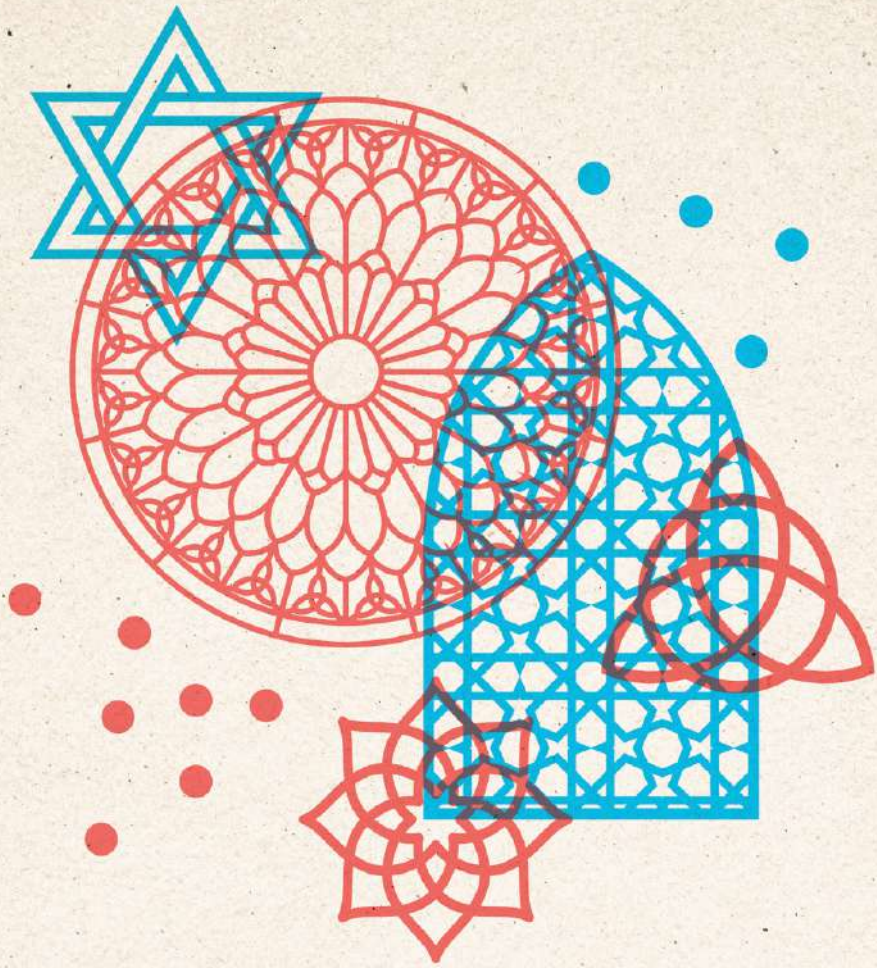

AN INTRODUCTION TO ECCLESIOLOGY

Revised and Expanded

Historical, Global, and Interreligious Perspectives

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen

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PREFACE

For a number of years it has been on my mind to revise this textbook, which was for the first time published in 2002 and subsequently also translated into Chinese (2010). While I have observed with great interest its wide use in all kinds of theological seminaries and faculties from mainstream Protestant to Roman Catholic to Free Churches and beyond, I have also felt the need to update it in order to incorporate the amazing influx of literature and insights into the doctrine of the church during the past two decades. Indeed, one can hardly find another theological topic as "hot" and vibrant as ecclesiology.

Since the first version of the textbook was released, I have worked intensely in the area of the doctrine of the church and published a great number of essays and articles. Recently, I finished a bigtime dream and goal of mine, namely, an attempt to present a constructive theology of the Christian community seeking to find new ways of imagining its nature, role, and mission. This I have presented in much detail in my *Hope and Community*, volume 5 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World, part two: "Community". Therein I expanded the domain of Christian ecclesiology by engaging also the visions and intuitions of the religious community among four sister faiths: Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. It goes without saying that this project required an enormous amount of research and reflection on issues not usually addressed by theologians. At the same time, my ongoing contact with theology students, not only in the United States (Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California) and Europe (University of Helsinki, Finland) but also in various locations in the Global South, has helped me think about how to best communicate these lessons to students and

other interested readers. Long-term and still continuing ecumenical work with the World Council of Churches, with a number of international dialogues, and in other venues in search of Christian unity has also taught me more than I probably grasp at the moment. Nor should I ever fail to acknowledge the importance of pastoral work as a wellspring of ideas and insights in understanding what Christian community is.

My first intuition was to do a careful checking of some inaccuracies and poor formulations in the first edition while attempting a full-scale upgrade of literature and documentation. I hoped that that would suffice. Very soon, however, I realized that the task ahead was far bigger and more demanding. A new edition of the whole work called for no less than a complete rewriting and the addition of significant new topics and themes. Somewhat counterintuitively, I succumbed gladly to this new challenge, seeing it as an opportunity to take stock of the wide and rich field of ecclesiology in the midst of rapid developments and new horizons—with the hope that this text would better serve a new generation of students, ministers, and other interested readers.

As a result, I dare to tell you that you now have in your hands a completely unique primer on the doctrine of the church. Not only does it attempt to do everything that a basic introduction to ecclesiology should do, that is, orient the reader to biblical, historical, and contemporary theologies of the Christian community, but in addition—and this makes the textbook one of a kind—it gives special attention to expanding the domain of traditional theological discussion by treating widely so-called contextual and global perspectives. That is, alongside Saint Augustine, Martin Luther, John Calvin, and, say, Wolfhart Pannenberg, the ecclesiological insights of women of various backgrounds (feminist, womanist, *mujerista*, and others) are included, as well as liberationist, Black, Hispanic, Asian American, African, Asian, and Latin American theologians. Furthermore, not only are older Christian traditions—from Orthodox to Roman Catholic to Lutheran and Reformed—invited to provide their ecclesiological visions; so also are the Free Churches, Pentecostal/charismatic movements, and Emerging churches. But there is even more, and this makes the book absolutely unique among all other introductions to ecclesiology. The text will also take a careful and detailed look at the visions and "theologies" of the Jewish synagogue, Islamic *ummah*, Buddhist *sangha*, and Hindu communities. In other words, it includes a robust interfaith aspect, which can also be called a comparative theological approach.

As will be detailed at the end of the introduction below, the book consists now of four interrelated sections. After a brief biblical orientation, main ecclesiological traditions and leading ecclesiologists' contributions will be the focus of part one. Part two will widen the conversation into contextual and global views. In part three, core ecclesiological topics such as the mission and ministry of the church, worship and liturgy, and sacraments will be treated, culminating in a quest for the unity of Christ's community on earth. The final part attempts a careful interfaith comparison between Christian faith and four other traditions.

I am deeply grateful to InterVarsity Press for encouraging me over the years to do the revision and allowing me to do it so thoroughly. As always, I am also deeply indebted to my long-term Fuller in-house editor, the late Susan Carlson Wood, who passed unexpectedly toward the end of the editing process. Her impeccable and persistent editorial skills have again helped "translate" my European English into proper American academic prose! My doctoral student Jae Yang, at Fuller's Center for Advanced Theological Studies, completed a most meticulous double-checking of all references and citations. As with many other books, another doctoral student, Viktor Toth, prepared the indexes. Although any mistakes and inaccuracies are to be attributed to no one else but myself, I can only imagine how many more there might have been without these extraordinary helpers' close attention to details and nuances.

Finally, I am ever grateful to my wife of four decades, Anne-Päivi, who not only supports my continuing writing ministry but also inspires and sweetens it with her gentle and delightful presence. Beginning every new morning with a cup of coffee and devotional together makes life more than worth living—another occasion of joy and anticipation.

ABBREVIATIONS

AICs	African Independent Churches (also called African Indigenous Churches or African Initiated Churches)
BC	*The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. Translated by Theodore G. Tappert. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959.
BECs	Basic Ecclesial Communities, also known as base communities
BEM	*Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*. Faith and Order 111. Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982.
BEM-B	Baptism section
BEM-E	Eucharist section
BEM-M	Ministry section
Calvin, *Institutes*	*Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Translated by Henry Beveridge. https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes/institutes.i.html.
ER	*Encyclopedia of Religion*. Edited by Lindsay Jones. 2nd ed. 15 vols. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005.
ET	English translation
LW	*Luther's Works*. American ed. (Libronix Digital Library). Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehman. 55 vols. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1955–1986.
NPNF[1]	*A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Edited by Philip Schaff. Series 1. 14 vols. Edinburgh, 1886–1890.

NPNF[2]	*A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Series 2. 14 vols. Edinburgh, 1890–1900.
OHE	*Oxford Handbook of Ecclesiology*. Edited by Paul Avis. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
RCCC	*The Routledge Companion to the Christian Church*. Edited by Gerard Mannion and Lewis S. Mudge. New York: Routledge, 2008.
WCC	World Council of Churches

INTRODUCTION

Key Issues of Ecclesiology

ECCLESIOLOGICAL RENAISSANCE AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church, has risen to the center of theological interest in recent decades. Alongside the Holy Spirit (pneumatology) and the Trinity, the nature and function of the church occupy theologians of various persuasions. That said, as the senior Catholic ecclesiologist Hans Küng observes in the opening of his classic *The Church*, "Though there is much talk nowadays about the Church in the secular world, there is not a corresponding awareness of what the Church is."[1]

As important a role as ecclesiology is playing in contemporary theology, we should recall that the doctrine of the church did not emerge as a fully developed separate locus until the time of the Reformation. This is of course not to ignore the many church-related themes discussed already in the patristic and later doctrinal manuals, particularly sacramentology. It is rather to remind us of the polemical setting of the Reformation theology out of which a full-orbed ecclesiology, an understanding of the "true" church, emerged.[2] Not surprisingly, the first full-scale ecclesiologies at the time advanced slowly and had a somewhat

[1]Hans Küng, *The Church*, trans. Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967; repr., Garden City, NY: Image Books/Doubleday, 1976), 11.

[2]A brief detailed outline of the emergence and history of ecclesiology can be found in Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 3:21-27, on which this section of the chapter is based.

haphazard tone due to circumstances.[3] That situation has happily changed. The theologian writing in the first decades of the third millennium is fortunate to be able to tap into unprecedented resources due to the resurgence of and enthusiasm over the doctrine of the church over many decades.[4] Indeed, the flow of new publications is overwhelming. A theologian must be selective in order to say something worthwhile.

While there may be a number of reasons for the resurgence of the doctrine of the church, a main catalyst seems to have been the birth and growth of the modern ecumenical movement. No other movement in the whole history of the Christian church, perhaps with the exception of the Reformation, has shaped the thinking and practice of Christianity as much as the movement for Christian unity. Now it is true that the history of *formal* ecumenism in terms of the formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 is quite brief, but its roots go back at least to the end of the nineteenth century.

Any talk about the unity of the church presupposes some tentative understanding of what the church is. You cannot unite entities without knowing what kind of organisms you are trying to unite. The ecumenical movement has also helped open up a fruitful dialogue about the nature and mission of the Christian community. The older controversial approach in which differences and disputes often took center stage has moved aside to make room for an approach in which churches seek to learn from and appreciate each other. The Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church (1962–1965), without doubt the most significant council of the Christian church, completely changed the horizons of the largest church in the world with regard to efforts for unity. At the same time, the Eastern Orthodox churches, including the influential Russian churches, joined the WCC and significantly broadened the membership.

Two other developments in the global church, partly interrelated but also independent to some extent, have inspired and challenged theological reflection on the church: the rapid growth of Christianity outside the Global North (Europe, North America)—so much so that currently the majority of Christians are in the Global South (Asia, Africa, Latin America)—and the rise of nontraditional forms

[3]For Melanchthon, Calvin, and others, see Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:22-23; see also Christopher Ocker, "Ecclesiology and the Religious Controversy of the Sixteenth Century," in *RCCC*, 63-84 (with excellent documentation).

[4]Gerard Mannion and Lewis S. Mudge, "Introduction: Ecclesiology—the Nature, Story and Study of the Church," *RCCC*, 1.

of the church both in the West and elsewhere. The latter development is in general connected to what are nowadays known as Free Churches. The expression *Free Churches* involves two primary meanings. It refers to communities with congregationalist polity or church constitution, and it emphasizes a stated separation between church and state.[5] New congregational models are emerging, especially in the Majority World but also in the West, and many specialists are of the opinion that the Free Church congregational model will be the major paradigm in the third millennium. Even Pope Benedict XVI, during the time he was Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in Rome, expressed severe criticism of congregational ecclesiologies but admitted that this is the direction that Christian ecumenism is heading.[6]

If one is not ready simply to discount the ecclesiality (the "churchliness") of Free Churches and other nontraditional church forms, one must determine conditions for being a church that are broad enough to include these. The approach of traditional theology has too often been to impose its own often quite limited definition of churchhood on its younger counterparts. Naturally, those churches that define what *ecclesiality* means usually fulfill the requirements of their own definitions! But this does not further the discussion ecumenically. For older churches simply to discard the enormous potential and force of nontraditional churches by classifying them as something less than a church is both dangerous and useless. Younger churches have shown their vitality, and now it is left to theology to catch up with these developments. This has always been the main task of theology, to reflect on and make sense of what is happening in Christian life and churches.

The expansive growth of Christian churches outside the traditionally Christian West has posed another challenging question to theology: How do we account culturally for the existence of churches in various contexts? What does it require to be a church amid an "animistic" culture in Africa or a highly spiritualist Asian culture?[7] What from the mainly Western heritage is transferable to the rest of the

[5]Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 9n2.

[6]Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger with Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*, trans. Salvator Attanasio and Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 45-46.

[7]I am well aware of the reluctance of contemporary anthropologists to use the term *animistic*. I use it exclusively to refer to cultures in which the spirit-world, however it may be conceived and imagined, lays claim to how people live, including Christians and their communities.

world, and what has to be revised and corrected? And there are other contextual challenges: What would the church look like if it were to make women and other minorities feel at home and find their potential? Or, what does it mean for a church to be a church for those who struggle for freedom and equality?

Furthermore, today the Christian church also faces the challenge and opportunity of interfaith relations. The Muslim *ummah*, the Jewish synagogue, the Buddhist *sangha*, and various Hindu communities—to name the traditions engaged in part four—have their own visions and practices for religious communities. How are we to conceive of the mutual relations between these diverse communities anchored on a particular spiritual-religious tradition?

DO WE REALLY NEED A RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY FOR THE FAITH?

The rise to prominence of the theology of the Christian community is not self-evident in light of the rampant individualism of the post-Enlightenment world, particularly in the Global North. There are voices contesting the necessity of a community, the church: Why not have one's own religion in the solitude of the heart? Friedrich Schleiermacher, "the father of modern theology," famously stated that what distinguishes Protestantism from Roman Catholicism is that the former makes the relation of individuals to the church dependent on their relation to Christ whereas the latter makes the relation of individuals to Christ dependent on their relation to the church.[8] Paradoxical as this statement is, it is also both an overstatement and inaccurate historically. Both Protestant and Catholic theologies traditionally have discussed the means of salvation, including the sacraments, prior to the topic of the church, the implication being that salvation is received individually, after which faith is nurtured by the church community. Even the Catholic dogmatic manuals up until our day followed the same route. This is, of course, the rule even in contemporary systematic theologies with few exceptions.

Wolfhart Pannenberg's *Systematic Theology*, in contrast, discusses the foundational theological issues concerning the church first and then launches into the topic of faith and salvation.[9] Doing so challenges the established canons of systematic theologies. Pannenberg rightly contends that "the fellowship

[8]Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. Mackintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), §24 epithet (101).
[9]For the necessary ecclesial mediation of faith, see also Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 160-68.

of individuals with Jesus is always mediated by the church, by its proclamation and its administration of the sacraments."[10] However, at the same time he acknowledges that even though faith is ecclesially mediated, it is still addressed to individuals for personal appropriation. Jesus addressed individuals directly with his announcement of the coming kingdom, "and did not, like other Jewish movements of the time, attempt to achieve a gathered eschatological remnant community or any other form or historical manifestation of the true people of God."[11]

THE NATURE AND PLAN OF THIS PRIMER

The present book attempts what is now called "comparative ecclesiology," which has become popular especially in ecumenical circles. According to the widely used textbook *Models of the Church*, by one of the leading Catholic ecclesiologists, Avery Dulles, SJ, the term *comparative ecclesiology* "signifies a systematic reflection on the points of similarity and difference in the ecclesiologies of different denominations."[12] Comparative ecclesiology usually draws from two kinds of sources: more or less official denominational confessional writings and texts of representative theologians. In principle, this is also the approach in this primer. That said, the present book goes beyond the traditional comparative ecclesiology in that the last part of the book also focuses on what may conveniently be called "contextual" (sometimes also "global") ecclesiologies.

The book consists of four parts. Part one seeks to survey major ecclesiological traditions from the oldest (Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic) to Protestantism to Free Churches and Pentecostals/charismatics. Alongside the description of each community's distinctive theology and practices, a leading theologian of the doctrine of the church from each particular tradition will be engaged (except for Pentecostals/charismatics, to be explained below).

The focus of part two is contextual and global ecclesiologies, in other words, doctrines of the church stemming from a particular agenda such as feminism or sociopolitical liberation or from a particular area of the world, especially the Global South. Even nowadays, unfortunately, these ecclesiologies are either neglected in theological discussions or only paid lip service. In light of the radical transformation of the global church, with the great majority of Christians now

[10]Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:24.
[11]Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:27.
[12]Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 7.

residing in the Global South, as well as the springing forth of new types of ecclesial existence, such an omission can no longer be tolerated.

Part three seeks to analyze and reflect on the life and mission of the church by focusing on such key ecclesiological issues as ministry and ministers, sacraments/ordinances, and liturgy and worship. This discussion, like the rest of the book, attempts to maintain an ecumenical approach, thus not intentionally privileging any particular Christian tradition.

In the spirit of the groundbreaking work of the British Anglican Keith Ward's *Religion and Community*, which compares the church with other religious communities, part four represents comparative theology, that is, comparing and contrasting Christian community with Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist communities. At the moment, no other major ecclesiological text is doing that work.

ECCLESIOLOGICAL TRADITIONS AND KEY THEOLOGIANS

ORIENTATION TO PART ONE

Biblical, Historical, and Theological Roots of the Christian Community

BIBLICAL SYMBOLS, METAPHORS, AND INTIMATIONS

Numerous metaphors and symbols of the church in the New Testament have deep roots in the Old Testament narrative of the nature, life, and experiences of the people of Israel.[1] The following three have gained particular importance in Christian parlance: the people of God (1 Pet 2:9; Rev 5:9-10), the body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23; 1 Cor 12:27; Col 1:18), and the temple of the Spirit (Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:5). Speaking from the later perspective of the fully developed trinitarian doctrine, one can easily see here a triadic pattern. Indeed, ecumenically it is noteworthy that virtually all Christian churches are currently in agreement regarding the trinitarian basis and nature of the church and the anchoring of communion (*koinonia*) in the shared divine life itself.

Let us take a closer look at the meaning and significance of these three defining biblical metaphors of the Christian community.

Church as the temple of the Spirit. In the Bible, the Spirit not only works in one's personal life but also has a community-forming role, as is clearly evident

[1]Everett Ferguson, *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996); and Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (London: Lutterworth, 1960). Another highly useful resource is also Part I: Biblical Foundations of *OHE*, with the following essays: Edward Adams, "The Shape of the Pauline Churches," in *OHE*, 119-46; Loveday C. A. Alexander, "The Church in the Synoptic Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles," in *OHE*, 55-98; Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Johannine Vision of the Church," in *OHE*, 99-118; R. W. L. Moberly, "The Ecclesiology of Israel's Scriptures," in *OHE*, 33-54; and Gerald O'Collins, "The Church in the General Epistles," in *OHE*, 147-60.

on the day of Pentecost, at the founding of the church (Acts 2). This is not to contend that Pentecost in itself is the "birthday" of the church—which is rather Easter because without the raising of the crucified Messiah, the church would not have emerged—but to highlight the importance of the Spirit, along with the Son, as the dual foundation of the Christian community. Everywhere the Son works, the Spirit is there as well, and vice versa.

The importance to the church of the Spirit of God has been appreciated particularly in the Christian East (the Orthodox tradition). Whereas ecclesiologies of the Christian West (Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Protestant, as well as Free Churches and independent communities) are predominantly built on christological categories, the Eastern doctrine of the church seeks a balance between Christology and pneumatology. Eastern theologians often speak of the church as the body of Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit.[2]

As the Spirit-ed community, the church is charismatically endowed and empowered to accomplish its mission.[3] The Spirit also guides and shapes the life of the community, themes to be developed in detail below.

Church as the body of Christ. In Pauline theology, the body terminology abounds. Whereas in 1 Corinthians and Romans *body* refers to the individual community, in Ephesians and Colossians it refers to the whole church. The body metaphor for individual communities has to do with interrelated virtues and qualities of love, unity, and working for the common good (1 Cor 12–14). In relation to the whole church, at the fore is a cosmological Christology working out eternal purposes toward the reconciliation of all peoples and all of creation.

Early in Christian tradition, the body metaphor (in reference to the whole church) began to be developed in primarily institutional and hierarchic terms. This development reached its zenith in medieval Catholic ecclesiology and subsequently. Unfortunately, it led to the implicit identification of the church with Christ, a mistake to be corrected (in the next section).

A proper and balanced ecclesiology is determined by the whole history of Jesus the Christ, beginning from his earthly life with teachings and miraculous acts and

[2]John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 22.

[3]The term *charismatic* here refers not to a particular church tradition such as Pentecostal churches but to the general scholarly observation that in the New Testament a vibrant life of charisms (say, healings, speaking in tongues, and prophecy) was commonplace. Only (much) later in history, when this kind of charismatic life waned, was a distinction between charismatic and other Christian communities adopted.

works; continuing with the pronouncement of forgiveness and inclusion of even "outsiders"; all the way to his suffering, cross, and death; and culminating in his glorious resurrection, ascension, the Pentecost pouring out of the Spirit, and finally his current cosmic rule. With this kind of wide and comprehensive grounding, the church's mission can be framed in a dynamic and multilayered manner.

Church as the people of God. Peoplehood is understandably based on divine election, a concept that has roots of course in the election of the people of Israel in the Old Testament (Gen 12:1-3). Divine election means both particularity and opening to the world. On the one hand, the chosen community has a unique relationship to God, notwithstanding the lack of superiority over other nations (Deut 7:7-9). On the other hand, on account of its election, it has a missionary mandate to help other nations to know God (Is 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-5).

Whereas in the theology of the early church the concept of the people of God played a significant role, it receded into the background subsequently, particularly with the entrance of Christendom and Christianity's official status as the civic religion. Fortunately, the peoplehood of the church has been rediscovered, first in the Reformation and then more recently in the Catholic Church's Vatican II theology of the church as the people of God.[4] Conceiving the church as the pilgrim people on the way to their destiny, Vatican II's profound ecclesiological document *Lumen Gentium* (The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church) further highlights the eschatological, future-driven nature of God's community.[5]

"People of God" is the most comprehensive among the three main metaphors. It not only means everything that the church denotes, but it also highlights the inclusiveness and equality of all Christians and, importantly, includes Israel, the first people of God. The church-Israel relationship will be carefully investigated in part four (chapter eighteen).

CHURCH, COMMUNION, AND THE KINGDOM

Church communion rooted in trinitarian communion. As mentioned, the common threefold, biblically based description of the Christian community as people, body, and temple reflects its trinitarian nature. No wonder then that,

[4]*Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II), November 21, 1964, chap. 2, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html. Citations from Vatican II documents use paragraph numbers instead of page numbers, which helps negotiate various translations and editions—unless, as here, the reference is to the whole chapter. All Vatican II documents are available at the official Vatican website: www.vatican.va.

[5]*Lumen Gentium*, chap. 7.

beginning from the early centuries, the Christian community has been conceived in trinitarian terms. This is still a living tradition, particularly in the Eastern (Orthodox) Church, and currently has an ecumenical consensus.

Just as each person is made according to the image of the Trinity (Gen 1:26-27), so the church as a whole is God's image. The triune God is the eternal communion of Father, Son, and Spirit. The church as communion is anchored in this same God, whom it reflects, albeit incompletely and often in a broken manner.

This understanding is expressed with the help of an important New Testament term: *koinōnia*. Its many meanings include a number of interrelated, dynamic meanings that make it ideal to describe the relationship between God and the church as well as relationships among the churches:

- fellowship with the triune God (1 Cor 1:9; 2 Cor 13:13; 1 Jn 1:3, 6)
- sharing in faith and the gospel (Rom 15:27; 1 Cor 9:23; 1 Jn 1:3, 7)
- sharing in the Eucharist (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 10:16)
- participation in (co)sufferings (Phil 3:10; Heb 10:33)
- partnering in common ministry (2 Cor 8:23; Philem 17)
- sharing in and contributing to communal and financial needs (Acts 2:44; Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 12:13; 1 Tim 6:18)[6]

Church and the kingdom of God. The whole ministry and proclamation of Jesus Christ centered on the coming of the righteous rule of his Father in the power of the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of God (Mk 1:15; cf. Mt 4:17; Lk 4:43-44). It had already arrived in his teaching, healings, exorcisms, and pronouncing of forgiveness, culminating in the glorious resurrection from death on behalf of the world. But the kingdom still awaits its final consummation. Between these two comings of Christ is the era of the church. Therefore, the church is referred to the future of God, the eschatological consummation. In the words of Miroslav Volf, the New Testament "authors portray the church, which emerged after Christ's resurrection and the sending of the Spirit, as the anticipation of the eschatological gathering of the entire people of God."[7] Every gathering of the church refers to the final homecoming (Rev 21:1-4).

