in the urgent call adopted as a watchword by the Western missionary movement in the late 1800s to evangelise the world in this generation. John Mott’s 1900 book, “The Evangelisation of the World in this Generation” offered the starting point for the 1910 Edinburgh Missionary Conference.

* Keith Walker is International Strategic Development Director for SIM.

Mott's work outlines the necessity and urgency of the task. Evangelism is defined here as verbal proclamation, albeit undertaken in the context of wider missionary activity in which the compassion of Christ is also expressed in other practical ways. He is clear that the missionary cannot guarantee the results of his or her evangelistic activity. He is also very clear that evangelism is not an end in itself. It must issue in transformed lives and communities, as those who hear it submit to the reign of Christ in the everydayness of their lives:

The church will not have fulfilled its task when the gospel has been preached to all men. Such evangelisation must be followed by the baptism of converts, by their organisation into churches, by building them up in knowledge, faith and character and by enlisting and training them for service.

While the missionary enterprise should not be diverted from the immediate and controlling aim of preaching the gospel where Christ has not been named, and while this work should have the right of way as the most urgent part of our task, it must ever be looked upon as but a means to the mighty and inspiring object of enthroning Christ in individual life, in family life, in social life, in national life, in international relations, in every relationship of mankind and, to this end, of planting and developing in all non-Christian lands self-supporting, self-directing and self-propagating churches which shall become so thoroughly rooted in the convictions and hearts of the people that if Christianity were to die out in Europe and America, it would abide in purity and as a missionary power in its new homes and would live on through the centuries.¹

Unfinished?

In this passage Mott does not seem to promote the notion of a task that can be defined in such a way as to know when it is finished, nor to define how much remains to be done. Despite the drive for the evangelisation of the world within a generation, the assumption seems to be that the task will be ongoing. This was not the view of some other missionary leaders and their views became significant in the development of the evangelical missionary movement over next century.

Two related factors were to play into this. The first is that eschatological vision in which the return of Christ may be hastened by the reaching of all peoples with the gospel. David Bosch's discussion of the late-nineteenth-century mission movement identifies Matthew 24:14 as the major missionary text drawn upon by Grattan Guinness, A. B. Simpson and Fredrik Franson, founders of Regions Beyond Missionary Union, the Christian and Missionary Alliance and The Evangelical Alliance Mission. "Christ's return was now understood as being dependent upon the successful completion of the missionary task; the preaching of the gospel was 'a condition to be fulfilled before the end comes'."²

¹ John R. Mott, *The Evangelisation of the World in this Generation* (New York: SVM, 1901), 15-16.

² David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis, 1993), 316f.

In an industrial age, production management thinking began to be applied to work out how, with what resources, and how quickly this task could be completed. The American preacher, A. T. Pierson, “estimated the number of pennies and right-hearted evangelists required to bring about the millennium”.³

This second factor, the growth of a managerial approach to mission, came fully to the fore in the latter part of the twentieth century. In order to set about accomplishing the task within a definite timeframe, it needed to be more rigorously defined; resources needed to be deployed towards its completion; missionary leaders needed to be aware of the gaps in the completion of the task, and to prioritise those gaps.

People groups

Within the flow of such thinking, the concept of people groups emerged in the 1970s as a central tool in missiological thought. The concept began to be unveiled on the global evangelical stage at the First International Congress on World Evangelisation held in Lausanne under the auspices of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. This Congress led to what we now know as the Lausanne Movement.

Two contributors, Ralph Winter and Donald McGavran, both from Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, explored a categorisation of evangelistic activities based on degrees of cultural separation between the missionary evangelist and the community in which they were working.⁴ This E-scale taxonomy has been used significantly in the United States but is less well known in the UK.⁵ In outline it is as follows:

E0 = evangelism directed towards nominal Christians

E1 = evangelism into the non-Christian culture within which the church is at home

E2 = evangelism outside of the church's host culture but to one which is similar

E3 = evangelism to a totally different culture

Both McGavran and Winter argued that evangelistic strategies needed to take these cultural differences fully into account. Linguistic differences, communication styles, points of cultural bridge-building and so on were critical contextual factors to be considered. They commented that such considerations were too often all but ignored by those being sent from their own cultural context and that those sending them had too little understanding of such factors.

³ *Ibid.*, 316.

⁴ Ralph D. Winter, *The Highest Priority: Cross-Cultural Evangelism* (Minneapolis: World Wide Publications, 1975), 218.

⁵ John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad* (Leicester: IVP, 2003), 195.

Moreover, Winter's analysis of global evangelistic activity in 1974 was devastating. He demonstrated that the majority of missionary workers' activities, along with the resources supporting those activities, addressed nominal Christians or the nurture of believers. His accompanying analysis of the populations of different parts of the world led to a stark picture.

In the Western world of the day, 95% of workers were addressing themselves to the Christian and nominal Christian community. Only 5% of workers were specifically engaged amongst those who would not self-identify as Christians – this group making up 25% of the population. Winter argued that this balance was at least understandable.

In the non-Western world the situation was far less defensible. Here, 95% of missionaries addressed the minority Christian communities and those within immediate reach of them. The other 76% of the world's population had no missionary serving them and no nearby church to reach out to them.

Winter concluded, "Brothers and sisters, this is a grim picture. The task to be done is big enough, but precisely where the cross-cultural task is the largest, the cross-cultural workers are the fewest."⁶ The point was well made.

Moreover, Winter argued that even where there were non-Christian communities within reach of Christian churches and missionary workers, it was not uncommon for these people groups to be hidden. Winter explores this concept as he expounds the immensity of the missionary task:

Far from being a task that is now out-of-date, the shattering truth is that at least four out of five non-Christians in the world today are beyond the reach of any Christian's E-1 evangelism.

Why is this fact not more widely known? I'm afraid that all our exultation about the fact that every country of the world has been penetrated has allowed many to suppose that every culture has by now been penetrated. This misunderstanding is a malady so widespread that it deserves a special name. Let us call it "people blindness" that is, blindness to the existence of separate peoples within countries; a blindness, I might add, which seems more prevalent in the U.S. and among U.S. missionaries than anywhere else. The Bible rightly translated could have made this plain to us. The "nations" to which Jesus often referred were mainly ethnic groups within the single political structure of the Roman government. The various nations represented on the day of Pentecost were, for the most part, not countries but peoples. In the Great Commission as it is found in Matthew, the phrase "make disciples of all *ethne* (peoples)" does not let us off the hook once we have a church in every country – God wants a strong church within every people!

"People blindness" is what prevents us from noticing the sub-groups within a country which are significant to development of effective evangelistic strategy.

The immensity of the task, however, lies not only in its bigness. The problem is more serious than retranslating the Great Commission in such a way that the peoples, not the countries, become the targets for evangelism. The immensity of the task is further underscored by the far greater complexity of the E-2 and E-3 task. Are we in America, for example, prepared for the fact that most non-Christians yet to be won to Christ (even in our country) will not fit readily into the kinds of churches we now have?⁷

⁶ Winter, *The Highest Priority*, 233.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 221.

Winter's concerns were clearly justified. The commission given by Christ to his church was (and remains) far from being completed. His statistical analysis, supported later by the publication of the remarkably influential *Operation World*, and the mobilisation efforts of mission promoters like George Verwer, brought to the evangelical world a fresh appreciation of the immensity of the unfinished task. It awoke the church to the short-sightedness and injustice of missionary resource deployment.

Moreover, his recognition that even within a comparatively reached geographical area there may be sub-groups unreached by the gospel has offered an important strategic tool. Perhaps two cautionary comments are justified, however.

Firstly, the assumption that the majority, nominally-Christian community in the West was separated from the church only by a "stained glass" barrier was grossly to underestimate the challenge being faced by the Western missionary movement in its own backyard. To be fair, Winter hints at this issue in the passage quoted above. Yet he assumes too readily that traditional church life could survive with little adaptation because the churches were accessible as they were to a sufficient number of converts from the surrounding culture. This Bible-belt view under-estimated the power and pervasiveness of secularism in the West. To this we will need to return.

This leads to a second observation. His conclusion that E2 evangelism would necessarily lead to the formation of churches culturally appropriate for its converts assumed that traditional church cultures were adequate as they stood. The reality in most urban environments in the West in the 1970s was that within a short time all churches needed to find ways to adapt so that they could embrace cultural diversity. Only rarely, and mostly in Bible-belt cultures, has it been possible to maintain vibrancy in traditional and unadapted Anglo-Saxon/Anglo-American mono-cultural churches in urban settings. This is critical as it bears on a conceptual extension to Winter's argument – that of the "homogeneous unit" principle.

The coalescing of Winter's cultural analysis and McGavran's church growth interest had led to the view that E2 and E3 evangelism would lead to the formation of separate churches for those converted. This would be necessary in order for church growth to occur. The formalising of this strategy led to what became known as the homogeneous unit (HU) principle. Briefly stated, this argued that church growth could best be promoted through the formation of churches comprised of people who shared a common culture. This article is not the place to evaluate the principle, save to note its close relation to the concept of "people groups".

UPGs and missionary strategising

Winter's concept of hidden groups of people and HU thinking drove a veritable industry of missionary strategies based on counting "unreached people groups" as the standard measure of the unfinished task, with priority being placed on those which are "unengaged". Within this framework, a people group remained unreached until a church had been planted in it which had the capacity to engage in E1, same culture, evangelism. The concept became of such importance as to be offered an agreed definition by the Lausanne Strategy Working Group in 1982: "For evangelization purposes, a people group is the largest group within which the gospel can spread as a church-planting movement without encountering barriers of understanding or acceptance."⁸

Again it needs to be acknowledged that much here is to be commended. In his seminal book "Let the Nations be Glad"⁹, John Piper notes the clear pragmatic value of seeking to identify and reach various groups. The missionary task is not simply to reach as many individual people as possible. The Bible does indeed offer focus on the diversity of those communities to be reached. Piper goes on, however, to discuss in detail the ways in which the Bible describes humanity to be reached. He notes that the biblical language of diversity is itself diverse. The Matthean Commission encompasses *panta ta ethne*, "all nations", which can too easily be misunderstood as a simple geopolitical description of nation-states, a clearly facile conclusion given the relative modernity of the nation-state concept as we know it. The fourfold "nations, tribes, peoples and languages" which forms a near-missionary chorus in Revelation 5-7 is augmented by *patrai* or "families" (Acts 3:23). Given that the Bible offers these diverse categorisations of humanity, the challenge of defining the remaining missionary task on the basis of a count of "unreached people groups" is clearly not trivial. Piper goes on to note the difficulty even of counting the world's languages with missionary human geographers' estimates varying from 8,990 to 24,000.^{10 11}

Yet the thirst to develop such definitions has been unabated. The desire to manage the missionary task into achievable (and marketable) goals has been evident in the people group movement. Movements such as Adopt-a-people, AD2000 (swiftly followed by AD2000 and beyond) have engaged the evangelical community in sending and supporting vital effort to reach the unreached based on "people group" analysis.

⁸ Ralph D. Winter, *Unreached Peoples*, August 1989.
<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/unreached-peoples>.

⁹ Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 189f.

¹¹ "History of Table 71", *Table 71*. <https://table71.org/>.

At its zenith the movement demonstrated a remarkable degree of certainty about the nature of the missionary task and its “finishability”. A stunning example of this is to be seen in the conversation between mission leaders held under the auspices of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in Amsterdam in 2000. Six hundred mission leaders had been invited to “talk about everything that had to do with the completion and fulfilment of the Great Commission”. In discussing the scandal that there were (as was calculated) 230 untargeted people groups, Bruce Wilkinson (Walk Thru the Bible Ministries) said to those assembled, “We lead the vast majority of the earth’s Christian army, in this room. And if we decided today, let’s finish it...”¹²

Wilkinson went on to challenge the delegates to consult with organisational colleagues present and to pick people groups of which they would “take ownership” to reach. Different leaders around the room agreed to take on one, two, three, more... until the last 60 of the 230 people groups were taken by a coalition of the International Missions Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Campus Crusade and YWAM. The leaders were euphoric. Wilkinson described it in this way:

There was shouting in heaven, literally. I can’t imagine what the angels must have sounded like when finally the sons of men stepped up to the bat in such a way that Christ’s agenda, what he’s waiting to be completed, finally became our most important finishing line.

We need to be clear – these were major players in world mission. This was not some fringe event and those involved were serious-minded evangelical leaders. Yet here in the heart of the mission world, there was a sense that Jesus is waiting for us to set in place strategies to complete the task of reaching the unreached people groups, of which only 230 or so were left to go.

As a postscript to the account of this occasion we should note that it is currently reckoned that there are 3,180 unengaged, unreached people groups.¹³ Those calculating the figures use the same basic definition of people group as the statisticians advising the Amsterdam meeting.

Rehabilitating the “Unfinished Task”

Against the background of such a remarkable claim to our capacity to finish the task through the management of human missionary resource, it behoves us to attempt to rehabilitate the notion of the unfinished task.

John Piper’s sober analysis of the meaning of people groups helpfully establishes that the NT evidence does not support a single tight definition of

¹² “History of Table 71”, *Table 71*. <https://table71.org/>.

¹³ People Groups, *People Groups* 03 10 2017. <http://www.peoplegroups.org/>.

the concept of a people group. Still he maintains that the task is to reach all the people groups that there are. He certainly does not take the next step of suggesting that such a definition of the task would allow us to define and accomplish its completion so that Jesus can return. Rather, he concludes that “there is no good reason for construing [the Matthean Commission] to mean any other than that the missionary task of the church is to press on to all the unreached peoples until Jesus comes”.¹⁴

Timothy Tennent would take it further:

We must increasingly recognize that the language of “completion” [often used by the Church] can be comprehended only when missions is built on the foundation of Christendom, not on the foundation of the Trinity... [however], even when every person has had an opportunity to hear the gospel, or even if a church is planted in every people group of the world, missions will not be over. Once mission is linked inseparably to the triune God, then the church recognizes that the ultimate goal of missions can be found only in the New Creation. This does not negate important goals such as planting a church in every people group in the world. However, it does mean that the church must always live in the tension of “unfinished business.” The mission of the church (missions) is to participate in the *missio dei* by continuing the mission of Jesus throughout the world until the end of history.¹⁵

The task then is essentially ongoing. Its completion, rather than signalling Jesus’ return, will be heralded by his glorious Parousia.

Indeed, the history of the church in Turkey, North Africa and the Middle East makes it plain that a people once reached does not necessarily stay reached. The commonly used lists of unreached peoples include the descendants of those who once inhabited “Bible belts” of the early church; the unreached become reached and the reached become unreached.

This reflection is important for the increasingly unreached cities of the Western world. Many traditional mission agencies were born with a focus on the inland regions of European colonies and those areas within reach of colonial trading posts. These were the obvious unreached communities of their day. They were remote, often inhospitable, and relatively disconnected from what was known as the developed world.

Today, least-reached communities may be found in cities where there is strong gospel witness. Even where there are whole cities in Europe which lack gospel witness, they are accessible and highly developed. The barriers to gospel advance in such once-reached contexts are distinctly different from those which pertain to remote, never-reached peoples. They present new challenges to agencies and to sending churches to which we will return later.

¹⁴ Piper, 188.

¹⁵ Timothy Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions - A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2012), 100f.

Focussing the task – beyond people groups

Such a perspective means that we are released from defining the missionary task in programmatic terms – the reaching of everyone of a definable and countable set of people groups. We are freed from managerial, military-style mission which sees a cluster of people as a target to be picked off, to be engaged until a sustainable church is planted. We are freed from mathematical mission in which an ethnolinguistic population are worthy of mission engagement if 1% of them are Christians but not if 3% are. And yet, as Piper indicates, there is a place for focus, for prioritising in mission.¹⁶

The Apostle Paul focussed on places where Christ was not named (Rom 15:20f). Verse 20 could be understood as indicating a desire not to tread on others' toes but v21 makes it clear, rather, that the issue is a sense of indebtedness (1:14) to those who have not heard. Moreover, this sense of indebtedness drove him to move from one context of ministry to the next.

Indeed, Paul's explicit strategy of focussing on contexts where Christ is unknown, exemplified in the account of his ministry in Acts, is of a piece with the whole storyline of Luke-Acts – Luke's Gospel is an account of all that Jesus began to do and to teach; Acts is the continuation. It is summarised in the prophetic words of Jesus at the end of Luke (24:46-49) and the beginning of Acts (1:8).

Acts records the phases of Jesus' summary as the gospel moves from Jerusalem (Acts 1-7) to Judaea and Samaria (Acts 8-12), then out to the ends of the earth (Acts 13-). Moreover, the literary punctuation of the book draws attention to the barrier-crossing nature of the gospel in terms of Pentecost (Acts 2) and the mini-Pentecosts of chapters 10 and 19 where Jesus' reign breaks out of the Jewish world to reach first God-fearing Gentiles and then pagan Artemis worshippers.

The story of Acts, which closes in such a way as to leave the clear impression that all that Jesus was continuing to do remained unfinished, has at its heart the crossing of barriers to proclaim Christ, expressing his love and compassion. It affirms Tennent's conviction that our missionary task is nothing less, and certainly nothing more, than a participation in the *missio dei*. It is the *missio Christi*, in which he crosses barriers to reach the world of sinners he came to save.

In casting the missionary task of the church in this way, we are freed to revisit those passages from which Winter and others have drawn their understanding of people groups. We do not need fully to rehearse Piper's careful discussion. He points to the fact that those passages that speak of the groups of people who will become beneficiaries of salvation describe them in a variety of terms – nations, peoples, tongues, tribes, families. In some cases

¹⁶ Piper, 159.

only one term is used, in others they are piled on top of each other, as in Rev 7:9. Piper wisely concludes that,

God probably did not intend for us to use a precise definition of people groups so as to think we could ever stop doing pioneer missionary work just because we conclude that all the groups with our definition have been reached.¹⁷

Indeed so. Yet we could go further. Texts such as Rev 7:9 should warn us explicitly not to attempt to define the missionary task based on a singular definition of a social grouping as the unit by which we might count progress towards a definable point of completion. Rather, in the context, the use of four terms to describe the divisions of humanity might be seen as indicating that the salvific impact of the Cross will reach across all barriers including – but not limited to – political, linguistic, ethnic or other barriers between affinity groups.

Such a conclusion fits the wider context of Revelation 7. The previous chapter ends by prophesying the completion of the work of Christ in the gathering of the full number of the elect, symbolised in the 144,000. Chapter 7 makes clear that the number is symbolic by affirming that the company of the saved cannot be counted, rather like grains of sand or the stars in the night sky (Gen 15:5). This vast, but definite, number of the elect are united in being washed in the blood of the Lamb. Yet there is huge diversity; no facet of the diversity of the human race is missing; every barrier has been crossed by the gospel. This is what the finished task looks like. The picture is essentially one of universality, but the lines traced out by the artist's brushwork are those of diversity and of unity.

Such a picture resonates with other New Testament material. In Galatians 5 Paul paints a picture of the unity of the church, deploying a pallet in which the colours of diversity are used. Here, however, they move beyond the language of geopolitics and ethno-linguistics. Paul includes status in society and gender within his taxonomy. Similar diversity appears in 1 Corinthians 1 where he considers the make-up of the church and notes that not many were wise, powerful or noble by the world's standards – but the implication is that some were. We know that the earliest converts included people of all stations of life. In chapter 6 he speaks of a diversity of wickednesses, but then concludes his breviary of sin with the stunning assertion – “and such were some of you”. The gospel had reached into parts of society in ways which demanded the crossing of social barriers, even into communities characterised by one or more manifestations of human sinfulness.

Drawing this material together allows us to conclude that the classically understood concept of “people groups” has indeed been of huge value in drawing attention to the lostness of vast numbers of communities. However,

¹⁷ Piper, 188.

if used as the only indicator towards mission strategy it may risk creating a new set of hidden peoples. The New Testament witness is that it is the Lord's intention that the gospel will be carried across all barriers and will reach into every community, every stratum of human society. Moreover, in doing so the impact of the gospel will not be to create homogeneous groups, each reflecting one of the divisions that exist amongst human beings. Rather it will transcend and unite the full diversity of redeemed people, reconciling them into local church communities, each expressing a diversity which bears testimony to the uniqueness and power of Christ.

Such a vision of the missional intent of Christ means that any conception of the mission of the church which falls short of that glorious goal will leave the task not only unfinished but shamefully unengaged. Such a statement is not intended to contradict the 1974 call to reach the many distinct ethno-linguistic groups of people who lived and died without hearing of Christ. Rather, it is to expand upon it. The missional task is to seek out all those communities living behind the whole range of barriers between peoples, to cross those barriers, and to bear witness to Christ amongst those who have not heard. It is furthermore to seek to see those barriers transcended as the impact of the Cross brings the elect to understand that they have a new common identity in Christ and thus to embrace one another in new communities supernaturally constituted in Christ by his Spirit.

Renewing strategies for mission

There are indications that the missions community is revisiting the "people groups" orthodoxy which has prevailed over recent decades:

- a) Voices from the Global South have raised proper concerns that approaches such as those exemplified in the Amsterdam meeting reported above, along with the propensity for some agencies to withdraw workers and resources in order to refocus on Unengaged People Groups, betray an attitude which makes other peoples the objects of Western Christianity's projects.
- b) The apparently insuperable difficulty of defining and counting UUPGs¹⁸ as they have become known has served to challenge the concept itself.
- c) Moderate voices in the USA such as Piper's have allowed the theological cracks in the concept to be opened out.
- d) The growth of diaspora ministries reflects a recognition that significant communities of recent arrivals exist in urban centres which may be geographically within reach of gospel churches but which are as far away culturally from them as those they have left in their homelands.

¹⁸ Unengaged, Unreached People Groups.

Many mission agencies have been adapting to these realities and have taken on board the missiological issues explored above. Some continue to use UPGs as the primary determinant of strategic priority. This is more likely to be true of those agencies which exhibit limited internal cultural diversity and thus are locked in a “from here to there” view of mission with its attendant cultural limitations.

Piper’s proper recognition of the value of the older UPG definition as a mechanism to aid prioritisation by both agencies and sending churches needs to be revisited. For sure, the needs of unreached peoples as traditionally defined are urgent, but the needs of many European cities are no less so.

Such a refocussing, away from the traditional definition of UPGs towards today’s communities where Christ is least known, will demand the development of fresh strategies for mission. Older strategies based on the economic, educational and technical capacities of the Western church will need to be replaced by strategies for engagement in workplaces as peers, in communities as neighbours, in places of learning as fellow students and researchers. Western agencies have tended to draw their workforces from the middle classes where Bible belt churches are strongest. This reality creates cultural and religious gaps to be crossed by workers if other sectors of European and North American cities are to be reached.

It also has impact on the identity of the missional worker. Missionary identity needs to consistently align with identity as an employee within a secular workplace, as a graduate student in a university, as a neighbour in a deeply materialistic community. Selection and training must take this into account. Financial arrangements for professionals and business people are markedly different than the traditional missionary sent to a desert tribe. Such changes are happening in the world of mission, but challenge the agencies at many levels – sub-cultural, organisational, financial, etc.

It also remains the case that some church leaders are behind the times in this matter as they consider where to invest the missionary giving of their churches. For some the priority of what they may call “frontier” missions continues to be shaped by a caricature of the unreached which is dominated by a narrow ethno-linguistic definition of UPGs.

Just as the contemporary missional challenge demands that the agencies learn new ways of being and of doing mission, so that same challenge has impact on how churches may identify, commission and support sent workers. Indeed it reinforces the need for churches to equip their members for local mission.

Whilst the need to send workers to foreign contexts remains, indeed is increasing, the huge challenge of mission in urban centres is becoming ever clearer. The spiritual needs of cities in India and China have long been recognised. Evangelicals in the US have been alerted in recent decades to the needs of Europe and its secularised cities. In Africa, mobilisation towards

ministry in Europe proceeds on the basis of seeing Europe as the new Dark Continent. Yet the needs of a city like Chicago may be overlooked on the basis that there are significant known churches there. Notwithstanding this penetration of the gospel into the city, there are also significant communities in Chicago where people have almost no knowledge of the gospel and where church planting is desperately needed and is very tough. The same could be said of many other Western cities.

In the UK, recent research indicates that though some of the better-known evangelical networks are growing, the socio-cultural breadth of those church networks is often limited.¹⁹ Specific initiatives such as 20schemes in Scotland seek to address this imbalance and are to be highly welcomed. But there is an ongoing need for the large church networks to build capacity so that their traditional core churches become effective in local cross-cultural mission.

It is arguable that the 1970s E-scale is waning in its applicability to today's reality. The E1 category of a community of non-Christians within which the church is at home fitted the realities of 1970s USA. The notion that the post-Christian communities of Europe are ones where the church is at home is less and less tenable. Our churches exist in a context of hostility.

Yet it is not clear that UK or other European churches have moved beyond a Christendom model of witness; to do so means re-learning how to "love our enemies", how to exercise "wise courage" and "courageous wisdom". A practical understanding of such phrases is far more common amongst Christian in the Middle East, China or Pakistan. As much as the UK and Europe may benefit from incoming workers from Western Bible-belt churches, such workers will do well to be members of multi-cultural teams including colleagues from contexts where standing for Christ is tough. Meanwhile, UK churches will need to learn how to receive from those who were once colonised by us. The parents need to learn what it means to become dependent.

A number of skills are needed if we are to engage the unfinished task in our home and overseas contexts. The following observations are offered in drawing this article to a close as starting points for exploring the barriers to be crossed in engaging our task. They are cast at congregational level. This is out of the conviction that, at the end of the day, it is the church that matters. Yet they can readily be recast in order to think about the missionary task from a mission agency perspective.

Rejoicing in and reflecting diversity in church life – who is here?

Every congregation will exhibit degrees of diversity. The question is whether that diversity is noted, rejoiced in and reflected in church life. Our skill in

¹⁹ Gospel Data Geek, 04 10 2017. <https://gospeldatageek.wordpress.com/>.

crossing barriers to reach those who do not know Christ, is likely to be limited if church life makes unbalanced demands of those who already come to us. What we mean is this: If there are minorities within our churches for whom coming to church means undertaking a painful cross-cultural journey on a weekly basis, or if coming to church demands an assimilation which squeezes their sense of cultural identity, then we may have a lot to learn from their pain and its causes.

A church which fully reflects its internal diversity (cultural, linguistic, demographic, economic, etc.) in its corporate life will already be teaching all its members what crossing barriers means. This will be true not least of those who would otherwise form the dominant culture. They will benefit as they learn not to dominate with their powerful cultural preferences, but to rejoice in mutual submission. Such church life will inculcate first base skills that will allow it to cross the barriers existing within the wider community.

Critical to this transformation is the inclusion of people from diverse cultural and social backgrounds in a church's leadership. Such is the rarity of truly diverse churches that the literature on diversity in church leadership is somewhat thin. However, anecdotal research suggests that where churches have broken out of mono-culturalism they have needed to include leaders from minority cultures. Indeed, some workers would reckon that if this does not happen the majority community will remain dominant at 80% or more of the congregation. Those from minority cultures consistently find themselves required to accommodate to the norms of the dominant culture.

Diversity in leadership allows breakthrough, but only if that diversity allows leaders from minority cultures to be themselves. This applies both to public leadership and to the way the leadership functions in decision-making. Perhaps the deepest challenge for the majority is to learn to receive leadership from minority culture leaders, and for majority culture leaders to facilitate that. For this to happen they will need to adjust how they structure and discuss in leadership meetings. Leading across cultures is a whole topic in itself and has been helpfully explored by Jim Plueddemann.²⁰

Identifying local communities which the church is missing – who is not here?

Winter's original concern in 1974 was that the unreached may be invisible to the reached. A majority or culturally-dominant community can readily fail to spot those who are missing from church life. The necessary process of discovery may be aided by careful research and intentional community engagement, yet in many cases a church may already possess much of the

²⁰ James E. Plueddemann, *Leading Across Cultures: Effective Ministry and Mission in the Global Church* (IVP Academic, 2009).

information it needs within its existing congregation members. In particular, those within the congregation who themselves reflect cultural margins will have insights that the majority community reflected in the church needs to hear. Their voice is critical but may be unheard unless leaders give time to listening. Local community leaders and workers with statutory agencies are also valuable collaborators in seeking to identify and understand the hidden parts of the community.