[6]Lorelei F. Fuchs, *Koinonia and the Quest for an Ecumenical Ecclesiology: From Foundations Through Dialogue to Symbolic Competence for Communionality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), appendix 1 (519-25).

[7]Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 128.

The coming of the kingdom of God is not only the consummation of men and women, but their salvation. The scope of the church's anticipation is even wider and more comprehensive. Concurrent with the coming of God's kingdom will be the consummation of God's eternal plans regarding the whole cosmos.

Hence, it can be said that the church serves as the sign of the coming reign of God. The church in itself is not to be equated with God's rule. God's reign, his kingdom, is much wider than the church or even human society. The church is a preceding sign pointing to the coming righteous rule of God in the eschaton.

The distinction between the sign and the thing sets the church and its function in relation to God's rule in its proper place: "A sign points beyond itself to the thing signified. It is thus essential to the function of the sign that we should distinguish them,"[8] or else we repeat what happened when Christendom essentially equated the church and God's kingdom.

Acknowledging the anticipatory nature of the church's existence helps avoid uncritical alignment with any political or ideological order. As Barth put it succinctly, "Christians will always be Christians first, and only then members of a specific culture or state or class or the like."[9]

ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC, AND APOSTOLIC: THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH

A cherished ancient way of describing the nature and goal of the church is to speak of the four "marks": one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. This expression even found its way into the ancient Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed (381 CE).

Importantly, unlike too often in later tradition, these four classical marks of the church (also called notes or signs in tradition)—unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity—were not first used in any apologetic sense. The marks were most probably added to the creed somewhat haphazardly. Rather than abstract definitions of the church, the marks were first and foremost objects of faith or "statements of hope." Eventually, they have also become "statements of action," because they urge us to realize what is believed and hoped for.[10]

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[8]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 3:32.

[9]Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. Geoffrey William Bromiley and Thomas Forsyth Torrance, trans. G. W. Bromiley, 4 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956–1975; online edition, Alexander Street Press, 1975), IV/1:703.

[10]Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1977), 339-40.

It is usual and useful to consider the marks as both gifts and tasks. Indeed, the twofold sense has already been implied above. On the one hand, they are gifts from God. We do not make the church one, holy, catholic, and apostolic; only God can. On the other hand, we see only too clearly that any church in the world, including our own, is far from those markers. Hence, each description is also a matter of hope, which leads to action to more closely attain their realization.

To underline the dynamic and missional orientation of the marks, the leading American Reformed mission theologian Charles Van Engen points in the right direction by calling them adverbs. Rather than static adjectives, the adverbial conception calls for the church to be "the unifying, sanctifying, reconciling, and proclaiming presence of Jesus Christ in the world," thereby "challenging local congregations to a transformed, purpose-driven life of mission in the world, locally and globally."[11]

The church as one. In light of the rampant divisions and splits, it really takes faith to confess that the church of Christ on earth is one. No wonder that the New Testament resounds with numerous exhortations toward fostering unity and seeking to avoid further divisions (Jn 17:20-26; Acts 2:42; Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 1:10-30; Eph 4:1-6). Although the unity of the church has been a spiritual and theological conviction from its beginning, we should not idealize the early church. Already in the New Testament, divisions and strife emerged as soon as new communities mushroomed. Importantly, early in patristic theology deep concern for restoring unity emerged as well, as is evident in ecumenical tracts such as the early third-century *On the Unity of the Church* by Cyprian.

Recalling the gift/task distinction introduced above, the church's unity is a God-given gift because there is only one "head" with one "body" of Christ (1 Cor 12). At the same time, it is a grand task given to all Christians.

The church as catholic. The term *catholic* here does not denote a particular Christian tradition, the Roman Catholic Church. It is rather a theological expression meaning "directed toward the whole" (literally in Greek), referring first of all to the whole church in distinction from local communities.[12] At this time, there was not yet an indication of the meaning "fullness" and "perfection," that is, "lacking nothing," which was later attached to *catholicity*, based on Ephesians 1:23.

[11]Charles Van Engen, "Church," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, ed. A. Scott Moreau et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), 193.

[12]For the earliest use of the term *catholic* in reference to the church, see Ignatius, *To the Smyrnaeans* 8, www.newadvent.org/fathers/0109.htm.

From this development, in polemical debates, the term came to mean "orthodox." This understanding came to its zenith with the establishment of Christianity as the only legitimate state religion in Christendom.

The contemporary understanding has to remember the original New Testament meaning of the term *catholic* (notwithstanding the lack of the term therein): it simply means the whole church as it consists of all local churches, which in themselves are full churches insofar as they are in communion with other similar communities. As the leading Catholic ecclesiologist, Hans Küng aptly put it, "While the individual local Church is *an* entire Church, it is not *the* entire Church." So each local church is truly catholic.[13]

Furthermore, although spatial extension, numerical quantity, and temporal continuity are not irrelevant to catholicity, they do not alone—or even primarily—constitute it. It is often noted—rightly—that the term *catholic* comes close to *ecumenical*, whose basic meaning, "pertaining to the whole inhabited world," came to denote (the search for) the wholeness, that is, oneness and unity, of the Christian church.

The church as holy. Similarly to unity, the holiness of the church is a challenging confession in light of the rampant sinfulness and corruption of churches and individual Christians: "The essential holiness of the Church stands in contrast to sin, individual as well as communal."[14] Not surprisingly, various tactics have been tried to ensure the church's holiness. One of them involves isolating the "holy members" from the rest. This goes all the way back to the (in)famous Donatist controversy in the patristic era.[15] Whereas the rigorous Donatists started off from the premise of the purity of the church, Augustine's mainline party insisted on the primacy of love. Augustine also insisted on the church as a "mixed body" on this side of the eschaton. The ultimate concern of the Augustinian party, based on the third-century legacy of Cyprian (known for his influential *The Unity of the Church*), had to do with the unity of the body of Christ and the principle of love.[16] The Donatists were overcome by the majority opinion.

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[13]Hans Küng, *The Church*, trans. Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967; repr., Garden City, NY: Image Books/Doubleday, 1976), 300.

[14]World Council of Churches, *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper no. 198, December 15, 2005, #54 (see also #51), www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-nature-and-mission-of-the-church-a-stage-on-the-way-to-a-common-statement.

[15]J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 409-17.

[16]Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 203-7, 409-17.

Another tactic makes a distinction between a church holy in itself and its sinful members; that is, it considers the *church* holy and its membership sinning. The obvious question arises however: What is a church without Christians? Is it an abstract concept? An "invisible" nonearthly reality?

What, then, would be a theologically and pastorally appropriate way to envision a "holy" church of the creed despite the necessary sinfulness of all its members? The starting point is the honest and bold acknowledgment of the sinfulness of the church. Even in its holiness, the church is sinful and yet holy. This means that the church derives its holiness not from the members—as Free Church ecclesiologies too often tend to imply—but from its Lord; nor does the church lose its holiness because of the presence of sin in the lives of men and women, as deplorable as that may be. That said, the idea of separation lies at the core of the biblical notion of holiness in both testaments—as Free Churches tirelessly remind older churches. Church members should turn away from all that is un- and anti-God(ly) and turn to the things of God. But notwithstanding the need for the human act of turning (away and toward), ultimately holiness is the work of the triune God.

The church as apostolic. Although the adjective *apostolic* never occurs in the Bible, the term *apostle* occurs frequently in the New Testament, most often in Luke and Paul, where its meaning resembles that of an ambassador (for Christ). The term is not limited to the twelve disciples as is often popularly assumed. It can also refer to various persons and groups; Paul himself is of course often its object, and he also mentions "false apostles" (2 Cor 11:13).

The original meaning of *apostolic* simply referred to a linkage with the apostles. Apostolicity, then, essentially involves continuity with the life and faith of the apostles and the apostolic church of the New Testament, not in an artificial technical sense but as a matter of continuity in faith, worship, and mission. Resemblance with the apostolic church includes following Jesus and his teachings as recorded in Scripture, charismatic endowment, and holistic mission and service. In that light, the claim to apostolicity by the youngest Christian family, Pentecostalism, gains a new credibility and significance—a movement of most enthusiastic missionary activity as well; no wonder numerous such communities adopted the name Apostolic.[17] This claim is as legitimate as the one based on episcopal

[17]Cecil M. Robeck, "A Pentecostal Perspective on Apostolicity," paper presented to Faith and Order, National Council of Churches, Consultation on American-Born Churches, March 1992.

succession (Orthodox and Roman Catholic), as well as the claim that appeals to the Bible as the apostolic Word (Reformation churches).

With this background in the roots of the Christian community, we will proceed with part one, surveying key ecclesiological traditions and also taking careful note of some leading theologians within those traditions who have made significant contributions to the understanding of ecclesiology. We will begin from what is routinely considered to be the most ancient among the living ecclesiological traditions, the Eastern Orthodox Church.

1

THE CHURCH AS AN ICON OF THE TRINITY

Eastern Orthodox Ecclesiology

WHO ARE ORTHODOX CHURCHES?

The Orthodox Church encompasses two wide families that are nowadays often identified as Eastern[1] and Oriental. The former is much better known in the Christian West and consists of four ancient patriarchates: Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. A fifth contemporary patriarchate is that of Moscow, the Russian Orthodox Church, by far the largest Orthodox church. In the former Eastern Europe are a number of other autocephalous churches: in Serbia, Romania, and Bulgaria, among others. The Eastern family follows the Byzantine liturgy and is also at times called Chalcedonian because of their strict adherence to the Creed of Chalcedon (451 CE). The other main family, the Orientals, consists of Armenian, Coptic, Syrian, and certain Indian Orthodox churches, among others. Alongside cultural, linguistic, and political differences, christological disputes have challenged the union of the global Orthodox family (going back to issues dealt with in great detail at Chalcedon). In the contemporary world, a concentration of Orthodox churches is also slowly growing in the United States, Western Europe, Africa, and some Asian countries such as China, Japan,

[1]This ecclesiological survey will be focused on the "Eastern" Orthodox family because their contributions are readily available in international theological languages and also because they have engaged with the ecumenical conversation much more widely.

and Korea.[2] Currently in the world church, the nomenclature *Eastern* is therefore not a geographical designation but rather a way to identify the church vis-à-vis the Western church, that is, Roman Catholics, Anglicans, and Protestants.

Among the patriarchates, primacy belongs to Constantinople. Its role, however, is not to be compared to that of the Vatican in the Roman Catholic Church because it has no power to interfere in the affairs of each self-governing patriarchate and church. What holds together such a diverse group of churches is sacramental communion and love of their living tradition. *Conciliarity* is the term used by Orthodox theologians to emphasize the significance of the early councils to the unity of the church, from that of Jerusalem in the book of Acts to the seven early ecumenical councils.[3] Throughout history and currently, "Eastern Orthodox theology claims to have preserved the integrity of the Apostolic Tradition (as implied by the term *orthodoxia*, lit. 'correct belief' or 'correct glory') by a direct, unbroken connection to the Church of the Apostles."[4] Because "Holy Tradition [Is] the Source of the Orthodox Faith,"[5] the theology of the church draws heavily from the early sources, the church fathers of the East.

Although Christian community and its liturgy and spirituality stand at the heart of Orthodox tradition, their own theologians have routinely acknowledged that precise ecclesiological doctrines are scarce in their midst. A key reason is their preferred way of doing theology—the apophatic way. In contrast to the West's more typical kataphatic method, which seeks to analyze and define, the apophatic relies rather on "negative" (that is, indirect and elusive) ways of speaking of theology, as well as mysticism and spiritual exercises.

THE CHURCH FOUNDED ON THE SPIRIT AND CHRIST

Eastern Orthodox theology draws heavily from the early sources, namely, the church fathers of the Christian East. Therefore, any inquiry into the distinctives of Eastern thought should bear in mind the experiences and theological

[2]See further, John Binns, *An Introduction to the Christian Orthodox Churches* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Kondothra M. George, "Ecclesiology in the Orthodox Tradition," in *RCCC*, chap. 8; and Andrew Louth, "The Eastern Orthodox Tradition," in *OHE*, 183-98.

[3]Paraskevè Tibbs, "Eastern Orthodox Theology," in *Global Dictionary of Theology*, ed. William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 244.

[4]Tibbs, "Eastern Orthodox Theology," 244.

[5]Chapter title in Timothy (Kallistos) Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, new rev. ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 195 (chap. 16).

developments of the early centuries. A fine introduction to modern appropriations of those ancient patristic thoughts is offered by Constantine Tsirpanlis in his *Introduction to Eastern Patristic Thought and Orthodox Theology.*[6]

Generally speaking, it can be said that Eastern theology has been more "spirit-sensitive" than its Western counterparts. Western theology is characteristically built on christological concepts rather than on pneumatological ones. The pneumatological orientation of the East, however, does not mean neglecting either Christ[7] or the Trinity.[8]

Consequently, in the Eastern Orthodox understanding, the church is founded on a twofold divine economy: the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.[9] Eastern theologians speak about the church as the body of Christ and the fullness of the Holy Spirit.[10] The christological aspect creates the objective and unchangeable features of the church while a result of the pneumatological aspect is the subjective side of the church. In other words, the christological aspect guarantees stability while its pneumatological aspect gives the church a dynamic character.[11]

Eastern pneumatological ecclesiology, ideally, balances hierarchy and charisms:

> But the Church is not only hierarchical, it is charismatic and Pentecostal. "Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesying" (1 Thessalonians v, 19-20). The Holy Spirit is poured out upon all God's people. . . . In the Apostolic Church, besides the institutional ministry conferred by the laying on of hands, there were other *charismata* or gifts conferred directly by the Spirit: Paul mentions "gifts of healing," the working of miracles, "speaking with tongues, and the like" (1 Corinthians xii, 28-30). In the Church of later days, these charismatic ministries have been less in evidence, but they have never been wholly extinguished.[12]

The Eastern church teaches that what is common to the Father and the Son is the divinity that the Holy Spirit communicates to humans within the church,

[6]Constantine N. Tsirpanlis, *Introduction to Eastern Patristic Thought and Orthodox Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991).

[7]Nikos A. Nissiotis, "Pneumatological Christology as a Presupposition of Ecclesiology," in *Oecumenica: An Annual Symposium of Ecumenical Research* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1967), 235-52.

[8]Vladimir Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, ed. John H. Erickson and Thomas E. Bird (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), chap. 4.

[9]Vladimir Lossky, "Concerning the Third Mark of the Church: Catholicity," in *Image and Likeness of God*, 177-78.

[10]Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, trans. Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976), chap. 9.

[11]Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 190-92.

[12]Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 249-50; see also 240, 243.

making them partakers of the divine nature.[13] This brings to light the distinctive Orthodox understanding of salvation as deification (or divinization; Greek *theōsis*). While strictly adhering to the distinction between God (and his uncreated essence) and the creature, deification means participation in the life of the triune God. Indeed, Eastern Fathers freely speak about the Holy Spirit as effecting deification, perfection, adoption, and sanctification.[14] Therefore, as the Spirit inspires and empowers the process of deification, the role of the Spirit in the church comes into focus.

Rather than centering on guilt concepts and sin—as in the West—Orthodox tradition focuses on a gradual growth in sanctification culminating in deification, becoming like God (the ancient doctrine of *theōsis*). Indeed, according to Eastern theology, Latin (Christian West) traditions have been dominated by legal, juridical, and forensic categories. Eastern theology, on the other hand, understands the need for salvation in terms of deliverance from mortality and corruption for life everlasting.

The ultimate goal of salvation and Christian life for the human being, created in the image of God, is union with God. In this effort, the idea of divine-human cooperation (*synergia*) is affirmed yet not understood as nullifying the role of grace. Prayer, asceticism, meditation, humble service, and similar exercises are recommended for attaining this noble goal of deification. Orthodox theology never separates grace and human freedom. Therefore, the charge of Pelagianism (that grace is a reward for the merit of the human will) is not fair. It is a question not of merit but of cooperation, of a synergy of the two wills, divine and human. Grace is a presence of God within us that demands constant effort on our part.[15]

SALIENT FEATURES OF ORTHODOX ECCLESIOLOGICAL EXPERIENCES AND INTIMATIONS

Even though strict ecclesiological definitions may be lacking, as mentioned above, several characteristics of Eastern ecclesiology can be mentioned: First, the church is seen as the image of the Trinity.[16] Just as each person is made according to the image of the Trinity, so the church as a whole is an icon of the Trinity,

[13]Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 161-62.
[14]For a sample of representative texts, see Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 163-65 (and all of chap. 8).
[15]Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, chap. 10.
[16]See further, Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 176-77.

"reproducing on earth the mystery of unity in diversity."[17] The church as the image of the Trinity represents the principle of identity and mutuality simultaneously:

> In the Trinity the three are one God, yet each is fully personal; in the Church a multitude of human persons is united in one, yet each preserves her or his personal diversity unimpaired. The mutual indwelling of the persons of the Trinity is paralleled by the coinherence of the members of the Church.[18]

Second, consequently, there is also a vivid consciousness of community: "We know that when any of us falls, he falls alone; but no one is saved alone. He is saved in the Church, as a member of it and in union with all its other members."[19] The Spiritual Way, as the journey of the Christian is often called, presupposes that individuals come together and join in community. The journey is undertaken in fellowship with others, not in isolation. The Orthodox tradition is intensely conscious of the ecclesial character of all true Christians.[20]

Third, at the very core of Orthodox theology in general and ecclesiology in particular is the relation of humanity to creation as a whole, the cosmos. The church is described in cosmological terms. In this understanding the church is the center of the universe, the sphere in which its destinies are determined. The church is also necessary since all the conditions required for us to attain union with God (*theōsis*, divinization, deification) are given in the church. It is in the church that human beings are restored to their original role as co-creators with God.[21]

The fourth defining feature of Orthodox ecclesial consciousness has to do with sacramentality and its focus, the Eucharist.

EUCHARISTIC ECCLESIOLOGY

At the heart of Eastern Orthodox ecclesiology stands the Eucharist. The Eucharist both represents the general principle of sacramentalism, common also to the Western Catholic traditions, and is the sacrament of primacy. *Sacramentalism* here means that God's grace is both mediated and experienced by and through the sacraments of the church. It does not downplay the meaning of faith, as is

[17]Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 240.
[18]Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 240.
[19]This clause is attributed to G. Khomiakov in Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 239.
[20]See further, Timothy (Kallistos) Ware, *The Orthodox Way*, rev. ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 107-8.
[21]Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 178.

often depicted in Protestant caricatures of sacramentalism, but rather brings faith into focus. It is through faith that sacraments are received, even though the sacraments also give birth to faith. "In the Church and through the sacraments our nature enters into union with the divine nature" of Christ, "the Head of His mystical body." Our human nature participates in and becomes one with Christ, particularly in sacramental life.[22]

One may ask, "What is the church for?" The biblical answer can be found, for example, in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, which speaks of the partaking of the bread and wine at the Eucharist and implies that the church is to bear witness to salvation in Christ—not only telling but also doing in remembrance of Christ. This is the function of the Eucharist. Therefore, the basic ecclesiological rule that goes back to the Fathers says: wherever the Eucharist is, there is the church. Or, the church makes the Eucharist, and the Eucharist makes the church. Eastern theologians point to the fact that in Paul talk about the Eucharist is not only analogical but also causal. "Therefore," which introduces Paul's instruction on the Eucharist (1 Cor 10:14), denotes causality.[23]

Several implications follow: *ekklēsia*, the church, is not just any kind of assembly but rather God's people gathered for Eucharist. The bishop is one who watches over rather than simply administers the celebration. This kind of Eucharist gathering can only be a local gathering, and therefore in every celebration the whole Christ is present. The important ecclesiastical corollary overall is that every local church is a true church. Furthermore, "The eucharist is the primary expression of communion between local churches."[24] In other words, local communities are independent of each other, but they are in communion with each other eucharistically.

No wonder the Eucharist is the center of Orthodox liturgy and worship. In a sense, church life is *liturgy after liturgy*, even in its mission. The earthly liturgy is a foretaste and icon of the heavenly worship when the church has finished its course and the members have reached the fulfillment of the earthly sojourn, that is, have become deified.[25]

[22]Lossky, *Mystical Theology*, 181-82 (181).
[23]Timothy (Kallistos) Ware, "Incarnation and Church," paper presented at the International Charismatic Consultation on World Evangelization, Prague, Czech Republic, August 23-27, 2000.
[24]George, "Ecclesiology in the Orthodox Tradition," 163.
[25]See further, Ware, *Orthodox Church*, chaps. 13 and 14.

JOHN ZIZIOULAS: ORTHODOX COMMUNION ECCLESIOLOGY

Being as communion. The best-known single Orthodox ecclesiologist in the Christian West is the Greek John Zizioulas, the titular bishop of Pergamon. The very title of the main ecclesiological work of John Zizioulas clearly indicates its central argument: *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*.[26] The Orthodox theologian argues that at the center of personal existence, whether divine or human, is communion, *koinonia*, being in relationships.

> From the fact that a human being is a member of the Church, he becomes an "image of God," he exists as God Himself exists, he takes on God's "way of being." This way of being . . . is a way of *relationship* with the world, with other people and with God, an event of *communion*, and that is why it cannot be realized as the achievement of an *individual*, but only as an *ecclesial* fact.[27]

There is no true being without communion; nothing exists as an individual in itself. To put it technically: communion is an ontological category, the most foundational statement about personhood. In the divine Trinity, this truth is manifested in that the one God exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Spirit—in an eternal loving communion.[28]

In becoming a Christian, a "biological individual" becomes an "ecclesial person."[29] Through baptism and faith a merely biological existence gives way to existence in communion with God and other people. Being in communion does not, however, mean downplaying the distinctive personhood of each individual. "The person cannot exist without communion; but every form of communion which denies or suppresses the person, is unadmissable."[30]

Since the triune God is the most profound manifestation of communion, a communion in which each person, Father, Son, and Spirit, represents true personhood rather than isolated individualism, those "in Christ," members of the church, also participate in a true communion.[31]

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[26]John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), esp. 124-25. A fine recent study of Zizioulas's ecclesiology, in critical dialogue with Catholic and Free Church ecclesiologies, is offered by Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), part 2.

[27]Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 15.

[28]The basic philosophical and theological orientation is given in chap. 2 of Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*.

[29]Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 49-65.

[30]Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 18.

[31]For a useful discussion, see Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 83-88.

Eucharist and communion. Zizioulas is an Orthodox theologian. For him, therefore, the Eucharist is the foundational act of the church; in fact, it is the act that makes the church. Communion is made possible and lived out in eucharistic *koinonia*. He bases his theology of the Eucharist in the Pauline saying that makes an explicit connection to *koinonia*: "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing [*koinōnia*, "communion"] in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing [*koinōnia*, "communion"] in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Cor 10:16-17 NRSV). This is the realization of the principle "One in many" and, conversely, "many in One." Many Christians are incorporated into the One Christ, and the One Christ is the representative, corporate personality of many Christians.[32]

For eucharistic ecclesiology, each local church is a whole church, since it has the whole Christ. The church can be found in all its fullness wherever the Eucharist is being celebrated. The church is essentially a local church. Not only is the local church a church by virtue of the celebration of the Eucharist, it is also a catholic church insofar as it involves the coming together of the whole church at a specific place. If the whole Christ is present at the Eucharist—and according to Zizioulas he is—then it becomes understandable that the catholicity of the church is guaranteed by Christ's presence. This is also the key to the relationship between the local and universal church. Volf summarizes it accurately: "The larger church is present in the local eucharistic *synaxis*; in a reverse fashion, the eucharistic *synaxis* is an act not only of the concrete eucharistic communion, but also of the larger church. Thus every Eucharist anticipates the eschatological gathering of the *whole* people of God."[33]

In order for the church to be catholic—the term derives from the Greek *katholos*, literally "according to the whole, i.e., undivided"—it has to transcend all natural divisions and obstacles. Says Zizioulas,

> A eucharist which discriminates between races, sexes, ages, professions, social classes etc. violates not certain ethical principles but its eschatological nature. For that reason such a eucharist is not a "bad"—i.e. morally deficient—eucharist but no eucharist at all. It cannot be said to be the body of the One who sums up all into Himself.[34]

[32]Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 145-49 (145).
[33]Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 104 (emphasis original).
[34]Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 255n11.

According to Zizioulas, there is one necessary condition for the local church to be able to celebrate the Eucharist, which actually makes that celebrating church a church, and that is the presence of a bishop. Why so? To understand this we have to notice his understanding of ordination. Ordination, rather than being primarily a transfer of power or authority, functions to connect him to the local community in a very concrete way. The person ordained, in this tradition only male, does not come into possession of something over against the community but rather becomes what he is now as the priest or bishop in the community.[35]

But there is also a place for the laity. Zizioulas considers all members of the church to be ordained by virtue of baptism, especially since in Eastern theology baptism is inseparable from confirmation, which occurs in the context of the Eucharist. The person baptized is not only made into a Christian through baptism but is also ordained. In confirmation, hands are laid upon the person and there is an *epiclesis*, a prayer for the Spirit.[36] The role of the laity at the Eucharist is to say "Amen" and so to receive the act of celebration.