Identifying barriers as a means to discovering hidden communities – what's in the way?

At times, barriers of different kinds – economic, social, ethnic, cultural, educational – can be so high that our knowledge of those living behind them is limited; the community is effectively hidden by the barrier. This may be true at all sorts of levels. What is certainly the case is that barriers tend to hide from view the things that shape a community from the inside.

A barrier may demarcate but not define the community behind it. A moment's reflection makes this obvious, for the barrier works in both directions. From the perspective of the community that is hidden from our view we are the other side of the barrier. Yet we do not consider ourselves to be defined by it. Neither will they, yet the temptation is for us to define others by the barrier between us.

A first step, therefore, in engaging a hidden community may be deliberately to identify and cross a barrier on a journey of discovery. The process itself is one in which crossing points may be established. It will allow the believing community to discover those features of the hidden community which are less alien, or even attractive from the perspective of Christian values.

It will also highlight those features of the hidden community which will make it challenging to reach, and which will demand the greatest attention if members of that community come to faith and are to be integrated in the church.

Understanding the dynamics of division and gospel reconciliation – how to overcome?

The New Testament is full of material to assist us in an understanding of how societal divisions work and the ways in which the gospel reconciles. There are case studies – the Jerusalem widows, the conversion of Saul, the acceptance of Cornelius and his family. There is didactic material – Ephesians 2, Galatians 5. What is clear in the biblical material and in contemporary experience is that barriers between communities are rarely singular.

The Jerusalem widows of Acts 6 were divided by language, but the issue which came to the fore was economic. This is not uncommon. Take, for example, a relatively diverse church in an English city. It is populated by middle-class, white, British people and by upwardly-mobile graduate migrants many of whom came as students from Africa and were able to obtain well-paid jobs in the UK marketplace. Close by are two other communities: a white, British community where multiple generations have had no work; a predominantly Muslim, refugee community populated by people who have survived through and fled from oppression. Those in the latter community continue in survival mode, living on their wits, making a bit of money as they are able, below the radar of regulatory authorities.

From the church's perspective the presenting barriers might well appear to be linguistic, racial or religious, but the most pressing social divisions may actually lie elsewhere. The poor, white British community may tend to feel aggrieved with all those of a different skin colour. Yet their real grievance is with those with whom they are in closest competition, the refugee community. The refugee community may feel envious of the upwardly mobile migrants who look like them but who are aspirational and successful in ways that seem out of reach.

Such deeper analysis of the dynamics of division between communities is vital if we are to understand how the gospel may bring healing and create a community of believers where diversity coexists with deep unity in Christ.

The finish

When Christ appears in glory the Holy City will be resplendent as a bride is presented to her husband. He will be its light and into her the kings of the nations will bring their splendour. The task of carrying the gospel to every community, not least to those where Christ's name is not known, will remain unfinished until then. Until then...

*We go to all the world
with Kingdom hope unfurled,
no other name has power to save,
but Jesus Christ the Lord.*

MARTIN LUTHER AND EVANGELICAL MISSION: FATHER OR FAILURE?

*Thorsten Prill**

This article discusses the mission theology and practice of Martin Luther. The author demonstrates that the popular view which claims that the German Reformer was neither interested in the mission of the church, nor made any noteworthy contribution to mission theology, lacks substance. Luther's critics seem to overlook the fact that Wittenberg, in which the Reformer lived, studied and taught, served as a hub of a huge missionary enterprise. Hundreds of preachers went out from this centre of the Reformation to spread the gospel all over Europe. Leading Scandinavian theologians, such as Olaus Petri and Hans Tausen, had all studied under Luther in Wittenberg and had been deeply influenced by him before they began reform work in their home countries. Furthermore, with his rediscovery of the gospel of justification by faith alone, his emphasis on the personal character of faith in Christ, his radical reinterpretation of the priesthood, his recognition of God's authorship of mission, his reminder that the witness to the gospel takes place in the midst of a spiritual battle, and his insistence that the Bible has to be available in common languages, Martin Luther laid down important principles for the mission work of the church which are still valid today.

I. Introduction

The year 2017 commemorates the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. In 1517 Martin Luther, a German monk and professor of theology at the University of Wittenberg, published his *Ninety-Five Theses* in which he criticised the sale of indulgences by the Roman Catholic Church. On 31 October 1517 Luther sent the *Theses* to his bishop, Albrecht of Mainz.¹ This date is considered the beginning of the Reformation.² While Luther is widely praised for the rediscovery of the biblical gospel, he is strongly criticised for his views on mission. There is a school of missiologists and church historians who argue that Luther was not interested in mission and, in fact, ignored the mission mandate which Christ had given to his Church. As a result, the German Reformer did not make any noteworthy contribution to mission theology, so the critics claim. This view is widespread and accepted

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¹ C. Methuen, "Luther's Life", in R. Kolb, I. Dingel & L. Batka (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11.

² W.J. Duiker & J.J. Spielvogel, *World History* (Boston: Cengage Learning, 2016), 422.

by many as fact. However, a closer study of Luther shows that the critics miss both his influence on practical mission work and his missiological contributions.

II. Luther and his critics

Martin Luther and his fellow Reformers have come under fire regarding their views on the role of mission. Key critics include both church historians and mission scholars. Among the former is the American historian William R. Hogg. In his book *Ecumenical Foundations* Hogg argues that within Western Protestant Christianity interest in mission work developed very slowly.³ He goes on to say that the Protestant Reformers, among them Luther, “disavowed any obligation for Christians to carry the gospel beyond their fellow-countrymen”.⁴ Hogg’s view is shared by Stephen Neill who served as a Professor of Missions and Ecumenical Theology in the German University of Hamburg. In his well-known book *A History of Christian Missions* Neill argues that “[i]n the Protestant world, during the period of the Reformation, there was little time for thought of missions”.⁵ He continues:

Naturally the Reformers were not unaware of the non-Christian world around them. Luther has many things, and sometimes surprisingly, kind things, to say about both Jews and Turks. It is clear that the idea of the steady progress of the preaching of the Gospel through the world is not foreign to his thought. Yet, when everything favourable has been said and can be said, and when all possible evidences from the writings of the Reformers have been collected, it all amounts to exceedingly little.⁶

Similarly, J. Herbert Kane, an evangelical scholar who taught at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, criticises the churches of the Reformation for a lack of missionary enterprise. He comments:

One would naturally expect that the spiritual forces released by the Reformation would have prompted the Protestant churches of Europe to take the gospel to the ends of the earth during the period of world exploration and colonisation which began about 1500. But such was not the case. The Roman Catholic Church between 1500 and 1700 won more converts in the pagan world than it lost to Protestantism in Europe.⁷

Kane goes on to identify deficiencies in the Reformers’ theologies as the main contributing factor.⁸ He argues that they believed that the Great Commission

³ W.R. Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and its Nineteenth-century Background* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 1-2.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁵ S. Neill, *A History of Christian Missions* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1973), 220.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 222.

⁷ J.H. Kane, *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 73.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 73.

had been achieved by the apostles by taking the good news to the ends of the world as it was known at that time. Consequently, there was no longer any need to send out missionaries to faraway countries. Kane also sees the Reformers' views on predestination as a stumbling block.⁹ Their "preoccupation" with the sovereignty of God, Kane believes, prevented them from promoting the spread of the gospel among pagan nations. Finally, he mentions the Reformers' "apocalypticism", with its negative view of the future, as a hindrance to global mission.¹⁰ According to Kane, "Luther particularly took a dim view of the future."¹¹

Other scholars have suggested that Luther and the Reformers refused to consider mission to be a proper theological subject and therefore showed a remarkable indifference to the missionary task of the church. In *Eclipse in Mission: Dispelling the Shadow of our Idols* Goodwin argues that the thought of the Protestant Reformers did not necessitate a separate theology of mission.¹² He continues:

Indeed, Calvin and Luther's thought... would suggest that the absence of mission in their thinking was theological and not just an issue of oversight! It appears that they did not deem mission *per se* to even be a valid theological discipline or doctrine worth mentioning.¹³

In *What in the World is God Doing?* C. Gordon Olson speaks of the "Great Omission" of which Luther and his fellow Reformers were guilty.¹⁴ The reason for their failure, Olson believes, was a spiritual one. The Reformation which they had started lacked deep spiritual roots. Olson goes on to explain what he means by that:

The Reformation was not a great revival in which tens of millions of people were born again. Probably there were only a minority of Protestants who really came to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The rest were swept along with the tide. With the territorial church arrangement of Europe it was not hard to be a Protestant without being born again. It is important to understand that Luther did not spell out a clear doctrine of regeneration or new birth. Much reliance was placed upon baptism and communion, which were seen as "sacraments"... The more we learn about the spiritual state of the reformation churches, the more it seems like Christ's words to the Sardis church in Revelation 3:1, "I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead." Before there could be world evangelism, there had to be spiritual renewal. That was two centuries in coming.¹⁵

⁹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹² *Ibid.*, 26.

¹³ R. Goodwin, *Eclipse in Mission: Dispelling the Shadow of Our Idols* (Eugene: Resource Publications, 2012), 26.

¹⁴ C.G. Olson, *What in the World Is God Doing?* (Cedar Knolls: Global Gospel, 1998), 120.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 120-121.

Such criticism of Luther and the Reformers, which is shared by many other authors,¹⁶ is anything but new. In his work *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time* published in 1901, German missiologist Gustav Warneck has laid, as Schulz writes, the foundation for the widespread criticism.¹⁷ If Neill's and Kane's criticism is harsh, Warneck's judgment, like that of Olson, is devastating. Thus, he states:

Notwithstanding the era of discovery in which the origin of the Protestant church fell, there was no missionary action on her part in the age of the Reformation... We miss in the Reformers not only missionary action, but even the idea of mission, in the sense in which we understand them today. And this is not only because the newly discovered heathen world across the sea lay almost wholly beyond the range of their vision, though that reason had some weight, but because fundamental theological views hindered them from giving their activity, and even their thoughts, a missionary direction.¹⁸

In Warneck's view Luther was clearly "not man of missionary spirit in the sense of seeking the Christianising of the heathen".¹⁹

The question one has to ask is whether such criticism of Luther is justified. Was Luther really indifferent to mission? Is there really a lack of mission emphasis in his theology?

III. The flaws of the critics

Most of the critics of Luther and the Protestant Reformers like Neill, Kane, Olson or Warneck share a view of mission which emphasises its global dimension. Warneck, for example, defines mission as "the regular sending of messengers of the Gospel to non-Christian nations, with the view of Christianizing them".²⁰ Olson's definition has a similar thrust. "Mission", he writes,

is the whole task, endeavour, and program of the Church of Jesus Christ to reach out across geographical and/or cultural boundaries by sending missionaries to evangelise people who have never heard or who have little opportunity to hear the saving gospel.²¹

¹⁶ See, for example, B.K. Camp, "A Survey of the Church's Involvement in Global/Local Outreach", in J. Bonk (ed), *Between Past and Future: Evangelical Missions Entering the Twenty-first Century* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2003), 214-215; T. Dakin, "What is at the Heart of a Global Perspective on the Church?", in S. Croft (ed), *Mission-shaped Questions: Defining Issues for Today's Church* (London: Church House Publishing, 2008), 45; R.A. James, "Post-reformation Missions Pioneers", in M. Barnett (ed), *Discovering the Mission of God: Best Missional Practices for the 21st Century* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2012), 251; J. Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 18.

¹⁷ K.D. Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), 46.

¹⁸ G. Warneck, *Outline of a History of Protestant Missions from the Reformation to the Present Time* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1901), 8-9.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 10.

²¹ Olson, *What in the World is God doing?*, 13.

If we understand mission first and foremost in such a way, i.e. as the enterprise of taking the gospel to places where there is no Christian presence, the charge against Luther might be justified. Luther, though he recognised the Turks' need of salvation in Christ,²² was not actively involved in the sending of missionaries to them or any other non-Christian nation. He only encouraged Christians who had become captives of the Turks to serve them "faithfully and diligently" so that they might "convert many, if they [the Turks] were to see that the Christians are so superior to the Turks in humility, patience, diligence, faithfulness, and similar virtues."²³

While on the surface, the charges against Luther seem to be warranted, a closer examination shows that they are, on various grounds, problematic.

1. *Historical circumstances*

First, the critics seem to ignore the fact that there are several valid reasons why Luther and the Protestant Reformers were not more focussed on world mission. The Reformers, as the word indicates, considered it their first task to reform the church, which was a time-consuming endeavour.²⁴ They were fully committed "to establish and secure the principles of the Reformation in their own domain".²⁵ Their regional churches were, as Bosch points out, "involved in a battle of sheer survival; only after the Peace of Westphalia (1648) were they able to organize themselves properly."²⁶ The Thirty Years War (1618-1648), in particular, had devastated many Protestant countries in central and northern Europe and had made it very difficult for Protestants to have a normal church life.²⁷ As a result it was almost impossible to develop an overseas mission strategy.²⁸ Furthermore, in contrast to the Roman Catholic Church, located in countries like Italy, Portugal, and Spain which were maritime powers with colonies and trading connections outside Europe, most Protestant churches in Germany did not have any direct links with overseas countries.²⁹ Unlike the Catholic rulers "none of the monarchs won over to the Reformation had", as Zorn points out, "responsibilities in

²² G. Miller, "From Crusades to Homeland Defense: Martin Luther Responded to Islam with a New Military Philosophy, Fresh Focus on the Qur'an, and Provocative Readings of Biblical Prophecy", *Christian History* 21, 2 (2002), 31-34.

²³ Cited in J. Pelikan, "After the Monks - What? Luther's Reformation and Institutions of Missions, Welfare, and Education", *Springfelder* 31, 3 (1967), 6.

²⁴ D.J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 245.

²⁵ T. Coates, "Were the Reformers Mission-minded?", *Concordia Theological Monthly* 40, 9 (1969), 609.

²⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 245.

²⁷ Coates, "Were the Reformers Mission-minded?", 609.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 609.

²⁹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 245.

distant countries”.³⁰ This was also true for Frederick III and his brother Johann, who, as electors of Saxony, were among Luther’s strongest supporters.³¹ Therefore, it would have been difficult for Luther to pursue overseas mission work compared to Spanish and Portuguese Roman Catholic monks who could rely on the support from their monarchs and willing navigators.³² The rulers in the Protestant countries were, in general, solely interested in their own regional churches and indifferent to mission work in other lands.³³ Finally, as Kaariainen points out, Luther probably met less than twenty unbaptised people in his lifetime.³⁴ Consequently, he viewed Muslims, in step with the majority of Christians of his day, “primarily as ‘infidels’ and a political threat to the Holy Roman Empire, rather than as prospective converts to Christianity.”³⁵ Schulz concludes: “Thus the lack of missionary intent and enterprise is mostly a case of historical circumstance, which many scholars – who often level scathing criticisms against the reformers – are loath to admit.”³⁶

2. *Missing the wider picture*

Surprisingly, many of the critics seem to be unfamiliar with Luther’s theological works. They interpret some of his doctrinal positions without looking at the wider picture. Öberg writes:

Scholars such as Warneck and Latourette have often expressed an opinion without penetrating and objectively analyzing the primary sources: Luther’s exegesis of the Old and New Testaments, his many writings, and his sermons. Lack of familiarity with the original sources is the only way to explain the unfounded conclusions of such scholars. Assertions by Warneck and Bergman have led others scholars to their negative evaluations. The first built on loose sand. The second, in turn, have followed.³⁷

However, if the wider picture is taken into account their allegation that Luther lacked missionary vision and zeal becomes less convincing.

³⁰ J.F. Zorn, “Did Calvin Foster or Hinder Missions?”, *Exchange* 40 (2011), 173.

³¹ Cf. M. Mullet, “Saxony”, in *Historical Dictionary of the Reformation and Counter-reformation* (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2010), 407-408.

³² K.J. Stewart, “Calvinism and Missions: The Contested Relationship Revisited”, *Themelios* 4, 1 (2009), 67.

³³ Coates, “Were the Reformers Mission-minded?”, 610.

³⁴ J.A. Kaariainen, *Mission Shaped by Promise: Lutheran Missiology Confronts the Challenge of Religious Pluralism* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2012), 7.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

³⁶ Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 45.

³⁷ I. Öberg, *Luther and World Mission: A Historical and Systematic Study with Special Reference to Luther’s Bible Exposition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), 7.

(i) Luther and the doctrine of God's sovereignty

According to R.A. James, the Reformers' doctrine of God's sovereignty "lessened the responsibility of humanity".³⁸ However, a careful study of Luther's writings shows us that Luther did not downplay the role Christians should play in spreading the gospel. Luther did not have any doubt that all responsibility for salvation from sin and eternal condemnation lay exclusively with God.³⁹ In his explanation of the *Third Article of the Apostle's Creed*, which we can find in his *Small Catechism*, Luther famously states:

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He forgives daily and richly all sins to me and all believers, and at the last day will raise up me and all the dead, and will give to me and all believers in Christ everlasting life. This is most certainly true.⁴⁰

At the same time Luther stresses that believers are totally responsible for the sphere of responsibility which God has given them.⁴¹ This includes the area of evangelism. In his commentary on Isaiah 40:9 Luther writes that "[e]very Christian is also an evangelist, who should teach another and publish the glory and praise of God".⁴² The church, he argues, has been "well informed and taught" and therefore is obliged "to proclaim and urge joyful tidings".⁴³ Luther clearly distinguished between divine and human responsibilities. He strove, as Kolb puts it, "to hold God's responsibility in tension with human responsibility to preserve the integrity of God as Creator and the integrity of the human creature as his special creation, fashioned in God's image...".⁴⁴

(ii) Luther and the great commission

Regarding the Reformers' understanding of the Great Commission, Kane states that,

³⁸ James, "Post-reformation Missions Pioneers", 251.

³⁹ R. Kolb, *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 103.

⁴⁰ M. Luther, *Small Catechism*, in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Lutheran Church*, <http://bookofconcord.org/smallcatechism.php> (Date of Access: 12.01.2017).

⁴¹ Kolb, *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith*, 103.

⁴² M. Luther, *Luther's Works: Lectures on Isaiah, Vol. 17*, H.C. Oswald & J. Pelikan (eds), (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1955), 13.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁴⁴ Kolb, *Martin Luther: Confessor of the Faith*, 103.

[t]hey taught that the Great Commission pertained only to the original apostles; that the apostles fulfilled the Great Commission by taking the gospel to the ends of the then known world; that if later generations were without the gospel, it was their own fault...⁴⁵

Kane continues to say that it was part of the Reformers' teaching that "the church in later stages had neither the authority nor the responsibility to send missionaries to the ends of the earth."⁴⁶ This view is widespread and often repeated by contemporary authors.⁴⁷ Luther and Calvin are usually at the centre of their criticism. James, for example, puts it this way:

Martin Luther, John Calvin and many other early Reformers assumed that the apostles had completed the Great Commission, and the message had fallen on deaf ears... Their belief was that the church did not have the power or the responsibility to commission missionaries.⁴⁸

Paul Avis speaks of "the strange silence" of the Protestant Reformers on mission.⁴⁹ He continues:

When both Luther and Calvin comment on the Great Commission (Matt. 28), they remain bafflingly silent on the duty of present-day Christians to carry on the work of the apostles in bringing the gospel to "every creature".⁵⁰

The fact that this charge against Luther and his fellow Reformers is often repeated in both popular and scholarly works does not necessarily mean that it is true. What is certainly true is that 17th century Lutheran orthodox theologians revived the scholastic view that the Great Commission was no longer valid.⁵¹ In 1652 this view was even expressed by the theological faculty of the University of Wittenberg.⁵² Luther, however, did not identify with this viewpoint. "Luther did not", as Coates writes, "accept the interpretation of Ps. 19:5 and Rom. 10:18 as signifying that the apostles had literally penetrated into every country and region of the earth".⁵³ In a sermon preached in 1523, Luther said the following:

⁴⁵ Kane, *A Concise History of the Christian World Mission*, 73.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴⁷ See for example D.L. Allen, "Preaching for a Great Commission Resurgence", in C. Lawless & A.W. Greenway (eds), *The Great Commission Resurgence: Fulfilling God's Mandate in Our Time* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 286; B.A. Gerrish, *Christian Faith: Dogmatics in Outline* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 232; Goodwin, *Eclipse in Mission*, 26; D.E. Ryoo, "The Moravian Missions Strategy: Christ-centered, Spirit-driven, Mission-minded", *Haddington House Journal* 12, 3 (2010), 38.

⁴⁸ James, "Post-reformation Missions Pioneers", 251.

⁴⁹ P.D.L. Avis, *The Church in the Theology of the Reformers* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2002), 168.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁵¹ Coates, "Were the Reformers Mission-minded?", 601.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 601.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 601.

With this message or preaching, it is just as if one throws a stone into the water. It makes waves and circles or wheels around itself, and the waves roll always farther outward. One drives the other until they reach the shore. Although it is still in the middle, the waves do not rest; instead, the waves continue forward. So it is with the preaching. It is started through the apostles and always proceeds and is driven farther through the preacher to and fro in the world, driven out and persecuted; nevertheless, it is always being made more widely known to those that have never heard it before. As it travels, however, in the center, it may be extinguished and perverted by heresy. Or as it is said, if someone sends a message out, the message has been sent even though it has not arrived at the intended place or at a particular point, but is travelling en route, as when one says: "The emperor's message has gone out," though it has not yet arrived at Nuremberg or in Tukey where it now should go. This is how the preaching of the apostles should also be understood.⁵⁴

At the same time it is only fair to say that the Great Commission of Matthew 28 did not play an important role as a missiological text in Luther's thinking. Davis points out that there are forty-six citations of Matthew's Great Commission passage in the collected works of Luther, but only once does Luther refer to the passage in a missiological context:

In a letter of October 2, 1539 to the Elector John Frederick Luther comments on the use of Matthew 28:19 by Martin Bucer to appeal to Luther to send Melanc[h]thon to England to help the cause of the Reformation there. Luther writes that this verse does not obligate him to send Melanc[h]thon, because he [Luther] is "Going into all the world... to preach" through his *writings* – and he also does not wish to leave the present work.⁵⁵

Luther clearly did not read Matthew 28:16-20 missiologically. He did not base the missionary task of the church on this passage. However, when we look at his interpretation of Luke's version of the Great Commission, which is recorded in chapter 24, verses 45-49 of his Gospel, we see that Luther treats this passage as a missiological text. Luther comments:

According to this command all the Apostles have first judged and reprov'd the world, and proclaimed God's wrath against it; afterwards they preached forgiveness of sins in Christ's name... As therefore the Apostles have preached according to the command of Christ, so too must we do, and say that all men are conceived and born in sin and are by nature children of wrath, and on this account condemned... With this however we do not cease, but we again encourage and comfort those whom we have rebuked, and say that Jesus has come into the world to save sinners, so that all who believe in him, should not perish, but receive everlasting life.⁵⁶

Luther also saw the need to take the gospel to all nations. He recognised the importance of Christian believers going to those who had not heard of Christ

⁵⁴ Cited in V. Stolle, *Church Comes from All Nations* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 24-25.

⁵⁵ J.J. Davis, *Practicing Ministry in the Presence of God: Theological Reflections on Ministry and the Christian Life* (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015), 164.

⁵⁶ M. Luther, *The Complete Works of Martin Luther, Vol. 4, Sermons 68-91* ([Harrington]: Delmarva Publications, 2000).

and witnessing to them.⁵⁷ In a sermon on Mark, chapter 16, preached on Ascension Day 1523, Luther said the following about Jesus' missionary commission to preach the gospel to all creation:

We have often said heretofore that the Gospel, properly speaking, is not something written in books, but an oral proclamation, which shall be heard in all the world and shall be cried out freely before all creatures, so that all would have to hear it if they had ears... For the Law, which was of old, and what the prophets preached, was not cried out in all the world before all creatures, but it was preached by the Jews in their synagogues. But the Gospel shall not be thus confined, it shall be preached freely unto all the world.⁵⁸

Reflecting on the words of Psalm 117, verse 1 "Praise the LORD, all you nations", Luther argues that the nations first need to hear God's Word before they can praise him.⁵⁹ He then goes on to say: "If they are to hear His Word, the preachers must be sent to proclaim God's Word to them."⁶⁰

(iii) Luther and the last day

Finally, the critics seem to misinterpret Luther's eschatological views when they claim that those views kept him from being mission-minded. Like many of his contemporaries, Luther believed that the second coming of Christ was not far. It was first and foremost the developments in the secular business world, the sinful lifestyle of the people around him, and the general condition of the church which convinced Luther that judgment day had to be imminent. In a sermon on Luke 21:25-36 he said:

I do not wish to force anyone to believe as I do; neither will I permit anyone to deny me the right to believe that the last day is near at hand. These words and signs of Christ compel me to believe that such is the case. For the history of the centuries that have passed since the birth of Christ nowhere reveals conditions like those of the present. There has never been such building and planting in the world. There has never been such gluttonous and varied eating and drinking as now. Wearing apparel has reached its limit in costliness. Who has ever heard of such commerce as now encircles the earth? There have arisen all kinds of art and sculpture, embroidery and engraving, the like of which has not been seen during the whole Christian era... But not only have such great strides been made in the world of commerce, but also in the spiritual field have there been great changes. Error, sin, and falsehood never held sway in the world as in these last centuries. The Gospel has been openly condemned at Constance, and the false teachings of the Pope have been adopted as law...⁶¹

⁵⁷ T.C. Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2010), 451.

⁵⁸ M. Luther, *Sermons by Martin Luther, Vol. 3, for Pentecost*, Translated by J.N. Lenker and others, J.N. Lenker (ed) (Minneapolis, 1907), 161.

http://martinluthersermons.com/Luther_Lenker_Vol_3.pdf (Date of Access: 04.10.2016).

⁵⁹ Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 451.

⁶⁰ Cited in Tennent, *Invitation to World Missions*, 451.

⁶¹ M. Luther, *Sermons by Martin Luther, Vol. 1, Sermons on Gospel Texts for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany*, Translated by J.N. Lenker and others, J.N. Lenker (ed), (Minneapolis, 1905), 64.

While these words of Luther very much express the pessimistic sentiment of his time, his assessment did not cause him to be afraid of the future.⁶² In the same sermon Luther urges his audience to look forward to Christ's second coming:

But to believers that day will be comforting and sweet. That day will be the highest joy and safety to the believer... Why should the believer fear and not rather exceedingly rejoice, since he trusts in Christ who comes as judge to redeem him and to be his everlasting portion.⁶³

Luther's eschatology neither made him to fear the future nor did it make him fatalistic. It certainly did not paralyse him, as some of his critics seem to suggest. On the contrary, the hope of heaven was a source of strength and comfort to him.⁶⁴ Luther took the earthly life very seriously. While he was looking forward to Christ's return he was firmly grounded in the here and now. He was, as Strohl puts it, "[i]n no way... dismissive of life in this world".⁶⁵ William Wright describes Luther's attitude well when he writes that Luther emphasised "the need of humankind to act now in the present and not to worry about the future, which was God's domain".⁶⁶ Wright continues: "The concern with the present while leaving the future to God was a key to his teaching on vocation."⁶⁷ Luther's theology of vocation is indeed a good expression of his grounding in life. The German reformer "vehemently rejected the distinction made by the medieval church between spiritual vocations and worldly ones".⁶⁸ He taught that every legitimate kind of work or function in society is a vocation or calling from God.⁶⁹ The purpose of a person's calling is to serve others. In a sermon which he preached in the Castle Church at Weimar in 1522, Luther spells out what that means for Christian believers:

http://www.martinluthersermons.com/Luther_Lenker_Vol_1.pdf (Date of Access: 21.10.2016).

⁶² H. Schwarz, *Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 311.

⁶³ Luther, *Sermons by Martin Luther, Vol. 1, Sermons on Gospel Texts for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany*, 76.

⁶⁴ P. Zimmerling, "Die Spiritualität Martin Luthers als Herausforderung", in H. Junghans (ed), *Lutherjahrbuch* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 39.