Pneumatology and Christology as the dual foundation of the church. In keeping with his tradition, Zizioulas explicitly attempts to work for a proper synthesis between Christology and pneumatology as the basis for ecclesiology. He rightly notes that the New Testament presents the mutuality rather than the priority of either one. On the one hand, the Spirit is given by Christ (Jn 7:39); on the other hand, there is no Christ until the Spirit is at work either at his baptism (Mk 1:9-11) or at his birth (Mt 1:18-25; Lk 1:35). Both of these views coexist in the one canon. At the liturgical level, confusion came early due to the separation of baptism and confirmation. As long as these two rites were united, it could be argued that pneumatology (confirmation) and baptism (Christology) form one entity.[37]

Consequently, Zizioulas speaks of the church as "instituted" by Christ and "constituted" by the Spirit.[38] He contends that it is not enough to speak of pneumatology in relation to the church; rather, one must make pneumatology constitutive. In other words, pneumatology must qualify the very ontology of the church. The Spirit is not something that animates a church that already exists. "Pneumatology does not refer to the well-being but to the very

[35]Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 110.
[36]Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 215-16; Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 113-14.
[37]Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 126-29.
[38]Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 132, 136, 140.

being of the Church." In other words, pneumatology is an ontological category in ecclesiology.[39]

A proper pneumatological orientation guards the church from overinstitutionalization. Where there is a pneumatological deficit, one result is a hierarchical, centralized concept of the church. All pyramidal notions disappear in a pneumatological ecclesiology, where the one and the many coexist as two aspects of the same being.[40]

[39]Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 131-32 (132).
[40]Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 139.

2

THE CHURCH AS THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Roman Catholic Ecclesiology

TOWARD A RENEWED ECCLESIOLOGY FOR THE WORLD'S LARGEST CHURCH

The Roman Catholic Church is currently the world's largest Christian body, claiming a membership of about half of all Christians. It is spread all over the world and is often the window into Christianity for non-Christians. Because of its vast size, whatever general characterizations can be made concerning Catholic theology in general and ecclesiology in particular are no more than generalizations.

Similarly to Orthodox tradition, the Roman Catholic Church builds on tradition, a living and dynamic Spirit-led development. That said, the innovations and new emphases of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) cannot be exaggerated.[1] In contrast to the past—even as recently as in Vatican I (1869–1870), when the church was conceived in terms of rigid hierarchy, fixed and unchanging doctrine, and focus on clerical acts[2]—Vatican II advocated the significance of

[1] All Catholic bishops and cardinals from all over the world were invited to meet in Vatican City at the invitation of John XXIII. Furthermore, a number of non-Catholic observers were also in attendance. While of course not all invitees were able to attend, at most there were well over 2,000 people in the (later) meetings.

[2] For a historical development, see Alison Forrestal, "The Church in the Tridentine and Early Modern Eras," in *RCCC*, 85-105.

the whole people of God, including the laity; openness to the world; and desire for continued renewal.[3]

Perhaps the most important development of Vatican II was the replacement of the old *societas perfecta* ("perfect society"), an institutional-hierarchic ecclesiology, with the dynamic "people of God" notion in which the church is seen first of all as a pilgrim people on the way to the heavenly city. The view of the church as a perfect society had enjoyed widespread support from the time of the Counter-Reformation through the first half of the twentieth century. In contrast to the idea of perfection, the pilgrim nature of the church aligns with its missionary nature: "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature, since it is from the mission of the Son and the mission of the Holy Spirit that she draws her origin, in accordance with the decree of God the Father."[4] This missional orientation is currently an ecumenical consensus, as will be discussed in more detail in chapter thirteen.

Characteristic of the earlier Catholic ecclesiology is the papal encyclical *Divinum illud munus* by Leo XIII (1897), according to which Christ is the head and the Holy Spirit is the soul of the church. The problem with this approach is that it makes the church and its structures absolute, divine in origin, while the only task of the Spirit is to "animate" the already existing ecclesiastical apparatus. Many Catholic theologians, including the noted late French Dominican Yves Congar criticized this kind of a predominantly institutional view of the church.[5] He also lamented that his own church had created during the course of history several sorts of "substitutes" for the Holy Spirit, such as the Eucharist, the pope, and Mary.[6]

Several other leading theologians such as Hans Küng and Karl Rahner played a crucial role in calling the church to renewal. They also helped Catholic ecclesiology recover more robustly the solid trinitarian and pneumatological early patristic roots of the Catholic doctrine of the church.

THE RENEWED ECCLESIOLOGY OF VATICAN II

Because of the groundbreaking role of Vatican II, its most important ecclesiological document, *Lumen Gentium* (The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church),

[3]See further, Richard Lennan, "Roman Catholic Ecclesiology," in *RCCC*, 234-50; and Ormond Rush, "Roman Catholic Ecclesiology from the Council of Trent to Vatican II and Beyond," in *OHE*, 263-92.

[4]*Ad Gentes* (Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church, Vatican II), December 7, 1965, #2, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html.

[5]Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith, 3 vols. in 1 (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1997), 1:9.

[6]Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:160-64.

deserves a careful look.[7] Among the sixteen authoritative documents Vatican II produced—documents that represent the highest teaching authority of the church—the ecclesiological document is one of the most significant statements on the church ever attempted in the history of theology. Even the structure of *Lumen Gentium* gives a clue to its purpose: rather than beginning with a chapter on hierarchy, which was the outline of the draft, the final version placed the chapter on the "People of God" at the beginning of the document, just after the opening chapter on the "Mystery of the Church," to be followed by the treatment of hierarchy and laity. Then there is a call to holiness to the whole church, not only to the religious.[8] And the document ends with a profound vision of the "Pilgrim Church." Finally, a chapter on "The Blessed Virgin Mary" was attached to the document on the doctrine of the church since that is the proper context for honoring the First Lady of the church.

Instead of beginning with a description of the church in its visible, empirical nature, the first chapter of *Lumen Gentium* provides a profound reflection on the inner life of the triune God within the church. Borrowing a phrase from the early-third-century Saint Cyprian of Carthage, the council states, "Thus, the Church has been seen as 'a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.'"[9] Along with this trinitarian approach to the doctrine of the church, the Second Vatican Council came to speak of the church as a "mystery" and "sacrament": "The Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race."[10] This notion is far removed from the older views of the church, which tended to understand it first of all as a hierarchical institution. This understanding of the church as sacrament has also enlarged the notion of (traditional) sacraments and consequently opened the way for less polemical and ecumenically more fruitful thinking about sacramental celebration and sacramental theology.[11]

Whereas in the past, the church was described as "an *unequal* society" composed of two categories of persons, "the Pastors and the flock" (and the faithful

[7] *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II), November 21, 1964, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

[8] The term *religious* as a noun refers to monks, nuns, and others who have devoted their whole lives to spiritual service.

[9] *Lumen Gentium*, #4.

[10] *Lumen Gentium*, #1.

[11] R. A. Duffy, "Sacraments in General," in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin, 1st ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 2:203-7.

having the duty to "allow themselves to be led, and, like a docile flock, to follow the Pastors"),[12] *Lumen Gentium* rehabilitates the whole people of God as the church. Every local gathering of the church, under the bishops and pastors, is a legitimate church. There is a lot of ecumenical potential in the way a recent Roman Catholic theology textbook invests the local church with the fullness of meaning, based on the ancient formula "one, holy, catholic, apostolic" church:

> The church is one because of the indwelling of the one Holy Spirit in all the baptized; it is holy because it is set apart by God's graciousness for the reception of a mysterious love of predilection; it is catholic in the original sense of the word, meaning that it is whole and entire, possessing all the parts needed to make it integral; and it is apostolic because it remains in continuity in essentials with the original witnessing of the first-century apostles. . . . Catholics are often inclined to apply these descriptive characteristics only to the worldwide, universal church, yet they are beginning to learn from the eastern Orthodox churches and others that these characteristics are meant to apply just as truly to the local church.[13]

A SACRAMENTAL COMMUNION THEOLOGY

One of the models of the church defined by the famed late Catholic theologian Avery Dulles is the church as "mystical communion."[14] He rightly argues that the Catholic ecclesiology of communion goes back to the New Testament witness and the emerging theology of the church of patristic times. As noted in the introduction to the present book, communion language goes back to the early church in Acts 2: "So, if one is true to the dynamics of Acts, one would add immediately after the imparting of the Spirit, *koinonia*/communion, i.e., community formation together with its eucharistic expression. The language of Luke is communion language."[15] In its basic meaning, the term *koinonia*/communion denotes "a sharing in one reality held in common."[16] *Lumen Gentium* defines the essence of communion ecclesiology neatly when it states that God has, however, willed to make men holy and save them, not as individuals without any bond or link

[12]Pius X, *Vehementer Nos* (Encyclical of Pope Pius X on the French Law of Separation), February 11, 1906, #8 (emphasis original), www.vatican.va/content/pius-x/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-x_enc_11021906_vehementer-nos.html.
[13]Michael Fahey, "Church," in Fiorenza and Galvin, *Systematic Theology*, 2:43.
[14]Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), chap. 3.
[15]Kilian McDonnell, "Communion Ecclesiology and Baptism in the Spirit: Tertullian and the Early Church," *Theological Studies* 49 (1988): 674 (emphasis added).
[16]McDonnell, "Communion Ecclesiology," 674.

between them but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness.[17]

The communion in the church is based on the communion between the members of the Trinity. The trinitarian communion of the persons of the Trinity is the highest expression of unity for Christians, the "deepest meaning of *koinonia*":

> This is the sacred mystery of the unity of the Church, in Christ and through Christ, the Holy Spirit energizes its various functions. It is a mystery that finds its highest exemplar and source in the unity of the Persons of the Trinity: the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit, one God.[18]

Catholic theology in general and ecclesiology in particular are sacramental, not unlike the Orthodox beliefs. Therefore, the communion is sacramental in nature. For Roman Catholics, primary in the "sharing in holy things" (*communio in sanctis*) are baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist, as constitutive of the church. The sacraments and the communion of the church share a double relationship. On the one hand, the sacraments mediate the communion of life with God, and thus they are constitutive of the church. On the other hand, the sacraments are acts of the church inasmuch as it is a communion.[19]

Baptism, which already unites the body of Christ, only reaches its full aim by common participation in the Eucharist, through which the unity of the church becomes effective (1 Cor 12:27). Furthermore, Catholic theology also sees communion in ordination to service in the church, although ordination is not put on the same level as baptism and the Eucharist. The French Hervé Legrand summarizes the Catholic view of the relationship between *koinonia* and the sacraments: "According to Catholic ecclesiology one can and one must say that the sacraments make the church inasmuch as they are operated by Christ, celebrated in faith and in the communion of the Holy Spirit."[20]

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[17] *Lumen Gentium*, #9.

[18] *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism, Vatican II), November 21, 1964, #2, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html; see also the opening paragraphs of *Lumen Gentium*, with its trinitarian structure.

[19] Hervé Legrand, "Koinonia, Church and Sacraments," The Catholic Position Paper for the International Dialogue Between the Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostal Churches, Venice, Italy, August 1-7, 1987, 6-14.

[20] Legrand, "Koinonia, Church and Sacraments," 9.

THE SPIRIT AND THE CHARISMATIC STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH

On the eve of Vatican II, Karl Rahner, one of the main architects of the council, issued a passionate theological pamphlet titled, "Do Not Stifle the Spirit,"[21] in which he spoke about the great potentialities and challenges facing the church. He issued a serious warning: the Spirit who blows everywhere "can never find adequate expression simply in the forms of what we call the Church's official life, her principles, sacramental system and teaching."[22] He was very concerned about the charismatic element of the church:

> It is a situation dominated by a spirit which has been rather too hasty and too uncompromising in taking the dogmatic definition of the primacy of the pope in the Church as the bond of unity and the guarantee of truth, this attitude objectifying itself in a not inconsiderable degree of centralization of government in an ecclesiastical bureaucracy at Rome.[23]

A couple of years later, while the council was still meeting, Rahner published another appeal for the charismatic in the church, *The Dynamic Element in the Church*.[24] He issued a powerful call for the charismatic structure of the church by reminding us that the Holy Spirit is promised and given first and foremost to ecclesiastical ministry, not to suppress the free flow of the Spirit but to make room for it.[25] The church should be until the end the "Church of the abiding Spirit."[26]

According to Rahner, the Spirit is constitutive of the church in a way more basic than its institutional structure.[27] Where there is one-sided emphasis on Christology, church structures tend to become dominating. The charismatic element "does not merely stand in a dialectical relationship to the institutional factor as its opposite pole, existing on the same plane. Rather it is the first and the most ultimate among the formal characteristics inherent in the very nature of the Church as such."[28]

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[21]In Karl Rahner, "Do Not Stifle the Spirit," in *Theological Investigations* 7, trans. David Bourke (Baltimore: Helicon Press; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1971), 72-87.
[22]Rahner, "Do Not Stifle the Spirit," 75.
[23]Rahner, "Do Not Stifle the Spirit," 76.
[24]Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, trans. W. J. O'Hara (New York: Herder & Herder, 1964).
[25]Rahner, *Dynamic Element*, 42-48 (titled fittingly "The Charisma of Office").
[26]Rahner, *Dynamic Element*, 47.
[27]Karl Rahner, "Observations on the Factor of the Charismatic in the Church," in *Theological Investigations* 12, trans. David Bourke (New York: Seabury; London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1974), 97.
[28]Rahner, "Observations," 97.

Theologically prepared by Rahner and some other leading Catholic ecclesiologists, Vatican II opened up to a new embrace of the charismatic element and the charisms as an integral part of church life.[29] The Catholic systematician Michael A. Fahey states that "another way that the church is described in the perspective of the Second Vatican Council is as a community of charisms."[30] This understanding was also a proper response to the vision of Pope John XXIII, who wrote, when formally announcing the council, "This getting together of all the bishops of the Church should be like a new Pentecost."[31] This council, then, could be called the "Council of the Holy Spirit."[32]

In keeping with this orientation, Vatican II teaching emphasizes that the Holy Spirit sanctifies and leads the people of God not only through the sacraments and church ministries but also through special charisms bestowed freely on all the faithful in a variety of ways. Each faithful has "the right and duty to use them [charisms] in the Church and in the world for the good of men and the building up of the Church, in the freedom of the Holy Spirit who 'breathes where He wills' (John 3:8)."[33]

It is really remarkable that—in contrast to what was often assumed in the past—it is not only the ordained clergy and the religious but also ordinary faithful who are the bearers of the Spirit's gifts.[34] Consequently, it is the task of the bishops and pastors to guide in the proper use of charisms:

> These charisms, whether they be the more outstanding or the more simple and widely diffused, are to be received with thanksgiving and consolation for they are perfectly suited to and useful for the needs of the Church. Extraordinary gifts are not to be sought after, nor are the fruits of apostolic labor to be presumptuously expected from their use; but judgment as to their genuinity and proper use belongs to those who are appointed leaders in the Church, to whose special competence it belongs, not indeed to extinguish the Spirit, but to test all things and hold fast to that which is good.[35]

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[29]Two basic sources that summarize neatly the pneumatological perspectives of Vatican II are Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Creator Spirit*, vol. 3 of *Explorations in Theology*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 245-67; and Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:167-73.

[30]Fahey, "Church," 2:39.

[31]Germain Marc'hadour, "The Holy Spirit over the New World: II," *Clergy Review* 59, no. 4 (1974): 247.

[32]See also Kilian McDonnell, *Open the Windows: The Popes and Charismatic Renewal* (South Bend, IN: Greenlawn Press, 1989).

[33]*Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity, Vatican II), November 18, 1965, #3, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651118_apostolicam-actuositatem_en.html.

[34]See further, *Lumen Gentium*, #34, and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, #3, among others.

[35]*Lumen Gentium*, #12.

THE ORDAINED AND THE LAITY

There are two kinds of ministers in the Roman Catholic Church, the ordained—who are the religious—and the laity. In that sense, the Catholic Church is hierarchical. This is not a sociological observation (whose connotation in the minds of the people in the Global North is predominantly negative) but rather an ecclesio-theological statement. Chapter three in *Lumen Gentium* provides a detailed discussion.

Claiming an apostolic continuity all the way to Jesus and Peter, the first apostle, the bishops represent here on earth the head of the church. The task of the bishops is to lead preaching, teaching, and the celebration of sacraments, as well as the administration of the church. Priests serve under the bishop. Only unmarried men can be ordained into the sacred priesthood (bishops and pastors), and only they have the right to administer sacraments. The ordination of both bishops and priests, a sacramental act (one of the seven sacraments) makes them "differ from . . . [the laity] in essence and not only in degree."[36] "At a lower level of the hierarchy are deacons, upon whom hands are imposed 'not unto the priesthood, but unto a ministry of service,'" and so they are equipped to "serve in the diaconate of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity to the people of God."[37] Deacons can also be married men.

Among the bishops, the place of primacy belongs to the bishop of Rome, the pope. He presides over the college of bishops and the whole church. Continuing the teaching of Vatican I, the Second Vatican Council reaffirmed the infallibility of the pope. This is a highly technical and limited formulation of the doctrine "when, as the supreme shepherd and teacher of all the faithful . . . by a definitive act he proclaims a doctrine of faith or morals." Then and only then, his pronouncements are "irreformable" and do not necessarily require the consent of the faithful.[38] At the same time, it is affirmed that the college of the bishops, when united in communion with each other and the whole church, has the divine gift of infallibility even if no individual bishop in himself has it and even if false teachers and teachings may emerge. But the church as a whole will not err from its divine destiny.[39]

What then of the faithful? Whereas in the past most all church activities were performed by the priests and the religious, a groundbreaking innovation

[36]*Lumen Gentium*, #10.
[37]*Lumen Gentium*, #29.
[38]*Lumen Gentium*, #25.
[39]*Lumen Gentium*, #25.

of Vatican II was to rehabilitate and commission also the lay faithful. Although the laity differs from the priests "in essence and not only in degree, the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial or hierarchical priesthood are nonetheless interrelated: each of them in its own special way is a participation in the one priesthood of Christ."[40] Sharing "in the priestly, prophetical, and kingly functions of Christ . . . they carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world."[41] Theirs is, indeed, the lay apostolate, and for that a whole document among the sixteen Vatican II documents is devoted: *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity). That in itself is an important reminder of the significance of ordinary men and women to the church, and the document confirms that the availability of charismatic gifting and endowment applies no less to the laity than to the religious.

HANS KÜNG: RENEWAL ECCLESIOLOGY

The church in need of a continuing renewal. It is not self-evident that Hans Küng should be selected as the representative of Roman Catholic ecclesiology. Although he is undoubtedly one of the most productive and creative post-conciliar theologians of the Roman Catholic Church, he also has been one of the most disputed figures in his church. Having published in 1971 his moderately critical *Infallible? An Inquiry*,[42] questioning papal infallibility, he was subsequently stripped of his teaching credentials as a Roman Catholic theologian (although he was able to retain his post as theology professor in the Catholic faculty of the University of Tübingen, Germany, until his retirement). Yet his relentless voice for renewal of the church and Christian faith has been heard both within and outside his own faith community. Küng's monumental 1967 *The Church*—launched in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, for which he, along with his colleague Karl Rahner and others, was influential in the preparatory work—marks a watershed not only in Catholic but also in contemporary ecumenical ecclesiology.

Echoing the Protestant approach with a turn to Scripture, Küng begins his major ecclesiological investigation with a thorough and unusually long biblical study. In it, he asserts that "one can only know what the Church should be now if

[40] *Lumen Gentium*, #10.
[41] *Lumen Gentium*, #31.
[42] Hans Küng, *Infallible? An Inquiry*, trans. Edward Quinn (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971).

one also knows what the Church was originally."[43] This desire to go back to the dynamic and vigorous life of the early church translates into a persistent call for a continuing renewal. It means that the church's

> nature must be constantly realized anew and given new form in history by our personal decision of faith. The historical Church cannot do without this constant renewal of its form. . . . Changing times demand changing forms. Yet in spite of all changes in form the basic structure of the Church given to it in Christ by God's saving act must be preserved, if it is to remain the true Church. (341)

Being a reformer of the church, Küng, however, wants to avoid the cardinal sin, as he sees it, of resorting to an overidealized, vague view of the church. It is the historical form of the church as it now shows itself to us that is the starting point for reform rather than "the abstract celestial spheres of theological theory" (23). Commensurate with this realistic attitude, Küng criticizes the way the distinction between the invisible and visible church is often depicted, for example, by the Protestant Reformers. A real church made up of real people cannot possibly be invisible. The visible church is the true church, not the false church. Nevertheless, the church is simultaneously visible and invisible. The visible aspects of the church are quickened, formed, and controlled by the invisible aspects (59-65).

As a real church, the faith community is composed of sinful men and women, and it exists for sinful men and women. Küng's view comes close to that of Luther, who regarded the church as the community of sinners (140). Therefore, the *communio sanctorum* (the communion of the saints) as *communio peccatorum* (the communion of sinners) is always in need of forgiveness and repentance (230).

The whole people of God. As already mentioned, Küng was instrumental in the theological and ecclesiological reforms of the Second Vatican Council. One of the main concepts of postconciliar thinking about the church has been the "people of God." Küng devotes a long section in *The Church* to discussing various aspects of this concept; he both echoes the main orientations of *Lumen Gentium* and elaborates its teaching.

Incorporation into the church through baptism, in which one surrenders oneself to the baptizer and so to the whole church and to the sustaining of Christian

[43]Hans Küng, *The Church*, trans. Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967; repr., Garden City, NY: Image Books/Doubleday, 1976), 11. Hereafter in this chapter, numbers in parentheses refer to this work unless otherwise noted.

life through participation in the Eucharist, demonstrates that the individual is incorporated into a community and does not exist simply as an individual.

> But the essential difference and superiority of the Christian message, when compared to other oriental religions of redemption, is that its aim is not the salvation of the individual alone and the freeing of the individual soul from suffering, sin and death. The essential part of the Christian message is the idea of salvation for the whole community of people, of which the individual is a member. (172)

As the people of God, the community of faith is a pilgrim people, another dominant feature of the Vatican II understanding of the church. "The Church is essentially *en route*, on a journey, a pilgrimage" (176).

A singular distinction of these "New People of God," the Christians, was their belief that all the faithful belong to the people of God; therefore, there must be no clericalization of the church.

> If we see the Church as the people of God, it is clear that the Church can never be merely a particular class or caste, a group of officials or a clique within the fellowship of the faithful. The Church is always and in all cases the *whole* people of God, the *whole* ecclesia, the *whole* fellowship of the faithful. Everyone belongs to the chosen race, the royal priesthood, the holy nation. (169, emphases original)

Consequently, Küng is critical of the unhealthy distinction between clergy and laity that attempts to remove decisive activity and initiative from the laity in the church.[44]

The body of Christ and the temple of the Spirit. Still another favored image of the church in Küng is the ancient biblical concept of the body of Christ, which has played such a decisive role in much of Catholic ecclesiology. Küng's approach to the concept revolutionizes the older Catholic canons and comes close to contemporary Protestant views, as well as the ecumenical consensus. Each local community as the body of Christ is a full church, Küng contends, going against the tendency of preconciliar Catholic ecclesiology in which the ecclesiality of the local community derives from the universal church (299-302).

In addition to the people of God and the body of Christ, the church is also "The Church as the Creation of the Spirit."[45] According to biblical testimonies, the

[44]For a self-critical note about the lack of theology of the laity and the continued overemphasis on the ordained ministers/hierarchy, see also Michael G. Lawler and Thomas J. Shanahan, *Church: A Spirited Communion* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), 73-83.

[45]Chapter title in Küng, *Church*, 201.

Spirit of God is the principle of freedom (2 Cor 3:17). As a result, the church of the Spirit is the church of freedom. Ultimately, freedom is granted not because it is struggled for and won; rather, because freedom has been granted, it can and must be lived. The Spirit is also an eschatological gift and so frees the people of God into God's future. This liberating work was already evident at the day of Pentecost when, as a result of the pouring out of God's Spirit on all flesh, social barriers were removed (215-24).

In line with his realistic ecclesiology, Küng also emphasizes that the Spirit of God who indwells the church is not a magical, mystical, or otherwise obscure power, as in some non-Christian traditions, but the presence of God in Christ and derivatively in the church (217). Even though the church is the locus of the Spirit, it never possesses the Spirit; rather, the church lives under the reign of the Spirit. The church is subordinate to the Spirit. Just as we cannot identify the church with Christ, as happened in the "Church as the continued incarnation of Christ" view of the Catholic ecclesiology of the nineteenth century, neither can we identify the church with the Spirit. The church is the church of the Spirit; however, the Spirit is not the Spirit of the church but the Spirit of God and Christ (229).

The Spirit of God is totally free to work when, where, and how the Spirit wills. The Spirit cannot be restricted by the church, not even the Catholic Church. Indeed, the Spirit "is at work not only in the Catholic Church, but where he wills: in Christianity as a whole. And finally he is at work not only in Christianity, but where he wills: in the whole world" (232). No wonder Küng wholeheartedly advocates Vatican II's vision of the charismatic structure of the church.

The charismatic structure of the church. According to Küng, there seem to be two reasons why the Catholic Church has resisted acknowledging the charismatic structure of the church. The first reason has been the clericalism and legalism hinted above. Presenting the second reason, Küng notes that the Catholic Church's ecclesiology has been founded exclusively upon the Pastoral Letters, which fail to express the pneumatic nature of the church's structure, as does, for example, 1–2 Corinthians (236).

Küng argues that the spiritual gifts are both common and "extraordinary" (supernatural). There is also a variety of charisms, and they are freely distributed among members of the whole community. An element of service is always attached to the charisms. The true charism is not simply a miracle; it serves the

community (1 Cor 12:7). Since the needs of the community are many, there are correspondingly a variety of charisms. A common misunderstanding presumes some kind of uniformity in gifting, especially related to ordination. This view finds no basis in Paul's theology. But since there are different spirits, the gift of discernment should always be active in the church (236-50).

Amid this variety of gifts and the freedom of the Spirit, though, is the principle of unity. Küng outlines three guiding principles from Paul that point to the need for and possibility of unity. First, every church member has her or his own specific charism from the Spirit of God. Second, the principle of "with another for one another" indicates that the charisms are for the edification of the whole church. The Christian is to use his or her charism not as a weapon for seizing power and position in the church but as a gift for the service of others and of the community. Third, obedience to the Lord means living in harmony with others in the church. All charisms have their origin in one and the same giver, God himself through Christ in the Spirit (248-49).