⁶⁵ J.E. Strohl, "Luther's Eschatology", in R. Kolb, I. Dingel & L. Batka (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 360.

⁶⁶ W.J. Wright, *Martin Luther's Understanding of the Two Kingdoms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 149.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁶⁸ J.E. Strohl, "The Framework for Christian Living: Luther on the Christian's Callings", in R. Kolb, I. Dingel & L. Batka (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 367.

⁶⁹ G.E. Veith, *The Spirituality of the Cross: The Way of the First Evangelicals* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 77.

The prince should think: Christ has served me and made everything to follow him: therefore, I should also serve my neighbour, protect him and everything that belongs to him. That is why God has given me this office, and I have it that I might serve him. That would be a good prince and ruler. When a prince sees his neighbor oppressed, he should think: That concerns me! I must protect and shield my neighbour... The same is true for shoemaker, tailor, scribe, or reader. If he is a Christian tailor, he will say: I make these clothes because God has bidden me to do so, so that I can make a living, so that I can help and serve my neighbor. When a Christian does not serve the other, God is not present; that is not Christian living.⁷⁰

IV. Luther's Wittenberg: a regional mission hub

In many varied ways, cities such as Wittenberg, Geneva, Zurich, Basel and Strasbourg, served as the regional mission hubs of the Reformation movement.⁷¹ First, it was in these cities that the Reformers developed and taught their ideas. Secondly, it was in these centres that the Reformers produced their writings and had them printed.⁷² In Wittenberg alone over 1,000 editions of Luther's works were printed between 1516 and 1546.⁷³ Thirdly, it was from these cities that not only merchants and traders but also itinerant evangelical preachers and pamphleteers, as well as former students of the Reformers, went out in all directions to spread the message of the Reformation.⁷⁴

What Geneva, Basel and Zurich were for the Protestant Reformation in Switzerland, southern Germany, the Netherlands and France, Wittenberg was for the Reformation in northern Germany, north-east Europe and Scandinavia. Like the Swiss cities, Wittenberg served as a mission hub from which the rediscovered message of salvation by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, spread to many German territories and other parts of Europe. Cameron notes:

The process by which the reformers reached their hearers was just as important as that by which pamphlets reached their readers. Some reformers were already established preachers in their community, and gravitated to the Reformation as they carried out their duties, through their own reading or contacts. Besides Luther himself, this occurred with Zwingli, Matthäus Zell, Wolfgang Capito, Berchthold Haller, Benz of Schwäbisch-Hall, Schappeler of Memmingen, and doubtless many others. Such preachers could carry their hearers with them on the basis of their existing reputation. Others travelled as students to a reformed centre, say, Wittenberg, Zurich, Strasbourg, or Geneva, and returned to their birthplace to spread the message among those they

⁷⁰ Cited in F.J. Gaiser, "What Luther Didn't Say About Vocation", *Word & World* 25, 4 (2005), 361.

⁷¹ Stewart, "Calvinism and Missions", 68-69.

⁷² A. Pettegree & M. Hall, "The Reformation and the Book: A Reconsideration", *The Historical Journal* 47, 4 (2004), 787-788.

⁷³ M. Von Habsburg, *The Reformation in Europe, c 1500-1564* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 43.

⁷⁴ P.E. Pierson, "The Reformation and Mission", in H. Netland & C. van Engen (eds), *Evangelical Dictionary of Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), 814.

knew. Wittenberg siphoned an astonishing number of visiting students, through its schools, several of whom became prominent as reformers of their native districts.⁷⁵

According to Öberg, Luther “had more than a theoretical vision for the Christianization of all peoples”.⁷⁶ However, he “showed a certain discontinuity or imbalance between his comprehensive mission vision and his sporadic suggestions for mission practice”.⁷⁷ While it is true that compared to Calvin and other Reformers,⁷⁸ Luther was less of a mission strategist, the training of theologians in Wittenberg for Germany and many parts of Europe certainly served a strategic purpose for him; and strategic this ministry was indeed. In Germany former students of Luther like Andreas Althamer, Anton Corvinus, and Martin Chemnitz, to name just a few, became catalysts of the Reformation.⁷⁹ In the Scandinavian kingdoms most of the leading Reformers had also studied under Luther⁸⁰ – among them were men like Olaus Petri, Hans Tausen, and Mikael Agricola. Luther took a great interest in his students from northern Europe. When one of them struggled financially, it was Luther himself who appealed on the student’s behalf via a letter calling on the Danish king to fund his studies in Wittenberg. Luther wrote:

Magister George Stur, a native of the principality of Schleswig, begged me to write you after receiving your Majesty’s promise of a stipendium, part of which money he has received, and pleads that your Majesty would graciously remember him and complete the matter.⁸¹

Similarly, after Mikael Agricola had finished his studies, Luther sent a letter of recommendation to King Gustav of Sweden asking the king for his support. This is what Luther wrote about the promising young theologian:

⁷⁵ E. Cameron, *The European Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 232.

⁷⁶ Öberg, *Luther and World Mission*, 12.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁷⁸ See P.J. Buys, “The Relevance of the Mission Strategy and Theology of John Calvin for Africa”, *Tydskrif vir Christelike Wetenskap* 4 (2013), 167; W. Walker, *John Calvin: The Organizer of Reformed Protestantism* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 380; A.C. Mauldin, *Fullerism as Opposed to Calvinism: A Historical and Theological Comparison of the Missiology of Andrew Fuller and John Calvin* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 39.

⁷⁹ See R.K. Rittgers, *The Reformation of Suffering: Pastoral Theology and Lay Piety in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 180; C.S. Dixon, *The Reformation and Rural Societies: The Parishes of Brandenburg-Ansbach-Kulmbach 1528-1603* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), 145; D.M. Whitford, *T&T Clark Companion to Reformation Theology* (London: T&T Clark International, 2012), 386.

⁸⁰ Cf. O. Czaika, “Luther, Melancthon und Chytraeus und ihre Bedeutung für die Theologenausbildung im Schwedischen Reich”, in Selderhuis, H.J. & Wriedt, M. (eds), *Konfession, Migration und Elitenbildung: Studien zur Theologenausbildung des 16. Jahrhunderts* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); R. Sorensen, *Martin Luther and the German Reformation* (London: Anthem Press, 2016), 92.

⁸¹ M. Luther, “To King Christian of Denmark”, *Martin Luther’s Letters*, <http://www.godrules.net/library/luther/208luther2.htm> (Date of Access: 04.03.2017).

He was born in your Majesty's dominions, and although young in years is very learned and sensible and of pleasing manners, and may achieve much good in your Majesty's lands. I pray that Christ may have much fruit through this man, whom I hope your Majesty will appoint to an office.⁸²

1. Luther and the reformation in Sweden

The history of Swedish Lutheranism began when Olaus Petri,⁸³ who had been born as the son of a blacksmith in the city of Örebro on 6 January 1493,⁸⁴ came to Germany in 1516.⁸⁵ From 1516 to 1518 he studied together with his brother Laurentius under Martin Luther and Philipp Melanchthon in Wittenberg. The two Swedish brothers were, as Heininen and Czaika write, strongly influenced by the teachings of the two German Reformers.⁸⁶ While in Wittenberg Olaus Petri heard Martin Luther lecture on Hebrews and Galatians and became a firsthand witness of the controversy over the sale of indulgences by the Catholic Church through Johann Tetzel.⁸⁷ Kraal points out that during Olaus' studies Luther completed three major works against the theology and practice of the Catholic Church: *The Disputation against Scholastic Theology* (1517), *The Ninety-five Theses* (1517), and the *Heidelberg Disputation* (1518).⁸⁸ When the Petri brothers returned to Sweden from Wittenberg in 1518, they were won for Luther's ideas.⁸⁹ Back in their home country they preached against someone selling indulgences who had come into that country.⁹⁰

Under the protection of the new Swedish king Gustav Vasa, Olaus Petri and his brother began preaching against other Roman Catholic practices such as veneration of the saints and pilgrimages to healing shrines.⁹¹ In 1524 Olaus Petri was appointed secretary of the Stockholm city council,⁹² before

⁸² M. Luther, "To King Gustavus I. of Sweden", Martin Luther's Letters, <http://www.godrules.net/library/luther/208luther2.htm> (Date of Access: 04.03.2017).

⁸³ Also known as Olavus Petri or Olof Pettersson.

⁸⁴ A. Kraal, "The Swedish Reformation Debates of 1527-28", *Lutheran Quarterly* 24 (2010), 374.

⁸⁵ N. Blåder, *Lutheran Tradition as Heritage and Tool: An Empirical Study of Reflections on Confessional Identity in Five Lutheran Churches in Different Contexts* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 8.

⁸⁶ S. Heininen & O. Czaika, "Wittenberg Influences on the Reformation in Scandinavia", *European History Online* (2012). <http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/crossroads/religious-and-confessional-spaces/simo-heininen-otfried-czaika-wittenberg-influences-on-the-reformation-in-scandinavia> (Date of Access: 20.08.2016).

⁸⁷ T.R. Skarsten, "Olaus, Petri (1493-1552)", in H.J. Hillerbrand (ed), *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism, Vol. 1-4* (London: Routledge, 2004), 1746.

⁸⁸ Kraal, "The Swedish Reformation Debates of 1527-28", 375.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 376.

⁹⁰ T. Lindsay, *The Reformation* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 2006), 55.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁹² F.D. Scott, *Sweden: The Nation's History* (Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), 128.

publishing his book *Useful Instruction* two years later.⁹³ In the following year he published *Answers to Twelve Questions*, in which he insisted that it was the church's primary task to preach the pure gospel.⁹⁴ With the permission of the Swedish king, Olaus Petri's treatises and books were distributed throughout the kingdom.⁹⁵ Petri also contributed to the translation of the New Testament into Swedish.⁹⁶ Scott comments on Petri's writing ministry and its influence:

He wrote profusely and with a remarkable persuasiveness; he had a knack for establishing intimate contact with his reader. For ten years he almost enjoyed a monopoly of the printing press that had been introduced in Stockholm in 1526, and he produced a flood of translations and pamphlets (:128). In his reforming zeal Master Olof wanted to arouse debate on the whole question of church reform, but the powerful Bishop Brask refused. Nevertheless the eager young man found occasion to answer in print various objections of those who clung to Roman doctrines and practices.⁹⁷

2. Luther and reformation in Denmark

In 1523, five years after Petri had graduated, the Danish monk Hans Tausen came to Wittenberg to study under Luther. Tausen, who later became the father of the Danish Reformation, belonged to the order of Knights Hospitallers at Antvorskov.⁹⁸ He had been trained at the three universities of Rostock, Copenhagen and Leuven. While in Wittenberg he was influenced by the ideas of the Protestant Reformation, causing concern to his superiors who subsequently called him back to Denmark in 1524. They feared that Tausen was aligning himself too closely to Luther. This fear was not unwarranted. Vind writes that "Tausen must have been immensely impressed by the proximity to Luther and his fellow theologians, since shortly after his return home, he began his evangelical preaching."⁹⁹ Back in Antvorskov Tausen taught in a sermon on Maundy Thursday that people are saved through Christ alone.¹⁰⁰ This kind of preaching was not without consequence. On the one hand, it triggered persecution from the Catholic Church, but on the other hand, he gained the support of the people. Inspired by Tausen's preaching

⁹³ R.T. Jones, *The Great Reformation*, (Downers Grove: IVP, 1997), 106.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁹⁵ Kraal, "The Swedish Reformation Debates of 1527-28", 376-377.

⁹⁶ Scott, *Sweden*, 128.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 128.

⁹⁸ R.H.C. Dreyer, "An Apologia for Luther: The Myth of the Danish Luther: Danish Reformer Hans Tausen and 'A Short Answer' (1528/29)", in P. Opitz (ed), *The Myth of the Reformation* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 213.

⁹⁹ A. Vind, "Approaching 2017: The Influence of Luther in Denmark", *Studia Theologica* 65 (2011), 123.

¹⁰⁰ J.L. Larson, *Reforming the North: The Kingdom and Churches of Scandinavia, 1520-1545* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 202.

there was a growing enthusiasm for the teachings of Luther in Denmark.¹⁰¹ Vind writes:

In 1525 he was sent away from the monastery in Antvorskov to the monastery of the Order of St John in Viborg, probably on account of irregular preaching. In Viborg he continued to preach, and presumably he became more and more critical of the existing church. We know that around 1526 he was expelled from his order. When the bishop sought to arrest him for heresy, he was defended by the citizens of Viborg, and they managed to get a letter of protection for him from King Frederik I.¹⁰²

Within a short period Tausen managed to establish the Reformation in Viborg.¹⁰³ In 1527 he had so many supporters in the city that the church, where he usually preached, could not hold all of them.

In the years following Tausen translated the works of Luther from German into Danish and repeatedly called upon King Frederik I to introduce the Reformation in Denmark, appealing to his sense of duty as king.¹⁰⁴ This did not happen until 1537 under the rule of King Christian III.¹⁰⁵ There is no doubt however that Tausen played a crucial role in the Danish evangelical movement and its post-Reformation Lutheran Church.¹⁰⁶ Gideon and Hilda Hagstotz summarise Tausen's role well when they write:

As a royal chaplain he drew immense crowds in Copenhagen. In 1530 he presented an independent confession of faith of forty-three articles, a counterpart of the Augsburg Confession. He stipulated the Bible alone as sufficient for salvation, the eucharist a commemoration of Christ's death, the Holy Spirit the third person of the Godhead; and purgatory, monastic life, indulgences, mass, and celibacy of priests he declared contrary to Scripture. He was named one of the seven superintendents of the realm; he shared in the construction of the ecclesiastical constitution; and he served for nearly twenty years as bishop of Ribe, until he died.¹⁰⁷

V. Luther and his missional theology

Some scholars, such as Scherer and Pitt, have conferred the title of "Father of Evangelical Missions" on Martin Luther,¹⁰⁸ thus directly contradicting the

¹⁰¹ Jones, *The Great Reformation*, 100.

¹⁰² Vind, "Approaching 2017", 123.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 125.

¹⁰⁴ M. Schwarz Lausten, "Luther nach 1530: Theologie, Kirche und Politik", in H. Junghans (ed), *Lutherjahrbuch: Luther nach 1530: Theologie, Kirche und Politik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 18.

¹⁰⁵ M. Schwarz Lausten, *Die heilige Stadt Wittenberg: Die Beziehung des dänischen Königshauses zu Wittenberg in der Reformationszeit* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2010), 92.

¹⁰⁶ M. Schwarz Lausten, "The Early Reformation in Denmark and Norway, 1520-1559", in O.P. Grell (ed), *The Scandinavian Reformation: From Evangelical Movement to Institutionalisation of Reform* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 20.

¹⁰⁷ G.D. Hagstotz & H. Hagstotz, *Heroes of the Reformation* (Rapidan: Hartland, 1996), 300.

¹⁰⁸ D.J. Hesselgrave, *Paradigms in Conflict: 10 Key Questions in Christian Missions Today* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 348.

claims of the critics. While this title is probably too strong a term, it is true that Luther's theology with its focus on the Word of God, the church, faith, and salvation contain important principles for mission.

1. Luther and the gospel of justification

Luther lived in a time when the message of the cross was no longer at the centre of the life of the church.¹⁰⁹ He lived in an age when people were told that they could obtain spiritual blessings, including the forgiveness of sins, by paying certain sums of money to the church.¹¹⁰ However, through the study of the Scriptures the German Reformer came to realise that the true gospel was very different from that taught by the church. He realised that while the Bible teaches the condemnation of sinful people, it also teaches that sinners are offered free forgiveness through Christ.¹¹¹ Together with his fellow Reformers he rediscovered the biblical gospel of justification.¹¹² Luther describes the moment he made that discovery as follows:

At last, God being merciful, as I meditated day and night on the connection of the words "the righteousness of God is revealed in it, as it is written: the righteous shall live by faith," I began to understand that "righteousness of God" as that by which the righteous lives by the gift of God, namely by faith, and this sentence, "the righteousness of God is revealed," to refer to a passive righteousness, by which the merciful God justifies us, as it is written, "The righteous lives by faith." This immediately made me feel as though I had been born again, and as though I had entered through open gates into paradise itself. From that moment, the whole face of Scripture appeared to me in a different light... And now, where I had once hated the phrase "the righteousness of God," so much I began to love and extoll it as the sweetest of words, so that this passage in Paul became the very gate of paradise for me.¹¹³

Luther came to realise that people are justified by faith alone; that they cannot contribute anything to their salvation because on the cross Christ has already achieved everything for them.¹¹⁴ Luther understood that justification is a gracious act of God by which a believer is declared righteous.

Luther not only came to embrace the biblical gospel; he also emphasised the necessity to proclaim it. In his *Large Catechism*, Luther writes the following about the second petition in the Lord's Prayer:

For the coming of God's kingdom to us occurs in two ways; first, here in time through the Word and faith; and secondly, in eternity forever through revelation. Now we pray for both these things, that it may come to those who are not yet in it, and, by daily increase, to us who have received the same, and hereafter in eternal life. All this is nothing else than saying: Dear Father,

¹⁰⁹ L.W. Spitz, *The Protestant Reformation, 1517-1559* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), 51-52.

¹¹⁰ Lindsay, *The Reformation*, 47.

¹¹¹ K. Birkett, *The Essence of the Reformation* (Kingsford: Matthias Media, 2009), 38.

¹¹² J. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Leicester: IVP, 1991), 182.

¹¹³ Cited in A.E. McGrath, *The Christian Theology Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 228-229.

¹¹⁴ M. Reeves & T. Chester, *Why the Reformation Still Matters* (London: IVP, 2016), 26.

we pray, give us first Thy Word, that the Gospel be preached properly throughout the world; and secondly, that it be received in faith, and work and live in us...¹¹⁵

Luther recognises that the gospel needs to be preached both to those who already belong to Christ through faith and to those who are not yet part of the kingdom.¹¹⁶ We can see here as Schulz writes, “the missionary dimension to Luther’s theology: God’s mission takes place within the Church, and yet it also extends beyond the Church to those still held in unbelief.”¹¹⁷ Interestingly, Luther stresses that the gospel has to be proclaimed “throughout the world”. By using this phrase, he acknowledges the global aspect of evangelism. The gospel has to be proclaimed to all unbelievers whether they live close by or far away so that they can come to a personal faith in Christ.

For Luther, preaching certainly formed the heart of mission. The preaching of the gospel had, as Zorn notes, priority over other activities, such as church planting and diaconal work.¹¹⁸ The reason for this was that “preaching the word built up the church, the latter being the consequence of the former and not the reverse.”¹¹⁹ Consequently, one can only agree with Chung when he writes “that the Reformation teaching of justification has an urgent motive for mission.”¹²⁰

2. Luther and God’s mission

It is striking that Luther stresses the role that God plays in the missionary proclamation of the gospel. God himself is ultimately responsible for the preaching of the gospel. It is his will that all nations hear the gospel and it is God who invites people to receive salvation. Put differently, mission is first and foremost God’s mission or to use the common technical term, *missio Dei*. Schulz notes: “God is the subject. Our activity must subordinate itself to God’s doing, and any success is due to Him.”¹²¹ Luther believed that whenever the Word of God is proclaimed properly God’s voice can be heard.¹²² The voice and the words of the preacher, writes Luther, “are not his own words and doctrine but those of our Lord and God”.¹²³ This notion is

¹¹⁵ M. Luther, *Large Catechism*, in *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Lutheran Church*, <http://bookofconcord.org/lc-5-ourfather.php> (Date of Access: 27.09.2016).

¹¹⁶ H.W. Gensichen, *Missionsgeschichte der neueren Zeit* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1976), 6.

¹¹⁷ Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 50.

¹¹⁸ Zorn, “Did Calvin Foster or Hinder Missions?”, 188.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 188.

¹²⁰ P.S. Chung, *Reclaiming Mission as Constructive Theology: Missional Church and World Christianity* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 101.

¹²¹ Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 50.

¹²² Reeves & Chester. *Why the Reformation Still Matters*, 46.

¹²³ M. Luther, “Sermons on the Gospel of St John”, in J.J. Pelikan (ed), *Luther’s Works, Vol. 22*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), 526.

based on his view of mission.¹²⁴ To him the missionary proclamation of the gospel is an essential part of God's salvation plan. While salvation is achieved through Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection, it is distributed through the Word of God by the Holy Spirit.¹²⁵ Without this distribution through the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit who applies the gospel to sinners no one would be saved. In his work *Against the Heavenly Prophets in the Manner of Images and Sacraments* Luther underlines the central role which the Word of God plays in the life of Christians:

Christ on the cross and all His suffering and His death do not avail, even if, as you teach, they are "acknowledged and meditated upon" with the utmost "passion, ardor, heartfeltness". Something else must always be there. What is it? The Word, the Word. Listen, lying spirit, the Word avails. Even if Christ were given for us and crucified a thousand times, it would all be in vain if the Word of God were absent and were not distributed and given to me with the bidding, this is for you, take it, take what is yours. If I now seek the forgiveness of sins, I do not run to the cross, for I will not find it there. Nor must I hold to the suffering of Christ, as Carlstadt trifles, in knowledge or remembrance, for I will not find it there either. But I will find in the sacraments or gospel, the Word which distributes, presents, offers, and gives me that forgiveness which was won on the cross.¹²⁶

Luther also recognises the central role the Holy Spirit plays in God's mission. Commenting on the third article of the Apostle's Creed Luther writes the following in his *Large Catechism*:

I believe that there is upon earth a little holy group and congregation of pure saints, under one head, even Christ, called together by the Holy Ghost in one faith, one mind, and understanding, with manifold gifts, yet agreeing in love, without sects or schisms. I am also a part and member of the same, a sharer and joint owner of all the goods it possesses, brought to it and incorporated into it by the Holy Ghost by having heard and continuing to hear the Word of God, which is the beginning of entering it. For formerly, before we attained to this, we were altogether of the devil, knowing nothing of God and of Christ. Thus, until the last day, the Holy Ghost abides with the holy congregation or Christendom, by means of which He fetches us to Christ and which he employs to teach and preach to us the Word, causing it [this community] daily to grow and become strong in the faith.¹²⁷

According to Luther, it is the Holy Spirit who works in and through the church. It is the Spirit of God who, through the church's preaching, brings individuals to faith in Christ and into the church and thus sets them free from the influence of the devil. It is also God's Spirit who, through the church's preaching, strengthens the faith of believers and equips them to bear fruit.

3. *The lost nature of humankind*

Like his fellow Reformers Luther saw human beings first and foremost from the perspective of their essential sinfulness and their inability to save them-

¹²⁴ Reeves & Chester. *Why the Reformation Still Matters*, 46.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹²⁶ Cited in R.D. Preus, "The Theology of the Cross", *Reformation and Revival* 8, 1 (1999), 49.

¹²⁷ Luther, *Large Catechism*.

selves.¹²⁸ He did not share Thomas Aquinas' optimistic view regarding the ability of human reason. Instead, they emphasised the depravity and lost nature of humanity and their need of a saviour. "Luther's starting point", as Spencer notes "was the hopelessness and futility of the human situation: he accepted fundamentally Augustine's doctrine of original sin and the dependence of humanity on God."¹²⁹ Commenting on the Apostle's Creed Luther deals with the fall and its consequences when he says:

For when we had been created by God the Father, and received from Him all manner of good, the devil came and led us into disobedience, sin, death, and all evil, so that we fell under his wrath and displeasure and were doomed to eternal damnation, as we had merited and deserved.¹³⁰

Luther goes on to explain that only a compassionate and gracious God could save human beings from that fate. It is only through the work of Christ that they can enjoy the benefits of being reconciled to their creator:

There was no counsel, help, or comfort until this only and eternal Son of God in His unfathomable goodness had compassion upon our misery and wretchedness, and came from heaven to help us. Those tyrants and jailers, then, are expelled now, and in their place has come Jesus Christ, Lord of life, righteousness, very blessing, and salvation, and has delivered us poor lost men from the jaws of hell, has won us, made us free, and brought us again into the favour and grace of the Father, and has taken us as His own property under his shelter and protection, that He may govern us by His righteousness, wisdom, power, life and blessedness.¹³¹

4. *Luther and the church in mission*

Luther clearly had a church-centred approach to mission. Luther emphasised "the overall mission (or gospel) orientation of the invisible Church – and of the individual, visible congregation – as being an integral part of their nature and purpose."¹³² Consequently, there was no need for him to even think about any separate mission organisation that would work alongside the church.¹³³ For Luther it is the church which "serves as the catalyst and base for missionary outreach."¹³⁴ It is the task of the church to preach the Word of God to both believers and unbelievers, to incorporate new believers through baptism into the church and to strengthen them through teaching and the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the faith.¹³⁵ All this happens on the local,

¹²⁸ J.P. Labuschagne, "Calvin and Mission", *HTS Theological Studies* 65, 1 (2009), 478.

¹²⁹ S. Spencer, *SCM Study Guide to Christian Mission: Historic Types and Contemporary Expressions* (London: SCM Press, 2007), 116.

¹³⁰ Luther, *Large Catechism*.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² E.R. Wendland, "Cultural and Theological Specificity in Lutheran Missiology", *Missio Apostolica* 3, 1 (1995), 25.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹³⁴ Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 53.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 52.

congregational level.¹³⁶ Luther believed, as Kolb and Arand note “that God gathered his people into communities, into congregations gathered by and around his Word as it was proclaimed, read, and shared in its sacramental form.”¹³⁷ This conviction stems from the Reformers’ understanding of the church. According to Luther, the marks of the church are twofold: the Church of God is present wherever the gospel is faithfully preached and the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper are properly administered. Luther writes that, “anywhere you hear or see such a word preached, believed, confessed and acted upon, do not doubt that the true *ecclesia sancta catholica*, a ‘holy Christian people’ must be there, even though there are very few of them.”¹³⁸ Luther did not like the idea of the church as an institution.¹³⁹ He rather saw it as the community or assembly of believers.¹⁴⁰

While Luther has a high view of the ordained ministry,¹⁴¹ he also insists that the whole people of God are called to be witnesses to God’s grace and salvation through Christ.¹⁴² In several of his works Luther reaffirms the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. For Luther the priesthood of all believers means that through Christ every Christian has direct access to God and does not need any human mediator between God and himself.¹⁴³ Luther strongly rejects the Roman Catholic doctrine and practice which gives both members of the clergy and the saints a mediating role. For Luther, to invoke the saints as mediators “is substituting dumb idols for Christ”.¹⁴⁴ The only mediator Christians as members of the spiritual priesthood need is the Son of God. Through him they can directly come before God the Father in prayer:

For Christ is our sole Mediator, and no one need expect to be heard unless he approach the Father in the name of that Mediator and confess him Lord given of God as intercessor for us and ruler of our bodies and souls. Prayer according to these conditions is approved. Strong faith, however, is necessary to lay hold of the comforting Word, picturing in our hearts as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹³⁷ R. Kolb & C.P. Arand. *The Genius of Luther’s Theology: A Wittenberg Way of Thinking for the Contemporary Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 180.

¹³⁸ Cited in McGrath, *The Christian Theology Reader*, 266.

¹³⁹ Reeves & Chester, *Why the Reformation Still Matters*, 135.

¹⁴⁰ D.P. Daniel, “Luther on the Church”, in R. Kolb, I. Dingel & L. Batka (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 344.

¹⁴¹ See G.R. Evans, *Problems of Authority in the Reformation Debates* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 220.

¹⁴² Zorn, “Did Calvin Foster or Hinder Missions?”, 187.

¹⁴³ M.B. Yarnell III, *Royal Priesthood in the English Reformation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.

¹⁴⁴ M. Luther, *Sermons by Martin Luther, Vol. 8, Sermons on Epistle Texts for Trinity Sunday to Advent*. Translated by J.N. Lenker and others, J.N. Lenker (ed) Minneapolis: 1909), 75. http://www.martinluthersermons.com/Luther_Lenker_Vol_8.pdf (Date of Access: 23.10.2016).

¹⁴⁵ Luther, *Sermons by Martin Luther, Vol. 8, Sermons on Epistle Texts for Trinity Sunday to Advent*, 226-227.

However, there is more to Luther's view on the doctrine of the universal priesthood. As Alston points out, Luther did not understand the doctrine merely in individualistic terms:

Luther was no rugged individualist; he was an ardent advocate of Christian community. The truth of the matter is that even when Luther spoke of the priesthood of all believers, he was speaking of the one essential ministry of the whole church.¹⁴⁶

Luther had no intention to abolish the priesthood, but to expand it.¹⁴⁷ In his treatise *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* Luther states that all Christians are consecrated priests through their baptism.¹⁴⁸ Consequently,

there is no true, basic difference between laymen and priests, princes and bishops, between religious and secular, except for the sake of office and work, but not for the sake of status. They are all of the spiritual estate, all are truly priests, bishops, and popes. But they do not all have the same work to do.¹⁴⁹

Though their individual work might differ, as members of God's royal priesthood they all have the mandate to witness to Christ. In a sermon on John 21:19-24 Luther says that as priests all Christians can "teach all the world" about the faith.¹⁵⁰ The difference, however, between those Christians who hold a ministerial office and those who do not is that the former proclaim the word on behalf of the entire Christian community while the latter do it in a private capacity.¹⁵¹ "Parents evangelize their children. At work, relationships are formed with colleagues, who, in the course of friendship and common work, can be introduced to the Gospel of grace."¹⁵² In a sermon he preached on 1 Peter 2:9 in his Wittenberg church Luther reminds his congregants that they are all called to proclaim the blessings of God's love in Christ.¹⁵³ Luther says:

Everything then should be directed in such a way that you recognize what God has done for you and you, thereafter, make it your highest priority to proclaim this publicly and call everyone to

¹⁴⁶ W.M. Alston, *The Church of the Living God: A Reformed Perspective* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 46.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

¹⁴⁸ M. Luther, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 12.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁵⁰ Luther, *Sermons by Martin Luther, Vol. 1, Sermons on Gospel Texts for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany*, 241.

¹⁵¹ R.A. Muthiah, *The Priesthood of All Believers in the Twenty-first Century: Living Faithfully as the Whole People of God in a Postmodern Context* (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2009), 19.

¹⁵² Veith, *The Spirituality of the Cross*, 85-86.

¹⁵³ R. Kolb, "Jeder Christ ist in die Pflicht genommen, Zeugnis vom Glauben abzulegen: Die Verkündigung der Lutheraner in der Spätreformation zu Mission und Bekenntnis", in C. Barnbrock & W. Klän (eds), *Gottes Wort in der Zeit: verstehen – verkündigen – verbreiten: Festschrift für Volker Stolle* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005), 132.

the light to which you are called. Where you see people that do not know this, you should instruct them and also teach them how you learned, that is, how a person through the good work and might of God is saved and comes from darkness into light.¹⁵⁴

In another sermon preached in 1522 Luther goes a step further. He stresses that it is Christ himself who gives believers the assurance that the gospel is indeed true. Christians who have been assured in such a way, Luther argues, cannot but witness to the world that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the world's only Saviour. He states:

That is, if he is in the heart he speaks through you, and assures and confirms you in the belief that the Gospel is true. Then, as a result, the confession of the Gospel springs forth. What then is the Gospel? It is a witness concerning Christ, that he is God's Son, the Savior, and beside him there is no other. This is what Peter means when he says: "Ye are a royal priesthood, that we are elected thereto, that we preach and show forth the excellencies of Christ." 1 Peter 2:9. Hence, there must always be witnessing.¹⁵⁵

5. Luther and faith in Christ

In an age when people's spiritual life was dominated by the observance of rituals, and the veneration of saints, as well as trust in the supernatural powers of the priests, Luther emphasised the personal character of faith in Christ. As a matter of fact, it is a central aspect of his theology. Luther, as Shepherd puts it, insists "that faith – as contrasted with mere 'belief' – is the engagement of the Christian's total person with the Person of Jesus Christ."¹⁵⁶ For Luther faith consists of three components: The first two are knowledge of Christ and assent to who he is and what he has done.¹⁵⁷ However, for the German Reformer the third component is crucial: trust in Christ as one's personal Lord and Saviour.¹⁵⁸ Such faith is established through the peaching of God's word. In *On Christian Liberty* first published in 1520 Luther writes:

Rather ought Christ to be preached to the end that faith in him may be established that he may not only be Christ, but be Christ for you and me, and that what his name denotes may be effectual in us. Such faith is produced and preserved in us by preaching why Christ came, what he brought and bestowed, and what benefit it is to us to accept him.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Cited in Stolle, *Church Comes from All Nations*, 20.

¹⁵⁵ Luther, *Sermons by Martin Luther, Vol. 1, Sermons on Gospel Texts for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany*, 222.

¹⁵⁶ V.A. Shepherd, *Interpreting Martin Luther: An Introduction to His Life and Thought* (Toronto: BPS Books, 2008), 159.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 160.

¹⁵⁹ M. Luther, "On Christian Liberty", in *Three Treatises* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 292-293.

In *A Sermon on Three Kinds of Good Life* Luther explains what the benefits of such saving faith in Christ are:

He who calls on Christ in faith, however, possesses his name, and the Holy Spirit most certainly comes to him. When the Spirit comes, however, look, he makes a pure, free, cheerful, glad, and loving heart... This is the last thing on earth that any man can do... This is the road to heaven... Christ referred to this when he said in Mark, "He that believes shall be saved." Faith alone saves...¹⁶⁰

Payton points out that for the Protestant Reformers faith in Christ which alone justifies is never alone: "[T]he faith that justifies cannot be solitary. It cannot exist by itself, in supposedly blissful isolation".¹⁶¹ For the Protestant Reformers genuine faith in Christ always leads to good works. Luther strongly holds that no one can earn his or her salvation by being a good person, but that does not mean that good works are not important. In *A Treatise on Good Works* Luther argues that good works are the litmus test of true faith,¹⁶² and in *The Freedom of a Christian* he writes:

Nevertheless the works themselves do not justify him before God, but he does the works out of spontaneous love in obedience to God and considers nothing except the approval of God, whom he would most scrupulously obey in all things.¹⁶³

For Luther good works are not a condition but a consequence or expression of salvation.¹⁶⁴ Forell notes: "Faith is never unethical faith. He who has faith will be sanctified and do good works. Justification and sanctification are for Luther two aspects of the same process and therefore mutually interdependent."¹⁶⁵ For the German Reformer, good works and service in society are an integral part of the Christian life, even if they are risky. In *Whether One May Flee from a Deadly Plague* Luther says the following about the civic duties towards one's neighbour:

If his house is on fire, love compels me to run to help him to extinguish the flames. If there are enough other people around to put the fire out, I may either go home or remain to help. If he falls into the water or into a pit I dare not turn away but must hurry to help him as best I can. If there are others to do it, I am released. If I see that he is hungry or thirsty, I cannot ignore him

¹⁶⁰ M. Luther, *Luther's Works: The Christians in Society I, Vol.44*, H.T. Lehmann (ed), (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 241.

¹⁶¹ J.R. Payton, *Getting the Reformation Wrong: Correcting Some Misunderstandings* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010), 123.

¹⁶² M. Luther, *A Treatise on Good Works Together with the Letter of Dedication* (Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 73. http://www.ccel.org/l/luther/good_works/cache/good_works.pdf (Date of Access: 25.11.2016).

¹⁶³ M. Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, in H.J. Grimm & H.T. Lehmann (eds), *Luther's Works: Career of the Reformer I, Vol. 31* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1957), 359.

¹⁶⁴ See J. Schofield, *Philip Melancthon and the English Reformation* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2006), 63.

¹⁶⁵ G.W. Forell, *Faith Active in Love* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1959), 85-86.

but must offer food and drink, not considering whether I would risk impoverishing myself by doing so.¹⁶⁶

Steinmetz summarises the heart of Luther's ethics well when he says: "For Luther, the vertical relationship to God and the horizontal relationship to the neighbour are so inseparably joined in the act of faith that one is unthinkable without the other."¹⁶⁷

6. Luther and the spiritual battle in mission

Luther recognises that the evangelising church is involved in a spiritual battle, i.e. in a clash between God's truths and God's Church on the one side and the devil's lies and his false church on the other side.¹⁶⁸ In his *Large Catechism* Luther prays "that through the Word and the power of the Holy Ghost Thy kingdom may prevail among us, and the kingdom of the devil be put down."¹⁶⁹ The church in mission is always confronted with the devil and its powers. Mission is never "done in a neutral zone".¹⁷⁰ Luther argues that Christians must expect the devil to become active wherever God's Word is proclaimed and believed.¹⁷¹ Commenting on the Lord's Prayer in his *Large Catechism* Luther notes: "If we would be Christians, therefore, we must surely expect and reckon upon having the devil with all his angels and the world as our enemies who will bring every possible misfortune and grief upon us."¹⁷² Luther continues to give the reason for the battle which the devil wages on Christian believers: "For where the Word of God is preached, accepted, or believed, and produces fruit, there the holy cross cannot be wanting."¹⁷³ To this explanation Luther adds a strong warning: "And let no one think that he shall have peace."¹⁷⁴

While Luther recognises the power of the devil, he also stresses that the weapons Christians in general, and Christian ministers in particular, have been given are stronger than all the weapons of the enemy. In the introduction to his *Large Catechism* Luther notes:

¹⁶⁶ M. Luther, "Whether One May Flee from a Deadly Plague", in G.K. Wiencke & H.T. Lehmann (eds), *Luther's Works: Devotional Writings II, Vol. 43* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 125-126.

¹⁶⁷ D.C. Steinmetz, *Luther in Context* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 124.

¹⁶⁸ R. Kolb, "Late Reformation Lutherans on Missions and Confession", *Lutheran Quarterly* 20 (2006), 26.

¹⁶⁹ Luther, *Large Catechism*.

¹⁷⁰ Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 50.

¹⁷¹ H.A. Oberman, "Luther Against the Devil", *The Christian Century* 107, 3 (1990), 75-79.

¹⁷² Luther, *Large Catechism*.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

The devil is called the master of a thousand arts. But what shall we call God's Word, which drives away and brings to naught this master of a thousand arts with all his arts and power? It must indeed be the master of more than a thousand arts. And shall we frivolously despise such power, profit, strength, and fruit – we, especially, who claim to be pastors and preachers?¹⁷⁵

Besides God's Word, Luther saw prayer as a powerful weapon against the devil and his schemes. Again in his *Large Catechism* Luther urges his readers to pray without ceasing:

[S]ince the devil with all his power, together with the world and our own flesh, resists our endeavors, nothing is so necessary as that we should continually resort the ear of God, call upon Him, and pray to Him, that He would give, preserve, and increase in us faith... and that He would remove everything that is in our way and opposes us therein.¹⁷⁶

Christians, Luther believes, cannot win the spiritual battle by their own strength.¹⁷⁷ They have to fight with the "Word of God and the prayer of faith".¹⁷⁸ One can only agree with Rogers who argues that Luther's "most significant contribution to contemporary understandings of prayer is his treatment of the devil and spiritual warfare."¹⁷⁹

7. Luther and the book of mission

"Throughout the history of the church", Franklin and Niemandt note "Christians have viewed the translation of the Bible into the languages of the world as an indispensable foundation for the sustainable mission of God."¹⁸⁰ The translation of the Bible from the original languages into common European languages was also high on the Reformers' agenda. They wanted God's Word to be read and understood not only by priests and monks but by all people.¹⁸¹ Thus, in 1521, while hiding in Wartburg Castle, Luther began to translate the New Testament from Greek into German.¹⁸² A year later, in September 1522, the first edition with a total circulation of 3,000 copies was

¹⁷⁵ Luther, *Large Catechism*.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁷ M. Rogers, "'Deliver us from the Evil One': Martin Luther on Prayer", *Themelios* 34, 3 (2009), 342.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 341.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 346.

¹⁸⁰ K.J. Franklin & C.J.P. Niemandt, "Vision 2025 and the Bible Translation Movement", *HTS Theological Studies* 69, 1 (2013), 3.

¹⁸¹ J.A.B. Jongeneel, "The Protestant Missionary Movement up to 1789", in F.J. Verstraelen (gen.ed.), *Missiology: An Ecumenical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 222-223.

¹⁸² A. Beutel, "Luther's Life", in D.K. McKim (ed), *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.

printed and distributed.¹⁸³ The entire German Bible, which was a “Wittenberg group endeavour”, was published in 1534.¹⁸⁴ McGoldrick notes:

During his stay at Wartburg, Luther translated the New Testament from Greek into German in eleven weeks! There had been earlier German versions, but they were dialectical renderings of only local usefulness. Luther’s mastery of language enabled him to produce a Bible for all Germans, and in the process he became the father of *Hochdeutsch* – High German – the national language.¹⁸⁵

Luther continued to refine this Bible translation up to his death in 1546. He developed what Wills calls “a target-orientated conception of Bible translation.”¹⁸⁶ Thus, one of the main principles he applied in his translation work was to watch the mouths of the people (or in German “dem Volk auf’s Maul schauen”).¹⁸⁷ Schulz explains: “Luther noted carefully people’s ways of expressing themselves as they pursued their daily chores and duties. This principle laid down by the Reformer has become an inspiration for all Protestant missionaries.”¹⁸⁸ Two years after Luther’s death his former student Mikael Agricola published his translation of the New Testament in Finnish, followed by parts of the Old Testament in 1551 and 1552.¹⁸⁹ Luther’s influence also shaped the Bible translations into the Danish language.¹⁹⁰ The first version of the Danish New Testament was “awkwardly translated by Malmö’s former Mayor Hans Mikkelsen” in 1524.¹⁹¹ A better translation by Christien Pedersen followed in 1529.¹⁹² It is certainly not an exaggeration to say that the translation work of Luther and the other Reformers and their view of Scripture have had a strong influence on the Protestant mission endeavour in general and the Protestant Bible translation movement in particular.¹⁹³ Jongeneel notes:

Since then translation of Scripture from the original languages into vernacular languages and distribution of these translations among believers have been essential characteristics of all Protestant mission work. The nineteenth-century creation of Bible societies to translate and distribute the Bible was a logical consequence of the Reformation’s doctrine of *sola scriptura*.¹⁹⁴

¹⁸³ Beutel, “Luther’s Life”, 12.

¹⁸⁴ R. Kolb, “Bible in the Reformation”, in R. Benedetto (ed), *The New Westminster Dictionary of Church History, Vol. 1*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 87.

¹⁸⁵ J.E. McGoldrick, “Introducing Martin Luther”, *Reformation & Revival: A Quarterly Journal for Church Leadership* 7, 4 (1998), 30-31.

¹⁸⁶ W. Wills, *Translation and Interpreting in the 20th Century: Focus on German* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 1999), 7.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁸⁸ Schulz, *Mission from the Cross*, 175.

¹⁸⁹ Kolb, “Bible in the Reformation”, 89.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁹¹ J.D. Fudge, *Commerce and Print in the Early Reformation* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 47.

¹⁹² Kolb, “Bible in the Reformation”, 89.

¹⁹³ Zorn, “Did Calvin Foster or Hinder Missions?”, 189.

¹⁹⁴ Jongeneel, “The Protestant Missionary Movement up to 1789”, 223.

The reason why Luther desired the Bible to be accessible to all Christians is founded upon his belief about the Bible's authority. The medieval church held that there was more than one authoritative source of Christian theology.¹⁹⁵ In addition to Scripture, tradition and reason were considered to be important sources. Tradition has to be understood as "an active process of reflection by which theological and spiritual insights are valued, assessed, and transmitted from one generation to another."¹⁹⁶ The Reformers were not opposed to tradition and reason as sources of theology.¹⁹⁷ They used their reason, accepted the early creeds of the church and valued the history of biblical interpretation.¹⁹⁸ However, they insisted that "the authority of the church, its leaders and its councils derived from Scripture and was therefore subordinate to Scripture."¹⁹⁹ One of the most outspoken advocates of this view was Luther, who highly valued the creeds and confessions of the church. For Luther, Scripture alone was the ultimate authority, because both the pope and church councils could err but divine Scripture could not. Luther first expressed this view when he met for debate with Johannes von Eck in Leipzig in June/July 1519.²⁰⁰ Mansch and Peters give the following account:

Eck insisted on an answer: was the Council of Constance... capable of error? Indeed it was, stated Luther. "That's the plague!" said a shocked Duke George, who was sitting close by. But Luther was firm. Councils were made up of men, and were, like the pope himself, subject to error. Christians were obligated to test the words and deeds of men by Holy Scripture. Scripture alone was perfect in its authority: *Sola Scriptura*, he called it.²⁰¹

However, it was at the Diet of Worms in 1521 where Luther spoke the famous words regarding the authority of Scripture:²⁰²

Since then Your majesty and your lordships desire a simple reply, I will answer without horns and teeth. Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.²⁰³

¹⁹⁵ K. Birkett, *The Essence of the Reformation*, 90.

¹⁹⁶ A.E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 219.

¹⁹⁷ Reeves & Chester, *Why the Reformation Still Matters*, 35.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 35 & 39.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁰⁰ H. Weinacht, *Melanchthon und Luther: Martin Luthers Lebensbeschreibungen durch Philipp Melanchthon* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2008), 93 & 99.

²⁰¹ L.D. Mansch & C.H. Peters, *Martin Luther: The Life and Lessons* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2016), 97.

²⁰² K.A. Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura* (Moscow: Canon Press, 2001), 95.

²⁰³ Cited in Mathison, *The Shape of Sola Scriptura*, 95.

For Luther the principle of Scripture alone is clearly Christo-centric.²⁰⁴ Hasel notes: "For Luther, it seems, there is no *sola Scriptura* without a *solus Christus*. Scripture must be understood in favour of Christ, not against Him."²⁰⁵ Luther sees the Bible as the cradle which holds Christ. In his *Prefaces to the Books of the Bible* he writes:

Therefore let your own thoughts and feelings go, and think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest of mines, which can never be worked out, so that you may find the wisdom of God that He lays before you in such foolish and simple guise, in order that he may quench all pride. Here you will find the swaddling-clothes and the manger in which Christ lies, and to which the angel points the shepherds. Simple and little are the swaddling-clothes, but dear is the treasure, Christ, that lies in them.²⁰⁶

Sola Scriptura means that only Scripture carries absolute normative authority because it is only Scripture through which a true and full knowledge of God is available.

VI. Conclusion

We have seen that Luther's Wittenberg played a central role as a regional mission hub for the Reformation movement in northern Europe. Luther himself saw the Reformation as a missionary movement, Wittenberg as its centre, and his fellow Reformers as missionaries.²⁰⁷ In a letter to Melancthon he even compared Wittenberg to Antioch and his colleagues to the apostle Paul and his co-workers: "You lecture, Amsdorf lectures; Jonas will lecture; do you want the kingdom of God to be proclaimed only in your town? Do not others need the gospel? Will your Antioch not release a Silas or a Paul or a Barnabas for some other work of the Spirit?"²⁰⁸ Consequently, the allegations against Luther pertaining to a lack of missionary involvement are unjustified.

This same can be said about the accusation that Luther's theology was not at all missional. The German Reformer formulates some important mission principles. Firstly, he leaves us with no doubt that mission is first of all God's mission. Secondly, he emphasises that the gospel is the message of mission, which must be proclaimed both within and outside of the church. Thirdly, the desired response to such gospel proclamation is trust in Christ

²⁰⁴ D. Daniell, "The Whole Bible in English", in J.M. Court (ed), *Biblical Interpretation: The Meanings of Scripture – Past and Present* (London: T&T Clark International, 2003), 92.

²⁰⁵ F.M. Hasel, *Scripture in the Theologies of W. Pannenberg and D.G. Bloesch: An Investigation and Assessment of its Origin, Nature and Use* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1996), 44.

²⁰⁶ M. Luther, *Works of Martin Luther: Translated with Introductions and Notes, Vol. VI* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1943), 368.

²⁰⁷ S.H. Hendrix, "Rerooting the Faith: The Reformation as Re-Christianization", *Church History* 69, 3 (2000), 565.

²⁰⁸ Cited in Hendrix, "Rerooting the Faith: The Reformation as Re-Christianization", 565.

as Lord and Saviour. Fourthly, Luther stresses that mission is a church-based endeavour. It is local communities of believers that the Holy Spirit uses to expand the universal Church until the return of Christ. Fifthly, Luther affirms that the evangelising church is always involved in a clash between truth and untruth, i.e. between the truths of God and the lies of the devil. Sixthly, he urges us to make the Bible – the ultimate authority for Christians in all matters of faith and conduct – accessible to all believers in their own languages. Finally, in an age when mission has become a very broad and, at times, vague concept, Luther reminds us that the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ forms the heart of what God is doing in and through His Church.

NATURE, PERSON AND WILL: AN ARGUMENT FROM THE CHURCH FATHERS AND THE ECUMENICAL COUNCILS AGAINST THE ETERNAL SUBORDINATION OF THE SON

*Thomas Brand**

In this paper I offer an argument against the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father. The argument is based on Scripture and is understood in the light of the historic, orthodox teaching of the church, as seen in a number of the Church Fathers and Ecumenical Councils. Specifically, I argue, from Maximus the Confessor's interpretation of Scripture, that the volitional faculty is a function of nature rather than person. This entails that just as in Christ there are two wills, because there are two natures, so in the Triune Godhead there is but one will, because there is but one divine nature. I argue that this renders the notion of eternal subordination meaningless.

The Nicene Creed was the primary doctrinal product of the first Ecumenical Council, the Council of Nicaea (325).¹ The Creed was developed and affirmed in the first Canon of the first Council of Constantinople (381). This was the second Ecumenical Council. The end result is the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed; it is usually referred to as the Nicene Creed for convenience.

I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible:

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father; By whom all things were made, Who for us men, and for our salvation came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, And was made man, And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried,

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¹ In this paper I refer to a number of the Ecumenical Church Councils. As will be noted below, within the Protestant tradition only the first four are considered to be fully orthodox. This position follows the teaching of Martin Luther: Martin Luther, "On the Councils and the Church" (1539), in *Luther's Works*, ed. Helmut T. Lehmann, vol XLI, *Church and Ministry III*, ed. Eric W. Gritsch, trans. Charles M. Jacobs (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 121. However, many of the canons of the remaining three Ecumenical Church Councils contain theological statements that are extremely insightful and beneficial in the following discussion.

And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, And ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of the Father. And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead: Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Ghost, The Lord and Giver of life, Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spake by the Prophets. And I believe in one Catholick and Apostolick Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Creed teaches, in accordance with Scriptural witness and the doctrine of the Church Fathers that the one divine essence of God subsists in three distinct persons or divine subsistences,² the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Each possesses the full deity and yet there is only one God. The Creed also teaches that there is an order among the subsistences of the Trinity; the subsistence of the Father is unbegotten, and begets the subsistence of the Son, and spirates the subsistence of the Holy Spirit; the subsistence of the Son is eternally begotten of the Father (eternal generation³) and spirates the subsistence of the Holy Spirit; and the subsistence of the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. The eternal generation of the subsistence of the Son by the Father and the communication of the divine nature is the theological premise on which the argument for the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father is grounded. The doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son is integral to the Nicene Creed, and cannot be abandoned without falling into heterodoxy. However, this is not necessarily the case with the doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father.

² With reference to the Trinity R. A. Muller defines a divine subsistence as “An individual instance of a given essence.” R. A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1985), *Subsistentia*. Muller’s definition is based on that of Francis Turretin, who defines subsistence as “a mode of existing proper to substances”. He further clarifies this by stating that “subsistence marks a mode of subsisting or personality”. Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology, Volume 1*, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1992), Third Topic, Question Twenty-Three, V. The term is used synonymously with the more self-explanatory term *modus subsistendi*. These terms contain the concept of personhood but avoid the tendency towards tritheism inherent in the use of *persona*. Moreover, subsistence language more accurately depicts the relation between the divine nature *in abstracto* and the three subsistences *in concreto* as subsistences of the divine nature, rather than different existents. The first canon of the Second Council of Constantinople (553) deliberately abandons Cyril’s context-dependent use of the terms *physis* and *hypostasis* in favour of the term subsistence. See Aloys Grillmeier with Theresia Hainthaler, *Christ in Christian Tradition, Volume 2, Part two: The Church of Constantinople in the Sixth Century*, trans. Pauline Allen and John Cawte (London: Mowbray, 1995), 430-446. In this paper I use the terms in the manner adopted at the Second Council of Constantinople (553) showing preference for the term subsistence/*subsistentia*.

³ For a helpful explanation of the doctrine of eternal generation in the Church Fathers, particularly Origen of Alexandria, see the forthcoming Lewis Ayres, “Scriptural Foundations and Theological Purpose in Origen of Alexandria”, in *Retrieving Eternal Generation*, eds. Fred Sanders and Scott R. Swain (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017), 176-195.

Implications of Trinitarian Taxis in the Nicene Creed

Recent debate about the personal relations between the Father and the Son in the Trinity prior to creation and the incarnation has drawn attention to the doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father. A critical element of the argument for eternal subordination is the claim that it is implied by the Creed's statement that the Son is eternally begotten of the Father.

In my recent review of the late Mike Ovey's monograph, *Your Will Be Done: Exploring Eternal Subordination, Divine Monarchy and Divine Humility*,⁴ I cautiously attempted to endorse Ovey's position that the Son is eternally subordinate to the Father. However, in this paper I will set out my reasons for rejecting eternal subordination. Ovey claims that eternal subordination is not a "New Arianism" because he grounds his Trinitarian theology on the patristic affirmation that God is one being in three persons; I will further discuss the "New Arianism" claim below. Therefore, any notion that the Son is ontologically inferior to the Father is impossible because the Son is consubstantial with the Father. Since the publication of the review my understanding has developed. I will explain the line of argument that has led to this modification. But it is first important to state that I consider belief in eternal subordination to be error, not heresy, because it is a debate about the implications of the Nicene Creed rather than the content of the Creed itself. All debate must be irenic and gracious as an intra-mural discussion, not heresy hunting. Moreover, there are biblical and historical arguments in favour of eternal subordination. In this brief article I will set out the main reason why I now reject the doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father.

Scriptural passages that speak of the submission of the Son to the Father all share an incarnational context. Christ's prayer in Gethsemane in which he prays "Not as I will, but as you will" (Matthew 26:39); Christ's statement that he came "not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me" (John 6:38); Paul's statement that our Lord "Being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8); and Christ's statement, "The Father is greater than I" (John 14:28),⁵ serve as four clear examples. In all of these verses, the Scriptures teach the relation of the Son incarnate to the one divine will. Although the

⁴ Michael J. Ovey, *Your Will Be Done: Exploring Eternal Subordination, Divine Monarch and Divine Humility* (Oxford: Latimer Trust, 2016). My review was published in this Journal, November 2016.

⁵ Augustine argues that this verse simply indicates the lesser status of the Son only as incarnate (See *De Trinitate* 1.15, 18; 6.10). In contrast Gregory Nazianzus frequently states the unity of God on the grounds that the Son and the Holy Spirit "refer back" to the Father as "cause" and "origin" (*Oration* 20.7). However, it is essential to note that Gregory, like Augustine, denies the eternal subordination of the Son apart from the incarnation.

context of some of these verses, most notably Philippians 2, refer to the Son prior to the incarnation, the Scriptures are consistent in ascribing volitional subordination to the Son only in his incarnate condition.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430) clearly notes this incarnational context in scriptures which speak of the Son as subordinate to the Father:

Many things are so said in the sacred books as to signify, or even most expressly declare, the Father to be greater than the Son; men have erred through a want of careful examination or consideration of the whole tenor of the Scriptures, and have endeavoured to transfer those things which are said of Jesus Christ according to the flesh, to that substance of his which was eternal before the incarnation, and is eternal.⁶

Augustine highlights the danger of the doctrine of eternal subordination, and draws the same distinction concerning verses that speak of Christ's subordination to the Father only in the context of the incarnation. As will be seen in this paper, although there are nuances of emphasis in the Church Fathers, the teaching that the subsistence of the Son is not subordinate to the Father apart from the incarnation is unmistakable in the most historically-significant patristic authors.⁷

Ovey bases much of his argument on exegesis of Christ's prayer in Gethsemane. Arguing from such passages that the Son eternally submits to the Father, not merely in the incarnation, is not reasonable. These passages teach that in the incarnation, Christ submitted to the will of God. Ovey's exegetical argument is not the focus of this paper; instead I will concentrate on the theological argument behind eternal subordinationism, which Ovey then seeks to apply to Christ's prayer in Gethsemane.⁸

The Incarnation and the Will of God

In the incarnation God the Son assumed full humanity into personal union with the divine nature as it subsists in the Son. The incarnation therefore produces a composite Christ, the personhood of which is provided in the Word of God, the divine logos.⁹ The humanity of Christ was complete just as

⁶ Augustine of Hippo, *On the Trinity*, Book I. Chapter VII. Cf. Chapters VIII, X, and XI.