The church is one. Küng opposes the view of his own church's tradition, which demands the celebration of the sacrament of the Eucharist under the bishop standing in the apostolic line as the necessary precondition for the "ecclesiality" of the church, that is, for the church to be a church. He argues that there is nothing in Catholic theology opposing the Reformers' twofold description of the basic ecclesiality of the church, namely, the preaching of the word and the right administration of the sacraments. The only problem is that these two criteria are too vague; they do not really distinguish the true church from the false, or from the "non-church." Almost anybody, heretics included, would affirm these two principles. The validity of these two criteria, however, depends upon the fourfold classical "marks" of the church referred to above (341-48).

For Küng, efforts to achieve the unity of the one church of Christ do not require suppressing the variety of existing churches. In the final analysis, the unity of the church is based not in the unity of the members among themselves but on the unity of God. "It is one and the same God who gathers the scattered from all places and all ages and makes them into one people of God" (353). Consequently, the multiplicity of churches is not a bad thing in itself. Küng summarizes his local-church-oriented, unity-in-diversity view of ecumenism in the following way:

> If, however, every local Church is a community, if every local Church is in its own way the ecclesia, the people of God, a creation of the Holy Spirit, the body of Christ,

> can the multiplicity of the Churches be a bad thing in itself? The unity of the church should not be sought only outside the local gathering of the community. Precisely the unity of the local Church, which implies something self-contained but not isolated, involves a multiplicity of Churches, since this local Church cannot be unique. The unity of the Church presupposes, therefore, a common life shared by all the local Churches. (354-55)

Thus, the unity of the church presupposes rather than seeks to eliminate the multiplicity of churches. Even more, this Catholic ecclesiologist contends, the unity of the church not only presupposes a multiplicity of churches but even makes it flourish anew. The coexistence of different churches "does not in itself jeopardize the unity of the church"; only hostile confrontation endangers unity. In other words, though excluding and exclusive differences are harmful, our differences in and of themselves can now be seen as assets (356-57).

After having surveyed Orthodox and Roman Catholic ecclesiologies, we will turn next to the Protestant world and begin with the two main Protestant traditions: Lutheran and Reformed.

3

THE CHURCH AROUND THE WORD AND SACRAMENTS, PART I

Protestant Reformation Ecclesiologies—Lutheran Tradition

HISTORICAL ORIENTATION

Protestant Reformation ecclesiologies. Despite the danger of adding to confusion, this chapter and the next one are similarly titled: "The Church Around the Word and Sacraments." This is to emphasize the unique and ecumenically highly significant definition and description of the Christian community based on these two elements and acts—preaching of the Word and celebrating the sacraments. It is not that other Christian churches do not participate in these acts of worship; rather, for other Christian traditions this is either too little to ensure the ecclesiality (Orthodox and Roman Catholics) or too much to demand (Free Churches, Pentecostals, and Independents). What this means in detail will be explained in due course.

That both Lutheran and Reformed ecclesiologies are addressed under this same rubric simply means that in principle they do not disagree about what makes a church truly a church.[1] At the same time, in order to be able to highlight the distinctive features and unique contributions of each, they need to be addressed separately.

[1]For a useful discussion, see Dorothea Wendebourg, "The Church in the Magisterial Reformers," in *OHE*, 218-38; and Christopher Ocker, "Ecclesiology and the Religious Controversy of the Sixteenth Century," in *RCCC*, 63-84.

The distinctive nature of each ecclesiological tradition is also brought home by the selection of two formative theologians—the late Lutheran Wolfhart Pannenberg and the Reformed Jürgen Moltmann—for a focused discussion. The two are similar in the sense that while building on their own home traditions, they also embody in their theological reflections on the church wide and deep ecumenical instincts and desires.

The context of Lutheran ecclesiology. For a proper understanding of Lutheran ecclesiology and its emphases, one must be reminded of the historical, religious, and theological context out of which it arose. On the one hand, as a former Augustinian monk Martin Luther, having reluctantly identified the incapacity of his own Catholic Church to renew, began to criticize harshly what he saw as its failings and abuses. Not only was there gross financial gain from the selling of indulgences and deplorable moral laxity among many of even the highest church leaders. It also appeared to the young Luther that his church had made the earthly institutional structure more or less absolutistic and was thereby in danger of forgetting who the true Lord of the church is.

On the other hand, Luther was soon disappointed by those he later called—pejoratively—the "Enthusiasts."[2] These were people also seeking to reform the church but by means and in a spirit not acceptable to the Reformer of Wittenberg. This group of movements was a mix of moderate Anabaptists and others from whom later arose the significant and influential Free Church movement and more radical "charismatics," as well as extreme zealots, some of whom even resorted to violence (not to forget that Luther and other mainstream Reformers also resorted to violence in a more limited and occasional manner).

Fighting on these two fronts, Lutheran ecclesiology emerged slowly and painfully. It continued well after Luther's own death in the 1540s and did not find its more or less stable form until about the 1580s when diverse Lutheran groups compiled a common book of confessions, *The Book of Concord*.[3]

[2]For Luther's harsh judgment against the "Enthusiasts," see further, Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith, 3 vols. in 1 (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1997), 1:139-40.

[3]A detailed and highly useful historical look at the emergence of Lutheran ecclesiology is provided by David P. Daniel, "Luther on the Church," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and L'ubomír Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 333-52. A highly useful general overview of Lutheran ecclesiology is Risto Saarinen, "Lutheran Ecclesiology," in *RCCC*, 170-86. That essay is particularly helpful in tracing the post-Reformation developments of Lutheranism.

THE MARKS OF THE TRUE CHURCH: GOSPEL AND SACRAMENTS

The most well-known and theologically-ecumenically decisive ecclesiological contribution of Protestant traditions, spearheaded by Lutherans, is the definition of what makes the church truly the church. According to the Lutheran Augsburg Confession,[4] the church

> is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel. For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word.[5]

As long as the gospel and sacraments are there, it "is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places."[6] Clearly, the theological and ecumenical value of Augsburg Confession article 7 lies in that as long as the gospel and sacraments are present, most everything else can be named *adiaphora*, matters of personal choice, including church structures and ministerial patterns.[7] (It is noteworthy that even when adding discipline, that is, obedience, as a necessary condition[8] and insisting on divinely sanctioned structures and offices,[9] the Reformed tradition firmly agreed with Lutherans.)

It is no surprise that the preaching of the gospel is at the forefront of the Lutheran rule of ecclesiality. Luther's theology is always centered on the gospel of Christ: "Where the word is, there is faith; and where faith is, there is the true

[4]Among the number of Lutheran Confessions compiled together in *The Book of Concord* (1580), the place of primacy is given to the Augsburg Confession and its Apology (penned under the leadership of Luther's right-hand Philip Melanchthon). Indeed, this confession alone is required for the churches of the Lutheran family to count as Lutheran even if most communities also subscribe to other (or even all other) confessional statements. The confession is routinely abbreviated as CA from the Latin *Confessio Augustana*.

[5]Augsburg Confession, art. 7; BC, 32.

[6]Augsburg Confession, art. 7; *BC*, 32.

[7]For useful comments, see Saarinen, "Lutheran Ecclesiology," 171-73.

[8]Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.12. (This chapter is devoted to discipline.) Note that even the current Presbyterian Church (USA)'s *Book of Order* devotes the largest section to discipline (rather than, say, to worship or government).

[9]Calvin (*Institutes*, 4.3.1) begins his consideration of offices: "We are now to speak of the order in which the Lord has been pleased that his Church should be governed." For Reformed orthodoxy's fixation on a certain order, following the fourfold office based on Ephesians 4:11, namely, pastors, teachers, presbyters, and deacons, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 3:385.

church."[10] Significantly, the Reformer sometimes called the church "mouth house" (from German *das Mundhaus*).[11] "For where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit to create, call, and gather the Christian church, and outside it no one can come to the Lord Christ."[12] Not only was the gospel to be read, it was also to be preached. But the gospel does not work alone; it is associated with the sacraments. Together they point to and draw from Christ and his salvation. Echoing ancient ecclesiological tradition, Luther believed that the church is "the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit reveals and preaches that Word, and by it he illumines and kindles hearts so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it."[13]

Since the church is not a human invention but a creation of the gospel of Christ and the sacraments instituted by him, it will remain, whatever may happen. One of the most famous ecclesiological maxims in the Lutheran tradition states: "It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever."[14]

The obvious question to the Lutheran tradition, routinely raised when the Augsburg rule is considered, is this: What constitutes the "pure" gospel as opposed to other kinds of gospels? And what insures the "right," that is, in conformity with the gospel, celebration of the sacraments? It is not that the defining Lutheran traditions and teachings do not provide help in judging these issues. Just think of the well-known hermeneutical key to reading the Bible, namely, the distinction between the law and the gospel, as well as the fact that the most valuable and authoritative truths in the Bible are those pointing to Christ. But what can be said safely for the purposes of this ecclesiological primer is that these two ecclesial criteria (the purity of the gospel and right administration of the sacraments) would call for a stricter and more robust definition.

What about the role of the Holy Spirit, then? The discussion of Luther's view of the Spirit's role in the church and its integral relation to the Word and sacraments further helps us appreciate the "objective" nature of this ecclesiology. Here *objective* means basically that as much as it is important for the faithful to believe the gospel and obey God's commandments, the church is more than just a gathering together of pious people.

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[10]"Resolution Concerning the Lutheran Thesis XIII on the Power of the Pope" (1519), in *LW* 39:xii.
[11]See, e.g., Martin Luther, *Through the Year with Martin Luther: A Selection of Sermons Celebrating the Feasts and Seasons of the Christian Year*, ed. Suzanne Tilton (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 29.
[12]Luther, *The Large Catechism*, second part: the creed, third article, #45; *BC*, 416.
[13]Luther, *The Large Catechism*, second part: the creed, third article, #42; *BC*, 416.
[14]Augsburg Confession 7:1; *BC*, 32.

THE SPIRIT, WORD, AND SACRAMENTS

Every Lutheran who has attended confirmation classes knows by heart this programmatic passage from *The Small Catechism*:

> I believe that by my own reason or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church he daily and abundantly forgives all my sins, and the sins of all believers, and on the last day he will raise me and all the dead and will grant eternal life to me and to all who believe in Christ. This is most certainly true.[15]

This reflects Luther's deep desire to link the work of the Holy Spirit to the church and its preaching and sacraments. Recall that Luther fought on two fronts. On the one hand, he was concerned that his former church had a great danger of imprisoning the Spirit in institutionalism and human attempts to merit salvation. On the other hand, he was greatly concerned about the danger among the Enthusiasts to sever the Spirit from the Word and sacraments. In his perception, the Anabaptists and like-minded believers relied on direct revelations and unmediated faith. Even if Luther's fear had no theological validity and did not come to pass, it is helpful to recognize it as a central feature of his thinking.

Differently from the "visible sending" of the Holy Spirit in biblical times with discernible signs, Luther surmised that after the early church we are living under the "invisible sending,"

> that by which the Holy Spirit, through the Word, is sent into the hearts of believers, as is said here: "God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts." This happens without a visible form, namely, when through the spoken Word we receive fire and light, by which we are made new and different. . . . This change and new judgment are not the work of human reason or power; they are the gift and accomplishment of the Holy Spirit, who comes with the preached Word, purifies our hearts by faith, and produces spiritual motivation in us.[16]

The surest and the most reliable way for the Spirit to work in tandem with the Word is, in the opinion of Luther, tied to the sacraments. Indeed, at times Luther saw it necessary to emphasize the relation of the Spirit and Word to sacraments

[15]Luther, *The Small Catechism*, Creed, art. 3: Sanctification, *BC*, 345.
[16]Luther, *Galatians Commentary* (1535); *LW* 26:375.

such that he denied any possibility of the reception of the Spirit apart from them: "Accordingly, we should and must constantly maintain that God will not deal with us except through his external Word and sacrament. Whatever is attributed to the Spirit apart from such Word and sacrament is of the devil."[17] The church's main task, then, is to preach Christ in order for the "Holy Spirit to create, call, and gather the Christian church."[18]

If the ecclesial nature of the church builds on the centrality of the Word, the gospel of Christ, and the sacraments through which the church lives, the nature of the community can be best approached from the perspective of so-called communion ecclesiology. The church is the communion of saints—as much as it is also a community made up of both saints and sinners, as will become clear in the ensuing discussion.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

Luther rejoiced that, "thank God,"

> a seven-year-old child knows what the church is, namely, holy believers and sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd (John 10:3). So children pray, "I believe in one holy Christian church." Its holiness does not consist of surplices, tonsures, albs, or other ceremonies of theirs [the papists] which they have invented over and above the Holy Scriptures, but consists of the Word of God and true faith.[19]

Even though Luther's understanding of the church according to this delightful passage may appear simple and naive, it emerged out of a severe conflict with both Catholic and Enthusiast positions, and it displays tensions.[20]

For Luther the church was not primarily an institution but

> an assembly of all the people on earth who believe in Christ, as we pray in the Creed, "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the communion of saints." This community or assembly means all those who live in true faith, hope, and love. Thus the essence, life, and nature of Christendom is not a physical assembly, but an assembly of hearts in one faith.[21]

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[17]Luther, "Schmalcald Articles," part 3, art. 8.10-11; *BC*, 313.
[18]Luther, *The Large Catechism*, Creed, third article, #45; *BC*, 416.
[19]Luther, "Schmalcald Articles," part 3, article 12: The Church, ##2-3; *BC*, 315.
[20]Fittingly, Eric W. Gritsch and Robert W. Jenson title their chapter on ecclesiology "Church—Body in Conflict," in *Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 124.
[21]*LW* 39:65. For other such examples and a useful discussion, see Daniel, "Luther on the Church," 333-34.

The Reformer thereby located himself in the great tradition of the church going back to the patristic traditions naming the church (in Latin) *communio sanctorum*, the "communion of saints."[22] He sums up its meaning profoundly with these words:

> I believe that there is on earth a little holy flock or community of pure saints under one head, Christ. It is called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, mind, and understanding. It possesses a variety of gifts, yet is united in love without sect or schism.
>
> Of this community I also am a part and member, a participant and co-partner in all the blessings it possesses. I was brought to it by the Holy Spirit and incorporated into it through the fact that I have heard and still hear God's Word, which is the first step in entering it. Before we had advanced this far, we were entirely of the devil, knowing nothing of God and of Christ.
>
> Until the last day the Holy Spirit remains with the holy community or Christian people. Through it he gathers us, using it to teach and preach the Word. By it he creates and increases sanctification, causing it daily to grow and become strong in the faith and in the fruits of the Spirit.[23]

THE COMMUNITY OF SAINTS AND SINNERS

In struggling to find the proper form of the new developing ecclesiology for what became Lutheranism, the Reformers had to seek to clarify a number of issues, including water baptism and its relation to faith; similarly, the understanding of the Eucharist was widely debated. These and related issues had a bearing on whether the "communion of saints" should be understood in a way that the Free Churches, in keeping with the Donatists of old, had understood it: as the holiness of the member. That understanding of course would lead to the ideal of a "pure church," a community that makes an effort to get rid of sinners. Lutheran tradition sided solidly with the Augustinian tradition, which acknowledges the presence of both saints and sinners in the church and leaves the final judgment to God in the eschaton. In other words, the church is a "mixed body."[24]

Furthermore, Luther's soteriological maxim regarding the believer as *simul justus et peccator*, simultaneously just and sinful, also shapes his doctrine of the church. In fact, even the church is just and sinful at the same time. In that light,

[22]A classic discussion can be found in Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, trans. Robert C. Schultz (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966), 294-313.
[23]Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, second part: The Creed, 3.51-53; *BC*, 417.
[24]For a highly useful discussion, see Gritsch and Jenson, *Lutheranism*, 128-30.

the affirmation of the basic marks of the church—the "pure" preaching of the Word and the "right" administration of the sacraments—should not be interpreted in a sectarian way, as if Luther would make a distinction between the true and false church based on how the members and the leaders pass this test. Luther's understanding is much more realistic; he takes it for granted that this church of Christ, the communion of saints, is also always a communion of sinners, until the Lord of the church will return.

A case in point is the polemical writing from the late 1520s, ominously titled *Concerning Rebaptism*, in which Luther continues his polemic against the rebaptizers, who argued that baptism is valid only for a faithful candidate for baptism (and by implication, a faithful baptizing minister). Luther's claim was that baptism is God's work and that while neither the candidate's nor the minister's disposition of faith is irrelevant, nor is it the deciding factor. To bring home his claim, Luther even famously contended that not even the presence of the Antichrist would make void the nature of the church as God's church (recall that the pope featured as a candidate for Antichrist for many Reformers).[25] With this in mind, Luther could remain patient and not demand overly much from the present state of the Christian community, as evident in this oft-cited passage from *The Large Catechism*:

> This, then, is the article which must always remain in force. Creation is past and redemption is accomplished, but the Holy Spirit carries on his work unceasingly until the last day. For this purpose he has appointed a community on earth, through which he speaks and does all his work.
>
> For he has not yet gathered together all his Christian people, nor has he completed the granting of forgiveness. Therefore we believe in him who daily brings us into this community through the Word, and imparts, increases, and strengthens faith through the same Word and the forgiveness of sins. Then when his work has been finished and we abide in it, having died to the world and all evil, he will finally make us perfectly and eternally holy. We now wait in faith for this to be accomplished through the Word.[26]

Ultimately, the church is a hidden reality, similarly to the Christian nature of the believer. It is not often an empirical reality to be observed.[27] The reason is simply "because in this life many false Christians, hypocrites, and even open

[25]See *LW*, esp. 40:231-34.
[26]Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, second part: The Creed, third article, ##61-62; *BC*, 419.
[27]See further, Oswald Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology: A Contemporary Interpretation*, trans. Thomas H. Trapp (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 278-81.

sinners remain among the godly."[28] And still—the same statement from the *Augsburg Confession* affirms—the sacraments are valid, even if the ministers themselves are unworthy. Only at the end will the separation be executed by the Lord of the church.[29]

THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

Although Luther is well known for advocating the important idea of the priesthood of all believers—the right and duty of all Christians to preach, teach, and comfort others—for the sake of church order, Lutheran tradition came to determine that under normal circumstances "no one should be allowed to administer the Word and the sacraments in the church unless he is duly called."[30] Here the term *called* means what we understand as ordination into the ministerial task.[31] The requirement of ordination, however, is not a theological statement about dividing the church members into two categories. It is rather a practical stipulation to ensure church order.

Theologically, Luther believed in the ancient view of all the baptized sharing in the priestly and kingly office of Jesus Christ. Therein he appealed to 1 Peter 2:9.[32] The famed Lutheran expert of the former generation, Paul Althaus, explains succinctly the implications of sharing in Christ's priesthood:

> When Christ bears our burden and intercedes for us with his righteousness, he does the work of a priest: mutual bearing of burdens and substitution in Christianity is also priestly activity. The church is founded on Christ's priesthood. Its inner structure is the priesthood of Christians for each other. The priesthood of Christians flows from the priesthood of Christ. . . . The priesthood means: We stand before God, pray for others, intercede with and sacrifice ourselves to God and proclaim the word to one another.[33]

Althaus aptly names this right as "evangelical authority to come before God on behalf of the brethren and also of the world."[34] Here a particularly significant task and right is the forgiveness of sins of sisters and brothers. So much so

[28] *Augsburg Confession* 8:1; *BC*, 33.
[29] See further, the long discussion in *Apology of Augsburg Confession*, arts. 7 and 8; *BC*, 168-78.
[30] *Apology of Augsburg Confession*, art. 14; *BC*, 214.
[31] *Apology of Augsburg Confession*, art. 14; *BC*, 214.
[32] See Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:373. See also the useful discussion in Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, 276-78.
[33] Althaus, *Theology of Martin Luther*, 313-14.
[34] Althaus, *Theology of Martin Luther*, 314.

that Luther says, "You see, then, that the whole church is full of the forgiveness of sins."[35]

WOLFHART PANNENBERG: LUTHERAN ECCLESIOLOGY IN THE SERVICE OF THE WHOLE CHURCH

The theologian chosen to represent contemporary Lutheran ecclesiology is the late German Wolfhart Pannenberg. He was a towering figure in international and ecumenical doctrinal theology and someone especially appropriate to serve as representative.

In search of a "public" ecclesiology. It might come as a surprise to the students of Wolfhart Pannenberg's theology that even though the third volume of his massive *Systematic Theology* may well be the most distinguished recent contribution to the ecumenical doctrine of the church, he had not previously produced a full-scale study of ecclesiology.[36] In order to gain a perspective on his ecclesiology, one has to acknowledge that for Pannenberg theology, and consequently ecclesiology, is a public discipline rather than an exercise in piety. He adamantly opposes the widespread privatization of faith and theology so prevalent especially in modern Protestant thought. Theology has to speak to common concerns since there is no special "religious truth" unrelated to truth in general.

Commensurately, in writing a major contribution to the doctrine of the church, Pannenberg aims for the whole worldwide church rather than any specific denomination, even his own. To be more precise, he is not even satisfied to write to the church and Christians alone but writes to the rest of humanity as well. This is because in his view the church is an anticipation and a sign of the unity of all people under one God. This wide and comprehensive ecumenical sensitivity could well be the most distinctive feature of Pannenberg's doctrine of the church. But Pannenberg is not content to promote ecumenism for its own sake; for him the ecumenical endeavors point to the final goal of the church, the unity of all people of God under one God.[37] "If Christians succeed

[35] *LW* 35:21.

[36] While Wolfhart Pannenberg's *The Church*, trans. Keith Crim (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), and the earlier Pannenberg, *Theology and the Kingdom of God*, ed. Richard John Neuhaus (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), esp. 72-101, touch importantly on ecclesiological issues, no attempt was made for any kind of a comprehensive doctrine of the church. An excellent introduction to Pannenberg's ecclesiology is Stanley J. Grenz, *Reason for Hope: The Systematic Theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), chap. 5.

[37] See further, Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Unity of the Church—Unity of Mankind: A Critical Appraisal of a Shift in Ecumenical Direction," *Mid-Stream* 21 (October 1982): 485-90.

in solving the problems of their own pluralism, they may be able to produce a model combining pluralism and the widest moral unity which will also be valid for political life."[38]

Pannenberg engages in a lively conversation with the description of the church as the "sign" and sacrament in the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic theology discussed above. Vatican II expressed the concept of the church as a sign and tool for the most inward union with God and for the unity of all people. For Pannenberg, the Lutheran theologian, the church in Christ is a sign of the coming unity of all people under one God. But he is quick to point out that in itself the church is not immediately seen as the sacrament of unity in which the unity of humanity in the kingdom of God finds anticipatory representation. The reason is obvious: in the church's historical form the divine mystery of salvation achieves only broken manifestation. Perversions and power plays abound. It is only by virtue of the fellowship with Christ that the church mediates its function as sign. "As the body of Christ the church is the eschatological people of God gathered out of all peoples, and it is thus a sign of reconciliation for a future unity of a renewed humanity in the kingdom of God."[39]

Pannenberg's overall program of seeing the church and ecumenism in the service of the unity of all people also shaped his view of church leadership. Unlike Protestant theologians in general, Pannenberg sees justification for the ministry/minister in the unity of Christianity at the global level. He is open to the idea that a minister in the service of the worldwide church would need to be "an individual who can be active as a spokesperson for Christianity as a whole." Even with his reservations about the current Roman Catholic claim for such ministry by the pope, Pannenberg basically gives a positive answer to his own query.[40]

The kingdom of God, society, and the church. It becomes clear that Pannenberg's comprehensive vision sees an integral connection between ecclesiology and eschatology; recall that the church is the anticipation of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is bigger than any church or even any human society because it is about what God is doing in working out the eternal divine purpose. In this light, it becomes understandable—as unconventional as it may be—that

[38]Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Christian Morality and Political Issues," in *Faith and Reality*, trans. J. M. Maxwell (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 138.
[39]Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, esp. 3:44.
[40]Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:420-21 (420).

Pannenberg places not only the church but also society under the kingdom of God. He sets God's rulership over all human orders.[41]

His view of the overarching nature of God's kingdom also informs his view of justice and its realization in the world. Opposite to what modern Western culture has imagined since the time of classical liberalism, human means cannot reach the kingdom or its justice. The concept of justice is anchored in religion rather than human capacity. The coming of the kingdom, which at the eschaton will take place through the sovereign intervention of God, will usher in justice and peace. Whatever noble activities Christians and other people carry out toward that goal are not irrelevant, but neither are they instrumental in its realization. Pannenberg always insists that the fulfillment of human destiny—any more than the destiny of the rest of creation—cannot be found in the political order but comes only in the kingdom of God. He is critical of that aspect of the official ecumenical movement that attempts to achieve justice and peace majoring on a "purely ethical interest in promoting a unity of humanity . . . quite apart from any question of religious unity as a basis of social harmony."[42]

That said, unlike liberation theologies, Pannenberg argues strongly that, notwithstanding the political content of Christian hope in the coming of God's kingdom, Jesus addressed his proclamation of the imminent rule of God to individuals and did not announce any kind of political program of liberation. "Only in the faith of individuals who, responding to the summons of Jesus, subordinated all other concerns in life to the imminence of the divine rule does this future already become the present."[43]

This focus on the individual reception of Jesus' message, however, does not deny the potential political implications of the church's life. Pannenberg opines: "When the fellowship of Christians is not just a minority in a non-Christian society, then the Christian spirit ought to govern the political and economic forms of the common life." Indeed, "there may well be envisioned and expected an overthrowing and restructuring of all forms of social life that are not controlled by the Christian spirit. Yet Christians are aware that all such restructuring of forms of social life can have only provisional significance and will always in principle be open to revision."[44]

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[41]Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:49-57.
[42]Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:47.
[43]Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:98.
[44]Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:479.

Church, salvation, and final consummation. The idea of the church as sign, pointing beyond itself to the final purposes of God, is aligned with Pannenberg's vision of salvation, which seeks to combine both individual and communal dimensions. Indeed, in a move surprising to anyone who knows theological tradition, Pannenberg adopts soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, as one of the topics within his ecclesiology. Related to it is his eschatological vision in which the individual person's salvation cannot be attained apart from the destiny of the community and even the whole cosmos—and vice versa. In other words, the horizons are wide and comprehensive.

Why include soteriology under the doctrine of the church?[45] Not because the church is the savior, nor because salvation has no personal, individual aspect. Indeed, Pannenberg loudly reminds us that the church is the medium and locus of salvation wrought by the triune God. He also begins his treatment of the doctrine of God by highlighting the importance of each person embracing the gift of salvation, albeit not without community. The first main rubric is telling: "The Fellowship of Individuals with Jesus Christ and the Church as the Fellowship of Believers."[46]

Even as the medium of salvation, the church, with all its importance in the economy of God in the world, is never an end in itself but always serves higher purposes: God's future rule in the arrival of God's kingdom. Pannenberg was also a theologian of hope, and his ecclesiology was always looking forward to the final culmination of God's purposes. The task of the sign is to point beyond itself, and therefore the idea of sign accurately captures this leading aspect of his doctrine of the church.

[45]Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3, chap. 13, 97-236.
[46]Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:97.

4

THE CHURCH AROUND THE WORD AND SACRAMENTS, PART II

Protestant Reformation Ecclesiologies—Reformed Tradition

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The term *Reformed* refers to Protestant Reformers other than Luther and his followers who, under the leadership of John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, Martin Bucer, Theodore Beza, and many others, sought to reform the church in France, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and surrounding areas. As with Lutheranism, which is much bigger than Martin Luther's legacy, the Reformed tradition cannot be equated with one person, not even Calvin. That said, Calvin's influence is felt throughout Reformed theology and ecclesiology. Although following the main ideas of Luther, Calvin also distinguished himself in the "development of an integral ecclesiology, where integrity points to a combination of theological reason and social organization."[1]

As with the Lutherans, it took time before the Reformers came to the painful realization that the Reformation withdrawal from the Catholic Church was more

[1]Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History*, vol. 2, *Comparative Ecclesiology* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 82. This survey of Reformed ecclesiology is indebted to that work (chap. 2). Useful brief surveys are Eddy van der Borgth, "Reformed Ecclesiology," in *RCCC*, chap. 10; and Lukas Vischer, "The Reformed Tradition and Its Multiple Facets," in *The Reformed Family Worldwide: A Survey of Reformed Churches, Theological Schools, and International Organizations*, ed. Jean-Jacques Bauswein and Lukas Vischer (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 1-33. A contemporary book-length presentation is Benjamin Charles Milner, *Calvin's Doctrine of the Church* (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

than a temporary one. After the collapse of the Colloquy of Regensburg in 1541, which was a last-ditch attempt to reach a compromise between Catholics and Protestants, the Reformers were slowly compelled to begin to develop their distinctive understanding of the church. Calvin is the leading figure in that company of Protestant Reformers who set themselves the difficult task of creating an ecclesiology that would be faithful both to the ancient creeds and to the ideas that brought the Reformation into existence.

Trained in law, the young Calvin began a serious theological work soon after his conversion to Protestantism in the 1530s, resulting in the publication of the programmatic work *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* in 1536. Although this defining Reformed theological presentation did not receive its final version until over two decades later (1559), from its first edition ecclesiology received considerable emphasis.[2] The theological development of the doctrine and order of the church emerged hand in hand with Calvin's organizing the Reformed church in Geneva (and during his brief stint in Strasbourg at the end of the 1930s).[3]

THE NATURE AND MARKS OF THE CHURCH

Calvin agreed with Luther that the marks of the true church were the preaching of the Word of God and the right administration of the sacraments:

> Wherever we see the word of God sincerely preached and heard, wherever we see the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there we cannot have any doubt that the Church of God has some existence, since his promise cannot fail, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Mt 18:20).[4]

That said, Calvin seemed to be more concerned than the Lutheran Reformers about not giving blind approval for any kind of community merely claiming to embrace these two signs. In the beginning of his ecclesiological discussion, the Genevan Reformer carefully considered the difference between the true and false church. That said, it looks like his sole focus was the "Papist" church, the Roman Catholic Church; hence, ultimately, he may not have differed materially from the Wittenberg Reformer.[5]

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[2]For the discussion of its key ideas, see Haight, *Christian Community*, 2:87-88.
[3]For a detailed discussion, see Haight, *Christian Community*, 2:89-101, which also introduces several other writings on the church alongside *The Institutes*.
[4]Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.1.9 (p. 2289).
[5]Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.2 (pp. 2304-14).

Similarly to Luther, Calvin goes back to the ancient metaphor of the motherhood of the church begetting and nurturing children.[6] Furthermore, again in agreement with Luther, one of Calvin's choice phrases for the Christian community is "the communion of saints" as this patristic concept "admirably expresses the quality of the Church" in that "saints are united in the fellowship of Christ on this condition, that all the blessings which God bestows upon them are mutually communicated to each other."[7] Not surprisingly then—again in keeping with the ancient tradition and Luther's direction—for Calvin the church is far more than a convenient coming together of pious people. In his preface to the discussion of the church (and communion of saints) in the fourth part of *The Institutes*, Calvin speaks of "the external means or helps by which God invites us to fellowship with Christ, and keeps us in it."[8] Because these signs are objective in nature, Calvin, similarly to Luther, warns Christians against abandoning the church even if there are sinful and godless members, hence rejecting Donatist-like separationist tendencies.[9]

All that said, however, there are two noteworthy departures from the Lutheran tradition. One has to do with church order, including the ministers. In opposition to Lutheran tradition, which, as was discussed, considered everything else but the Word and sacraments as *adiaphora*, Calvin believed that there were specific scriptural directions regarding the right order of ministry (to be discussed below). Another difference has to do with the role of discipline. Whereas for Luther questions of behavior were mostly left to the judgment of the conscience, Calvin was much more the legalist who sought to implement a specific and rather ascetic view of the norms of Christian conduct. He even devoted one chapter in his *Institutes* (4.12) to a detailed description of the discipline. Calvin's rather strict and often seemingly one-sided emphasis on behavior and doctrine also made his view of the church depart from the ecclesiology of his counterpart Zwingli's, in which personal faith was the key.[10]

[6]Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.1 heading: "Of the True Church. Duty of Cultivating Unity with Her, as the Mother of All the Godly" (p. 2279).
[7]Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.1.3 (p. 2282).
[8]Calvin, *Institutes*, "Argument" to part 4 (p. 2278). For details, see 4.1.1 (pp. 2280-81).
[9]Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.1.13 (p. 2292).
[10]See further, P. D. L. Avis, "'The True Church' in Reformation Theology," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 30 (1977): esp. 326-32.

THE CHURCH VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

Although the distinction between the visible and invisible church is common in Christian ecclesiology, for Calvin it is a particularly important theme. He begins the discussion in the first chapter of his ecclesiological treatment in *The Institutes* and claims it is scripturally based. The invisible church is "the Church as it really is before God—the Church into which none are admitted but those who by the gift of adoption are sons of God, and by the sanctification of the Spirit true members of Christ." It includes all saints throughout the ages, the elect. The visible church, on the contrary, is

> the whole body of mankind scattered throughout the world, who profess to worship one God and Christ, who by baptism are initiated into the faith; by partaking of the Lord's Supper profess unity in true doctrine and charity, agree in holding the word of the Lord, and observe the ministry which Christ has appointed for the preaching of it. In this Church there is a very large mixture of hypocrites, who have nothing of Christ but the name and outward appearance: of ambitious, avaricious, envious, evil-speaking men, some also of impurer lives, who are tolerated for a time, either because their guilt cannot be legally established, or because due strictness of discipline is not always observed.[11]

In other words, the Augustinian "mixed body" doctrine is affirmed even if, in keeping with Calvin's focus on discipline, its deviations from the norm are deeply lamented. Indeed, he believes that the elect (the saved) "are a small and despised number, concealed in an immense crowd, like a few grains of wheat buried among a heap of chaff, to God alone must be left the knowledge of his Church, of which his secret election forms the foundation."[12] At the same time, again in keeping with tradition, Calvin insists that the visible church is to be believed (as part of the creedal confessions) as much as the invisible.[13] Indeed, it is important for Calvin that this dual nature of the church—wherein visible and invisible are held as one albeit distinguished—be honored. This principle also relates to his sacramental and baptismal discussion. He emphasized God's free offer of Christ as the nature of the substance of the sacraments. "This offer always marked the one true church: explicitly in the visible church through the sacraments, themselves a form of the word that offered engrafting in Christ, and implicitly in

[11]Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.1.7 (p. 2288).
[12]Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.1.2 (p. 2282).
[13]Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.1.7 (p. 2288). Consult also John W. Riggs, "Emerging Ecclesiology in Calvin's Baptismal Thought, 1536–1543," *Church History* 64, no. 1 (1995): 37-38.

the invisible church because the elect were those engrafted in Christ. . . . Baptism represented entrance into the visible church community."[14]

In the final analysis, it is very important to note that this distinction between the visible and invisible church is eschatological because, as he repeatedly insists, it is known only to God. The invisible church is the church that will come into being at the end of time when God administers the final judgment.

THE MINISTRY, ORGANIZATION, AND POWERS OF THE CHURCH

An integral part of Calvin's ecclesiology is the church's powers that help the community to function as the external means of salvation. These are ultimately spiritual powers granted in order for the church to do its mission.[15] The powers include doctrine, legislation, and jurisdiction and discipline.[16]

The organization and structure of the church has to be such that it can best use these powers. As mentioned, differently from Luther, Calvin believed these were stipulated by the Word of God.[17] Indeed, the ministers "represent his [God's] own person" to the community.[18] There is a four-tiered ministry structure in this church tradition:

- Pastors, a permanent office, whose main task is to preach the Word and administer sacraments
- Teachers (also called Doctors), whose main task is to insure the purity of the doctrine
- Elders, whose office is that of governance
- Deacons, who take care of the poor and the needy

While in principle Calvin was not opposed to the ancient office of the bishop, neither did he see it as necessary (and of course, he was vehemently opposed to the office of the bishop of Rome, the pope). Similarly, although he was not in principle opposed to the sacrament(al nature) of ordination, in keeping with other Protestant Reformers, neither did he affirm it.[19]

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[14]Riggs, "Emerging Ecclesiology," 41.
[15]For details, see Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.8 (pp. 2389-2401).
[16]For a detailed discussion, see Haight, *Christian Community*, 2:105-7.
[17]He begins the discussion on church ministers with this statement: "We are now to speak of the order in which the Lord has been pleased that his Church should be governed" (*Institutes*, 4.3.1 [p. 2315]).
[18]Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.3.1 (p. 2316).
[19]For details, consult Haight, *Christian Community*, 2:107-11.

CHURCH AND SOCIETY

One of the most distinctive and controversial aspects of the Reformed view of the church, especially in the Calvinistic form, is the integral relationship between state and church.[20] Indeed, "Calvin's ideal remained that of a society in which citizenship was equated with church-membership."[21] During Calvin's early years in Geneva, church and state were mutually integrated in a symbiotic relationship. While the distinction should be held, ultimately both the earthly and the ecclesiastical domain serve the one purpose of God. Commenting on Isaiah 49:23 ("Kings shall be your foster fathers, / and their queens your nursing mothers"), he writes in a manner illustrative of his theological vision:

> "Kings" and "queens" shall supply everything that is necessary for nourishing the offspring of the Church. Having formerly driven out Christ from their dominions, they shall henceforth acknowledge him to be the supreme King: and shall render to him all honor, obedience, and worship. This took place when the Lord revealed himself to the whole world by the Gospel; for mighty kings and princes not only submitted to the yoke of Christ, but likewise contributed their riches to raise up and maintain the Church of Christ, so as to be her guardians and defenders.
>
> Hence it ought to be observed that something remarkable is here demanded from princes, besides an ordinary profession of faith; for the Lord has bestowed on them authority and power to defend the Church and to promote the glory of God. This is indeed the duty of all; but kings, in proportion as their power is greater, ought to devote themselves to it more earnestly, and to labor in it more diligently.[22]

Although the Christian lives simultaneously in two domains, the spiritual and the civil, there is still no marked distinction between the morality of the church and of society. Hence, the Genevan Reformers went to extremes in trying to supervise and correct deviations from the norm. The (in)famous agency of the Consistory, "a committee or tribunal of ministers of the church, pastors and elders . . . exercised the power of spiritual jurisdiction of the church by oversight of the public and in some cases private moral behavior of the members of the

[20]For details, consult Haight, *Christian Community*, 2:121-31.
[21]G. S. M. Walker, "Calvin and the Church," in *Readings in Calvin's Theology*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1984), 221, as cited in Haight, *Christian Community*, 2:122.
[22]John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, vol. 4, trans. William Pringle (www.ccel.org), on Isaiah 49:23 (n.p.).

church."[23] While reaching out to the public domain, the Consistory's power was still considered spiritual rather than earthly!

Although Reformed theology, spirituality, and ecclesiology are, as mentioned, much more than merely the theology of John Calvin, it is also the case that very few, if any, Reformed traditions fail to trace their doctrine and many practices back to the Genevan Reformer. Hence, for the sake of this primer, it seems justified to lay out Calvin's vision of the church as the defining origins and roots of that family of churches.

JÜRGEN MOLTMANN: MESSIANIC ECCLESIOLOGY

The criteria for choosing Jürgen Moltmann as the spokesperson for Reformed ecclesiology are similar to those for choosing Pannenberg as the representative of the Lutheran tradition. While he undoubtedly is Reformed and draws from the Reformed wells, Moltmann is also a deeply ecumenical theologian in search of a vision for the whole church.

A contextual ecclesiology. Whereas Pannenberg is pedantic and methodical in his method of systematic theology, Moltmann's approach is open, elusive, and exploratory.[24] His first three contributions to theology were *Theology of Hope* (ET 1967), *The Crucified God* (ET 1974), and his main ecclesiological work, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (ET 1977). His later series consists of the following books: *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (ET 1981), *God in Creation* (ET 1985), *The Way of Jesus Christ* (1990), and his main pneumatological work, *The Spirit of Life* (1992). A Protestant counterpart to Hans Küng's *The Church*, Moltmann's *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* is one of the defining ecumenical works on the doctrine of the church during the past decades.

[23]Haight, *Christian Community*, 2:125. For a detailed discussion of the discipline, including the Consistory, in Calvin, *Institutes*, consult 4.12 (pp. 2452-71).

[24]Moltmann describes the development of his evolving theological method particularly in prefaces or introductions to his several writings and in a more focused way in his book on theological method: "For me, theology was, and still is, an adventure of ideas. It is an open, inviting path. . . . *The road emerged only as I walked it*" (Jürgen Moltmann, *Experiences in Theology: Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*, trans. Margaret Kohl [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000], xv [emphasis original]). In this respect, the difference of approach from, say, the methodologically rigorous Wolfhart Pannenberg, couldn't be more dramatic. Whereas Pannenberg devoted most of his theological prime time to honing the method, to the point that his magnum opus, the three-volume *Systematic Theology*, only appeared toward the end of his career, Moltmann set out to write constructive theology without any defined method and let the approach develop as he went along.

Ecclesiological discussions are not limited to this main work however. In his *Theology of Hope*,[25] the eschatological promise given in the resurrection of Christ creates a missionary church, living in hopeful anticipation of final resurrection. Moltmann's *The Crucified God*[26] further develops the theology of the cross and suffering for the church, thus identifying the church with those with whom the crucified Christ identified himself. Moltmann himself characterizes his theology as having "a biblical foundation, an eschatological orientation, a political responsibility."[27]

Especially in his later works, Moltmann has come to highlight more and more the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity. Trinitarian structure is also evident in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, whose main divisions, after the introductory discussions, are "The Church of Jesus Christ" (chap. 3); "The Church of the Kingdom of God" (chap. 4); and "The Church in the Presence of the Holy Spirit" (chap. 5) and "The Church in the Power of the Holy Spirit" (chap. 60). In this trinitarian perspective, he situates the church in the concrete realities of life and speaks for a church that is faithful to its calling: this church he identifies as the church of Jesus Christ, the missionary church, the ecumenical church, and the political church.[28]

For his creative work, Moltmann draws from various sources: his ecumenical contacts and work in the World Council of Churches (WCC) and in relation to the Eastern Orthodox Church (his extended dialogue with Eastern spirituality and theology being one of the distinctive features of his theology); his extensive travel in the Global South; his interest in the Pentecostal/charismatic movements; and his contacts with churches other than the German state-churches, namely, the "voluntary religion" of Protestant Free Churches, liberation theologies of Latin America and elsewhere, and Catholic base communities in Latin America. That he draws from so many different sources makes his theology not only contemporary but also contextually relevant. Moltmann's voice has also been

[25]With the subtitle *On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*, trans. James W. Leitch (1st ET, London: SCM Press, 1967; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

[26]With the subtitle *The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, trans. R. A. Wilson and John Bowden (New York: Harper & Row, 1974; repr., Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

[27]Jürgen Moltmann, *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press, 1991), 182, cited in Stephen N. Williams, "The Problem with Moltmann," *European Journal of Theology* 5, no. 2 (1996): 158.157-67.

[28]Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1977), chap. 1. Hereafter in this chapter, all page references to *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* will be given in parenthetical references.

heard outside the confines of the Western academy, and a growing number of Majority World theologians have interacted with his proposals.[29]

Christological focus. Moltmann describes his doctrine of the church as a messianic and relational ecclesiology. *Messianic* means essentially "christological"; the christological foundation always points toward the eschaton so his view is "a christologically founded and eschatologically directed doctrine of the church" (13). The church is the church of Jesus Christ, subject to his lordship alone. Consequently, for Moltmann ecclesiology can only be developed from Christology (chap. 3). But it is important to notice that statements about Christ also point beyond the church to the kingdom, the future reign of Christ, the Messiah. Thus, Christ's church has to be a "messianic fellowship." As the church of Christ, it lives "between remembrance of his history and hope of his kingdom"; the church is not the kingdom but its anticipation (75).

As the church of Jesus Christ, the church is bound together with the history and destiny of its Lord. The dialectic of suffering and joy characterizes the existence of the church; the cross and resurrection set the tone for its life. The church participates in the passion of Christ, "sighings of the Spirit," until God's kingdom of joy and peace will arrive. God has made Godself vulnerable to the sufferings of the world, and the church is drawn to that: "God's pain in the world is the way to God's happiness with the world."[30] The dialectic of suffering and joy also becomes apparent in the dual nature of the church. Christian community is a church under the cross and a celebrating, joyful church. Even under the cross, the church celebrates constantly the "messianic feast" (261-75).

While the christological focus in Moltmann's systematic theology has been especially determinative in his doctrine of the church, in his later works, trinitarian and especially pneumatological perspectives on the church have gained more importance. A trinitarian outlook was already evident in *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*, but as a whole the doctrine of the Trinity has captured his interest more and more. His continued dialogue with Eastern Orthodox theology has had a determining influence in this shift.

A fellowship of equal persons. For Moltmann, the church is a free society of equals, an open fellowship of friends. Mirroring the egalitarian relationships

[29]A very helpful overview of Moltmann's ecclesiology is offered by Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, *The Kingdom and the Power: The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann*, trans. John Bowden (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), chap. 5.

[30]Jürgen Moltmann, *The Open Church: Invitation to a Messianic Life-style*, trans. M. Douglas Meeks (London: SCM Press, 1978), 93.

between the trinitarian persons, the church is a communion of equals. Moltmann argues that one's doctrine of the Trinity directly carries over to ecclesiology. Where there is a hierarchical notion of the Trinity, a hierarchical view of the church follows. With an open Trinity, one finds relationships of affection with respect and loyalty. Not only is the Trinity open, but so was Jesus' friendship. It was not closed and exclusive but inclusive, even revolutionary: "Open and total friendship that goes out to meet the other is the spirit of the kingdom in which God comes to man and man to man. . . . Open friendship prepares the ground for a friendlier world" (121).

An open church is a voluntary fellowship of committed Christians rather than a "cultural" state church (xx). Moltmann clearly opts for a "Free church" model and is sharply critical of the state-church model with infant baptism (226-42). (Moltmann writes from the perspective of a German "state church" situation in which, similarly to most countries in Europe, people in the mainline churches such as the Reformed Church simply become church members more or less "automatically" through infant baptism.) As a voluntary fellowship of Christians, church members submit their lives under Christ's lordship. In contrast, the state church focuses on maintenance (xiii). Moltmann calls for mature and responsible congregations that cultivate community, foster liberation and equality, and are open for the world. They focus on discipleship and service.

Behind the state-church, cultural tradition of the church, Moltmann surmises, is a reductionist and limited view of the work of the Spirit in the world:

> In reaction against the spirit of the new liberty—freedom of belief, freedom of religion, freedom of conscience and free churches—the only Spirit that was declared holy was the Spirit that is bound to the ecclesiastical institution for mediating grace, and to the preaching of the official "spiritual pastors and teachers." The Spirit which people experience personally in their own decision of faith, in believers' baptism, in the inner experience of faith in which "they feel their hearts strangely warmed" (as John Wesley put it), and in their own charismatic endowment, was declared "unholy" and "enthusiastic." Even today, in ecclesiastical discussions about the Holy Spirit, people like to turn first and foremost to "the criterion for discerning the spirits"—even when there do not seem to be any spirits to hand.[31]

[31] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 2.

A church for others. Yet another designation for Moltmann's doctrine of the church is "relational ecclesiology." The church never exists for itself but is always in relation to God and the world; therefore it is a serving, missionary church: "The church cannot understand itself simply from itself alone. It can only truly comprehend its mission and its meaning, its roles and its functions in relation to others" (19).

There is a *theo*logical foundation for Moltmann's relational ecclesiology: everything, including God, only exists in relationships. Moltmann's view of the Trinity may be described as an "open Trinity": in creation, God opens Godself to the world, and also makes Godself vulnerable to happenings in history. Consequently, ecclesiology always has to be developed in relation to Christology, pneumatology, and eschatology. Relationality means openness to the world and to God's future; the church is to be "open for God, open for men and open for the future of both God and men. The church atrophies when it surrenders any one of these opennesses and closes itself up against God, men or the future" (2). The English title of the popular version of his main ecclesiological work clearly brings this aspect of his doctrine of the church into focus: *The Open Church*.

One way the church lives for the world and for others is by participating in the "offices" of Christ. Following traditional Reformed dogmatics, Moltmann talks about the three offices of Christ as prophet (ministry), priest (death), and king (resurrection/rule). The church participates in all of these in its response to God's invitation to be an instrument of salvation. In its prophetic task, the church participates in Jesus' messianic proclamation and his setting people free. This is the liberating ministry of the church. Participating in Jesus' passion, the church lives and ministers under the cross, in suffering solidarity with the weak. And being part of Jesus' exaltation, the church lives as the fellowship of freedom and equality in the Spirit. To these traditional offices, Moltmann adds two more: (1) Christ's transfiguration, which highlights the aesthetic dimension, the worship and "festival of freedom," and (2) Christ's friendship; the church opens up itself into an open friendship and inviting fellowship.[32]

The church does not live for itself but rather exists for the world. Therefore, the church lives for and out of mission; it is a missionary church (7-11). But even mission has to be shaped by the principle of openness. Israel, the people of God, the world religions, and the economic, political, and cultural spheres are under

[32]See further, Moltmann, *Church in the Power of the Spirit*, part 3.

the kingdom of God and hence partners in history (chap. 4). Ultimately the mission of the church is not to "spread the church but to spread the kingdom"; the church is not self-serving but serving the world and the kingdom (11).

Moltmann is also a political theologian. His political, social, and ecological concerns are visible also in his view of the church. Even though the church's mission is based on the gospel and the history of Christ, political involvement is a necessary part of the church's ministry to the world. The church by definition is political in that it represents certain values and opposes others in the name of the gospel (15-18).

The church in the power of the Spirit. Indicative of a pneumatology much wider and more inclusive than a traditional church-based doctrine of the Spirit is the programmatic statement in the preface to his ecclesiology volume: "The Spirit fills the church with the powers of the new creation, its liberty and its peace" (xviii). The eschatological and creation-oriented inclusive view of the Spirit is thus introduced as the backdrop for the discussion of a pneumatological ecclesiology. It is through the Spirit that the church of Jesus Christ becomes an eschatological community, an anticipation of the future of the kingdom. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to make possible the passing of history into eschatology and eschatology into history. This is because the "new life" experienced in the church is "life in the Spirit." "For through the Spirit the believer is determined by the divine future" (34). Hence, Moltmann's ecclesiology can also be called pneumatological and charismatic.