⁷ Ovey attempts to find evidence for the doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son in a number of the Church Fathers. He also cites a number of Councils; however, none of the seven Ecumenical Councils teaches eternal subordination. See Ovey, *Will*, 18-29, 62-74. Michael J. Ovey, "True Sonship – Where Dignity and Submission Meet", in *One God in Three Persons*, eds. Bruce A. Ware and John Starke (Illinois: Crossway, 2015), 130-150.

⁸ Ovey, *Will*, 105-114.

⁹ As noted below, the orthodox position is in contrast with the heresy of Nestorius, a Syrian monk summoned by the emperor to succeed Sisinnius as Bishop of Constantinople in 428. Cyril of Alexandria's correspondence with Nestorius reveals that the latter's teaching implies that in Christ there are two persons, the divine and the human. He rejected the application of the term *theotokos* (God-bearer) to Mary. In response to Nestorius, Cyril of Alexandria composed twelve

ours is, except without sin. The Nicene Creed describes the incarnation only briefly; fuller definition is provided at the Council of Chalcedon (451), the fourth Ecumenical Council. Chalcedon states that, “The same Christ, Son, Lord, Only begotten, [is] to be acknowledged in two natures, unconfusedly (ἀσυγχυτως), unchangeably (ἀτρέπτως), indivisibly (ἀδιαίρετως), inseparably (ἀχωριστως).”¹⁰ These four Chalcedonian adverbs primarily defend against the heresies of Eutyches¹¹ and Nestorius respectively. Christ’s humanity includes human emotions, the intellectual and volitional faculties, as well as the passibility entailed by being a creature. Therefore, in Christ there are two wills, the divine and the human, even though there is one person. The human will of Christ ceaselessly submits to the one divine will. Dyotheletism, the doctrine that there are two wills in the one Christ was formally approved and accepted by the Church at the sixth ecumenical council, the Third Council of Constantinople in 681.

When Christ prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, “Not as I will, but as you will”, he was submitting his human will to the will of God. He was not submitting his divine will to the divine will of the Father; I argue that this is impossible. The concept that the will of the Son submits to the will of the Father is foundational to the doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son. This conception of intra-divine submission depends upon the notion that in God there are three distinct wills; the will of the Father, the will of the Son, and the will of the Holy Spirit. I assert that this is not a biblical conception of the will of God. Instead, the Scriptures speak of one will of God.¹² The

anathemas which were formalised in the Pact of Reunion, signed by Cyril and John of Jerusalem in 433 following the Council of Ephesus (431). The Chalcedonian Fathers declared that the two natures of Christ were united in his person in such a way that they could not be converted into one another, nor could they be confused so that a third, hybrid nature should emerge. For an outline of Nestorius’s Christology see John McGuckin, *Saint Cyril of Alexandria and the Christological Controversy* (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2004), 127-174.

¹⁰ The first three adverbs were supplied by the writings of Cyril of Alexandria. The fourth was added at Chalcedon and effectively summarises Cyril’s opposition to Nestorius. Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Volume 1, Council of Chalcedon – 451* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1989), 88-89.

¹¹ Eutyches advocated that prior to the incarnation there were two natures, but after the incarnation there was only one nature in Christ, which exists as a mixture of the two natures. In response to Eutyches and his followers, the Chalcedonian Fathers declared the inseparability and indivisibility of the *unio personalis* because of the perpetuity of the incarnation. Eutyches strongly opposed Nestorianism, and in 448, was accused by Eusebius of Dorlaeum of the opposite heresy. Eutyches’ doctrine was opposed by Pope Leo in his epistle of 449 to Flavian, Patriarch of Constantinople, who had excommunicated Eutychus the previous year at a Synod at Constantinople.

¹² Isaiah 46:10; Romans 9:19; Ephesians 1:11; Revelation 4:11. The first three references teach the unicity of the divine will, and the fourth reference concerns God’s act of willing multiple particular objects.

argument for the one divine will is grounded in the Scriptures and guided by the writings of a number of the Church Fathers. It is beyond the scope of this paper to exegete Scriptures which are taken by adherents to the doctrine of eternal subordination to imply that there are three wills in the Godhead.¹³ I suggest that such verses speak of the functioning of the single unified will of the divine nature with reference to the Triune subsistences in accordance with the doctrine of appropriations. This is frequently the way the Scriptures speak of the divine works of God in relation to what he has created.

In the Lord Jesus Christ there is one person – the person of God the Son. There are not two persons in Christ, a human person and a divine person; this is the heresy of Nestorianism, which was anathematised at the Council of Ephesus (431), which was the third Ecumenical Council. And yet in the Lord Jesus Christ there are two wills – the divine will and the human will. It is this human will of the Lord Jesus Christ that submits to the will of God in the New Testament. There are two faculties of volition and two wills in Christ because there are two natures in Christ. The claim that there is only one will in Christ stems from Nestorianism and must be rejected. If the will were a faculty of the person then there could only be one will in the Lord Jesus Christ. However there are two natures and two corresponding wills in Christ, and one person. Therefore the faculty of volition and the exercise of the will are tied to the nature rather than to the person.

An awareness of Nestorianism and the corresponding volitional heresy of monotheletism is crucial to an orthodox articulation of Christology and the intra-Trinitarian relations. I have argued for a dyothelite Christology; this may now be applied to the doctrine of God. I have demonstrated that in Christology, the faculty of volition and the exercise of the will are grounded in the nature. In Christ there are two natures, there are therefore two wills. In applying this argument to the doctrine of God it is therefore clear that there can only be one divine will of God, not three wills in the three subsistences or persons. This is because the will is tied not to the subsistences but to the nature and there is only one divine nature. One might speak of a Trinitarian expression of the one divine will,¹⁴ but this still precludes numerical distinction in the divine will itself. Scripture does distinguish between the human will of the Lord Jesus Christ and the will of God, but Scripture does not divide the one will of God.¹⁵

¹³ In his essay “Doctrinal Deviations in Evangelical-Feminist Arguments about the Trinity”, Wayne Grudem cites a number of passages that he understands to imply the presence of three wills in the Godhead; most significantly Ephesians 1:3-5, 9-11. Wayne Grudem, “Doctrinal Deviations in Evangelical-Feminist Arguments about the Trinity”, in *One God in Three Persons* eds. Bruce A. Ware and John Starke (Illinois: Crossway, 2015), 37-44. Ephesians 1:5 and 9 speak of the Christ, the Son incarnate, accomplishing the divine will.

¹⁴ E.g. Ephesians 1:3-5; 9-11. Cf. previous footnote.

¹⁵ Within the unity of the one divine will, distinctions must be made, most notably in Reformed thought, the distinction between God’s effective and permissive will. See John Calvin,

The one will of the one divine nature is, in my mind, the primary argument against the doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father. Unfortunately, in spite of the central importance of this argument, it is seldom discussed extensively in the literature on eternal subordination in the last two decades. In his article “God is the Head of Christ: 1 Corinthians 11:3” Kyle Claunch notes this lacuna:

One often overlooked feature of such a proposal is that this understanding of the eternal relationship between Father and Son seems to entail a commitment to three distinct wills in the immanent Trinity. In order for the Son to submit willingly to the will of the Father, the two must possess distinct wills.¹⁶

Claunch correctly states that this premise, which lies behind the doctrine of eternal subordination, is a departure from Trinitarian orthodoxy understood in the light of the Church Councils and Fathers. He adds that this understanding also runs counter to medieval and Reformed understanding of the divine will.¹⁷

According to traditional Trinitarian theology, the will is predicated of the one undivided divine essence so that there is only one divine will in the immanent Trinity. If there is only one divine will, the notion that the Son submits his will to the will of the Father is illogical and incoherent. Without three wills in God it is meaningless to speak of the will of one divine subsistence being subordinated to the will of another divine subsistence. However it is entirely scriptural to state that the human will of Christ submits to the divine will.

Patristic and Conciliar Sources in Opposition to Eternal Subordination

The argument that there is only one divine will is in accordance with the teaching of the Church Fathers and the Councils of the early Church.¹⁸ In

Institutes of the Christian Religion (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1983), I. xviii. 3. Exploration of these distinctions is beyond the scope of this paper, however it in no way compromises the orthodox affirmation that there is only one divine will.

¹⁶ Kyle Claunch, “God is the Head of Christ: 1 Corinthians 11:3”, in *One God in Three Persons*, eds. Bruce A. Ware and John Starke (Illinois: Crossway, 2015), 88.

¹⁷ Regarding the collection of essays in *One God in Three Persons*, Claunch observes that Bruce Ware, Wayne Grudem and others intentionally commit to a three wills conception of the Trinity. In his own essay, Claunch mentions the importance of the unity of the divine will but does not deal with it at length.

¹⁸ The patristic teaching concerning the one divine will is continued in the Reformation. For further discussion see, R. A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics, Volume Three: The Divine Essence and Attributes* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 2003), 432-446. Muller expressly

order to demonstrate this claim I will cite evidence from Emperor Justinian (482-565), the third Council of Constantinople (680-681), which was the sixth Ecumenical Council, and Maximus the Confessor (580-662). The theology of the Confessor is especially pertinent because his theological statement of the divine and human wills in the one Christ is central to the argument against the eternal subordination of the Son; furthermore it is directly explored by Ovey.

Justinian reigned over the Byzantine East as emperor from 527 to 565. Justinian's political and military concern was the reunification of East and West, which he attempted in part through ecclesiastical rapprochement. He convoked the second Council of Constantinople (553), which was the fifth Ecumenical Council, the primary purpose of which was to confirm Justinian's condemnation in 543 of the "Three Chapters" – the writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoret against Cyril of Alexandria, and the letter of Ibas of Edessa to Maris, all of which were sympathetic to Nestorius. Examining Justinian's position on the relations between the Father and the Son in the Triune Godhead is helpful because as both emperor and theologian he represents a broad theological consensus in the sixth century. This is seen in his influence on the second Council of Constantinople.

Justinian's work *The Edict on the True Faith* examines scriptural and patristic teaching on Trinitarian theology and aspects of Chalcedonian Christology. Justinian quotes widely from previous Church Fathers in support of his arguments, particularly Cyril of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and Athanasius the Great of Alexandria. Justinian composed thirteen anathemas in order to uphold orthodoxy. The first reads as follows: "If anyone does not confess the consubstantial Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, worshipped as one Godhead or nature or essence, or one power or authority in three *hypostases* or *prosopa*, let him be anathema."¹⁹ Justinian quotes from and incorporates the writings of the Church Fathers in order to show that there is only one divine will; one divine authority located in the one divine nature.

The imperial approval of the patristic teaching that there is one divine will received conciliar affirmation with the *Exposition of Faith* in the Third Council of Constantinople. This Church Council is the sixth of the seven Ecumenical Councils. Historically, Protestantism has typically rejected the fifth, sixth, and seventh Councils²⁰ as containing heterodox statements about

notes that the Reformed doctrine of the unity of the one divine will aligns with the consensus of the Church Fathers and the medieval doctors. Muller, *Volume 3*, 435.

¹⁹ Emperor Justinian, *On the Person of Christ: The Christology of Emperor Justinian*, trans. Kenneth Paul Wesche (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991), 181.

²⁰ The fifth, sixth and seventh Ecumenical Councils are as follows: The Second Council of Constantinople (553) opposed Nestorianism and Origenism; the Third Council of Constantinople

the Virgin Mary among other issues. This trend follows Martin Luther's statements in *On the Councils and the Church*.²¹ However, I assert that it would be unwise to disregard the teaching of these Councils entirely, especially in their Christological judgments, simply on the basis of a limited number of heterodox statements on secondary issues.²² The third Council of Constantinople represents the most significant ecclesiastical teaching on the will in relation to Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Council condemned monotheletism, the teaching that in the incarnate Christ there is only one will; and upheld dyotheletism as orthodox in accordance with the Scriptures and the Church Fathers. This is the doctrine that in the incarnate Christ there are two wills, the divine and the human. The Council clearly locates the faculty of volition in the natures of Christ rather than in his person, and therefore also states that there is only one divine will because there is only one divine nature, which subsists in three persons:

We proclaim equally two natural volitions or wills in him and two natural principles of action which undergo no division, no change, no partition, no confusion, in accordance with the teaching of the holy fathers... And the two natural wills not in opposition, as the impious heretics said, far from it, but his human will following, and not resisting or struggling, rather in fact subject to his divine and all powerful will... For the will of the flesh had to be moved, and yet to be subjected to the divine will, according to the most wise Athanasius... Believing our lord Jesus Christ, even after his incarnation, to be one of the holy Trinity and our true God, we say that he has two natures shining forth in his one subsistence in which he demonstrated the miracles and the sufferings throughout his entire providential dwelling here, not in appearance but in truth, the difference of the natures being made known in the same one subsistence in that each nature wills and performs the things that are proper to it in a communion with the other; then in accord with this reasoning we hold that two natural wills and principles of action meet in correspondence for the salvation of the human race.

The third Council of Constantinople, like Justinian, seeks to establish scriptural truth with reference to patristic orthodoxy. The statement clearly locates the human will of Christ in the human nature of Christ, and the divine will of Christ in the divine nature of Christ. By explicitly locating the faculty of

(680-681) opposed Monotheletism; and the Second Council of Nicea (787) positively discussed Iconography.

²¹ Luther, *Councils*, 122.

²² The Second Council of Constantinople (553) develops the Christological conclusions of the Council of Chalcedon (451), and further defends orthodoxy against Nestorianism. From the perspective of Protestantism, the primary issue of concern in the Second Council of Constantinople is the apparent veneration of the Virgin Mary as holy, glorious and ever virgin. However, it is important to note that Martin Luther, who initiated the rejection of the latter three Ecumenical Councils, upheld the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary in Part I. IV. of the Smalcald Articles. The bracketed phrase "[and always]" only appears in the Latin translation and not in the original German.

volition in the nature, this statement directly upholds the orthodox teaching that there is but one divine will because there is but one divine nature.

I now turn to third main piece of evidence in the paper in the writings of Maximus the Confessor. I discuss the Confessor at greater length than Justinian and the third Council of Constantinople because Ovey interacts with Maximus on the central question of the unicity of the divine will as the ground for opposing the doctrine of eternal subordination.

A Possible Counterargument from the Theology of Maximus the Confessor

The claim that the doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son is a “New Arianism” assumes that the doctrine is a misinterpretation of the Nicene Creed, whereas I have argued that it is instead a misunderstanding of the implications of the Creed. However, the doctrine of eternal subordination assumes that the will of Christ, which submits to God the Father, is located not in his nature but in his person. This understanding undermines the patristic defence of dyotheletism and dyophysitism against the opposing heresies monotheletism and monophysitism. Two significant departures from orthodoxy obtain. First, if the incarnate Son has only one will then the distinctions between Christ’s two natures set out in the Council of Chalcedon in 451 fail to obtain. Secondly, if the pre-incarnate Son possesses a will that is different from the will of the Father and the Holy Spirit, then the three persons of the Trinity are not consubstantial because the will is a natural faculty. This argument is evident in the *Theological Orations*²³ of Gregory Nazianzus concerning the Gethsemane prayer. Gregory argues against the Arian position that the incarnate Son possesses a different will from the Father. However his exegesis of the prayer is problematic in other respects in that he does not do justice to the authorial emphasis on Christ’s volitional predicament in submitting his human will to the divine will. The same dyothelite anti-Arian affirmation occurs in Gregory of Nyssa’s treatise *Against Apollinarius*.²⁴

The early Church seems to have consistently taught that in Christ there are two wills because there are two natures, and that therefore in the divine nature there is only one will.²⁵ Once this has been established and accepted it is a matter of deductive logic to reach the conclusion that the person of the Son cannot volitionally submit to the person of the Father because the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit, share one nature and therefore one divine

²³ Gregory Nazianzus, *Oration 30*, 12 – PG 36, 117C-120B.

²⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Apollinarius*, PG 45, 1193C-1196A.

²⁵ Maximus the Confessor distinguished between the object of volition and the will as a faculty of all rational beings. This distinction raises important issues in the present discussion.

will. According to the *communicatio idiomatum*, whatever is said of either of Christ's natures is predicated of the person of the Son. Therefore if the will of the human nature of Christ submitted to the divine will, one can correctly say that the person of God the Son incarnate submitted to the Father. However, this nuance does not amount to the eternal subordination of the Son because it only obtains within the incarnation. Instead it clarifies the orthodox understanding of the *unio personalis*.

In order to overcome the assertion that the doctrine of eternal subordination is a "New Arianism", I suggest that its adherents must accept one of two options: Either the clear witness of Scripture and the teaching of the Church Councils that there is only one divine will must be abandoned, or it must be modified by the introduction of a new distinction. Ovey attempts to uncover such a potential distinction in the writings of Maximus the Confessor, who lived towards the end of the period of the seven Ecumenical Councils, but before the nascent development of theological scholasticism. His theological writing is intensely logical and intricate. Paul Blowers writes, "Maximus' theological reasoning at times comes to expression in an exacting logic and use of syllogisms; and he is often meticulously precise in the nuances of his theological language."²⁶ Maximus' emphasis on deification, and the cosmic aspect of salvation in Christ focuses on the *unio personalis*. Moreover, his understanding of the nature of the volitional faculty is crucial to Christological debate and Trinitarian theology.

Maximus the Confessor argues in *Opusculum 6*²⁷ that the will is a natural not a personal faculty, and applies this notion to the doctrine of God in his discussion of Christ's prayer in Gethsemane: "The Father and the Son always share a common will." Maximus argues that when Christ submits his will to the will of his Father, he is submitting the will of his human nature to the one will of God. Maximus' teaching is not directly quoted in the Church Councils, but his influence is apparent, particularly in the third Council of Constantinople.

In the preceding argument I have established that there is but one divine will, and I have employed this notion to argue against the doctrine of the eternal subordination of the Son on the grounds that it is meaningless to speak of the Son submitting his divine will to the divine will of the Father when they share one will. However, Ovey addresses this very argument and offers an intriguing counter-argument which, in the space of three pages, attempts to incorporate the theology of Maximus the Confessor. He frames Maximus' position in the context of the dyothelite controversy and the writings of Sergius of Constantinople. However, it is not insignificant that Ovey only utilises secondary sources in his discussion of Maximus; he is

²⁶ Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 16.

²⁷ PG 91:65A-68D. St Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*. 175.

heavily dependent on Demetrios Bathrellos,²⁸ and the sparse quotations from Maximus are lifted from Bathrellos' monograph. Ovey argues that the unity of Christ's person means that the divine and human wills of Christ cannot will inconsistently: "One person cannot ultimately will inconsistently with himself or herself, even if that person has two ways in which 'will' may be exercised."²⁹ Ovey proceeds to define will in the writings of Maximus by drawing a distinction between the faculty of volition and the act of willing a particular thing; or more specifically from Maximus, the particular object of the will. Ovey attempts to incorporate Maximus' theology and notes that Maximus places the one divine will in the category of the former, that is the faculty of volition; in Maximus' words, the faculty "in virtue of which one is able to will or act".³⁰ Ovey claims that the act of willing "relates more to what 'I' do with my 'natural' faculty of will".³¹ However this claim is not directly grounded in Maximus' writings, as is seen by Ovey's speculative conclusion:

If Maximus is correct to stress that the Person or hypostasis provides the unifying point by which the different faculties of the two natures operate, and if he is also correct to see a distinction between will at the level of nature and the exercise/actualisation of that faculty at, in effect, the level of Person, then Maximus' theology does have the resources to cope with the eternal subordination of the Son. For the eternal subordination involves a distinction of "wills" between Father and Son at the level of personal relation and not a distinction at the level of nature.³²

The implication of this distinction drawn by Ovey is not substantiated by Bathrellos or in the primary sources in Maximus:

Maximus drew an all-important distinction, without which the question of the wills of Christ cannot be properly approached. This distinction is between the will as a faculty, integral to all rational beings, in virtue of which they are capable of willing, and the object of willing; namely, that which is willed by the being possessing this faculty... The former is a permanent, indispensable part of the ontological constitution of both God and man, whereas the latter is not more than its external object.³³

This quotation demonstrates that Ovey has slightly misrepresented Maximus' distinction. Bathrellos' understanding of the distinction is clearly substantiated by the text of *Opusculum 6*.

Furthermore, Ovey asserts that the veracity of his subordinationist interpretation is demonstrated by its assimilation into sound exegesis of the

²⁸ Demetrios Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature and Will in the Christology of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

²⁹ Ovey, *Will*, 104. This is aligned with the above discussion of the *communicatio idiomatum* with reference to the one divine will. As noted there, this cannot be used as an argument for eternal subordination.

³⁰ Maximus, *Opusculum 6*.

³¹ Ovey, *Will*, 104.

³² Ovey, *Will*, 104-105.

³³ Bathrellos, *Byzantine*, 119.

Gethsemane prayer. Central to this is Ovey's claim that in this prayer Christ submits his divine will to the divine will of the Father. Maximus directly opposes this interpretation in *Opusculum 6*. He argues that if the subject of the Gethsemane prayer is the divine will of the Son then one is "not repudiating what is willed, namely, the declining of the cup, but you are in fact ascribing that declining to their common and eternal divinity, to which you have also referred the exercise of will in the negating."³⁴ I suggest that this quotation from Maximus the Confessor, and the context of *Opusculum 6* makes it clear that Maximus' theology is not compatible with Ovey's position on the eternal subordination of the Son. Therefore, Ovey is not successful in his attempt to align his explanation of the dyothelite controversy and its implications for the Son's relation to the Father, with the historic Christological orthodoxy of the Church Fathers and the Ecumenical Councils.

Conclusions and Further Questions

In the incarnation the divine subsistence of the Son assumes human nature into personal union. From the incarnation the subsistence of the Son possesses both human and divine natures which are united in the subsistence of the Son in the manner described by the four Chalcedonian adverbs. Christ's human nature and his divine nature each possess a faculty of volition; there are therefore two wills in Christ. I have argued from this that in the one Godhead there can only be one will because there is one nature. I have demonstrated the orthodoxy of belief in the one divine will from patristic sources including Augustine of Hippo, Gregory Nazianus, Emperor Justinian, Maximus the Confessor, and the third Council of Constantinople. Furthermore, I have demonstrated explicitly from these patristic sources that the consensus of the early Church Fathers took the unicity of the divine will to entail that the Son is not eternally subordinate to the Father. I have also used these patristic sources, and specifically Maximus the Confessor, to argue against Ovey's position. My argument has focused on his attempt to incorporate Maximus' writings to pursue a person-centred understanding of the functioning of the faculty of volition. I have demonstrated that Ovey's position lacks proper grounding in the original sources.

I have presented my argument against the eternal subordination of the Son to the Father on the basis of the Scriptures as the supreme authority, and also from the early Church Councils and the writings of a number of the Church Fathers. The limited space has necessitated a relatively brief treatment of the subject, which has not done full justice to the many subtleties of the intra-Trinitarian relations in eternity and in the incarnation.

³⁴ Maximus, *Opusculum 6*.

In order to highlight something of this complexity for further reflection, I will close by noting an important aspect of the doctrine of the incarnation.

Why did the Son become incarnate rather than the Father or the Holy Spirit? The divine works *ad extra* always involve the three divine subsistences; this is therefore true of the incarnation. Within the Triune Godhead the subsistence of the Father is unbegotten; he eternally begets the subsistence of the Son, and eternally spirates the subsistence of the Holy Spirit; he is the fountainhead of the Triune subsistences. Therefore it is logical that the Father sends the Son and that the Son is sent by the Father in the incarnation.³⁵ The Son's mission in the incarnation is grounded in his eternal generation. It would be theologically inappropriate and unfitting, to use Francis Turretin's term, for the Father to be sent by the Son. Similarly, it would be inappropriate for the Holy Spirit, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, and who is the love between the Father and the Son, to become incarnate. Rather his role is the application of the redemption purchased by Christ at the cross. Furthermore, it is through the Holy Spirit that the Lord Jesus Christ offered himself to the Father.³⁶ If it is only the Son who becomes incarnate,³⁷ and submits his human will to the divine will in the incarnation, what is implied by this concerning the relation of the Son to the Father in eternity prior to creation and the incarnation?

The implications of this in terms of the one undivided will of God and the relations among the Triune subsistences are beyond the scope of this brief paper, but they raise considerable questions. I have argued that it is meaningless to speak of the Son's eternal subordination to the Father, but in light of the incarnation of the Son and not the Father, perhaps something may be said concerning the eternal intra-Trinitarian relations beyond the Nicene formula in this regard, though what that something is must surely remain hidden in the eternal and unsearchable councils of the Triune Godhead.³⁸

³⁵ Francis Turretin writes, "Nor was it fitting that he, who was the Father in divine things, should become the Son in human things by being born of a virgin. The Holy Spirit could not, who was to be sent by the Mediator to the church, and yet he could not be sent by himself. Thus there would have been two sons, the second person by eternal generation and the third by an incarnation in time." Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology, Volume 2*, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 1992), Thirteenth Topic, Question Four, V.

³⁶ Hebrews 9:14.

³⁷ Cf. *Capitulum 2*, Second Council of Constantinople.

³⁸ To employ Ludwig Wittgenstein's closing remark in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, "Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent." Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Major Works* (USA: Harper Collins, 2009), *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Proposition 7. There is a certain irony in quoting Wittgenstein's epistemological statement in the present paper of Trinitarian metaphysics.

REVIEW ARTICLE: *CROSS-CURRENTS IN MUSLIM MINISTRY*

A WIND IN THE HOUSE OF ISLAM: HOW GOD IS DRAWING MUSLIMS AROUND THE WORLD TO FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST

David Garrison, WIGTake, 2014, 328pp, £14.27 (£8.03 Kindle)

The House of Islam, *Dar al-Islam* in Arabic, is “the name Muslims give to an invisible religious empire that stretches from West Africa to the Indonesian archipelago, encompassing 49 nations and 1.6 billion Muslims” (5). David Garrison’s thesis is that “a wind” is blowing through the house: “Christianity’s re-emergence” from centuries of decline and, in many cases, obliteration (6).

Clearly, by Garrison’s own assertion and from the many stories that are reported, this book needs to be studied by all who have an interest in the progress of the gospel in the Muslim world. If the stories and statistics are to be taken at face value there is an astonishing and unprecedented turn to Christ taking place in many locations and among many distinct communities at this time, for which we should give thanks to God. But such claims need to be critically evaluated rather than simply accepted at face value. In this review article, I want to do just that in the hope that further research will be more fruitful. I will start by outlining the book using Garrison’s headings.

The Hinges of History

In Part One, the author introduces the theme of the book in its historical context and explains his methodology. Garrison and his numerous associates in 14 countries interviewed more than a thousand people in 33 communities (“people groups”) (26). The result is an account that covers 45 “movements”. Garrison helpfully embeds their informants’ stories in the descriptions of the region in question, demonstrating the tremendous variety of cultures encountered throughout the Muslim world and showing how each region is distinct. Islamic terminology is used quite a bit and a helpful glossary is included at the end.

The author is aware of some of the limitations of the study. One limitation the researchers imposed on themselves was to research only “movements to Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament” (37) suggesting that there may be other movements that are theologically

heterodox. None such is reported, still less analysed. If indeed such movements do exist, a serious comparative study would be very instructive.