As the creation of the Spirit, the church is a "charismatic fellowship" of equal persons. "There is no division between the office bearers and the people" (298). The church for Paul (1 Cor 12–14)—and for Moltmann—is where the Spirit's self-manifestation takes place in overflowing powers, charismata. Consequently, the people of God see themselves in their existence as being "the creation of the Spirit": "The Spirit calls them into life; the Spirit gives the community the authority for its mission, the Spirit makes its living powers and the ministries that spring from them effective; the Spirit unites, orders and preserves it" (294). Consequently, the ministry of the church is charismatic in essence. For Moltmann,

> ecclesiology becomes hierarchology if we do not start from the fact that every believer, whether he be an office-bearer or not, is a member of the messianic people of God. The ministry is turned into an insipid—a 'spiritless'—kind of civil service, and the charisma becomes a cult of the religious genius, if we do not make the one charismatically living community our point of departure. (289-90)

Moltmann wants to emphasize the role of charismata in the church, but he does so by expanding the often too-narrow understanding of spiritual gifts. Traditionally, the charismata have been divided into two groups: "supernatural" (1 Cor 12:6-8) and "natural" (Rom 12:6-8). But both groups have operated within the confines of the church and individual piety. Moltmann insists that the Holy Spirit gives spiritual gifts for service in the world, for example, prophetic speech in liberation and ecology movements. "If charismata are not given to us so that we can flee from this world into a world of religious dreams, but if they are intended to witness to the liberating lordship of Christ in this world's conflicts, then the charismatic movement must not become a non-political religion, let alone a de-politicized one."[33]

The church was born on the day of Pentecost, and glossolalia was the sign of its birth.[34] As the creation of the Spirit, this church of Christ is dependent on the charismatic powers of the Spirit. The church participates in the passion of Christ and the "sighings of the Spirit" until God's kingdom of joy and peace arrives. Glossolalia, speaking in tongues, is "such a strong inner grasp of the Spirit that its expression leaves the realm of understandable speech and expresses itself in an extraordinary manner, just as intense pain is expressed in unrestrained crying or great joy in jumping and dancing."[35]

Having now investigated the understanding of the nature and mission of the church in older, traditional theologies, from Orthodox and Roman Catholic to Protestant, it is time to focus on the more recent ecclesiological visions. We will discuss next the diverse Free Church doctrines of the church and thereafter move to Pentecostal/charismatic communities.

[33]Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 186.
[34]Jürgen Moltmann, "The Spirit Gives Life: Spirituality and Vitality," in *All Together in One Place: Theological Papers from the Brighton Conference on World Evangelization*, ed. Harold D. Hunter and Peter D. Hocken (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1993), 26.
[35]Moltmann, "Spirit Gives Life," 26-27.

5

THE CHURCH AS THE FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS

Free Church Ecclesiologies

AN ECCLESIOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION

Most everybody would agree today that there is a radical ecclesiological shift happening: "The understanding of the church seems to be moving away from the traditional hierarchical model to the (no longer quite so new) participative models of church configuration." It looks like the future of Protestant Christianity can be found in the Free Church model of the communities. Not only that, but it is likely that even the older churches need to learn from and integrate into their own structures elements of the Free Church.[1] This has been called the "process of congregationalization" of Christianity.[2] Harvey Cox expresses this mentality clearly in his book on the Latin American liberationist Leonardo Boff: "How will the church leaders deal with a restless spiritual energy splashing up from the underside of society and threatening to erode traditional modes of ecclesiastical governance?"[3] Miroslav Volf contends that whatever one thinks about these developments in the church and society, it is a fact that a Free Church model is emerging as a powerful global force: "The continuing global expansion of the Free

[1]Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as an Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 12.
[2]Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 13.
[3]Harvey Cox, *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff: The Vatican and the Future of World Christianity* (Oak Park, IL: Meyer-Stone, 1988), 17.

church model is without a doubt being borne by irreversible social changes of global proportions."[4]

Any survey of Free Church traditions raises the obvious question of which movements to include under that rubric.[5] So, who are Free Churches? As will be explained below, defining Free Churches is a far more complex task than for, say, the Roman Catholics and mainstream Protestants (Lutherans and Reformed) or the Anglicans (Episcopalians). Here is a tentative statement to guide the reader: Baptists of all sorts (in the United States, both Southern and "Northern" [American] Baptists), Free Methodists (as opposed to the United Methodist Church), Congregationalists, Free Church of America and the Covenant Church, Anabaptists and Mennonites, and a number of others outside the mainstream Protestants (or Anglicans). Globally speaking, there are a sizable number of churches in whose name the term *free* signals belonging to this group; so, for example, in my native Finland: Free Church of Finland.[6] Pentecostals also embody the Free Church mentality although—for their size and significance—their distinctive ecclesiology is discussed in a separate chapter.

One can, of course, simply disregard these radical changes by an attitude that dogmatically limits the ecclesiality of the church to models that still conform with more traditional churches. Parodies of Free Churches abound even in more recent literature, implying that these groups manifest something less than church. For example, a statement from the top of the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church disqualifies the Free Churches ecclesiologically by assessing these Christian communities as ones that fled to North America and "took refuge from the oppressive model of the 'State Church' produced by the Reformation . . . [and] created their *own* church, an organization structured according to their needs."[7] Ecumenically, this kind of attitude is disastrous and sociologically naive in that the fastest growing segment of Christianity—which displays many features surprisingly similar to the original form of the Christian church—is discredited by a few strokes of a theologian's pen. Fortunately,

[4]Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 13.

[5]See further, Michael Montgomery, "Non-Conformist Ecclesiologies," in *RCCC*, 217-33.

[6]For a listing of Free Churches under the rubric of the International Federation of Free Evangelical Churches, see "Member Federations" on their website, accessed June 18, 2020, https://iffec.org/about/members/.

[7]Joseph Ratzinger, with Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*, trans. Salvator Attanasio and Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1985), 46 (emphasis original).

the same document, however, qualifies its ecclesiological assessment by admitting that

> the authentically Catholic meaning of the reality "Church" is tacitly disappearing, without being expressly rejected. . . . In other words, in many ways a conception of Church is spreading in Catholic thought, and even in Catholic theology, that cannot even be called Protestant in a "classic" sense. Many current ecclesiological ideas, rather, refer to the model of certain North American "free churches."[8]

We will begin with what most theologians regard as the origins of a Free Church mentality, namely, the Radical Reformation and emerging Anabaptism. Then, along the way we will reference the doctrine of the church as it was further developed by the Baptist tradition and its main architect, John Smyth. One of the central foci here will be the rise of what is often called the idea of the believers' church, undoubtedly the most distinctive feature of this ecclesiological tradition. Unfortunately, for the purposes of general outline and comprehensiveness, the differences between various Free Church ecclesiologies cannot be highlighted, and thus theological accuracy in some cases is sacrificed for the broader pedagogical goals of the present book.

THE RADICAL REFORMATION HERITAGE

Church history, like any other history, is written from the perspective of those who hold power. Even at the end of the nineteenth century most church historians still divided Western Christianity into Protestant and Catholic types without remainder. A whole array of legitimate Christian churches and communities were left out. These were mainly the descendants of the Radical Reformation.[9] Anabaptism and later Baptist movements were on the one hand forerunners of later Free Churches and on the other hand the legacy of that part of the Protestant Reformation that wanted to go further than the Magisterial Reformers had gone.[10] The Radical Reformers were dissatisfied with the "compromises" of their mainline counterparts.

Four features succinctly summarize the ethos and character of the Radical Reformation. First, it was led by charismatic leaders. Second, a number of

[8]Ratzinger, *Ratzinger Report*, 45-46.

[9]The defining work is still George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation*, 3rd ed. (Kirksville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1992). Consult also Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History*, vol. 2, *Comparative Ecclesiology* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 219-45.

[10]See further, John J. Kiwiet, "Anabaptist Views of the Church," in *The People of God: Essays on the Believers' Church*, ed. Paul Basden and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 225-34.

those leaders were not only local but importantly itinerant, which helped disseminate the emerging ideas. Third, the Radical Reformation cultivated a trial-and-error mentality, thus being occasional, exploratory, and adventurous. And, fourth, it was "religiously and morally intense: it gravitated toward single-minded piety that demonstrated itself in a strict moral life" and at times led to martyrdom.[11]

The marks of the church—or as the Dutch Anabaptist leader Menno Simons called them, "signs"—included pure doctrine, biblically based celebration of sacraments, obedience to Scripture, brotherly love, confession of faith even in front of opponents, and willingness to suffer for the gospel.[12] This church is "a community of saints."[13]

There is always a difference of perception between opposing groups. Whereas the Catholics and Magisterial Reformers regarded the left-wingers as dissenters, they considered themselves the true church of God on earth. Consequently, they saw an alarming difference between the apostolic church and the compromised state church. Sebastian Frank claimed boldly:

> I believe that the outward Church of Christ, including all its gifts and sacraments, because of the breaking in and laying waste by antichrist right after the death of the Apostles, went up into heaven, and lies concealed in the Spirit and in truth. I am thus quite certain that for fourteen hundred years now there has existed no gathered Church nor any sacrament.[14]

In other words, the true church was in heaven, and the earthly church was corrupt and wayward. In this believers' church model, the church was seen as "an assembly of the righteous" rather than a "mixed body." In truth, those who merely boast of his name are not the true congregation of Christ. The true congregation of Christ consists of those "who are truly converted, who are born from above of God, who are of a regenerate mind by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the hearing of the divine Word, and have become the children of God."[15]

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[11]Haight, *Christian Community in History*, 2:221.

[12]Menno Simons, *Reply to Gellius Faber* (1552), in *The Complete Writings of Menno Simons (c. 1496–1561)*, ed. J. C. Wenger, trans. Leonard Verdiun (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 739-41 (summarized on p. 743).

[13]Simons, *Reply to Gellius Faber*, 734.

[14]Cited in Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 6th ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley and Sons, 2017), 363.

[15]Simons, *Reply to Gellius Faber*, 300. For a concise historical and theological discussion of diverse forms of that tradition, see Donald F. Durnbaugh, *The Believers' Church: The History and Character of Radical Protestantism* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1968).

UNMEDIATED ACCESS TO GOD

It is a historical and theological commonplace to contend that Anabaptists and other groups of the left wing of the Reformation devalued Scripture and put in its place a reliance on the Holy Spirit. While there is undeniably some truth to this claim, it is also clear that this impression comes more from the often less-than-fair judgments of their opponents.[16] It is more correct to say that, rather than devaluing the written Word, the Anabaptists had a distinctive view of the relationship between the Spirit and Word. It is a historical fact that even though they emphasized the Holy Spirit, they were also rigorously obedient to the Bible. Scripture was the supreme authority for Anabaptists. In fact, the whole point of their often quite narrow and even exclusivist view of the church and matters relating to society was their insistence on obedience to the most literal interpretation of Scripture. Anabaptists also insisted that whoever has made the commitment to obedience and has the Spirit can read with understanding. Furthermore, far from being individualistic, they emphasized the importance of the community for the right understanding of revelation—the Spirit was operative in the church even though the opponents highly doubted it. This, of course, made the common people supreme Bible interpreters in a more concrete way even than in the mainline Reformation.

A key characteristic of these "Nonconformist" churches from early on has been a desire to claim an unmediated access to God, apart from human-made prerequisites such as special ministry, sacraments, or liturgies. The Quakers, another stream of the descendants of the left-wing Reformation, are a representative, though extreme, example of this mindset.[17] The founder of the Baptist movement,[18] John Smyth, who came out of the Church of England and particularly from its Puritanist side, proposed the following rule of ecclesiality. It expresses clearly the underlying Free Church mentality:

> A visible communion of Saincts is of two, three, or more Saincts joyned together by covenant with God & themselves, freely to use al the holy things of God, according to the word, for their mutual edification, & Gods glory. Mat. 18, 20 Deut. 29, 12. &c Psal. 147, 19 & 149, 6-9. Rev. 1, 6.[19]

[16]For Martin Luther's harsh judgment against the Enthusiasts (*Schwärmerei*), see Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith, 3 vols. (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1997), 1:139-40.
[17]See further, Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:141-43.
[18]See further, Paul S. Fiddes, "Baptist Concepts of the Church and Their Antecedents," in *OHE*, 293-315.
[19]John Smyth, "Principles and Inferences Concerning the Visible Church," in *The Works of John Smyth*, ed. W. T. Whitley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), 1:252.

Even when sacraments are celebrated, Christ's presence in the church is believed to be accessible to all believers without any human mediation.

There is no denying a heavy accent on individualism and an ambiguous view of the meaning of community in the Free Church tradition. The category of community is ambiguous because, on the one hand, these little groups of Christians really held everything in common, but, on the other hand, no human community, and certainly no church hierarchy, was allowed to make spiritual decisions. For Quakers and others, God continued to speak throughout history. Each person is capable of a personal, direct relationship with God.

THE BELIEVERS' CHURCH

One of the self-designated names for the Free Churches is the "believers' church," which has been widely used, especially among the Baptists but also others.[20] Franklin H. Littell has attempted to give more specific content to that expression. First, the believers' church, although outwardly constituted by volunteers, is Christ's church and not theirs. Second, membership in the believers' church is voluntary. Consequently, the practice of believers' baptism rather than pedobaptism is generally, although not exclusively, preferred. The fact that membership is voluntary has made it possible to accent the dignity and voice of each member in the church. Third, the principle of separation from the world is emphasized, although often misinterpreted both by critics and by initiates, making an unnuanced connection with Donatism and perfectionism. Actually, the separation between the church and the world instead relates to the distinction between those who believe and those who do not. Fourth, mission and witness are key concepts for the believers' church and involve all members. The Anabaptist treatment of the "counsel of perfection" is illustrative. Over against the medieval Catholic mentality, according to which only a few were "religious" (that is, a part of holy orders), among the Anabaptists each and every person in the church was supposed to live a holy life. Likewise, the Hutterites, the Quakers, the Congregationalists, the Baptists, the Methodists, the Moravians—all these Free Churches and many others have a long and rich history of missions. Fifth, as has already become evident, church discipline and internal discipline are stressed since the church is to consist of believers who have submitted their lives without condition

[20]For a useful current discussion, in dialogue with historical traditions, consult Abe Dueck, Helmut Harder, and Karl Koop, eds., *New Perspectives in Believers Church Ecclesiology* (Winnipeg: CMU Press, 2010).

to Christ. And sixth, of great importance lately has been the concept of "the secular." Opposing the idea of "cultural Christianity," the believers' churches have opposed identification between the church and the secular and have endeavored to grant integrity and dignity to life outside the church. Take for example the idea of a secular government instead of the medieval Christian state in which the priest and the prince ruled together, the latter being servant to the former.[21]

Other general characteristics have been offered for a Free Church vision of the church, such as an appeal to the New Testament rather than to tradition as the ground for church doctrine; primitivism, or the principle of restoration of the early church; and an affirmation of religious liberty.[22] Furthermore, it has been suggested that a possible equivalent term for the believers' church is the "gathered" church in contrast with the "given church" of the older traditions, the latter being an institutionalized community, often linked with ethnic and cultural ties to the surrounding society.[23]

To the idea of the church as the community of believers belongs integrally the pursuit of—and at times, an absolute requirement of—sanctity, typically codified in strict rules and regulations. Holy living has always been of great concern to the ethically oriented mentality of the Free Churches. The Anabaptist churches have had "the ban," by means of which church members could be excluded from the congregation. The famous Schleitheim Confession by the Swiss Brethren (1527) included the ban and a directive for separation from the world, as well as prohibitions against taking an oath and carrying a sword.[24]

THE PRIESTHOOD OF ALL BELIEVERS

As already noticed, one of the most distinctive emphases of the Free Church ecclesiologies has been insistence on the right and gifting of each believer for ministry as equal partners. Any notion of special ministry relegated to only a few members in the church has been adamantly opposed. The Free Churches

[21]Franklin H. Littell, "The Concept of the Believers' Church," in *The Concept of the Believers' Church: Addresses from the 1967 Louisville Conference*, ed. James Leo Garrett (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1969), 15-32.

[22]William R. Estep Jr., "A Believing People: Historical Background," in Garrett, *Concept of the Believers' Church*, 57-58.

[23]George Huntston Williams, "The Believers' Church and the Given Church," in Basden and Dockery, *People of God*, 325-32.

[24]*The Schleitheim Confession of Faith, 1527*, trans. J. C. Wenger; reprinted from *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 19, no. 4 (1945): 247-53, https://courses.washington.edu/hist112/SCHLEITHEIM%20CONFESSION%20OF%20FAITH.htm.

have in general continued the tradition of the Radical Reformation in their critique of overly rigid church structures and the limitation of the ministry to the ordained clergy. They have attempted a more stringent practice of the priesthood of all believers.[25]

Most Free Churches have ordained ministries, but few, if any, understand ordination to be one of the sacraments, as Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches do. For most of them, ordination is just a public confirmation of a divine call already active in one's life.[26]

In the Free Church view of ministry, each and every believer—notwithstanding the presence of ordained or licensed minister—is a minister with full right to proclaim, serve, and be engaged in the church's work. The view of the Disciples of Christ is representative here. According to Harry Clyde Munro,

> Through Jesus Christ . . . every believer has direct and immediate access to God. He needs no human professional mediator. Or if one does lose touch with God and seems unable to re-establish this personal relationship, a brother Christian may help him find the way back. . . . Unlike the professional priest who remains permanently as the necessary mediator between the believer and God, the pastor or lay brother who serves in this priestly way steps aside as soon as the relationship has been established and the person so helped can become his own priest.[27]

There is no doubt that some kinds of Free Churches have been more successful than others in implementing in everyday church life some of the leading principles of the Protestant idea of the priesthood of all believers. That said, it is also true that Free Churches have not often explicated the theological foundation for the ministry of all. More work is needed here in close dialogue with other traditions.

No wonder Free Church history is characterized by missionary passion. Mission has not been *a* task of the church but rather *the* purpose of all church life. The following declaration by leading Free Church theologians appeals to the importance of mission for the being of the church: "We have found ourselves agreed

[25]See further, Timothy George, "The Priesthood of All Believers," in Basden and Dockery, *People of God*, 85-95. For an older work, still useful, consult also Cyril Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers: An Examination of the Doctrine from the Reformation to the Present Day* (London: Epworth, 1960).

[26]See further, Fisher Humphreys, "Ordination and the Church," in Basden and Dockery, *People of God*, 288-98. For the view of John Smyth, the founder of the Baptists, the oldest Free Church, see the careful discussion in Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 245-57.

[27]Quoted in James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 2:561.

that the mission of the church in the world is to work out her being as a covenant community in the midst of the world. The visible community is the organ of missionary proclamation. Integration into its fellowship and style of life is the goal of the evangelistic call to individuals."[28] Bishop Stephen Neill quite correctly suggested that to the traditional Reformation marks of the church there should be added three more, namely, missionary vitality, willingness to suffer for Christ, and the mobility of the pilgrim.[29]

JAMES WM. McCLENDON JR.: THE BELIEVERS' CHURCH ECCLESIOLOGY

While a number of outstanding Free Church ecclesiologists could have been chosen as the representative theologian—including the late Canadian Baptist Stanley J. Grenz[30] and the Croatian American Miroslav Volf, who, while (currently) Anglican, has written an excellent ecumenical Free Church proposal based on the ecclesiology of John Smyth, the first Baptist[31]—few tower higher in influence than the late American Baptist James Wm. McClendon Jr.

Ecclesiology as practiced doctrine. The theological vision of James Wm. McClendon Jr., whose life and thinking were embedded in an ecumenical Baptist heritage going back to Anabaptist, Mennonite, and Radical Reformation forefathers, took a synthetic and integrative approach. Nothing less than a holistic Christ-centered theology, rooted in the rich classical tradition of both the East and the West, at the same time contemporary and often creative in its constructive proposal, was sufficient for this premier theologian of the Free Church wing of the church. His vision of the church is an integral part of his theological and ethical system and can be understood only in relation to the whole.

Baptist by his denomination, McClendon used the term *baptist* (lowercase) in a wider sense than merely referring to one church tradition. For him, the word denoted the wider believers' church world in which believers' baptism and voluntary commitment are central values.

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[28]"Report of the Findings Committee" of the 1967 Louisville Conference, in Garrett, *Concept of the Believers' Church*, 320.

[29]Stephen Neill, *The Unfinished Task* (London: Lutterworth, 1957), 19, 20. For a useful discussion, see John Howard Yoder, *Theology of Mission: A Believers Church Perspective*, ed. Gayle Gerber Koontz and Andy Alexis-Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014).

[30]Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), part 5: Ecclesiology: The Doctrine of the Church.

[31]Volf, *After Our Likeness*.

McClendon illustrates the distinctive nature of the baptist gathering community by referring to and making some adjustments to the well-known typology of Lesslie Newbigin. In addition to Newbigin's first two categories, the Catholic and Protestant type, McClendon adds the Baptist type, and he includes Pentecostals in that category. The third type includes those churches, nowadays called Free Churches, that stem from the Radical Reformation: Anabaptists, Mennonites, Brethren, and others. Building on Newbigin's analysis, McClendon comes to the surprising conclusion that this third type, "local, Spirit-filled, mission-oriented, its discipleship always shaped by a practice of discernment" is almost "too good to be true."[32] Even though these churches unfortunately have often fallen short of this pattern, their driving force is the requirement that the church act in keeping with the New Testament example and expectations of the church. But in actual church life this aspiration can only be achieved to a certain degree and only occasionally. Therefore, Christian ecclesiology is always a provisional ecclesiology; not unlike Christian eschatology, it looks forward to a fulfillment not yet achieved (344-45).

McClendon's understanding of the church is tied to his view of theology and doctrine. Christian doctrine is something that is practiced in the church; even when it is not "practical" in the popular sense of the world, its power and legitimacy come from praxis in the church. In his simple, profound style, McClendon defined doctrine as "*a church teaching as she must teach if she is to be the church here and now*."[33] His ecclesiology took its point of departure sympathetically and critically from classical approaches but went beyond them by asserting that learning and studying doctrine are the task given to the whole church, the gathered fellowship. "The Christian gospel summons all to be students in the school of Christ (*mathetai*, learners, disciples). In the broad sense in which the church is itself a teacher, each member is a teacher as well" (29). In other words, his idea is that of a disciple church engaged in its doctrinal or teaching task, centered on the study of Scripture, which for McClendon is the objective content and character of doctrine (34-35).

McClendon also calls the church a narrative community, the home of doctrine.[34] The local community is the center and locus of the reading and

[32]James Wm. McClendon Jr., *Doctrine*, vol. 2 of *Systematic Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 332-45 (343). Hereafter in this chapter, all page references to *Doctrine* will be given in parenthetical references.

[33]McClendon, *Doctrine*, 24 (emphasis original).

[34]See further the most creative and challenging work of James McClendon Jr., *Biography as Theology: How Life Stories Can Remake Today's Theology*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990 [orig. 1974]).

interpretation of Scripture, the narrative of Jesus Christ. As much as denominational and national structures of the church may mean, the essence of the church can only be found in this "narrative" and "communitarian" conception of the community (34-46).

Talk about the doctrine of the church is no luxury but rather a task, a responsibility given to Christian theology. The reason is obvious: Christians exist only as Christians of some tradition or denomination. They are not only Christians but also "Greek Orthodox or German Baptist or Roman Catholic or Missouri Synod Lutheran or Iraqi Nestorians or French Reformed or . . ." (332).

A gathering church under the reign of God. For McClendon's baptist ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church "begins with (though it does not end with) the actually meeting, flesh-and-blood disciples assembly." This is what he also calls "the character of church as tangible, as local, as gathering." Being an ecclesiology of a believers' church, a gathering in a particular location, does not however make it particularist: "A baptist ecclesiology must in this sense be catholic in order to be faithfully baptist." The principle of gathering church also means that over against those who define the church in terms of its functions, McClendon emphasizes its nature as the "coming together of believers." A predominantly functional approach to the church runs the danger of making it too instrumental (327-28).

The gathering church, however, does not imply any kind of gathering at all, such as the coming together of members of a club. The church gathering is God's gathering, and it has a definite purpose even when it is not looked upon as something primarily functional. It is the place to live out "the new way of Jesus."[35] In McClendon's theological vision, salvation is understood as revolution (105-22). Soteriology is included under the reign of God, and this rule is eschatological in nature. Christian theology had to create a new terminology to describe the radical nature of salvation that had taken place in Christ. Revolution was taking place in the lives of the disciples and in the church. The aim of this revolution was to establish right relations among believers and Christ, and to define the new way of life, the way of discipleship. The church, "The Fellowship of the Spirit,"[36] is the locus of this discipleship life.

A people set apart for obedience, worship, and ministry. What constitutes authentic Christian community today? In McClendon's broad and comprehensive

[35]Subhead in McClendon, *Doctrine*, 117. The term *new* appears frequently in the context of salvation; see chap. 3, "The New in Christ: Salvation and Sin."

[36]McClendon's title for the third part of *Doctrine*, vol. 2 of his *Systematic Theology*.

vision, three underlying, interrelated principles focus on the rule of God under which Christians should, first, subject themselves in obedient and loving discipleship; second, follow Jesus in his ministry, suffering, and resurrection; and, third, cultivate common life as a gathered community in the fellowship of the Spirit anticipating the coming of the final consummation. Even though, in light of recent New Testament scholarship, there cannot be any single pattern of church life, there are "the long continuities of Christian teaching," such as God's rule, Christ's centrality, and the Spirit's koinonic presence, which tie the church members together into a people. For example, from the rule of God comes membership that consents to that rule: "In baptist parlance, that has meant receiving the Spirit, obeying the gospel, receiving Christ, taking up discipleship. It implies a disciple church, shaped by its distinctive conversion-baptism" (367). This kind of community focused on Christ has the power and desire to resist the powers of the old order and align itself with the powers of the risen Lord and his dawning rule (367).

The concept of the ministry of the church flows naturally out of the idea of the believers' church, a gathered people. For McClendon, the understanding of leadership is a critical theological issue, "like a knife separating joint and marrow [which] divides the church's worldly self-understanding from the self-knowledge given it by the Spirit of God." Whereas religions have always had priests, a class of special people, Jesus made the whole people of God priests, based on Israel's covenantal identity (Ex 19:5, 6), among whom service rather than lordship is the distinguishing mark (Mk 10:42-43). He himself set the example by submitting his own life for others (Mk 10:44-45). Consequently, McClendon contends that the distinction between lay and clerical has no clear New Testament roots. This being a fatal distinction, even separation between the two has to be abolished (367-68).