Another limitation was in the accessibility of key informants in certain regions. Though hundreds of people were interviewed in sub-Saharan Africa (where for the most part there is less difficulty gaining access), the interviewers were severely limited in the Arab world and “Western South Asia”, an area covering western India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. (One can only surmise that great difficulty was faced in Afghanistan, which is still in a state of serious conflict. Presumably the researchers would have been able to meet Afghan informants only across the border in the relative freedom of Pakistan.) Such problems meant that in these parts they struggled to gather even a dozen interviews, a weakness acknowledged by the author (38). It seems unwarranted, therefore, for Garrison to assert that for each of these movements they “have established a clear floor of 1,000 baptised believers or 100 churches” (39).

The House of Islam

In Part Two, each of the nine “rooms” is described and analysed in turn, and we are given a taste of what appears to be very significant happenings throughout the Muslim world. For the most part Garrison’s taxonomy of culture areas, or “geo-cultural rooms” as he calls them, is sound, the glaring exception being South Asia. This region is divided into Western and Eastern “rooms” in an artificial manner (the partition clumsily running right through India), for which no rationale is given.

Each of the nine culture areas is examined in turn: after an outline of the historical context, testimonies of local people coming to faith fill the pages. Often these individuals become the means God has used to bring many others to faith.

According to the research there are movements to Christ going on in all nine regions. The stories reported are very encouraging and not a few quite amazing. Throughout the Muslim world people are hearing the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, sometimes from foreign workers, at other times from satellite TV, but nearly always also from their neighbours and friends. Even in the Arab world there appear to be large numbers of Muslims turning to Christ. The accounts, however, are not always glowing: the realities of life for followers of Christ in North Africa, for instance, are clearly, though briefly, portrayed so that no one can be under the illusion that it is easy for them (96-97).

In the Arab world, Muslim movements to Christ often have an ambivalent relationship to the evangelical and ancient churches around them (216). This is due to the politically-charged nature of religious communities. It appears in such situations Muslims are impressed by their Christian neighbours but such are the security concerns that it is almost impossible for Muslims to

engage with them on matters of faith. The need for outside witnesses in such situations becomes clear.

The author is not unaware of possible non-spiritual motivations for “conversion”: commenting on communities of new believers from several Turkic people groups he suggests that, “Doubtless some of them were attracted to the development programs that the Western Christians offered. Some saw these foreign relationships as avenues to a better life in the West. When Western (and Korean) organizations offered church buildings and pastoral subsidies to local leaders, the motivations for conversion became even more clouded” (150-51). Thankfully, some of the local believers interviewed also expressed their unease about the corrupting influence of handouts (152).

The researchers were not content to enumerate “conversions”; questions about discipleship addressed qualitative matters too. In a stirring story from “Western South Asia” we are told that a leading figure in a movement was told that the gospel was having big consequences: “Last year, more than 100 jamaat [worshipping group] leaders said to me, ‘I no longer beat my wife’” (198) – not the sort of comment one reads every day but one that clearly means a great deal to the leader – and no doubt to the wives as well!

Maps helpfully indicate the main countries in each region. There are, however, a few inaccuracies (or lack of precision) in the maps: in the East Africa map, 20 nations are labelled but only 19 given in the statistics (67); in the North Africa map, the disputed territory of Western Sahara is not labelled (89) though it is included in a list of nations (84); in The Persian World map, Muslim populations are labelled in 4 nations but only 3 are given in the statistics and the hatched areas of Afghanistan do not correspond with Persian peoples, who are the majority community in central (Hazara) and northeast (Tajik) regions (125); in The Arab World map 19 nations are labelled but 21 given in the statistics (203). Furthermore, it is surely a significant shortcoming that the Maldives are neither labelled in maps of Eastern or Western South Asia nor even mentioned in the text.

A more serious inaccuracy, though – because this myth had a part in the destruction of so many lives – is the assertion that the Rwanda genocide was a product of racial division: “Bantu Hutus... killed 800,000 Nilotic Tutsis” (65). This is inaccurate and misleading: genetic studies have shown that the Tutsis have 85% Bantu DNA, only slightly less than that of the Hutu. The Rwanda genocide was far more complex than a racial “clash”, a theory that has been vigorously disputed.

In the House of War

The book concludes with Part Three, in which Garrison outlines the factors that may have led to these movements. Ten “bridges of God” (borrowing

McGavran's term) are enumerated. Among them are faith, prayer, vernacular Bible translations, patient witness, the Holy Spirit and communication. There are some helpful ideas here that suggest fruitful areas for further research. Even, it is argued, features of Islam have been important: Islam "contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction" (243). This, I think, is a significant insight. Many Muslims they interviewed become interested in Christ on reading recently produced vernacular versions of the Qur'an. For many, it appears, the mystique felt on hearing the Qur'an in an unintelligible language (as Arabic is for the clear majority of Muslims) has been shattered.

We have much to be thankful for in the work that has been carried out by Garrison and his team. The study is let down, however, by a few malapropisms: "1,500 Chinese children died while interred [rather than 'interned'] in refugee camps" (55); "Christian tribes jousted [rather than 'jostled'] for centuries with neighbouring Cushitic Muslims" (66); revenge is "extracted" (rather than "exacted") (78, 163, 181); and Imperial Russia is said to be in "ascension" (rather than "ascendancy") (145). Furthermore, this reader is mystified how superpowers might be able to "dominate... through their predecessors" (6).

In the analysis that follows, however, I seek to unpack three more serious concerns that I have with the book. It is hoped that further research will address these concerns and thereby give us a more robust account of the wind in the house of Islam.

Definitional Ambiguities

The author informs us that he used a phenomenological, or descriptive, approach to examining these movements (31). This seems eminently reasonable. There is a lack of clarity, however, in discussions of "conversion" and "religion". The former is defined in theological terms – "converting to faith in Christ" (35) – and distinguished from a change of the latter. Hence, "Changing religion, at least in the Christian faith, has never been the point of true conversion, though it often follows true conversion and has historically been associated with true conversion" (36). A change of religion does seem to be expected. So Islam is identified as a "life orientation" that one must "turn from" in "true conversion" (36). Thus also, the subjects of the study are designated as "Muslim-background believers" (36 and *passim*) suggesting that the believers have left Islam behind.

Garrison reports that rarely did the "Muslim-background believers" of their research wrestle with divided loyalty demands of Christ and Muhammad. Clearly for most of those interviewed there was no conflict in their allegiance: "Muhammad had faded into irrelevance" (114). The complex nature of religious identity, however, comes out in some reports: in West

Africa, for instance, we are told that “To be Fulani, a Kanuri, a Susu, a Bambara, a White or Black Moor is to be a Muslim.” He goes on, adding that, “To reject this core identity is tantamount to suicide. Consequently, the Muslim movements to Christ in the north have a much more tenuous identification with the Christian religion and culture, while still exhibiting a deep commitment to the person of Christ and to the authority of the New Testament” (166). This all begs the question that is hardly addressed: what is to be the Muslim-background believer’s ongoing relationship to Islam?

Individual stories are important to the author but the focus of the work is on *movements*. This is so because throughout the Muslim world individuals are only significant in their communities: “In movements to Christ, it is not the individuals, the single converts, who represent the nature of a true movement. It is the communities, beginning with the families that produce the swelling ranks of true *movements* of Muslims to Christ” (173, original emphasis).

A movement of Muslims to Christ is defined, somewhat artificially, as “at least 100 new church starts or 1,000 baptisms that occur over a two-decade period” (5). Garrison asserts that such movements are taking place in “more than 70 separate locations in 29 nations. The author acknowledges that the sample movements they researched may not be representative of all the movements in a “room” (30). He says that, though “movements often begin with some measure of outside stimulus, at some point they become driven indigenously and so become independent of those outside, foreign forces” (37). It seems no attempt is made to compare those that have had outside stimulus and those that have not, which would seem to be a weakness, especially as many outsiders (inevitably, given that the book is in English and published in the USA) who read this account would be interested in how they might be able to help in other analogous situations.

Critical Deficiencies

The author frequently seems to lack a critical perspective. Thus, he reports the standard orthodox history of Muhammad (68) without even a hint that historiography is increasingly casting doubt on many of these assertions. In some reports the author’s writing becomes quite subjective – “I had the distinct impression that he had never sat so close to a foreigner in his life” (113).

In many cases, it seems, information from movement leaders is relied heavily upon. So, for example, we are told that in Eastern South Asia “Their leaders say these Insiders number in the tens or perhaps hundreds of thousands” (99). He goes on to qualify this report by saying that, “At this point it is impossible to know.” If it is impossible to know, then isn’t it just a little bit irresponsible to report the leaders? One thinks this is especially

pertinent of Bangladesh as here multiple mission agencies have often peddled influence on such nascent movements, buying workers by offering higher salaries. When material opportunities are so significant it is incumbent on researchers to take assertions with more than a degree of caution.

A wide discrepancy is reported between missionary Roger Dixon's estimate of "over 12 million Javanese Muslims who had converted to Protestant Christianity" and that of the *World Christian Encyclopedia* which "could account for no more than 2.82 million Christians on Java..., many of whom would have come from non-Muslim backgrounds and nearly half of whom were Roman Catholic" (57). No attempt, however, is made to resolve this discrepancy. Clearly someone's estimate is wildly inaccurate, if not both. It is inadequate to simply report such figures without comment.

In commenting on reported movements in "Western South Asia" Garrison offers us a footnote to the effect that the plausibility of an unpublished indigenous survey, conducted in 2010 and purportedly "revealing tens of thousands of baptisms" is "highly disputed by many" (273). Why is this comment put in a footnote? Surely the fact that "many" are disputing the claim demands a fuller discussion in the body of the book. There is clearly much going on below the surface, to which we are not privy. Although negative reports are sometimes included there seems to be a reluctance to engage with such possibilities. We are left then with a considerable measure of doubt as to the veracity of the research.

Further related to these claims, it has also been documented in some parts of the Muslim world that those who enter the church often do so through a revolving door. The Middle Eastern theologian and activist, Nour Armagan (pseudonym) asserts that "in the Islamic world, around 80% of new followers of Christ give up on their new faith after two years, and by the fifth year only a small proportion remain as Christians.¹ Research, supervised by me, in one overwhelmingly Muslim country has reported that "probably over 50%" of professing believers have left the church, though very few say they are turning back to Islam.² It is hoped that another edition of Garrison's research will include some carefully elucidated data on this phenomenon and provide some necessary analysis.

Missiological Vulnerabilities

Garrison's missiology tends to be reductionist and pragmatic. This can be seen in his emphasis on the human dynamic rather than the divine. The

¹ Nour Armagan, "The Gospel, The Global Church and the World of Islam", in *Christ Our Reconciler: Gospel/Church/World* (J. E. M. Cameron, ed.; Nottingham: Inter-Varsity, 2012), 88.

² From an MTh dissertation. Source withheld for security reasons.

significance of prayer, for instance, is that it “has been the first and primary strategy for virtually every new initiative into the Muslim world. It is the great unseen force that has both stimulated Christians to venture in the House of Islam and pierced the hearts of Muslims whom they encounter there” (237). Prayer here seems to be simply a tool to get the job done. This is surely a shallow view of the means the Lord has given us to have fellowship with him and to bring to him our cares and concerns. The work of the Holy Spirit, likewise, is largely restricted to the extraordinary – dreams, visions and the like (238-39) – rather than in the ordinary lives of people living as Jesus’ disciples in their work and family life, and seeking opportunities to talk of him to their friends and relatives.

Furthermore, the author has an over-riding concern in the *strategic*. Thus, he uses military tones in talking of respondents to the gospel as “beachhead communities” (150). Such talk plays into the hands of those who see the call to discipleship to Christ as nothing short of a crusade against Islam. How can we possibly communicate the radical, self-sacrificing message of discipleship effectively when such careless writing is out in the public domain? No doubt the book is the subject of intense scrutiny by leaders throughout the Muslim world. What will they think when they read such a sentence? Is this simply a careless slip or is the writer here displaying a territorial Christendom-style attitude? When the Lord Jesus announced that his kingdom is not “of this world” (John 18:36) he was putting paid once and for all to any confusion of his kingdom with earthly kingdoms. Talk about beachheads surely simply foments antagonism to the gospel.

Ironically, Garrison seems to be aware of the weaknesses of pragmatic approaches to ministry. So, in discussing the progress of the gospel in West Africa, he criticises “Western expressions of Christianity which emphasize rational precepts, doctrines and programs”. The people welcome, rather, the offer of “power to defeat the challenges of curses, physical illness, mental illness, and demonic possession” that come from a bold offer of the gospel (166). But how different is this, when power is seen simply in utilitarian terms, as another means to an end? Never mind what the Lord Jesus said about loving “the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your *mind* and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). And never mind that the Lord Jesus himself often declined to *use* his power (Mark 1:38). A solid biblical theology must underpin all efforts at contextualisation of the gospel – including among those for whom power is so important. This demands more than superficial readings of the Gospels.

In like manner, then, contextualisation is treated as a *tool* for effective communication by outsiders (245) rather than a process in which indigenous Christ-followers reflect on Scripture and work out their discipleship (with or without foreign interaction). A pragmatic approach to contextualisation soon runs into trouble when new tools for ministry are

touted. Thus, the author can cite “19th century American revivalism” as a good example of cultural adaptation, “important for the contextualization of the gospel in its day and time” (248). A careful analysis of 19th century American revivalism, however, shows some serious deficiencies in theology and practice that continue to have negative consequences today as the methods have been exported around the world.³ Far from an appropriate adaptation, revivalist methodology emerged out of an uncritical adoption of Enlightenment ideas of humanity. If careful, critical contextualisation of the gospel message had been going on in the 19th century such deficiencies would have been dealt with at source, to the benefit of contemporary Americans as well as the recipients of their gospel efforts. One cannot but wonder, however, whether such ideas continue to have a detrimental effect not only on local believers in other countries but also on missiology in the West.

This article has been quite critical of several aspects of the research that is recorded in this book. My hope is that it will sharpen the critical faculties of researchers in the house of Islam that will, in turn, enable better approaches to ministry among Muslims. But it is not just Muslim ministry that is in need of critical reflection. Approaches to work among Hindus and Buddhists, likewise, to say nothing of others, will also benefit from the lessons one can learn from reflection on such work.

Mark Pickett

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³ Iain H. Murray, *Revival and Revivalism: The Making and Marring of American Evangelicalism 1750-1858* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1994).

BOOK REVIEWS

Divided we Fall: Overcoming a history of Christian disunity

Luder G. Whitlock, P&R Publishing Co., 2017, 213pp, £11.19/£7.75 (Kindle)

Luder Whitlock was president of Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) from 1978–2001. During his time there the seminary grew to become one of the ten largest in North America. For eight years he was president of the Fellowship of Evangelical Seminary Presidents, and also served on the boards of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) and the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. The list of his involvement in various evangelical organisations is extensive and this gives a weight to the book as he appeals for unity across the evangelical divides.

Ligon Duncan, who writes the forward, has admired Whitlock's dedicated service to promote unity across denominational lines with an unwavering commitment to truth and a convictional kindness in dealing with others. The book has a definite focus on the American context, and is replete with examples and experiences, in particular the divisions and mergers of American Presbyterianism. Whitlock states, "it will quickly be apparent that this was written primarily for Presbyterian Reformed evangelicals". He summarises his goal: "This is a call to repentance for our failure to be the church God wants us to be."

The first chapter outlines several biblical principles that show the importance of working for church unity. After the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of humanity, he turns to look at the doctrine of the church: "The New Testament acknowledges only one church, comprising all those who are in Christ." He acknowledges that the early churches were not a corporate organisation but a network of personal contacts. He writes, "Given such an undeniably clear emphasis by Jesus on the importance of unity, how can his people afford to neglect it or treat it lightly?"

The second chapter highlights some lessons from church history. On the early church he summarises, "As ecumenical scholars Rouse and Neill observed, 'If this great age of the church was marked by endless division, it was marked also by endless efforts for the restoration of unity'." During the middle ages the focus of church unity moved from doctrinal unity (the creeds) to organisational unity (the authority of the pope). At the Reformation, when Luther called for a church council, "The Pope refused, and, by blocking a council meeting, he essentially destroyed the last chance of maintaining the unity of the Western church." The Reformers were assured that they were the true perpetuators of the catholic church. They "continued to prize the concept of one holy, catholic (universal), and

apostolic church". Calvin desired unity between Protestant churches, writing, "Amongst the greatest evils of our century must be counted the fact that the churches are so divided from one another that there is scarcely even a human relationship between us".

Jumping forward to the last century Whitlock speaks of "two major religious earthquakes", the first of which he calls the "Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy", the second he doesn't name but says it hit America in the 1960s and 1970s. (I guess he is referring to the Charismatic movement but he seems to side-step this significant issue.)

Chapter three is entitled "The communion of Saints", and after summarising America's social transformation through urbanisation, and the loss of social community, he reminds us that churches should be communities of love not just preaching centres and that it is impossible to live the Christian life in the abstract; we need a church body life. He considers that the Reformation and the Fundamentalist controversy became the "two defining events for the church" leaving a legacy of "an enduring vigilance for doctrinal orthodoxy as a high priority. The mere suggestion of compromise became repugnant to evangelicals". Again, "these experiences engendered a mentality that minimised a concern for unity, with lasting deleterious effects". Again, "Evangelicalism, molded by this negative reactive behaviour, morphed into a different kind of Christianity."

In chapter four he deals with Sectarianism, Schism and Ecumenism. Before the Fundamentalist controversy, "Protestants in America generally regarded themselves as members of a family of related religious bodies called denominations. They were heirs of a common faith and saw themselves as part of a larger body called the church." With numerous examples he exposes both the sectarian spirit of liberal Presbyterianism towards evangelical Presbyterians and also the sectarianism *between* evangelicals. But what then is schism? "Essentially, schism is a separation from the organized church without just cause. This is different from sectarianism". Again, liberal and evangelical examples are given. Finally, after pronouncing the old Ecumenical Movement as "dead", he supports the approach of the NAE, which he considers a "potential umbrella organisation" for the "dynamic network of evangelical ministries" such as Acts29, Together for the Gospel, Desiring God and the Gospel Coalition. He is enthused by "this new evangelical ecumenism", quoting the Manila Manifesto as an example among others. He appeals, "Shouldn't we find fresh motivation to prioritize the unfulfilled Protestant mission to achieve greater visible unity in the aftermath of the Reformation?" Again, "shouldn't it also be a biblical mission to work toward a united evangelical Protestantism to the greatest degree possible?"

In the final two chapters, he presses the appeal home, working to overcome evangelical apathy towards evangelical unity. He quotes Carl

Henry: "If unity based on theological concession is undesirable, disunity alongside theological agreement is inexcusable." He also offers "a few suggestions regarding ways in which we may seek a greater expression of unity and fellowship". We should love one another, learn how to build trust, really listen to each other's different views, be kind, and discuss *how* we should seek the unity of the Spirit. He brings the book to a conclusion with two important statements: "Believers today are justified, as were the Reformers, in separating from those who deny the gospel and refuse to place themselves under the authority of God's Word." But also, "It should be equally apparent that the fragmented church of the modern period is a tragic expression of human sinfulness, and greater priority should have been given and should be given to achieving the oneness for which Jesus prayed."

Divided we Fall is easy and interesting to read; its central appeal is for gospel unity. The book challenges our apathy and entuses us to express primary evangelical unity across secondary divisions. Many pastors and churches are indifferent to issues of interdenominational unity in the gospel, and *Divided we Fall* could encourage an increase in convictional church unity.

There are some matters over which I could not agree with the author. Whitlock outlines the threefold categories of Primary, Secondary and Tertiary issues. He affirms that, "primary doctrines are essential to being a Christian. The secondary doctrines could be those that are essential to being Presbyterian" or whatever other denominational distinctives. Tertiary are nonessentials within the local church or denomination. But who decides which issues fit into which categories? He approves of the EPC position of neutrality regarding women elders and regarding charismatic gifts: "Confessional Presbyterianism transcended these and other differences." I think he is wrong to regard female elders as a tertiary matter.

He gives the example of a Wheaton college professor who claimed that Muslims "worship the same God". This he rightly affirms as a gospel issue, it is a primary issue. But the next example – a Christian college announcing that they would accept faculty who were engaged in same-sex marriages – this he considers to be only a moral issue, "not a doctrine essential to salvation". But surely the doctrine of repentance from sin is essential to salvation? Homosexuality cannot be put in the same category as alcohol, tobacco, movies and dancing.

I think the book was weakened by separating the pursuit of the unity of the church from the pursuit of the purity of the church. By doing so, the book fails to give the necessary warnings regarding the ease with which compromising accommodation takes place. For example, Whitlock seems to shake his head at Piper's confrontation of an emerging church pastor who rejects penal substitution. This imbalanced perspective has emerged because he has focussed exclusively on unity.

Underlying it all, I think he fails to properly define a Christian in terms of both faith and repentance and this results in an ambiguous foundation for church unity. For these reasons, it is not a book I would recommend, but its central appeal for gospel unity should be pursued.

Nathan Pomeroy

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How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets

Peter J Gentry, Crossway, 2017, 141pp, £13.76, £6.71 (Kindle)

The books of the Old Testament prophets form a substantial proportion of the Bible and yet for many Christians they constitute largely uncharted territory. With the possible exception of the book of Jonah and isolated passages which explicitly foretell the coming of the Messiah, we frequently find ourselves at sea. Unfamiliar place names, combined with alien imagery and an apparent absence of any overall structure within many of the books can leave us intimidated and overawed. Judging from the widespread neglect of the Twelve Minor Prophets and large portions of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel in the public preaching of the Word, those entrusted with the task of expounding the Scriptures do not feel any more at home in the writings of the prophets than those to whom they minister. But in this slim and readable volume by Peter Gentry, professor of Old Testament Interpretation at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, help is at hand.

Professor Gentry argues that:

A central problem in the Christian church, especially during the last one hundred years, is that we have been reading the Gospels of the New Testament, the narratives of the Old Testament and the book of Acts, and the Hebrew prophets of the Old Testament and the New Testament (e.g., Revelation), including apocalyptic prophecies, exactly the same way we read Romans (13).

Yet he contends that the prophets must be understood as an entirely different type of literature from a New Testament epistle – as different as a cartoon is from the front page of a newspaper. In seven chapters, he proceeds to set out seven characteristics or features of prophetic literature in the Bible which provide us with the keys – or “cues” – that will help open up the prophets to us.

The first point to be stressed is that: “*Everything* in the prophets is based upon the covenant made between God and Israel during the exodus from Egypt, especially the expression or form of the covenant as it is found in the book of Deuteronomy” (15). The promises and warnings of the prophets, and even the very words and sentences they use, are based on the expansion and

renewal of the Sinaitic covenant found in the final book of the Pentateuch. Professor Gentry uses Isaiah 5 and 6 as an example of how the prophet called the people back to the covenant. He notes that “the biggest part of the message of the biblical prophets has nothing to do with predicting the future”. Their chief concern is, rather, to explain “how the word of God, already revealed and received in the past, applies to present circumstances and situations” (30).

Literary structure

Professor Gentry repeatedly emphasises that the literary structure of each prophetic book is fundamental to interpretation (18, 21, 28, 51, 60, 107), and notes that the normal pattern of Hebrew literature is to consider topics in a *recursive* manner – i.e. the topic is progressively repeated. Taking the prophecy of Isaiah by way of example, he demonstrates how the book can be divided into seven separate sections in which the prophet “goes around the same topic like a kaleidoscope, looking at it from different perspectives” (18). He likens this repetition to the two speakers in a stereo system. Each speaker provides music which is both different and the same. The principle is illustrated from different genres of Old Testament literature, including the creation accounts of Genesis 1:1-2:3 and Genesis 2:4-3:24.

Other features of Hebrew literature that receive attention include the couplet, which forms the basis of almost all Hebrew poetry; word pairs, in which two words communicate an idea that is fuller and greater than either of the two words considered individually; and chiasms, in which topics are communicated and repeated according to different patterns and arrangements. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Professor Gentry adopts something of a recursive approach himself, as he returns to his key point that when we study the prophets, “we cannot read the text in a linear manner, like we read scientific texts derived from a Greek and Roman heritage. Only when we grasp the literary methods of ancient Hebrew writers can we properly understand the text” (50-51).

Turning again to Isaiah, he demonstrates how attention to the literary structure of the book can help us see how the central theme of the transformation of Zion is presented seven times, as the prophet maps the path from a corrupt Zion in the old creation to a renewed and transformed Zion in the new creation:

In other words, we can divide the book of Isaiah into seven distinct conversations or discourses. In each one Isaiah is dealing with the topic of how we get from a corrupt Jerusalem in the first creation – a Jerusalem characterized by covenant disloyalty due to idolatry and lack of social justice – to a renewed, restored, transformed Zion in a new creation. (52)

After giving a brief overview of the seven sections (1:2-2:4; 2:5-4:6; 5:1-12:6; 13:1-27:13; 28:1-37:38; 38:1-55:13; 56:1-66:24), the author demonstrates how repetition can serve as an aid to interpretation. When confronted with a difficult passage, we may be able to identify a parallel passage in another section where the same topic is treated: "We need to listen to these seven speakers all at once in order to catch the idea Isaiah is communicating" (58).

Purpose of the writing prophets

The question is raised as to why the words of the earlier prophets were not put into writing as were the words of the later prophets. Professor Gentry's response is that as a result of a breaking point being reached in the covenant relationship between Yahweh and Israel, it became necessary to record the messages of the prophets in order to establish the Lord's faithfulness. He outlines five reasons for the predictive element in the prophetic writings:

- It distinguished Yahweh from the idols worshiped by the nations surrounding Israel and by faithless Israelites.
- It was necessary to explain the exile. Without the messages of the prophets, the people might have concluded that the gods of the nations were more powerful than Yahweh.
- It pointed to the fact that deliverance would take time. During the long weary years of waiting, the Lord's people could derive comfort and hope from the promise of salvation.
- It demonstrated the sovereignty of Yahweh over the nations.
- It proved the trustworthiness of the word of Yahweh.

Professor Gentry writes:

Predictions given concerning the future were made known publicly and *written down* at a specific date and time and attested publicly or verified by witnesses. Later on, when these predictions came true, people would see that Yahweh is indeed able to predict and determine the future (34).

In many of the prophetic writings, predictions relating to the distant future are placed side by side with predictions concerning the near future. When the more immediate predictions were fulfilled, the prophet was validated and the people could have confidence in predictions made in relation to the distant future.

Oracles concerning the nations

Many readers of the Old Testament prophets have been perplexed by the presence of long passages devoted to nations in the ancient world that have

long ceased to exist. What possible relevance could they have to us today? Do we really need them? Professor Gentry addresses this question head-on. He begins by setting the oracles against the background of the book of Deuteronomy, and in particular the Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32. He demonstrates how Moses' Song sums up the current history of Israel and predicts its future history through to the end of time, showing that "the relationship of the foreign nations and their future is connected directly to the future of Israel" (60). Professor Gentry writes:

Throughout all the stanzas of this song run two themes: (1) negatively, God will bring judgment upon the arrogant idolatry of the foreign nations, and (2), positively, he will fulfil the Abrahamic covenant by using Israel to bring deliverance and salvation to the rest of the world. God called Abraham and blessed him so that he might bless all the nations of the world (Acts 3:25-26).

This song and the messages in the prophets concerning the foreign nations would bring huge comfort and encouragement to the people of God. The oracles show that Yahweh controls and governs not just Israel but the entire world. He is sovereign over all nations. Only Yahweh is sovereign. He alone defines what is right and wrong, he alone makes future plans that shall certainly come to pass, and he alone acts in history. No one and no nation can challenge his right, spurn his will, or thwart his actions (65).

Professor Gentry then proceeds to give an illuminating overview of the first group of five oracles found in Isaiah 13-27, showing "how God plans to judge the nations for arrogant idolatry and also how he calls and invites them to find salvation through Israel and particularly through a future king of Israel" (65-66). Viewed in this light, far from being tedious and boring, the oracles concerning the nations may be read with great interest and delight: "God is sovereign over the world. He will hold the nations accountable for worshiping the creation instead of the Creator. The only form of deliverance and salvation is found in Israel and in her coming King" (70).

Typology and apocalyptic language

In his consideration of how the prophets describe the future, Professor Gentry devotes a chapter to typology followed by a chapter on apocalyptic language. He advances the view that typology is governed by four factors:

- correspondence between events, people, places, etc., of one time, and events, people, places, etc., of a later time;
- escalation from type to antitype so that the later event, person, or thing is much better and greater than what foreshadows it;
- biblical warrant in the form of exegetical evidence that indicates that what the text is dealing with is intended to be a model or pattern for something to follow in history;
- the progression of the covenants throughout the narrative plot structure of the Bible creates, controls and develops the typological structures across the canon of Scripture (90).

Professor Gentry focuses on how the exodus served as a model or pattern to describe not only the deliverance from Babylonian exile, but also the subsequent coming of the King who would bring spiritual rescue from slavery to sin. In the interpretation of types, he insists that, “The literal meaning is the meaning as *determined by the rules of the particular genre or kind of literature.*” Therefore,

according to the interpretive principle of using images and the language of God’s deliverance in the past to describe a coming salvation, we form in our minds only the idea that no obstacles will stand in God’s way when he gathers the remnant of his people (85).

There is no warrant for expecting the antitype to conform to the type literally in every detail:

The debate between literal interpretation and spiritual interpretation is entirely bogus. When the Reformers talked about the “literal sense” of the text, they meant the meaning intended by the author *according to the rules of the genre of literature* being used to communicate the message (124).

In his chapter on apocalyptic language, Professor Gentry lists a number of features that normally characterise this genre of literature: (i) a narrative framework, (ii) an arrangement of human history into periods, (iii) the mediation of revelation by a heavenly messenger, (iv) a representation of history from God’s vantage point, (v) colourful metaphors and symbols, and (vi) a note of future hope in present trouble. He demonstrates that apocalyptic language can be used both to describe the event and explain its meaning, and further argues that expository teaching must go beyond merely communicating the content of the text; the preacher must also *explain the form* and show how it carries the meaning.

“The Already and Not Yet”

In a concluding chapter entitled “The Already and Not Yet”, Professor Gentry draws attention to the way in which the prophets of the Old Testament frequently put everything together in one grand picture and did not clearly distinguish between the first and second comings of the Messiah. They did not see that there would be a gap of at least 2,000 years between the revelation of grace at Christ’s first coming and the exercise of judgment at his return. On this basis, he cautions that,

[W]e cannot construct a chronology of events from the prophets of the Old Testament concerning the coming of the King and the coming of his kingdom. We need the teaching of Jesus and the apostles to clarify which prophecies apply to the first coming and which apply to the second coming. It is even possible that some prophecies can apply to both at the same time (122).

As a bonus, *How to Read and Understand the Biblical Prophets* contains an appendix, briefly describing the literary structure of the New Testament book of Revelation as analysed by Andrew Fountain. This is provided on the basis that, “while John is writing in Greek, this book follows the characteristics of the Hebrew prophets” (125).

To sum up, this is a most helpful and stimulating title, which will be instructive to both preachers and general readers alike. The disproportionate attention given to the prophecy of Isaiah gives the book a certain uneven feel, but that is a minor criticism given the range of valuable pointers that it provides to assist in the interpretation of a neglected part of Scripture. Perhaps in a subsequent edition or a sequel, Professor Gentry may be persuaded to treat us to a more detailed consideration of the literary structure of some of the other prophetic writings.

Norman Wells

Director, Family Education Trust

Making All Things New: Restoring Joy to the Sexually Broken

David Powlison, Crossway, 2017, 128pp, £9.05/£6.71 (Kindle)

David Powlison has served for more than 35 years at the *Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation* in Philadelphia, and is its current Executive Director. He is senior editor of the *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, and has written extensively on biblical counseling and on the relationship between faith and psychology.

Whilst many books today seek to offer counsel on issues of sexual immorality and many other books seek to do so on sexual victimisation – and often with Christians in mind – these topics are rarely treated together. In this, his latest book, David Powlison writes to offer counsel to those struggling with either of these problems or with both of them. He is aware that he is attempting to cover a lot of ground in a relatively short space.

Though short, the book is not superficial, and despite its occasional use of big words, is easy to read. The sentences are punchy and artfully alliterated. Many expressions are pithy and memorable. There is a lot of repetition, which helps to glue the lines of thought together. The impressions given are strong and clear. The author does not balk at tackling difficult subjects and the reader does not squirm when he tackles them.

Powlison’s argument is that the gospel addresses the issues underlying life’s problems. Everyone needs the gospel; and Christ’s work of renewal is for all aspects of life, including our sexuality. Jesus begins where we are. The book looks at both sin *and* affliction (at what we do *and* at what happens to

us). Though different in kind, these are yet intertwined in our human condition. Pro-active sins inflamed by immoral desires are different from reactive sins emerging through fear and the desire for protection, yet both can be renewed and sanctified by the gospel. The gospel is for sinners *and* sufferers. Whilst the book challenges behaviours which today in the West are becoming cultural norms, it is aimed primarily at believers. The presenting issues within the context of the church can be tackled today through a whole variety of pastoral ministries, but the dynamic by which both the immoral *and* the victims are renewed has a core similarity, which Christ alone can address.

Generally, books on immorality are written for men and books on victimisation for women. But, as Powlison maintains, sexual sin and suffering cannot be rigidly “sex-typed”. Also, grace crosses male and female boundaries: “no temptation has overcome you that is not common to man...” (1 Cor 10:13). So the Lord Jesus Christ engages us in his work of renewing the immoral *and* the fearful – and aims to purify both.

The book begins with a vivid illustration and gathers momentum through an extended metaphor. The trajectory illustration is about fabric quality. Our sexual lives are somewhere on a spectrum between a clean, bright, luminous quilt (the pure end of the spectrum to which we are being renewed) and a dirty, sordid, oily rag (the experience and feeling many of us have with regards to our own sexuality). The book’s main metaphor is one of “battle”, which is used effectively throughout the remainder of the book. Believers, violators and violated alike, are in a battle. The illustration and the metaphor are appropriate, but to my mind might have been connected more clearly.

Powlison states that God has a positive view of sex and a negative view of immorality. And whilst God has a deep concern for the abused, he is also concerned for the immoral, whether their actions are consensual or criminal, that they, too, be renewed. Working against God’s work of renewal are temptations, coming by allurement *and* affliction, by a variety of paths, through a range of provocations. “The world, the flesh and the devil” form a complex of formidable foes that can hardly be disentangled from one another. And the battle, basically between obedience and disobedience, can be fierce. But there are aids to help in the fight.

The reader is led through the importance of conscience, and the value of having a good conscience, shaped through obedience to the gospel. That “we are all deviants in one way or another”, would suggest the author is working from within the doctrine of total depravity.

Powlison develops the helpful insight that those battling do well to look *long-term*. There are no quick-fixes; sanctification is life-long. Turning from sin and shame is a gradual process. Life never operates in cruise-control. So we cannot put a timetable on God’s delivering of us from either sexual sins or from results of sexual victimisation. Neither ought we to judge others’

behaviours rashly. Whilst God prunes, he is always patient. It is God's prerogative to bring matters to completion (Phil 1:6, a verse Powlison utilises often, and helpfully so). And in the battle, the *direction* in which we are heading is key, more so than the speed or distance travelled. With Luther and Calvin in support, repentance is seen as life-long, a way of thinking, a life-style. Being always with his people, God will prompt them to repent if their direction becomes wayward. God loves them and is always for them. Despite his sin, David understood by faith that God would remember his mercies more than David's sin.

Sinful thoughts and actions dethrone God in our lives. But growing sanctification deepens the significance of the Saviour who sees our hearts and still loves us. As believers grow they become more aware of the subtlety of the struggle. And "as we get better we get worse at the same time" [!]. It is healthy to know one's poverty of spirit, need of the Saviour and God's faithfulness. While the fight is long, and deep, Jesus' goal is to make us like himself in real life – and so we realise that his love is greater than we first perceive. Whilst, as the author says, Jesus may address the unruly and lustful in a manner different from the fainthearted, the author's case may have been helped had he supplied more concrete examples.

And renewal in one area of life can affect other areas as well; sexual problems rarely come alone. Attitudes and motives can intertwine and affect the topography of the battle-field. The author gives a lengthy and helpful case study. Throughout the book he seeks to consider the redemption of sex holistically. Victims often identify themselves as "survivors". They have set up "self-asserted boundaries". But their attitudes sometimes need a lot of cleaning up. Post-abuse anger, loneliness and feeling misunderstood are areas the gospel also addresses.

God's direction is that you treat others properly and that you be persuaded that good sex (within marriage alone) is normal. And what matters are the moral choices you make *today*. Other voices will compete to suppress God's voice, but he is always with you, so you must talk to him and walk with him through the problem. It is crucial to ask if God is with you in the situation. You must be assured whenever you find yourself in trouble that the God who is always for you is full of free mercy.

Powlison writes with a desire to help people at the practical level. He has a helpful realism about marriage, writing to help those who have practised or who still practise sexual immorality (according to biblical standards) or who have been victims of sexual betrayal or violation. He writes also to those who may be in a position to offer counsel to people in either or both categories. He is aware that the two issues are not always neatly compartmentalised, but that one can affect the other, and also be affected by various other theological-ethical issues.

Would I recommend this book? Yes. Do I think it could benefit those in the battle? Very much so! I could happily recommend it both to church members struggling with either sexual sin or sexual suffering and to counselors seeking to help them. It might even be used “evangelistically” to point out from a biblical perspective what is sexually sinful and what is not, and how we might respond biblically to either.

On a wider front, Powlison uses Scripture texts respectfully to support, and sometimes “proof-text”, his arguments, but his sensitivity to the original context of these texts varies. This means that texts used to address particular pastoral issues can have their use and interpretation influenced by the issue itself. Similarly, because human sexuality is something to be renewed and sanctified, it is a subject properly incorporated within the doctrine of sanctification. This being the case – as some argue – the pastoral issue is better brought to the biblical-theological framework (rather than the texts being brought to the pastoral issue). Powlison communicates well an underlying awareness of relevant theology, but it is not always clear which way his method is working – a more complex subject.

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The Benedict Option

Rod Dreher, Penguin Random House, 2017, 262pp, £14.25/£10.99 (Kindle)

Conservative American columnist Rod Dreher wants to save the world. Or at least he wants to preserve the church long enough that it can rebuild Western civilisation after its inevitable collapse. If nothing else, Dreher plays for the long game.

The path the church must tread if it is to survive: follow St. Benedict. Abandon fond illusions of “capturing the culture for Christ” and follow Benedict into the woods, hunker down in blessed isolation from the surrounding culture, and become really good at being the church. *Then* we shall be the kind of church worthy of saving the world.

There are more nuances and qualifications, but that’s the gist. Some of his qualifications ring a bit hollow, though. For instance, he keeps telling his readers that he is not being alarmist, generally right after he has told a scary story about someone losing their job or child or church to “liquid modernity”, the antagonist of our tale (previously called “acidic modernity” in his columns at *The American Conservative*).

The book begins by (naturally) sounding the alarm, showing how the “great flood” (he’s fond of deluge imagery) is swamping the remnant of

“orthodox” Christendom. By “orthodox” he means all good conservative Christians: Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic or conservative Protestant. The particulars of denomination and theology concern him little here (an issue to which we shall return presently). Newly aggressive secularism should alert the church to its true peril. He traces the roots of our cultural crisis using metaphors of cultural decline (e.g. Ostrogoths, Visigoths and Vandals at the gates of Rome). Drawing loosely on analyses from both Radical Orthodoxy and Charles Taylor, he pins the inception of our present crisis on medieval nominalism’s critique of metaphysical realism, the idea that there is a *way things really are*. William of Ockham tried to preserve God’s freedom but actually opened the door to increasingly man-centred and constructivist ways of seeing the world that have landed us in radical individualism, the sexual revolution and gay marriage. It’s more complex, of course, but that’s the upshot: abandoning realism means abandoning spiritual sanity.

He then relates the Benedictine origin story, how through discipline and strategic withdrawal, Benedict was able to shepherd the Christian faith through the dark and barbaric ages to come. The metaphor is compelling: we too face a dark age and we need a fortress. We face a deluge and need an ark. Dreher recommends the Benedictine Rule as the antidote. It can be applied outside the monastery: to a Catholic neighbourhood, a Christian school or the household as a mini-monastery. The moral: we can overcome the approaching darkness through intentional communities that practice discipline, withdraw from the corrosive parts of society (especially popular culture), and go deep into our own traditions. Then he explores various challenges the Church faces: politics, the shallowness of the contemporary church, modern disintegration of community, secular education, discrimination against Christian teachers and other occupations (bakers, etc.), the new sexual ethic (or lack thereof), and technology (especially the internet and social media). In each case, the solutions are similar: intentional communities born of discipline and strategic withdrawal.

Is Dreher’s message relevant for British Evangelicals? His target audience seems to be exhausted American Christian culture warriors, worn out from decades of battle with the liberal élites, now (temporarily) reinvigorated and hopeful in the time of Trump and resurgent “values politics”. Dreher comes alongside them and says in soothing tones, “You’ve fought well, but it’s a losing effort. Christian political activism is doomed for now. Come away. The battle’s over, but the war is just begun. Time to dig in and wait, faithful through this dark night until we can re-emerge.” That message – part alarm, part reassurance – should be enticing to British Evangelicals as well. They, too, feel alienated and vulnerable in the face of local and national authorities who are, if anything, more aggressively secular than those in the States.

There are plenty of conservative British Christians who already see cultural withdrawal as the road to faithfulness.

Let us assess his message. *The Benedict Option* surely has important merits. Dreher's prose is lucid and entertaining. The man is a master storyteller. His insistence that Christians need to recapture "thick community" and a "thick culture" is much needed. Secularism tends to thin communal ties and traditions, as polling data regarding Christians' knowledge of the Bible, doctrine and practice readily reveal. The natural drift of modernity tends towards the fetishising of individuals' desires. We need heart reformation and communities that can speak truth and grace deep into each other's lives. All of this is true and necessary, and Dreher should be rightly commended.

But is pursuing intentional, "thick" community necessarily at odds with engaging surrounding culture (even popular culture)? Dreher certainly thinks so. It is precisely here that I believe he departs from biblical orthodoxy in a number of ways:

1. Christ explicitly called his disciples (who, too, felt vulnerable in the face of a hostile culture) *into* the world, *into* the culture that surrounded them (John 17:14-18). So he calls us. We are simply not at liberty to abandon secular society to its own devices.

2. The strategic withdrawal Dreher advocates often seems more concerned with protecting one's own than with loving those outside our communities. (This is especially disturbing at a time when many American Evangelicals compulsively support a man who is *really* into building walls.) Dreher still largely operates within the American culture-war mentality, except he's choosing flight rather than fight. Failing to withdraw, for him, means losing our culture, our church, our children etc. There is another way: deep, intentional community that sends us out into loving engagement with the surrounding culture, including moderns in all their fluidity. A deep understanding of the gospel leads inevitably not to withdrawal for self-protection, but into mission to, and engagement with, culture.

3. Dreher's theology lacks any category of common grace. For him, secularism (and the popular culture it spawns) is simply evil, full stop. There is no recognition that even non-Christians are created in God's image, and therefore the culture they make will inevitably gesture towards God's goodness and light, despite their alienation from him. Culture will always be a mixture of good and bad, truth and lies. Christians need a nuanced understanding of non-Christian culture that Dreher apparently lacks.¹ The

¹ For a more nuanced approach, see Tim Keller, "Why Culture Matters", a *Q Ideas* talk delivered 6 September, 2015, available online at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWyn\]bvcZfs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWyn]bvcZfs), or chapter 4 of my own *Popologetics: Popular Culture in Christian Perspective* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2012).

result is a mixture of nostalgia and alarmism that compels withdrawal (versus Eccl 7:10).

4. In addressing “small-o orthodox” Christians (whether Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant Evangelical), he overlooks important doctrinal distinctions. There are evangelical precedents for this, such as Francis Schaeffer’s “co-belligerency” with Roman Catholics regarding abortion in the 1980s. However, I fear that Dreher’s blithe disregard for the particular differences between these traditions ends up producing an idol with a very different soteriology: cultural conservatism, entrenchment and discipline will save us, and perhaps the world as well. Conversely, if we fail to appease this god, the consequences are dire: the Church will collapse, and the West will be consumed by the darkness it has itself generated. Winter is coming.

This stands in stark contrast to the biblical message of hope that stems from worshipping a sovereign God who can save anyone, who preserves his Church through the darkest episodes, and will reign victorious at the end of history. Does *Sola Gratia* and *Solus Christus* mean nothing anymore? When Dreher points to Orthodox Jewish communities and Czechoslovak dissidents as models for Christian community, one detects a serious indifference to doctrine, or even the advocating of foreign gods.² Who needs grace? Who needs Jesus? We’ve got resilient conservative communities. We’ll be fine.

This may be a reflection of his own Eastern Orthodoxy: God saves only *through* certain disciplines and rituals. If you do the right things, God comes close and preserves. If not, abandon hope. But if God still reigns over history and saves by sovereign grace alone through the finished work of Christ, we can pursue intentional community *and* engage culture without fear.

There are plenty of evangelical churches in both the UK and the US that are both committed to intentional community *and* cultural engagement. If we wish to live faithfully in a post-Christian age, look primarily to such communities rather than Benedict. Hope in our gracious Saviour and be faithful to your calling. We have no other option.

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² On a related note, I kept wondering why Dreher never once mentioned the black church as the *obvious* model of cultural resistance in the face of a hostile majority culture. Czech Catholics, atheists and agnostics, yes. Orthodox Jews, yes. Black Protestant Christians, no. It may be that, like many conservative white Christians, Dreher has a significant blind spot with regard to racial injustice. To be fair, on p. 159 he does mention how Christian schools furthered racial segregation, but that is the only significant mention of race in the book.

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage: Critical Questions and Answers
 Jim Newheiser, P&R Publishing Co., 2017, 336pp, £12.94/£7.72 (Kindle)

In the recent deluge of marriage books by conservative evangelicals, one might cringe at the sight of another. But Newheiser isn't offering another evangelical take on marriage, and there is no saccharine anecdotal advice. Neither is it a "how-to" on marriage counselling. Dr. Newheiser is very much attempting to present the Bible's teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage. And his counselling background means he is well acquainted with the human condition and the pastoral devastation of failing Christian marriages.

As director of the Christian Counselling program, and Associate Professor in Practical Theology, at Reformed Theological Seminary (Charlotte), Dr. Newheiser has been involved in marriage counselling for over thirty years. His book consists of forty questions and answers in the form of forty brief chapters. He starts with the biblical foundations of marriage, such as: What is marriage? Is polygamy forbidden by Scripture? What are the responsibilities of husband and wife, and the permissibility of cohabitation. He then moves onto the foundations of divorce and remarriage: What is divorce? Why does God hate divorce? Why does he permit divorce? Should a Christian initiate divorce? And, of course, the teachings of Jesus and Paul on divorce and remarriage. From here he explores the controversies, particularly the "exceptive clauses" in Matthew 5 and 19, and unpacks the use of *porneia*, developing the argument that the biblical grounds for divorce are adultery and desertion. Remarriage is permitted only under these terms. In pastoral sensitivity and gospel optimism, however, Newheiser always seeks reconciliation (177) and offers some guidance on this (chapters 16-20).

Does biblical divorce exist?

Newheiser's contribution is really in his biblical handling of divorce from Deuteronomy 24, Malachi 2, Matthew 5 and 19, and 1 Corinthians 7, in response to many of the differing situations and painful complications of marital and sexual sin. Although it is impossible to address every scenario, Newheiser does an impressive job. He is all too aware of the uniqueness of each individual couple – so he is not prescriptive. And while there is perhaps a hint of proof-texting, Newheiser interacts with Scripture with refreshing clarity and thought. More should have been made of the Ephesians 5 marriage paradigm of the union between Christ and the church, but generally Newheiser presents God's design for marriage in a helpful and stimulating way.

Newheiser's high view of the marriage covenant means he is slow and careful in dealing with divorce. In witnessing the painful and destructive

nature of marital breakdown it is, in sympathy and broken-heartedness, tempting to encourage divorce and/or separation. Yet, Newheiser counsels us to remain faithful to Scripture, calling for reverence and biblical wisdom, for it is better for a millstone to be tied around our neck and drowned in the sea than to lead someone into an unbiblical, sinful divorce (Matt 18:6. Cf. Jas 3:1). Newheiser writes,

God hates divorce because it violates the two great commandments – love God and love your neighbor. Divorce is a defiant sin against the love we should have for God, who joins husband and wife in the marriage covenant and calls them to remain committed and faithful until death parts them. Divorce is also a sin against our neighbour, whom we are to love as ourselves (187).

Interacting with the Permanence View

In line with the Westminster Confession (see 24:5-6), Newheiser believes that God permits divorce on the grounds of adultery and desertion. He does interact with those who adhere to the permanence view and overlook the “exceptive clauses” of Matthew 5:32 (John Piper and James Montgomery Boice), as well as the opposing position of David Instone-Brewer who overemphasises the clause. Newheiser demonstrates flaws in their argument succinctly and with grace. This is helpful to those who are uncertain of the interpretative differences amongst evangelicals and haven’t yet formed their own opinion.

Weaknesses and recommendation

The work’s main weakness is in the brevity of its chapters and the breadth of its subject area, the inevitable gloss over many areas where depth and development is really required. For example, if you are looking for a detailed exposition of the biblical texts, then Stephen Clark’s *Putting Asunder: Divorce and Remarriage in Biblical and Pastoral Perspective* would better serve the reader. There is also need for further discussion on the subtleties of emotional and psychological abuse as grounds for divorce. However, I would certainly recommend this book to pastors and pastoral workers. It offers biblical clarity to those preparing for marriage or in marital difficulty, as well as those considering or pursuing divorce and/or remarriage. Simply, Newheiser’s work is a worthy addition if your library suffers from a lacuna in this critical area.

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The Christ of Wisdom: A Redemptive-Historical Exploration of the Wisdom Books of the Old Testament

O. Palmer Robertson, P&R Publishing, 2017, 407pp, £14.71/£7.72 (Kindle)

This volume concludes a set of four books by Robertson; *The Christ of the Covenants* (1980), *The Christ of the Prophets* (2004, re-organised 2008), *The Flow of the Psalms* (2015) and *The Christ of Wisdom* (2017).

My first encounter with the works of O. P. Robertson came via his *Christ of the Covenants* when I entered Bible College in the mid-eighties. Ever since, his works have been a fairly constant part of my biblical studies. Throughout the years I, along with many others, have come to appreciate the way in which he unfolds the message of Scripture. Therefore, I was delighted to have the opportunity to review his latest volume.

Initially the author intended to do a single volume covering “The Christ of the Psalmists and Sages”. However, as he entered into the task he soon found himself with a volume on the Psalms of three hundred pages in length that became *The Flow of the Psalms*. There is a very real sense in which this book is “the other half of that originally conceived unity of ‘Psalmists and Sages’”.

At the outset of the book there is a short but helpful *Introduction to Wisdom Literature* (1-28). Amongst other things he points to the “Regal Role of Wisdom” throughout the Old Testament from Moses to Solomon and the “messianic expectation in Israel focussing on a future wisdom figure that would arise at God’s appointed time”. He notes that “from a new covenant perspective, all believers united to Christ by faith may share in this regal dimension of wisdom. For in him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col 2:2-3)”.

Unsurprisingly, the first section, dealing with Proverbs, “How To Walk in Wisdom’s Way”, receives the most extended treatment (29-117). The preliminary sections are short, yet informative, and set the scene well for his sure-footed overview of the structure of Proverbs. A flight home from London to Aberdeen disappeared unnoticed as I revelled in the excursus on the interpretation of Proverbs 8:22 by Athanasius against the Arians. While he gladly acknowledges the “down-to-earth” advice of Proverbs, he refuses to view it as simply a moralistic compendium of human wisdom. It is a guide to godly living for the covenant people of God:

This book contains the divinely inspired wisdom by which a father may prepare his son for the many different challenges that he must face in life. How to respond to wealth, to work, to words. What to expect from the constant scheming of wicked people. But most of all, how to keep God, the LORD of Creation and Covenant, central throughout your entire life.

He turns to Job in the chapter “*How To Puzzle*” (118-196). He considers the various speeches and responses in the book before seeking to summarise the whole. He is careful to point out first that Job does not answer the question

“Why do the righteous suffer?” nor does it justify God’s dealings with Job or any individual; man simply has no right to demand an explanation from God. However, the positive message is that “God ultimately rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked”. Job is declared to be “a book that communicates with great effectiveness the realities of God and his sovereign purposes in the world he has made, providentially sustains, and will graciously bring to its proper conclusion”.

He moves on to Ecclesiastes, “How To Cope With Life’s Frustrations” (197-274). Here he takes a slightly novel approach by focussing on the “target audience”. He points out the complete absence of the covenant name of *Yahweh* throughout Ecclesiastes. He advocates a view that “Ecclesiastes addresses an audience that is not specifically identified, but apparently includes humanity as a whole”. He surveys pros and cons of maintaining an historic, conservative position regarding the Solomonic authorship and eventually affirms that this remains the most convincing position.

In a surprising turn of phrase he refers to “God in the gospel of Ecclesiastes” and then doubles down when he states that, “Ecclesiastes is full of the gospel. More Particularly, God emerges as the focal factor in the gospel of Ecclesiastes”. He then returns to his earlier introductory considerations and brings both together:

As has been previously proposed, the target audience of the book of Ecclesiastes is humanity as a whole. Paul the apostle to the nations spoke in a similar way to the community of humanity at the market place in Lystra and the open forum of Athens... He focuses on the reality of God – God the Creator, the Benevolent Sustainer, the Righteous Judge. In that well-formed context, he ultimately introduces the “one Shepherd” who serves as the ultimate source of all true understanding of reality in God’s world (Eccl. 12:11).

When summing up, he declares “the writer to Ecclesiastes is anything but a secularist. God is everywhere providing his perception of human life”. A little later he concludes:

In the regular daily struggles with life’s frustrations, it may be helpful to remember the wideness of God’s mercy towards humanity. Even this constant living with frustration may prove beneficial if it is understood to have the divine intention of leading us back to God.

The book of Lamentations is treated in a short, but helpful, chapter entitled “How To Weep” (275-320) In this he views the response of the godly to catastrophe and disaster in the midst of a covenantal framework:

Through the experience of Israel, God’s people must learn how to weep. For there is a wrong way and a right way to weep. There is a God-honouring way to respond to the deepest tragedies of life, and there is a seriously harmful way for the people of God to react to their calamities, both as individuals and as a body.

The final book considered is that of the Song of Songs in the chapter “How To Love” (321-380). As he sets about evaluating preliminary considerations he comes to decidedly conservative positions on the matters of authorship and two person versus three person readings of the text.

The matter of the framework for interpreting the Song of Songs brings in the aspect most likely to draw applause or opposition from the reader. As a Scots Presbyterian with a decidedly strong confessional commitment it’s not too surprising that this was where he and I parted company. While he makes a case likely to commend itself to others, I found this chapter the least satisfying. While appreciative of Robertson’s treatment of the wisdom literature in the preceding chapters, I suspect I will continue to reach for Durham when meditating upon this part of Scripture.

In summary *The Christ of Wisdom* is a book worthy of a careful reading. It will reward those who take time over it with valuable insights and much food for thought. In addition, it is interesting to note that the production of this series was not the result of mere happenstance or serendipity, but rather, the fruit of an intelligent plan. Early in his ministry he took time to consider how he might usefully benefit the church of Christ by his efforts; the planned series which this volume completes was his answer. The completion of the task over a lifetime of diligent service is commendable in itself. The result is a valuable contribution to the library of any serious student of the Bible.

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Covenant and God’s Purpose for the World

Tom Schreiner, Crossway, 2017, 144pp, £7.58/£6.71 (Kindle)

Tom Schreiner’s latest offering, the fourth entry in Crossway’s *Short Studies in Biblical Theology* series, is an excellent introduction to one of the most important themes in the Bible: covenant.