A dynamic concept of the ministry is present in the Pauline concept of gifts granted to each member of the community. Remarkably, in 1 Corinthians 12 Paul lists the gift of apostleship alongside the gifts of helping others and speaking in tongues. Indeed, "leadership, ecstasy, and the humblest service are alike gifts of the one Spirit of God" (369).

For this people set apart for God, worship is an encounter between God and God's people. "God acts and enabled people answer" (376).[37] Christian worship is distinctive because, unlike, for example, affective worship, in which the

[37]The original bold font is deleted in the quotation.

worshipers are expected to be changed by way of their feelings, or magical worship, in which the worshiper means to control God, the divine initiative is primary (374-77).

Christian worship does not limit the presence of Christ to any particular act or element, not even the Eucharist. Christ is present everywhere in the midst of the gathering community. To what end is Christ present among his people? So that his "*story continues*," and Christian worship is the way for the Risen Christ to make that happen. What matters finally is not the readiness of the worshiper; even the doubting disciples were surrounded by his presence (Mt 28:16-17) (377-79 [378]).

McClendon summarizes his bold baptist vision with these striking words:

> If *membership* in the church is intentional, then the church becomes a live circuit for the power of the Holy Spirit. That is the power of unity that the ecumenical movement seeks to realize in the churches. If *leadership* in the church is a gift among gifts granted in the fullness of Christ, then ordination . . . and hierarchy . . . are not essentials of leadership, and may concretely resist the realization of that fullness. If *the church itself* is a sign of the rule of God, the foretaste of humanity reconciled to God, then to come to church is to come "to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to myriad of angels, to the full concourse and assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven" (Heb 12:22-23). (371)

6

THE CHURCH IN THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT

Pentecostal/Charismatic Ecclesiologies

THE EMERGENCE AND SPREAD OF THE PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC PHENOMENON

The twentieth century has witnessed dramatic developments in the Christian church with the emergence and rapid growth of Pentecostalism[1] and later charismatic movements,[2] which have impacted all of worldwide Christianity. The origins and roots of these movements can be found in the American context in a revival that took place in 1901 at Charles F. Parham's Bethel Bible School in Topeka, Kansas, with students speaking in (unknown) tongues after spending concentrated time studying the accounts of the book of Acts. A few years later, this revival gained more publicity from a Black holiness preacher, William J. Seymour, who preached the new message of Pentecost at the Azusa Street Mission in Los

[1]A brief, accessible statement of the emergence of Pentecostalism and basic definitions can be found in the introduction to Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, eds., *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, rev. and expanded ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), xvii-xxviii. The most prominent presentations of history and theologies of worldwide Pentecostalism are by Walter J. Hollenweger: *The Pentecostals* (London: SCM Press, 1972 and subsequent editions) and its sequel, idem, *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1997). A recent resource is Cecil M. Robeck Jr. and Amos Yong, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[2]An authoritative and detailed introduction to the origins and history of major charismatic movements is Peter Hocken, "The Charismatic Movements," in Burgess and van der Maas, *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 477-519.

Angeles, California. From 1906 onwards, the news of the "outpouring" of the Holy Spirit spread across the nation and around the world. Before long, Pentecostal revivals could be found in Canada, England, Scandinavia, Germany, and some parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America.[3] Alongside events in the United States—and also preceding them—charismatic revivals in India and elsewhere have contributed to the birth and spread of the movement.

A half-century later, the renewal entered into older churches, beginning with the Episcopal Church under the leadership of the ministry of Dennis Bennett, an Episcopal rector in Van Nuys, California. The movement gained a particularly strong foothold in the Roman Catholic Church and was from the start blessed and guided by the highest leadership. Currently, the Roman Catholic Church includes over 100 million charismatics.[4]

During the twentieth century, the Pentecostal/charismatic movement has become the largest single category of Christians outside the Roman Catholic Church.[5] After its first century of existence, the various movements grouped under the nomenclature "Pentecostal/charismatic movements" claim about 700 million adherents at the time of this writing. From its beginning, Pentecostalism has been characterized by variety; therefore, any classifications are at best generalizations. One obvious reason is its multicultural, multinational beginnings and growth in so many cultural settings.[6] Actually, we need to speak of pentecostalisms rather than Pentecostalism (as a single phenomenon).[7] Apart from these dramatic growth numbers, Pentecostal/charismatic movements exercise massive influence on all Christian churches, not least on the Roman Catholic Church. The footprint of charismatic spirituality can be discerned particularly in the Global South among Christian communities.

[3]An authoritative account of Azusa Street events and their impact is Cecil M. Robeck Jr., *The Azusa Street Mission and Revival; The Birth of the Global Pentecostal Movement* (Nashville: Nelson, 2006).

[4]T. P. Thigpen, "Catholic Charismatic Renewal," in Burgess and Maas, *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 460-67.

[5]Annual statistics provided each year in the January issue of *International Bulletin of Mission Research* give the most up-to-date survey of the spread of Christian churches and movement, including Pentecostals. For a healthy cautionary note to Pentecostals not to glory in numbers, see Gary B. McGee, "Pentecostal Missiology: Moving Beyond Triumphalism to Face the Issues," *Pneuma* 16, no. 1 (1994): 275-81.

[6]See further Allan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); and Allan H. Anderson and W. J. Hollenweger, eds., *Pentecostals After a Century: Global Perspectives on a Movement in Transition* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999).

[7]See further, Matthew Clark, "Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A View from the Global South," *Transformation* 30, no. 1 (2013): 46-59.

A short explanation of terminology used in scholarly literature may be of use here. Whereas the term *Pentecostal*, as explained, refers to the first wave of this renewal movement started in the beginning of the twentieth-century, the term *charismatic* denotes Pentecostal-type groups and movements within existing churches, such as Roman Catholic charismatics. Furthermore, the term *neo-charismatic* describes a diverse grouping of additional Christians who cherish Pentecostal-charismatic spirituality. They are typically nondenominational, and at times it is difficult to agree on who exactly belongs to this category. Examples include Vineyard communities, the famous Toronto revival, and most African Instituted Churches.

In light of the staggering diversity of the Pentecostal/charismatic phenomenon, this chapter focuses on what might be called "Classical Pentecostalism," the "original" form and the mother of the movement. Although it represents at most about one-fourth of the total Pentecostal/charismatic movements globally (around 150-180 million, with the charismatic movements claiming about 200 million adherents and the neo-charismatic about 300 million), it also represents its "original" form. Unlike charismatic movements in, say, the Roman Catholic Church, which follow their mother-church's ecclesiology, Pentecostal churches' vision of the church is unique enough to merit a separate look.

DYNAMIC CHARISMATIC SPIRITUALITY AT THE CENTER

In contrast to other chapters in this main section of the book, no individual theologian was chosen to represent a Pentecostal ecclesiology. This is simply because at the moment it is difficult to identify such an individual scholar. Rather, the contributions of a number of leading Pentecostal theologians will be integrated into the discussion.

Unlike confessional traditions such as Roman Catholicism, mainstream Protestantism, and Anglicanism, Pentecostalism arose out of a vibrant, dynamic spiritual experience in search of doctrinal and confessional definitions; in this regard, it is closer in ethos to Eastern Orthodox tradition. To no one's surprise,

> the salient characteristic of Pentecostalism is its belief in the present-day manifestation of spiritual gifts, such as miraculous healing, prophecy and, most distinctively, glossolalia. Pentecostals affirm that these spiritual gifts (charismata) are

> granted by the Holy Spirit and are normative in contemporary church life and ministry.[8]

Pentecostalism has (re)introduced a dynamic, enthusiastic type of spirituality to the contemporary church. This comes to the fore particularly in regular church life, as expressed by Daniel Albrecht, the researcher of Pentecostal spirituality:

> In a very real sense the Sunday services of . . . [Pentecostal] churches are designed to provide a context for a mystical *encounter*, an experience with the divine. This encounter is mediated by the sense of the immediate divine presence. The primary rites of worship and altar/response are particularly structured to sensitize the congregants to the presence of the divine and to stimulate conscious experience of God. . . . The gestures, ritual actions, and symbols all function within this context to speak of the manifest presence.[9]

To set dynamic charismatic spirituality at the center of Pentecostalism is not to say that therefore the movement represents primarily a "spirit-movement," focusing in the first place on the charismatic ministry of the Holy Spirit. Rather, the theological and spiritual center of Pentecostalism is Christ and Christology. Consequently, it is Christ who stands at the center of the Pentecostal "Full Gospel." Pentecostal understanding of Christian life and church ministry is embedded and anchored in a dynamic encounter with Christ as Christ is being depicted in his manifold role of Justifier, Sanctifier, Baptizer with the Spirit, Healer of the Body, and the Soon-Coming King.[10] It is this Full Gospel that has set the tone for Pentecostal spirituality, and it is here that we also find a clue toward constructing a Pentecostal vision of ecclesiology.

IN SEARCH OF PENTECOSTAL ECCLESIOLOGY

Even today many wonder if there is such a thing as Pentecostal ecclesiology.[11] Indeed, the question has been raised: "If Pentecostalism is a movement, is it

[8]Jon Ruthven, *On the Cessation of the Charismata: The Protestant Polemic on Postbiblical Miracles* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 14.

[9]Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 239 (emphasis original).

[10]The basic work here is Donald W. Dayton, *Theological Roots of Pentecostalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1987).

[11]For a recent attempt to outline defining features of Pentecostal ecclesiology, see Amos Yong, "Pentecostal Ecclesiologies," in *OHE*, 335-58. Useful resources are also the following: Chris E. W. Green, ed., *Pentecostal Ecclesiology: A Reader* (Leiden: Brill, 2016); V.-M. Kärkkäinen, guest editor, "Ecclesiology and the Pentecostal Churches," theme issue of *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 11, no. 4 (2011); Amos Yong, with Jonathan A. Anderson, *Renewing Christian Theology: Systematics for a Global Christianity* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), chap. 7: "The Church and Its Mission: The Spirit of the Reconciling God." This section of the chapter is indebted to Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "A Full Gospel

useful or valid to talk about ecclesiology at all? What does ecclesiology mean to a Pentecostal?"[12] Take for example the formative book written by the American Assemblies of God theologian M. L. Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective.*[13] While offering a number of helpful biblical and practical—in this case predominantly missiological—insights, it can hardly be regarded as a constructive theological reflection on the church. It is rather a practical approach to the topic of the church in the service of mission. Indeed, mission plays such a central role that recent titles such as *Network Church: A Pentecostal Ecclesiology Shaped by Mission* have been published.[14]

Amos Yong rightly remarks that Pentecostals' focus on experience rather than theological reflection led to "practical" and "realistic" perspectives on the church. Leading teachers such as Hodges merely "[assumed] uncritically the free-church ecclesiology and . . . [inherited] thereby all the problems that go along with it."[15] By and large, until recently, most Pentecostals have approached the topic of ecclesiology primarily by reiterating some key biblical perspectives from the New Testament, often echoing more general evangelical viewpoints.[16] The book of Acts in particular has served well the Pentecostal desire to continue their communities' apostolic pattern of charismatically empowered missionary-focused life.[17]

It is noteworthy that in some Pentecostal theological and doctrinal presentations a separate chapter on ecclesiology may be missing despite extensive treatments of ministry, ordinances, and similar church-related themes.[18] Even the recent massive collection of essays by leading Pentecostal scholars from various

Ecclesiology of *Koinonia*: Pentecostal Contributions to the Doctrine of the Church," in *Renewal History & Theology: Essays in Honor of H. Vinson Synan*, ed. S. David Moore and James M. Henderson (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2014), 175-93.

[12]Paul D. Lee, "Pneumatological Ecclesiology in the Roman Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue: A Catholic Reading of the Third Quinquennium (1985–1989)" (PhD diss., Pontifical University, Faculty of Theology, Rome, 1994), 15.

[13]Melvin L. Hodges, *A Theology of the Church and Its Mission: A Pentecostal Perspective* (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1977).

[14]Andy Lord, *Network Church: A Pentecostal Ecclesiology Shaped by Mission* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

[15]Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 101.

[16]Representative examples include Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), chap. 8; and Michael L. Dusing, "The New Testament Church," in *Systematic Theology: A Pentecostal Perspective*, ed. Stanley M. Horton (Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 1994), 525-50.

[17]A programmatic essay is Steven Jack Land, *Pentecostal Spirituality: A Passion for the Kingdom* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), chap. 3.

[18]Clifton R. Clarke, ed., *Pentecostal Theology in Africa* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2014); and Keith Warrington, ed., *Pentecostal Perspectives* (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Paternoster, 1998).

global contexts, *The Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*, devotes no chapter to ecclesiology![19] Furthermore, it is ironic that the entry "Theology of the Church" in the *Dictionary of the Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* was authored by a Roman Catholic (charismatic) theologian![20]

PENTECOSTAL ECCLESIOLOGY AND THE FIVEFOLD GOSPEL

Although Pentecostal ecclesiology is still in the making, as mentioned above, one way to construct a vision of the church is to build on the fivefold gospel. This is, indeed, a project underway among a group of Pentecostal theologians, and we are fortunate in benefiting from their efforts.

In a recent programmatic work titled *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel*, a group of international Pentecostal scholars outlined the following vision of the church through the template of the Full Gospel:[21]

1. Christ as Savior: A Saving Community
2. Christ as Sanctifier: A Sanctifying Community
3. Christ as Healer: A Healing Community
4. Christ as Baptizer with the Spirit: An Empowering Community
5. Christ as the Soon Coming King: An Eschatological Community

Saving community. With all their desire to seek healing and empowerment, Pentecostals have never lost sight of the first work of Christ as Savior. Yet in keeping with the contemporary ultra-individualistic cultural milieu as well as Reformation insistence on the individual's access to God, Pentecostal soteriology too easily fails to envision Christ's soteriological presence in communitarian terms. In the self-critical words of the Pentecostal Simon Chan of Singapore, "My relationship with God is primary, while my relationship with others is secondary."[22] That said, while Pentecostals at times have lost sight of community in their understanding of the church, their view of salvation—and thus of the church—is holistic. For Pentecostals, being saved is not reduced to accepting a

[19]Robeck and Yong, *Cambridge Companion to Pentecostalism*.
[20]Peter Hocken, "Church, Theology of the," in Burgess and Maas, *New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, 544-51.
[21]John Christopher Thomas, ed., *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel* (Cleveland, TN: CPT Press, 2010).
[22]Simon Chan, "Mother Church: Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology," *Pneuma* 22, no. 1 (2000): 180.

few doctrines. It is a lived experience; beyond that, it is an experience that touches the whole being of the person. This holistic orientation can be easily discerned in Pentecostal preaching and in their prayers.

Sanctifying community. While the roots of Pentecostalism reach in various directions, the holiness movements were midwife to current Pentecostalism. With their belief in the possibility of and strong insistence on the need for sanctification and holiness, those movements reminded Pentecostals of the connection between character and charism. At its best, Pentecostal communal life, lived in the power of the Spirit and in the midst of the fruit of the Spirit, has cultivated and nourished Christians' lives in a remarkable way. Former drunkards, gang members, criminals—or ordinary men and women, boys and girls, with less visible vices—have been crafted into a loving, healing, sanctifying community.

Healing community. Healing has been the hallmark of Pentecostalism since its inception. While Pentecostals came to the belief of healing by reading the book of Acts and comparing notes with their own experience, unconsciously they also came to manifest and represent a leading contemporary motif in pneumatology and ecclesiology—holism. Nothing in human life, including the physical dimension, is to be excluded from God's care. An integral part of Pentecostal worship and ministry is prayer for healing and restoration.

Empowered community. Because of the centrality of the Christ-driven charismatic experience, it is understandable that empowerment for service and ministry, including the exercise of a wide variety of spiritual gifts (charisms), is an integral part of Pentecostal church life and ecclesiology. Indeed, the most distinctive Pentecostal experience, that of Spirit baptism, is a deeply communal, not only personal, experience. As the leading Pentecostal systematician Frank Macchia writes, "The Spirit is the Spirit of communion. Spirit baptism implies communion. This is why it leads to a shared love, a shared meal, a shared mission, and the proliferation/enhancement of an interactive charismatic life."[23]

Eschatological community. Unknowingly, early Pentecostals made the all-important theological connection of the pouring out of the Spirit, the end times, and the church's mission. Notwithstanding excesses and at times overly enthusiastic expectation, the early Pentecostal conviction of the urgency of mission to the world as a result of the "Latter Day Rain" leading up to the Second Coming of Christ is a

[23]Frank D. Macchia, *Baptized in the Spirit: A Global Pentecostal Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 205.

legacy for all Christian communities. Eschatological urgency did not result in complacency but rather energized Pentecostal communities in service and mission.

SALIENT FEATURES OF PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC ECCLESIOLOGIES: A SUMMARY STATEMENT

Having outlined some key dimensions and features of the Pentecostal vision of the church based on its normative theological template, it is useful to end this discussion by examining some salient features of the church life in Pentecostal communities. The late Eastern Orthodox (then Anglican) priest Michael Harper of England, who identified himself as a charismatic Christian and was intimately knowledgeable of Pentecostalism, has provided the following list:

1. The important role of the Holy Spirit in giving life and power to the individual and through the individual to the Church and world.
2. The active participation of the whole assembly of God's people in acts of worship and administrations of the sacraments.
3. The release of the laity in ministry in the Church and world, and their active role in all parts of church life.
4. The importance of the local church as the gathering of the people of God, to be a corporate expression of Christ's life to the world.
5. The experience of charismatic actions of God. A kind of quasi-sacramentalism, actively at work in people's lives.
6. The restoration of experiential apostolicity to the whole Church. The Roman Catholic Church has stressed its apostolic nature largely in historical terms, apostolic succession and all that. Protestant Churches moved the emphasis to doctrine in an attempt to restore the apostles' teaching to the Church. . . . The Pentecostal contribution has been in the restoration of the apostolic signs—healing, miracles, prophecy, speaking in tongues and so on.
7. The Pentecostals' greatest contribution may yet be assessed in terms of their ability to instill indigenous principles from the start in the Third World, which in part accounts for the remarkable growth. . . . Whereas historic church missionary endeavors in the nineteenth century were carried out in the atmosphere of empire building and the westernizing of other cultures, Pentecostal outreach has very largely been free from such taints.[24]

[24]Michael Harper, "The Holy Spirit Acts in the Church, Its Structures, Its Sacramentality, Its Worship and Sacraments," *One in Christ* 12 (1976): 323.

7

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS ON ECCLESIOLOGICAL TRADITIONS

The two ancient ecclesiological traditions, Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, share a common heritage that goes back to the early church, namely, the idea of apostolicity and catholicity. *Apostolicity* means faithfulness to the life and tradition of the apostles, and *catholicity* here indicates fullness of doctrine, the idea of not lacking in anything needed for salvation. The Reformation churches also claim apostolicity; their focus is on the Word preached, the apostolic message. All these churches claim to stand on the foundation of the apostles and thus represent the church of God on earth. They include not only those who have made a conscious confession of faith but also those to be nurtured in the faith in the hope that in the future they will confess Christ.

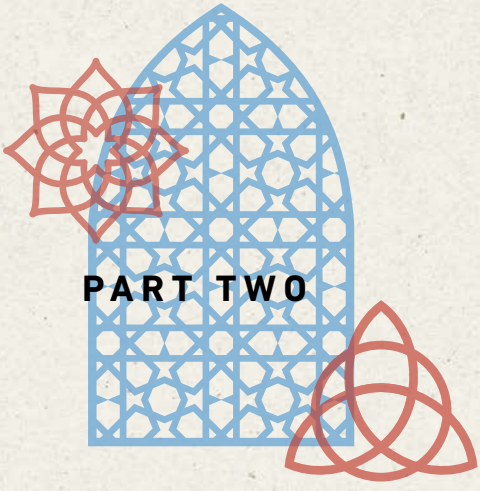
The emergence of a Free Church tradition—including the newcomers, Pentecostals and charismatics—was a result of the concern for holy living for *all* members of the church. While the older churches never dismissed the call for holiness, in the eyes of the younger churches, they did not emphasize it enough. So the idea of the believers' church arose. These churches also claim apostolicity in terms of living up to the apostolic life of commitment and evangelization.

Older churches usually emphasize community and the communal dimension of the Christian life while the newer churches have paid more attention to the individual's responsibility and role. These emphases have carried over also into the concept of ministry. Older churches, understandably, often focus more on the structures of the church and consider sacraments as essential means of grace.

The younger churches, though regarding neither one of these as irrelevant—for example, sacraments are performed by virtually all Christian groups—place more emphasis on the response of faith and on flexibility of church models. Reformation churches in most cases stand in the middle of these two extremes and try to hold to both the Eastern and Western Catholic churches' and the younger Free Churches' orientations.

Ecclesial history is a sad testimony of the lack of love and sensitivity. Struggles, poisoned attitudes, even persecutions have taken place between various denominations depending on who happened to be most powerful. Sadly, the noble mindset of Christian love did not always prevail. Strife and wars arose between the Reformation and Catholic churches and among the right- and left-wing Reformation churches. The rise of the ecumenical movement (chapter seventeen) sheds a ray of hope on this sorrowful picture. Even though the ecumenical movement in the form of the World Council of Churches is quite young, only three-quarters of a century in age, it has already shown its potential. Whatever one's view of the goal of ecumenism, "visible" unity or unity at some other levels, the Christian message points to the unity of all people of God under one God. It is left to be seen what the ecclesiological implications of those developments will be.

A groundbreaking trend of developments during the last century of the second millennium, alongside the rise of the ecumenical movement, has been the proliferation and rapid growth of the Christian church beyond Europe and North America (the Global North). Indeed, the majority of Christians can now be found in the Global South (Africa, Asia, Latin America). Furthermore, the voices and experiences of women, the oppressed, and the marginalized, as well as, say, the postmodern generation, have come to join ecclesiological conversations. To these exciting and innovative developments we turn next.



PART TWO

CONTEXTUAL AND GLOBAL ECCLESIOLOGIES

ORIENTATION TO PART TWO

The Church Goes Global

A RADICAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE CHURCH UNDERWAY

The reader of textbooks and treatises, even the most recent ones, may easily wonder why it is that they are still written as if the surrounding world had not experienced any major changes.[1] By and large, doctrines of the church are written as if a Christendom model were still in place, making Christianity virtually the only world religion, with established "mainline" churches as the only players on the field and well-to-do Europeans and Americans the majority of the faithful. And of course, leaders and theologians are supposedly mainly aging white males! Yet, how radically different is the world of the third millennium in which the global church and its mission exist. Nothing less than a radical transformation—or in the words of the Cuban American historian-theologian Justo González, "macroreformation"[2]—is happening before our very eyes. The church of the bygone era is over and something radically new is emerging.[3]

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[1]This first section of the orientation draws from Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Christian Church Among Religions: Toward a Hospitable Missionary Encounter with the Other," in *Wrestling with God in Context: Revisiting the Theology and Social Vision of Shoki Coe*, ed. M. P. Joseph, Po Ho Huang, and Victor Hsu (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018), 161-80.

[2]Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 49.

[3]For insightful observations about the context of ecclesiology in the current world, see Gerard Mannion and Lewis S. Mudge, "Introduction: Ecclesiology—the Nature, Story and Study of the Church," in *RCCC*, 1-6.

This radical transformation is well known and well documented. The great majority of the adherents of Christianity, the world's largest religion, with over 2.4 billion adherents, can now be found in the Majority World (Africa, Asia, Latin America). The Global North (Europe, and more recently North America) used to be the epicenter. By 2050, only about one-fifth of the world's Christians will be non-Hispanic whites. Rather than a wealthy Euro-American male, a "'typical' contemporary Christian . . . [is] a woman living in a village in Nigeria or in a Brazilian *favela*"[4] or a young, often poor, person anywhere in the megacities of the Global South.

At the same time, the composition of the church worldwide with regard to denominations is changing dramatically. As of this writing, one-half of all Christians are Roman Catholics, another quarter comprises Pentecostals/charismatics, and the rest are Eastern Orthodox Christians, Anglicans, mainline Protestants, and members of Free Churches.[5] This means that Roman Catholics and Pentecostal/charismatics together constitute three-fourths of the global membership. As a result, conservative and traditional mindsets will be strengthened globally even when theological liberalism and pluralism reign in Western academia. The "Pentecostalization" of the Christian church in terms of Pentecostal/charismatic spirituality and worship patterns infiltrating all churches is yet another implication of the transformation.[6] Add to this the rapidly growing influence of diaspora[7] and migration,[8] and you begin to get a picture of this unprecedented global transformation.

That said, it is important to keep in mind that even though the global nature of the church has become a theological theme only in recent times, the church

[4]Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2. For Asia, see Peter C. Phan, ed., *Christianities in Asia*, Blackwell Guides to Global Christianity (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011); for Africa and the Caribbean, see Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); for Latin America, see Edward Cleary and Timothy J. Steigenga, eds., *Conversion of a Continent: Contemporary Religious Change in Latin America* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

[5]The current statistical source is Todd M. Johnson and Brian J. Grim, *The World's Religions in Figures* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013).

[6]For important contributions, see Neil J. Ormerod and Shane Clifton, ed., *Globalization and the Mission of the Church: Ecclesiological Investigations* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009).

[7]See Stéphane Dufoix, *Diasporas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

[8]A useful reference work is Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 4th ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2009). A standard missiological analysis is Jehu J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008). General migration data can be found in the continuously updated database of the Pew Research Center: www.pewresearch.org/topics/migration/.

has always embodied diversity and "globality," just differently from our times. As my colleague at Fuller Theological Seminary Vince Bantu has shown in his *A Multitude of All Peoples: Engaging Ancient Christianity's Global Identity*, from the beginning the church of Christ has been composed of diverse people(s) and found itself in many locations.[9]

Having considered theological thinking about the church among movements and individual theologians associated for the most part with classical Western theology in part one, the second major part of this book delves into what is often called contextual or global or intercultural ecclesiologies. The devotion of one major section to this discussion reflects my conviction that it is here that the future of Christian theology and, consequently, of ecclesiology, also lies. But before advancing in this discussion, an all-important terminological consideration is in order.