Schreiner likens God’s covenants to the backbone of the Bible’s storyline, insisting that we can’t fully understand it if we don’t understand them. Moreover, a nuanced understanding is necessary as there is more than one covenant; showing how they are all related and fulfilled in Jesus Christ is the purpose of his book. It is a purpose that is admirably achieved, even without recourse to the traditional notion of a single, overarching “covenant of grace”.

Schreiner defines covenant as “a chosen relationship in which two parties make binding promises to each other” (13). Marriage is a good example. That said, in the ancient world covenants were often not between

equals but between a superior and an inferior, and this is obviously the case with those that God made with man. These “advance the story of God’s kingdom... tracing out the progress of redemptive history, which centres on the promise that God will bring redemption to the human race (Gen 3:15)” (13).

The author omits any discussion of the “covenant of redemption” between the persons of the Trinity in eternity past (cf. John 17) and moves immediately to the first covenant in time.

The Covenant with Creation

Many interpreters have held that the Lord made a covenant with Adam in the garden of Eden, often called the “covenant of works”. Schreiner agrees, though he prefers the title “covenant with creation” as it points to the final New Creation at the other end of the Bible. Some question whether there was such a covenant at all, given that the word is not used in Genesis 1-3 and that all the other divine covenants are redemptive, that is, given graciously to *sinful* men. But the author presents compelling evidence that there indeed was one.

As God’s children and image-bearers, Adam and Eve were to be priest-kings, ruling on his behalf, mediating his blessing to their offspring and to the rest of creation. Confirmation of this is found in the many parallels between Eden and the design of the tabernacle/temple. When our first parents fell, the world was doomed to die, yet the image of God in man, though marred, was not lost. Moreover, a Saviour was promised, the seed of the woman who would crush the serpent’s head (Gen 3:15), and this is our Saviour Jesus Christ (Rom 16:20).

The Covenant with Noah

How the promise will be fulfilled is not obvious however, for after Eden things get rapidly worse: “The world unravelled as sin enfolded humanity in its tentacles” (31). Genesis 4-6 bears witness to this downward spiral and provides the background for the next covenant. The Lord resolved to wipe out man, bird and beast in a flood, but spared Noah because of his righteous faith (Heb 11:7), making a covenant with him, which, Schreiner suggests, is a renewal of the one at creation. He identifies several parallels between Genesis 1-2 and 8-9, indicating that Noah is a kind of “new Adam”. Yet there is discontinuity as well; Noah is a sinner (9:20f), and the world he emerges into is fallen (8:21). The covenant, with its promise not to flood the earth again, was needed because human nature hadn’t changed. “Starting over again wouldn’t lead to Eden” (37) but now the world would be preserved

until God's plan of redemption could be realised. Schreiner is clear that there are conditions attached to this covenant that still apply (e.g. 9:6), but is right to affirm its ultimately unconditional nature. The next covenant will begin to provide a remedy and not just a restraint for man's iniquity.

The Covenant with Abraham

If Adam was perfect, Noah upright, then Abraham was ungodly when God called him (Josh 24:2f). The grace of the Lord was exceedingly abundant in this covenant. Abraham was to be another Adam, with God's original blessing on the first man now to be channelled through his seed (Gen 12:1ff).

The promises to Abraham can be divided into three parts: offspring (implying a nation), land (Canaan, a new Eden), and universal blessing. To begin with it was Abraham's physical descendants who benefitted, above all in Solomon's reign (1 Ki 4:20f). Yet "the covenant... was never focused solely on Israel... Through Abraham the whole world would be reclaimed for the glory of God" (46; cf. Rom 4:13).

Whereas Genesis 15 emphasises the unconditional nature of the covenant, in chapter 17 there are several conditions incumbent upon Abraham, notably circumcision (cf. 18:19). Schreiner ably reconciles this tension: "The covenant is unconditional, for God will grant the grace for those who are his own to meet the covenant conditions." (56) That included Abraham himself (Gen 26:5) but much more so Jesus Christ, the son of Abraham (Mt 1:1). "Since Jesus is the true son of Abraham, the children of Abraham are those who belong to Jesus Christ" (56; cf. Gal 3:29).

The Covenant with Israel

Made with Abraham's descendants through Moses at Sinai, this covenant is distinct from the Abrahamic yet flows from it (Ex 2:23ff; 6:3ff). It is not a legalistic covenant in which salvation is based on works: "The Lord doesn't begin with a demand that Israel observe these commands in order to be his people... His grace and mercy precede and undergird his demands" (61; cf. Ex 19:4; 20:2), and accompany them in the form of the blood sacrifices.

Israel too was a new Adam ("my son", Ex. 4:22f) and Canaan a new Eden ("a land flowing with milk and honey", Ex 3:8). "The blessing for the whole world will come through Israel." (67)

At the same time, this covenant has "a built-in obsolescence. It was not intended to last forever" (68). "Remarkably, [it] was blighted with pessimism from the outset" (69). Disobedience was predicted and the curses (more detailed and lengthy than the blessings) would certainly be experienced. Yet the final word is optimistic: repentance and restoration (Dt 30:1ff). Israel's

national failure will be overcome by the obedience of an ideal Israelite (Isa 49:1ff). As the next covenant reveals, this one will be none other than their rightful king.

The Covenant with David

At first glance, the establishment of monarchy in Israel seems like a bad idea (1 Sam 8). But there had been increasingly clear hints that a royal line was always part of God's plan for his people (Gen 17:6, 16; 35:11; 49:8ff; Num 24:17ff). It will not be self-reliant Saul though, but humble David, "a new Adam and the true Israel" (76), who fulfils this ancient promise.

God establishes his covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7, promising to build him an everlasting house (cf. Ps 89:3f). Like that with Abraham, it is a blend of the conditional and unconditional: "The dynasty won't be removed from David's house, and the covenant will finally be fulfilled, but individual kings who transgress will not experience blessing" (76; cf. Ps 89:30-37).

Even David himself fell short of true kingly conduct (2 Sam 11). Therefore Isaiah (9:6f), Jeremiah (33:14ff), Ezekiel (34:23f), Hosea (3:5), Amos (9:11) and Zechariah (12:10-13:1) all prophesy of the Christ, David's son and Lord, whom the New Testament consistently declares to be Jesus. His resurrection and ascension inaugurate the final fulfilment of this covenant: "As David's son he is now reigning at God's right hand and will come again to consummate his reign" (87).

The New Covenant

In his longest chapter, Schreiner shows how the New Covenant fulfils the previous covenants God made with his people, yet there are significant differences as well. For example, the genealogical principle of the Abrahamic covenant is not carried over; membership of God's household is now co-extensive with heart circumcision, which was not the case previously. There is even greater discontinuity with the Mosaic covenant: In Jeremiah 31:31-34, "the banner passage on the new covenant" (90), God himself distinguishes the two. The problem with the Old Covenant was that Israel broke it and experienced the curses. The new will avoid this by God enabling his people to keep it, writing his law on their hearts not on stone. It is "the gift of the Spirit [that] enables the people of God to keep God's laws" (92).

The work of Christ on the cross secures another outstanding benefit of the New Covenant – the complete forgiveness of sins. It is clearly "superior to the Old Covenant since it grants free and confident access to God by virtue of Jesus' death" (97). He is the seed of the woman who at Calvary bruised Satan's head, though his own heel was bruised (Gen 3:15).

Schreiner makes the interesting suggestion that the New Covenant promise of Israel's reunification (e.g. Ezek 37:15ff) was fulfilled in the conversion of the Samaritans (Acts 8:4-25; 9:31). Gentile believers are with Christian Jews full members of the house of Israel, for their heart circumcision by the Spirit makes them spiritually Jewish (Rom 2:26, 28-29). Together, we will inherit a new creation at Christ's return (2 Pet 3:13), when all the covenants will be complete.

Conclusion

Some significant differences between Bible-believing Christians arise from our respective understanding of the covenants, so not everyone will agree with all of Tom Schreiner's. It is also a relatively brief book, so at times one is left with unanswered questions. But if you know a young Christian who is eager to grow in their understanding, or indeed want to refresh your memory and whet your appetite in this area, this book is a great place to start.

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Transforming Homosexuality: What the Bible says about sexual orientation and change

Denny Burk and Heath Lambert, P&R Publishing Co., 2015, 138pp, £6.99/£3.26 (Kindle)

This book comes well recommended, with a foreword by R. Albert Mohler Jr and commendations from Sam Allberry, John MacArthur and Rosaria Butterfield. Heath Lambert is a professor of biblical counselling at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS) and executive director of the Association of Certified Biblical Counsellors.

The question they address is a simple but important one: is homosexual desire (or orientation, or attraction – the authors use these terms as, for practical purposes, equivalent) sinful? Hard on its heels comes a subsidiary: if it is, can people who experience it change? The authors give a resounding “yes” to both questions.

Christians will agree, say the authors, that homosexual behaviour is sinful. There is more debate about homosexual desire. Lambert and Burk argue that it, too, is sinful. Their interest is not just in “ethics”. They are concerned for “ministry” to people who experience same-sex attraction: “People who struggle with homosexual desires and behaviours need to

change" (15). The goal, however, they argue, is not to become heterosexual, but holy.

Part One of the book, "The Ethics of Desire" asks "What is same-sex attraction?" and uses as a starting point the American Psychological Association's definition of sexual orientation: an enduring pattern of attractions that has three elements – sexual attraction, emotional and romantic attraction and a sense of identity as (in this case) homosexual. They summarise different "Christian" responses to current homosexuality debates – liberal, which rejects Scripture's authority; revisionist, which accommodates Scripture to the practice of homosexuality; neo-traditional, which sees homosexual *behaviour*, but not *orientation* in itself, as wrong; and traditional – homosexual orientation is also wrong and needs to be and can be sanctified. This last reflects the authors' view. They reject the idea that homosexual attraction at either the sexual or emotional level can be right or that anyone should find their sense of identity in their sexual orientation.

"Is same-sex attraction sinful?" asks the next chapter. What does the Bible say about the pre-behavioural components of sexual sin? Drawing on the Bible, helped by Augustine, Calvin and Hodge they conclude that the 'pre-moral disposition', not just our conscious choices, is sinful. Original sin manifests itself in many ways. It, of course, pollutes all we do – praying and eating as well as sexual activity. What is it that makes a desire *in itself* sinful? Well, if it is for the wrong object: while our sinful nature corrupts all we do, there are some desires that are wrong in themselves. This is when they are directed at the wrong thing, something forbidden by God. Right and wrong are defined by God's law. Hence sin is any breach of, or want of conformity to, the law of God. To desire your wife sexually is not sinful *in itself* (though it will be tainted by sin) as it is within the covenant of marriage; the lustful look at another woman is wrong (Matt 5:27,28) as it is for a forbidden object.

Homosexual longings, therefore, are *ipso facto* unlawful. To desire a person of your own sex can never be according to God's purposes. This includes sexual, but also romantic/emotional desire. Same-sex attraction can never result in glorifying God in marriage. Same-sex attraction leads, in principle, to same-sex behaviour. It is sinful and it needs to be repented of.

How?

Part Two of the book deals with "The Path of Transformation". The authors unroll a programme for change. In his foreword Al Mohler summarises the agenda of the book:

...Christians cannot accept any argument suggesting the impossibility of fundamentally reorienting a believer's desires in such a way that increasingly pleases God and is increasingly obedient to Christ. To the contrary, we must argue that this process is exactly what the Christian life is to demonstrate. As Paul writes, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2Corinthians 5:17) (10).

It is a myth, therefore, that change is impossible or harmful. “Reparative therapy” comes under fire; it is basically secular, working from the unproven and unbiblical assumption that homosexual desire derives from broken childhood relationships. Nor does change require as its goal heterosexual desire. The biblical goal is sex within the marriage covenant, not indiscriminate heterosexual desire.

The sexual desire that is commanded [in Scripture] is directed not to women in general but to one’s wife in particular. In the Bible, men and women are to have sexual desire for their spouse, not for the opposite sex in general.

What the Bible commands, therefore, is not heterosexuality but holiness. Christians are called to pursue purity. In biblical terms this means that Christians are called to mortify every sexual desire that is not directed toward one’s spouse in biblical marriage. This creates a wonderful amount of freedom for those struggling with homosexual attraction. They no longer have to pursue being “straight” as the only goal. They can, instead, pursue the biblical goal of purity (75).

Some people do testify to a change from same-sex to opposite-sex attraction, say the authors, but it is not the goal of biblical counselling. Many do not experience a change in this area; many remain single. The authors insist that change will not happen without repentance. Same sex desire must be recognised for what it is – sin – and be repented of.

“A Biblical Path to Change” (chapter 4) is basically an exposition of Ephesians 5:1-21. People struggling with same-sex attraction (along with the rest of us) must repent of hatred and pursue love (vv. 1-2); repent of covetousness and pursue gratitude (vv. 3-4) etc. They must also repent of “sinful concealing and pursue open accountability”. Based on vv. 11-14 (“For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible...”) the counsellor is urged to confess everything to a trustworthy friend (of the same sex). Burk and Lambert write:

Finally, if you don’t walk in the light, the warnings of this passage will apply to you. If you do not walk as Jesus walked, you will prove that you never knew Jesus. Which is worse? To experience the fleeting shame of exposing your hidden sins to someone who loves you and wants to help? Or to experience separation from Christ forever as you pay the penalty for those hidden sins? (96).

“Confessing all” *to a human being* in relation to sexual sins may be advisable and very helpful; whether it is a matter of salvation, as the authors imply here, is doubtful.

The writers are insistent that the gospel will change a person. But they are realistic too. Not everyone will change as much as they would like. Certainly not everyone will become heterosexual – but that is not the biblical aim: the goal is holiness, not heterosexuality. Many will go on struggling with

same-sex attraction all their lives. But do not lose faith or hope in the power of the gospel and the Holy Spirit to bring about change.

Evangelicals need to change too, asserts the last chapter. We must learn to be able to speak the truth about homosexuality: both behaviour and desire are sinful. We must also be humble. Remember that Paul speaks in 1 Timothy 1 of homosexuality being a sin, but then says that he was the foremost sinner – and his sins were nothing to do with same-sex attraction. We need to be a friend to people struggling with same-sex attraction; to listen, be compassionate, share the gospel, oppose bullying, receive those who come to us or are converted, and recognise that all of us need to grow in grace.

This is an illuminating and helpful book. Space does not allow justice to be done to its discussion of the nature of sin, original sin and temptation. It is the kind of discussion that is needed on this subject. To condemn homosexual behavior, but to argue that homosexual desire is not morally culpable, is untenable. The purposes of God in creation and his law do not permit such a fudge. The way expounded by Burk and Lambert is harder, but is faithful to Scripture, and can therefore lay claim to the power of the gospel for change. It reminds us, too, that God is interested in the heart, not just behaviour. The book is pastoral and whilst the “ethics: section lays down the traditional (and biblical) position without compromise, the “ministry” chapters outline a mainly helpful way of compassionate care.

This book should be read by pastors and others involved in counselling people struggling with same-sex attraction. Its approach is sound. It will enable you better to help the sinner because you will be better equipped to identify the sin.

Mostyn Roberts

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Living Life Backward: How Ecclesiastes Teaches Us to Live in Light of the End
David Gibson, Crossway, 2017, 176pp, £13.67 (Amazon)

I haven't played much sport for quite a while, but I still remember one particular goal I scored when playing football. I knew, as soon as the ball had left my foot, that it was a goal. It didn't matter how good the goalkeeper was, I just hit it perfectly. (I remember because it was a rare event!) Reading this book was a bit like that. I knew, before the end of chapter 2 that this was going to be a significant and excellent read. By the end of chapter 3 I was already constructing a mental list of people I wanted to buy it for! It comes with high praise from the likes of Don Carson and Alec Motyer, so I began reading with some hope it would be good and I wasn't disappointed.

David Gibson is the Minister of Trinity Church, Aberdeen and sets out in this book to guide the reader through Ecclesiastes. The title gives a good idea of his understanding of the wisdom of the teacher. As he says in the preface,

Ecclesiastes... makes a very simple point: life is complex and messy, sometimes brutally so, but there is a straightforward way to look at the mess. The end will put it all right. The end – when we stand before God as our Creator and Judge – will explain everything.

Central to his understanding is his grasp of the word many modern translations render “meaningless”. He makes a very good case that, “...the Hebrew word *hebel* is also accurately translated as ‘breath’ or ‘breeze’. The Preacher is saying that everything is a mist, a vapor, a puff of wind, a bit of smoke. It’s a common biblical idea...” as in Psalm 144:3-4. Understanding that life is like the merest of breaths that ends in the same way for all, with the judgment of God, gives us the necessary grasp on the teacher’s wisdom, that in all the uncertainties of life our sure guide is the certainty of our end. As Gibson says in the preface, “I want to persuade you that only if you prepare to die can you really learn how to live.”

I found this understanding of *hebel* far more satisfying than any other perspective I have come across. It not only makes sense exegetically but doesn’t grate theologically either within the book or with wider biblical and systematic theology in mind.

Gibson also has a very helpful perspective on the teacher’s view of life *under the sun*. He doesn’t subscribe to the idea that at times the teacher is describing life from a secularist point of view, *under the sun*, and other times with God in view, leaving the reader to try and work out at which point he is talking from which perspective. He remarks at one point,

He is not saying this repetitive roundabout is what life is like from a secularist perspective. This is not what the world feels like from the viewpoint of existential nihilism, or postmodern navel gazing. It’s just what the world is like. It’s reality. It’s the same for everyone, Christian or non-Christian, adherent or atheist: we each live under the sun.

His perspective and clarity on this again I found persuasive and a significant help in understanding the detail and the thrust of the book. For example, seeing the teacher having a consistent point of view fits with the idea that this side of eternity life is like a breath. These two insights feed into Gibson’s understanding of every part of the book, bringing a coherency and significant challenge to the reader.

In ten chapters he works through the main material in Ecclesiastes. My greatest sadness is that he doesn’t deal with every part of the book; I enjoyed reading it so much I wanted him to cover every part. However, he covers the ground of the book well and there was certainly more than enough to chew over at the end of each chapter. He also ends each with a short set of

questions to help the reader think through what they have just read.

In the opening chapter Gibson shows how the teacher starts with shock tactics: "The very first thing he wants to tell us is that 'all is vanity', 'vanity of vanities'. If you want readers to wake up and stop pretending about what life is like, that's a pretty good way to get their attention." Life is short, life is elusive and life is repetitive, so prepare to die in order to learn to live!

He then moves on to show that the teacher is bursting the bubbles of expectation around fun, social contribution, wealth and wisdom – that in the end there is nothing to be gained from these things because we all finish in the same place: death. However, "Far from being something that makes life in the present completely pointless, future death is a light God shines on the present to change it. Death can radically enable us to enjoy life." Chasing these things will leave us unsatisfied, but accepting them as a finite gift from a gracious God transforms life.

Gibson carefully links the famous "time for everything" passage to its context, dealing both with the detail of the poem and showing how the rhythms of life don't lead to gain. It is with the sovereign judgment of God that gives meaning to all things, whether we can see that meaning or not. This is both a comfort – the sovereign God knows what he is doing even when we do not – and a challenge: I don't need to be in control because God is!

So he continues through the book, carefully, sometimes humorously, always pastorally, guiding the reader through Ecclesiastes in a way that puts the wisdom of the teacher in our hands and rubs it into the heart.

There are one or two parts where his application requires careful reading. He is at times deliberately provocative, as any pastor ought to be! The gear change required to think how the teacher is thinking can be quite significant and at one or two points I felt that the gears of application just crunched a little bit. That is a minor criticism and the only one I could think of to balance how helpful I have found this book. As a Christian, the book has fed my soul and strengthened my faith. As a pastor, the book has informed my mind and helped me work through how to pastor better. As a preacher, the book has left me wanting to preach Ecclesiastes, feeling I have a grasp of it now that is significantly better than that I had beforehand.

Gibson does an excellent job of what he set out to do – guiding the reader through the wisdom of the teacher with an expert hand, never patronising, never over-complicated. Questions at the end of each chapter make the book even more useful in personal devotion or for small groups. This is a book that is recommended for anyone's library. All I need to do now is finish my list of people to buy it for...

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Calling on the name of the Lord: A Biblical theology of Prayer

J. Gary Millar, Apollos/IVP, 2016, 263pp, £14.99

This book is part of the New Studies in Biblical Theology series, edited by Don Carson, “addressing key issues in the discipline of biblical theology”.

Using Genesis 4:26 as his starting point, Millar defines prayer as “calling on the name of the LORD”, by which he means asking God to act according to his character and his gracious plans. The central theme traced through the book is that all prayer should be linked with Yahweh’s plans to act in judgment and salvation to fulfil his good purpose for the saving of his people and the glory of his name.

The author then proceeds to take us on a comprehensive journey through pretty much every setting for prayer in the Bible including the Pentateuch, the Prophets, wisdom literature, the Gospels and the Epistles. Arriving in Revelation, he notes the same theme of prayers for “the coming of God’s kingdom, the completion of God’s purposes and fulfilment of all that he has promised”. He suggests that as Revelation ends Scripture, prayer is replaced with singing as the prayers are answered and petition becomes celebration.

Particularly interesting is his analysis of the Psalms, many of which we would tend to immediately personalise, but he contends that they are firstly about God’s kingdom purpose and God’s king, Jesus: “These are first the prayers of the Messiah... which become the prayers of Messiah’s people”.

A good example is his treatment of Psalm 102, which we would take as a believer in trouble asking for God to help him, but Millar says its goal is the enthroned God arising to “build up Zion”. Another example is Psalm 51: Millar explains that although it is certainly a penitential Psalm, it also connects directly with the covenant promise of forgiveness: “What is at stake is not the guilt of one man but the progress of the plan of God.”

He accepts that “prayer is not limited to asking God to honour his promises – other things can and must be said to Yahweh” but the primary purpose is in connection with the kingdom of God breaking in as he fulfils his promise.

In the final chapter there is a brief application of the teaching. He ponders on why we seem to pray less than previous generations and calls us to recalibrate *how* we pray, and *what* we pray for, in the light of biblical theology. He calls the reader to become an “advanced praying person” by asking God to do what he has promised to do, and keep doing it until we no longer need to pray, when we will see him face to face.

Millar makes a good case for his central argument, which is well illustrated with numerous examples, often picking passages that might, on the face of it, challenge his assumptions. It lifts prayer from self-serving

shopping lists to a grand task of calling down the blessing of God in historically significant works, for his glory.

One would have preferred a much longer application section with more examples. Also, at times it did feel as if he was straining out some really important aspects of biblical prayers by applying this filter. Overall, I would thoroughly recommend this book as well researched, easy to read and personally challenging.

Graham Nicholls
Director of Affinity

J. C. Ryle: Prepared to Stand Alone

Iain H. Murray, Banner of Truth, 2016, 273pp, £13.92

A good biographer helps his readers to get under the skin of their subject so that you feel you get to know them, almost personally. A good Christian biographer will do more than that; as well as setting their subject against the background of their times and offering a convincing psychological portrait, they will give readers a glimpse of a soul in its communion with God and dealings with people.

Iain H. Murray has often pulled off this feat in his many biographies of Christian men and women, Jonathan Edwards, C. H. Spurgeon, Archibald Brown, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones and Amy Carmichael among them. He has now done the same for J. C. Ryle.

Ryle was one of the most famous Evangelical Anglicans of his day. He became the first Bishop of Liverpool and his many tracts and books attracted avid readers all around the globe. Yet towards the end of his life and in the decades that followed, he was regarded as something of a dinosaur. His “old fashioned” beliefs and attitudes were dismissed as irrelevant for the times.

In some ways Ryle was “a man born out of due time”; a staunch Protestant, he seemed more like a bishop from the days of Latimer and Ridley than a Victorian Churchman. The Church of England of that period was in a state of flux; Newman and Pusey of the Oxford Movement were seeking to pull the Church in a Rome-ward direction; theological liberalism was beginning to take hold, questioning the authority of Scripture in the name of the “assured results of modern scholarship”.

Against these trends, Ryle dared to stand alone. He called the Church of England to remain true to its confessional heritage in the Thirty Nine Articles. But he was fighting a losing battle. When he became a bishop, Ryle found himself torn between the need to be an ecclesiastical statesman, trying to hold together all the various parties in his diocese, and his principled stand for Protestant beliefs.

Ryle never wanted to be a clergyman. It was only because his father's bank collapsed that he turned to the Church for employment. He was converted some years earlier when a student at Oxford University, but had no desire whatever to become a minister. The Lord had other ideas. All doors closed to him bar one – that of becoming curate of a parish church in Exbury, Hampshire. Thereafter he served churches in Winchester, Helmingham and Stradbroke, before being appointed Bishop of Liverpool. Just as his call to the ministry seemed a matter of financial expediency from a human point of view, so his becoming a bishop was a political fix on the part of Tory Prime Minister, Disraeli. The politician was keen to avoid his Liberal opponent Gladstone imposing a ritualist on the growing city.

But whatever man's motivations and machinations, there can be no doubt that J. C. Ryle was called by God to proclaim the good old truths of the gospel to the people of his day. And it is those truths, held by the Reformers and Puritans so beloved by Ryle, that have stood the test of time, for they are the mighty life-transforming doctrines of God's Word. Few bother to read the "state of the art" works of nineteenth-century theological liberalism these days, but Ryle's writings have been rediscovered and reprinted for a global audience. His *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels* are a model of straightforward applicatory exposition; historical writings such as *Christian Leaders of the Eighteenth Century* have introduced readers to the mighty work of God that was the Evangelical Revival; his work on *Holiness* has helped to correct unhelpful emphases in evangelical teaching on sanctification.

Although Ryle was a somewhat reluctant pastor, he threw himself unstintingly into the work. He was a diligent visitor of his flocks and fully engaged in the life of the communities in which he served. He sought to preach with simplicity and verve, grabbing the attention of his people with lively illustrations. The preacher brought God's Word to bear upon his hearers' lives with punchy and direct application of the truth. In a day when Calvinism was rapidly going out of fashion, Ryle was not ashamed to identify himself with the Reformed faith, which he saw as essential for the life and witness of the Church. He seems, however, to have held to a "hypothetical universalist" view of the atonement, rather than the "definite atonement" view of full-blown Calvinism.

Murray brings out the private trials and struggles of the public figure. A recently discovered memoir penned by Ryle for the benefit of his children has thrown new light on his early years. As a younger man, he was twice widowed and left in sole charge of small children. His time at Helmington was marked by tensions with the local bigwig who owned the living of the parish church he served. Throughout his long life he never really got over the shock and shame of his family losing everything when his father's bank collapsed. Although Ryle could be a combative figure, he felt himself lacking in social confidence. The "man of granite" had his vulnerable side, which only

served to make him a better pastor.

Murray brings to the fore key aspects of Ryle's teachings and considers what we may learn from him today. Ryle was a keen believer in the Establishment principle and believed that nations should recognise God and his law. He would have preferred Spurgeon as a Baptist equivalent to the Archbishop of Canterbury, rather than no Established Protestant Church at all. I trust Ryle's Baptist contemporary would have demurred on the grounds of Baptist belief in the separation of Church and State! Ryle's position in the Church of England made him a somewhat conflicted character, especially when he became Bishop of Liverpool. His hopes of bringing together a mainstream bulwark against Anglo-Catholicism and Liberalism were misplaced. The Church of England is no longer bound to uphold the Thirty Nine Articles that Ryle fought to maintain. His policy for recovering Anglicanism for the gospel didn't work and cannot realistically be used as a model for today's Evangelical Anglicans.

Ryle was catholic-spirited enough to transcend denominational boundaries and had more spiritual affinity with Liverpool's nonconformist leaders than many of the Anglican clergy over whom he presided as Bishop. His was a generous orthodoxy; valiant for truth, but without ever becoming sectarian. That is why his writings have a timeless quality that recommend themselves to a new generation of readers. Murray's biography helpfully brings out the man, the grace-touched soul behind the impressive beard and many instructive books.

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