WHAT IS A CONTEXTUAL AND GLOBAL ECCLESIOLOGY?

What is contextual theology? Somewhat counterintuitively, the right answer to this question is this: all theology is contextual! What does this mean? There are two important considerations at work here. On the one hand, all theology is necessarily contextual in the sense that each and every theology is shaped by and originates from a particular religious, cultural, and sociopolitical context. Just think of classical creeds of the church, say the Niceno-Constantinopolitan (381 CE), which rules over matters related to Christian belief in the trinitarian God. In order to meet its goal, that of clarifying and defending Christian faith vis-à-vis the pagan world, this creed utilized the concepts and thought forms of the Greco-Roman world. The same can be said of, for example, classic atonement theories, ways of explaining the meaning and nature of Christ's salvific work. Anselm of Canterbury's ingenious satisfaction theory from the eleventh century can only be understood against the high medieval hierarchic cosmology and the worldview in which harmony and payment of debt to one's superior (God standing at the very top) were the leading values. And so forth. On the other hand—and this justifies the use of the term *contextual*—only some theologians are mindful of and readily acknowledge the contextuality of their theologies. And even more, to take an obvious example, for

[9]Vince L. Bantu, *A Multitude of All Peoples: Engaging Ancient Christianity's Global Identity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2020).

various sorts of liberation theologians, contextuality is taken as an asset in their search for theology in the service of freedom, equality, and fairness.

Regretfully, most theologies written and taught until the twentieth century were not only not aware of the influence of the context. Even worse, many of them made a fatal distinction between "contextual" theologies and "neutral" theologies, as if, for example, theology done by aging Euro-American males belonged to the latter category whereas feminist, Latin American liberationist, and African theologies were contextual. That is a fatal misunderstanding indeed! Caucasian male theologies from Europe are as contextual as the work of Asian postcolonialists and South African Black theologians.

Acknowledging the necessarily contextual nature of all theology, and thus ecclesiology, "does not of course mean that Christian tradition is to be undervalued. That would be not only naive but also counterproductive. Much of contemporary theology in particular locations and contexts draws its energy from a careful, painstaking, and often tension-filled dialogue with and response to tradition."[10] Theological tradition is the heritage of the whole church of Christ on earth, not only of the church in the Global North. A landmark volume written by two leading Roman Catholic missiologists in the United States, titled *Constants in Context*,[11] accurately illustrates the need for Christian theology to negotiate the *constant* features of Christian beliefs and doctrines in changing, diverse, and often perplexing *contexts*.

Christian theology has tried more than one way to accommodate the cultural challenge; some of the approaches have been less than successful. Similarly, that several kinds of contextual theologies are emerging and growing in significance does not, of course, mean that the Western theological tradition loses its significance; even theologians from outside the West are still primarily being trained either by Westerners or, even in their own contexts, in topics mainly deriving from the West. What will change in the near future—and the reverberations can already be felt—is that theologizing can no longer be the privilege of one culture only. It is going to be a global, interrelated enterprise.

The term *global*, often used in connection with *contextual*, similarly has to be handled with great care. *Global* means that, in the presentation and argumentation

[10]Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), 5.

[11]Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004).

of constructive theology, voices, testimonies, and perspectives from around the world and from different agendas will be engaged. Global theology is a communion of local conversations in a continuing interrelated dialogue. At the same time, we should be mindful of the danger that *global* smacks of modernity's preference for *universal*, grand projects and concepts.[12] One way to illustrate this dynamic is to coin a new word, tried by some contemporary writers, namely, *glocal*, a hybrid of *global* and *local*.[13] The term was invented a few years ago in the interdisciplinary debate about the meaning of *globalization*[14] and has been subsequently used by some Christian missiologists,[15] among others. The Reformed missiologist Charles Van Engen speaks to this issue: "In the twenty-first century, the church of Jesus Christ needs to become self-consciously what it in fact already is: a *glocal* church. . . . [A] healthy congregation of disciples of Jesus lives out its catholicity by intentionally and actively participating in Christ's mission that dynamically fosters the glocal interaction between the global and the local."[16]

In part two, I seek to cover briefly some ecclesiological expressions in the African, Asian, and Latin American, as well as on North American soil, paying attention to salient features, distinctive characteristics, and noteworthy developments. Visions and experiences of women of various agendas (feminists, womanists, and *mujeristas*) and of liberationists focused on sociopolitical and economic issues will be included, as well as the distinctively Roman Catholic ecclesiological experiment called "base communities." Some of the most recent ecclesiological experiments such as the Emerging/Emergent churches, particularly among the postmoderns, will also get our attention. While not limited to the American continent, these newest trends will be considered in that context, similarly to distinctively American ecclesiologies coming from Black, Hispanic American, and Asian American communities.

[12]Kärkkäinen, *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World*, 5.

[13]See further, William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, introduction to *Global Dictionary of Theology*, ed. William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), vii-xiv.

[14]See further Susan H. C. Tai and Y. H. Wong, "Advertising Decision Making in Asia: 'Glocal' Versus 'Regcal' Approach," *Journal of Managerial Issues* 10, no. 3 (1998): 318-19.

[15]Charles E. Van Engen, "The Glocal Church: Locality and Catholicity in a Globalizing World," in *Globalizing Theology: Belief and Practice in an Era of World Christianity*, ed. Craig Ott and Harold A. Netland (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 157-79.

[16]Van Engen, "Glocal Church," 157. This paragraph is adapted from Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, vol. 1 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 20.

8

THE POWER OF LIBERATION AND BASE COMMUNITIES IN LATIN AMERICA

LATIN AMERICAN CONTEXT

In order to understand the Latin American context, we need to be reminded of its sad history of colonialization and oppression of the Indigenous peoples.[1] At the end of the fifteenth century, Christopher ("The-Christ-Bearer") Columbus and the *conquistadors* (Spanish soldiers) introduced Christ to the local peoples as the Powerful Ruler[2] while at the same time the figure of the suffering Christ was portrayed in popular piety in a way that served other than theological purposes:

> The two images [of Christ presented to the Indios] are to some degree two sides of the one coin of colonialist propaganda. The dying or dead Christ is an offer of identification in suffering, without arousing hope—the resurrection is distant. Even today, in the popular Catholicism of Latin America, Good Friday is the greatest day of celebration. The other side, Christ the ruler, is embodied in the Spanish king and the colonial rulers, to whom the Indios are to bend the knee in veneration. In both cases the christology degenerates into an instrument of oppression. At an early stage resistance against it grew.[3]

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[1]For an accessible account, see Volker Küster, *The Many Faces of Jesus Christ: Intercultural Christology*, trans. John Bowden (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), 41-46.

[2]For political and religious motifs behind the conquest, see Anton Wessels, *Images of Jesus: How Jesus Is Perceived and Portrayed in Non-European Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 58-61.

[3]Küster, *Many Faces of Jesus Christ*, 42.

You may recall the story behind the popular cult of Guadalupe in which the Virgin appeared to a poor Indian by the name of Juan Diego to convey a message to the bishop of Mexico. Only after a miracle was the bishop ready to listen to such a humble envoy, finally becoming convinced that indeed the Lady had manifested herself to the poor man. "Thus the Virgin of Guadalupe became a symbol of the affirmation of the Indian over against the Spanish, of the unlearned over against the learned, of the oppressed over against the oppressor."[4]

It has been said that whereas African theology begins with a shout of joy, Latin American theology begins with a cry of despair. One could also say that while African theologians are drawn to issues of culture and identity, many Latin American theologians wrestle with social and political issues.[5] Even the majority of those who dare not to speak of revolution in the sense of armed conflict[6] do feel compelled to take actions and think theologically in a way that has political implications.

The Roman Catholic Church has been and still is the major Christian community on the continent, but as the ensuing discussion reveals, Protestantism, particularly in its evangelical and Pentecostal/charismatic manifestations is rapidly gaining much influence as well.

THEOLOGY AS AN ACT OF LIBERATION

Whereas, in the past, theological reflection was often understood to address only matters divine and ecclesiastical, a radical turn to the earthly and human realities has taken place in what has come to be called liberation theologies.[7] This approach is embodied and skillfully constructed in the work of the senior Latin American Roman Catholic liberationist theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez. In his landmark work, *A Theology of Liberation* (originally published in Spanish in 1971), Gutiérrez reminds us that the question of liberation is not a new one but rather a "classic question of the relation between faith and human existence, between faith and social reality, between faith and political action, or in other words,

[4]Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), 61.

[5]William A. Dyrness, *Learning About Theology from the Third World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 72.

[6]Cf. José Míguez Bonino, *Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).

[7]A fine, accessible account is Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History*, vol. 2, *Comparative Ecclesiology* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 408-15. Consult also Gustavo Gutiérrez, "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," trans. Judith Condor, in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 19-38; and Christopher Rowland, "Introduction: The Theology of Liberation," in Rowland, *Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, 1-16.

between the kingdom of God and the building up of the world."[8] In Gutiérrez's understanding, this calls us to shift from considering theology primarily as "wisdom," as in the early centuries, or as "rational knowledge," as from the twelfth century on, to considering theology "as critical reflection on praxis."[9] This kind of approach has fostered "a greater sensitivity to the *anthropological aspects* of revelation,"[10] which alone can genuinely represent "theology from the underside of history."[11] A truly liberationist approach comes to acknowledge God as the *God of Life* who liberates, executes justice, shows his faithfulness, and comes to meet us in our particular situation.[12]

In order to respond to the many charges of complacency toward the issues of poverty and social inequality, the term *integral liberation* was coined in the so-called Puebla Document subsequent to CELAM, the Roman Catholic Church's Second Conference of Latin American Bishops at Medellín, Colombia (1968). It denotes Jesus' liberating ministry that takes into consideration different dimensions of life—social, political, economic, and cultural—and the whole web of factors affecting human life. Gutiérrez has called this liberationist orientation a "theology from the underside of history."[13] The idea of integral liberation insists that "spiritual" and "earthly" belong together and can never be divorced from each other, as has often happened in classical theology. This is in keeping with the Christology of the New Testament: The emancipatory power of the gospel of the kingdom of God—God's righteous and just rule—was manifest in the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth. Those whom Jesus delivered—the sick, the demon-possessed, those outside the covenant community—became signs of the coming kingdom and its power of liberation and reconciliation.[14]

In order to work out a viable theology in support of sociopolitical, gender, and economic challenges, Latin American liberationists have proposed a new hermeneutic, the starting point of which is the context rather than the text. Based on this insight, the "hermeneutical circle" takes place in four interrelated stages:

[8]Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1973), 45.
[9]Subhead in Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 6.
[10]Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 7.
[11]Chapter title in Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The Power of the Poor in History*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 169.
[12]These and related themes are developed in detail in Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The God of Life*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991).
[13]Subhead for chap. 7 in Gutiérrez, *Power of the Poor in History*.
[14]See further, Priscilla Pope-Levison and John R. Levison, *Jesus in Global Contexts* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 36.

1. Ideological suspicion: an emerging notion that perhaps something is wrong in society, especially among the underprivileged
2. Analytical reflection on the social value system: asking penetrating questions such as whether a situation is justified by Scripture and whether God's purposes are fulfilled in it
3. Exegetical suspicion: an acknowledgment of the fact that theology is not relevant because of a one-sided and biased style of reading the Bible that neglects the perspective of the poor and oppressed
4. Pastoral action: articulating an appropriate response to what is determined to be one's personal biblical responsibility[15]

The human reality in Latin America is taken as the praxis of theology. This term has three interrelated facets. First, human beings are heavily shaped by political-historical reality. Second, human reality is intersubjective: "Human beings are not first ahistorical 'I's' that express their unique essences in relations to others through language. . . . All subjectivity arises out of intersubjective relations between human beings." Third, humans can and must intentionally create history, "transforming and shaping reality for the improvement of human flourishing."[16] In light of this focus on praxis, Pablo Richards summarizes much of the agenda of Latin American liberation theology: The "mystery of the presence of God in the world of the poor" is that "God personally comes to meet us and to bestow a self-revelation. The world of the poor is now seen for what it is: the privileged locus of the presence and revelation of God."[17]

Liberation theologies are in no way limited to the Latin American context. Alongside women's liberationist approaches, Black theologians in the United States and South Africa, Asian theologians in various locations of this vast continent, and a host of others have developed distinctive tactics and emphases. One particularly important global platform has been the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT).[18] That said, Latin Americans, particularly Roman Catholics, have been in the forefront for several reasons, namely, "the

[15]Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1976), 39-40.
[16]Rebecca S. Chopp, "Latin American Liberation Theology," in *The Modern Theologians*, ed. David F. Ford, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, UK: Blackwell, 1997), 412.
[17]Pablo Richard, "Theology in the Theology of Liberation," in *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts of Liberation Theology*, ed. Ignacio Ellacuría and Jon Sobrino (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 150-51.
[18]Regarding Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) records, 1975–2001, one can see availability of documents at Columbia University Libraries with the link https://clio.columbia.edu/catalog/6306796, accessed June 22, 2020. These records are open for research by appointment.

involvement and consequent martyrdom of clergy, women religious, and catechists in the face of the unjust treatment of the Latin American poor and the Vatican's consistent vilification of the pastoral and academic incarnations of this theology."[19]

THE CHURCH OF/FOR THE POOR

After hundreds of years of subjugation of native peoples, unequal sharing of resources, power struggles, and unstable governments in Latin America, the Roman Catholic Church found itself in an utterly challenging and complex situation. The church

> inherited a legacy of colonial Catholicism that was linked to the oppressive regime of the Spanish empire and its conquest of the Americas. As a result of this history, once Latin American countries gained independence from Spain the church was faced with liberal governments that promoted staunch anticlericalism, and it was forced to align itself with conservative factions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Also of note is the historical lack of indigenous clergy within Latin American countries, whose priests and women religious were predominantly foreign-born. In addition, a shortage of priests throughout Latin America led to a population that was well schooled in popular Catholicism and religiosity yet was not thoroughly instructed in dogmatic theological teachings.[20]

Thanks to Vatican II, these and related challenges were taken up and new massive efforts to help the church find its proper place in South America have emerged. Under the leadership of liberationists, the Roman Catholic Church has come to see Christ as identified with the poor and oppressed and has refocused on the self-understanding of the church "from underneath."[21] The 1971 Synod of the Catholic Bishops took up the topic of "Justice in the World" and produced a notable declaration on the integral relationship between action for justice and evangelization: "Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation

[19]Michelle Gonzalez Maldonado, "Liberation Ecclesiologies with Special Reference to Latin America," in *OHE*, 574-75. See further, Jon Sobrino, *Witnesses to the Kingdom: The Martyrs of El Salvador and the Crucified Peoples* [no translator provided] (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2003).

[20]Maldonado, "Liberation Ecclesiologies," 583. Consult also Quiroz Magaña Alvaro, "Ecclesiology in the Theology of Liberation," in Ellacuría and Sobrino, *Mysterium Liberationis*, 194-209; and José Comblin, *Called for Freedom: The Changing Context of Liberation Theology*, trans. Phillip Berryman (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1998).

[21]M.-D. Chenu, "Vatican II and the Church of the Poor," in *The Poor and the Church*, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Alois Müller, Concilium 104 (New York: Seabury, 1977), 56-61; see also Gutiérrez, *Power of the Poor in History*.

of the world fully appear to us as a *constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel*, or, in other words, of the Church's mission for the redemption of the human race and its liberation from every oppressive situation."[22] This is the first time, to my knowledge, that an official Catholic document describes social justice as a "constitutive" dimension of the preaching of the gospel. Importantly, the bishops added that

> Christian love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated. For love implies an absolute demand for justice, namely a recognition of the dignity and rights of one's neighbor. Justice attains its inner fullness only in love. Because every person is truly a visible image of the invisible God and a sibling of Christ, the Christian finds in every person God himself and God's absolute demand for justice and love.[23]

The above-mentioned 1968 CELAM, meeting in the presence of Pope Paul VI, placed three interrelated themes on its agenda: efforts toward justice and peace, the need for adaptation in evangelization and faith, and the reform of the church and its structures. This regional conference was actually a turning point in the identity and mission of the church of that continent with its clear articulation of the people's cry for justice and liberation, its espousal of the cause of the poor, and its recognition of base Christian communities as primary centers for Christian community and evangelization.[24] To bring about justice, however, it is not enough to change political structures; people need to be authentically converted to the kingdom values and ethics.

ECCLESIOGENESIS: A NEW ECCLESIOLOGY

Out of the liberation theologies' struggle for freedom, justice, and economic sharing arose a new type of ecclesiological experimentation that has contributed to the renewal of the church in Latin America, namely, the base communities or Basic Ecclesial Communities (BECs).[25]

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[22]"Justice in the World Synod of Catholic Bishops, 1971," #6 (emphasis added), accessed June 22, 2020, www.cctwincities.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Justicia-in-Mundo.pdf.

[23]"Justice in the World Synod of Catholic Bishops, 1971," #34.

[24]*The Church in the Present-Day Transformation of Latin America in the Light of the Council: Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, Medellín, August 26-September 6, 1968*, vol. 2, *Conclusions* (Washington, DC: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1968), esp. chaps. 1, 14, 15.

[25]For a detailed history and emergence of Basic Ecclesial Communities, see Guillermo Cook, *The Expectation of the Poor: Latin American Basic Ecclesial Communities in Protestant Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985), 11-85. For the nature and life of BECs (apart from sources cited below), see Marcello de Carvalho Azevedo, *Basic Ecclesial Communities in Brazil: The Challenge of a New Way of Being Church* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1987); Edward L. Cleary, *How Latin America Saved the*

> Slowly, but with ever-increasing intensity, we have witnessed the creation of communities in which persons actually know and recognize one another, where they can be themselves in their individuality, where they can "have their say," where they can be welcomed by name. And so, we see, groups and little communities have sprung up everywhere. This phenomenon exists in the church, as well: grassroots Christian communities, as they are known, or basic church communities.[26]

The birth and rise of the BECs was a reaction to the institutional crisis of the Roman Catholic Church having to do not least with the availability of priests; furthermore, as discussed, the Catholic Church until Vatican II and even after tended to be hierarchical and fixed without a needed sensitivity to local needs and challenges on that diverse continent.[27] The term *base* means the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized. These communities, in which lay leadership and lay ministries have taken on a new significance, represent a grassroots cry from the marginalized, the oppressed, and those without voice in the church. According to Leonardo Boff, one of the leading liberationists, these communities "deserve to be contemplated, welcomed, and respected as salvific events."[28] The preaching of the gospel, good news to the poor, kindles in the poor the fire of hope and transforms their lives. The BECs are an expression of and reaction to the desperate lack of community in society in general and in the church.[29]

Ecclesiologically, however, it would be too simplified to say that these new Christian communities are only a sociological response to some felt needs in society or the church. The BECs are "not dealing with the expansion of an existing ecclesial system, rotating on a sacramental, clerical axis, but with the emergence of another form of being church, rotating on the axis of the word and the laity."[30] Indeed, BEC theologians argue that these Christian communities represent more than just renewal movements of the church and bear more than a few legitimate ecclesial elements. They argue for the ecclesiality of the communities within the larger church, the Roman Catholic Church. These communities represent a "new

Soul of the Catholic Church (New York: Paulist Press, 2009); Sergio Torres and John Eagleson, eds., *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1981).

[26]Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986), 1.

[27]Leonardo Boff, *Church: Charism and Power; Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, trans. John W. Diercksmeier (New York: Crossroad, 1985). While originating in Latin America, BECs are not limited to that continent. Notwithstanding the lack of fixed terminology, similar kinds of Catholic communities can be found, for example, in Africa; see Haight, *Christian Community in History*, 2:417-19.

[28]See Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis*, 1.

[29]Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis*, 1.

[30]Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis*, 2.

ecclesiology," new formulations in the theology of the church.[31] It is very important to keep in mind that "base communities are not rival churches. Members of these communities have not left the church. They emphasize the gospel, liberation and conscientization, de-clericalization, and a preferential option for the poor."[32]

Not only do the base communities argue for the ecclesiality of the church. They also argue for a specific type of ecclesiality, namely, the birthing of the church community "from below," from the people of God. In their interpretation of the Gospels, Jesus' whole preaching could be summarized as an invitation for both vertical and horizontal communion, relationship both with God and with fellow men and women. That also makes the church apostolic: "The church sprung from the people is the same as the church sprung from the apostles."[33] Very importantly, the Medellín Conference (1968) acknowledged the foundational, initial churchly nature of base communities:

> Thus the Christian base community is the *first and fundamental ecclesiastical nucleus*, which on its own level must make itself responsible for the richness and expansion of the faith, as well as of the cult which is its expression. This community becomes then the *initial cell* of the ecclesiastical structures and the focus of evangelization, and it currently serves as the most important source of human advancement and development. The essential element for the existence of Christian base communities are their leaders or directors. These can be priest, deacons, men or women religious, or laymen.[34]

This is a surprising Catholic statement, truly an affirmation of the "Grassroots Church."[35] Understandably, one pressing question for the BECs in Latin America is the desperate lack of ordained priests. Is it possible to affirm the ecclesiality without a consecrated minister? The BECs' theology of the church once again takes its point of departure from ecclesiology "from below." If the church abides and is founded on the people of God as they continue to come together, convoked by the word of God and the discipleship of Jesus Christ, then the existence of an ordained minister cannot be seen as a necessary prerequisite

[31]Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis*, 2.
[32]Maldonado, "Liberation Ecclesiologies," 584.
[33]Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis*, 7 (emphasis removed from original).
[34]*The Church in the Present-Day Transformation*, 2:10-11, as quoted in Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis*, 15 (emphases Boff's).
[35]See further, Leonardo Boff, "Theological Characteristics of a Grassroots Church," in Torres and Eagleson, *Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, 124-44.

for being the church. On the contrary, the priest participates in the church in these communities.

In the Latin American context, the BECs have not limited the focus of their liberating work to the poor but also speak against the oppression of women.[36] Several BEC theologians openly question the denial of ordination of women in the Roman Catholic Church.[37] They argue that limiting the ministry only to male members of the church is yet another means of oppression. That kind of exclusivism also goes against the teaching and attitude of Jesus, who welcomed all regardless of their sex, status, or class. The main purpose of the BECs, therefore, is to live out that kind of open and inclusive community life that does not erect any kind of social, political, religious, or other boundaries but affirms the value of all people, especially the rejected and oppressed.

Notwithstanding all the contributions and progress, even at the time of this writing after a half century of experiments, the BECs' ecclesiology is still in the making, far from a finished task.[38] It is yet to be seen what its long-lasting effect and form will be.

THE "PENTECOSTALIZATION" OF LATIN AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY

No account of church life and ecclesiology in Latin America dares ignore the continuous rapid growth and massive presence of Pentecostal/charismatic movements and the wide Pentecostalization not only of the Roman Catholic Church but also of Protestantism.[39] Most of church growth does not take place in mainstream Protestant churches but rather in small and diverse local communities, many of them independent and almost all either Pentecostal or Pentecostal-type.[40] Furthermore, evangelical communities are growing and

[36]See further, Cora Ferro, "The Latin American Woman: The Praxis and Theology of Liberation," in Torres and Eagleson, *The Challenge of Basic Christian Communities*, 24-37.

[37]Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis*, 76-98.

[38]A fascinating study of the relationship between BECs and the emerging New Testament Christology and ecclesiology is Carlos Sosa Siliezar, "Ecclesiology in Latin America: A Biblical Perspective," in *Majority World Theology*, ed. Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic), 537-50.

[39]For recent statistics and assessments, see the ambitious Pew Research Center report: David Masci, "Why Has Pentecostalism Grown so Dramatically in Latin America?," *Fact Tank*, Pew Research Center, November 14, 2014, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/11/14/why-has-pentecostalism-grown-so-dramatically-in-latin-america. Consult also David Snyder, "The Growing Protestant Presence in Latin America," *Panoramas*, January 11, 2017, www.panoramas.pitt.edu/art-and-culture/growing-protestant-presence-latin-america.

[40]Virginia Garrard-Burnett, "'Like a Mighty Rushing Wind': The Growth of Protestantism in Contemporary Latin America," in *Religion and Society in Latin America: Interpretive Essays from Conquest to*

currently represent the "mainstream" among non-Catholics. In 2009, it was found that "nearly 40% of the world's Pentecostals are estimated to live in Latin America. The vast majority of them had been Catholic."[41] Previously considered a foreign religion, currently "Pentecostalism appeals to the religious impulses found among indigenous and African peoples. It is heavily inculturated. Pentecostalism understands itself as a church where one encounters the Spirit of God, a spirit-filled community grounded in the theology of the early church."[42]

Particularly pertinent to the current chapter, which seeks to discern churches' efforts for social concern, economic justice, and equality of all, is the emerging social consciousness and a legacy of grassroots activities among diverse Pentecostal communities all over Latin America.[43]

> African and Latin American Christians are people for whom the New Testament Beatitudes have a direct relevance inconceivable for most Christians in Northern societies. When Jesus told the "poor" they were blessed, the word used does not imply relative deprivation, it means total poverty, or destitution. The great majority of Southern Christians (and increasingly of all Christians) really are the poor, the hungry, the persecuted, even the dehumanized. India has a perfect translation for Jesus' word in the term *Dalit*, literally "crushed" or "oppressed."[44]

A growing number of testimonies and reports concerning Pentecostal action for alleviating poverty and combating injustice are emerging from various

Present, ed. Lee M. Penyak and Walter J. Perry (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009), 190-206; and David Martin, *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1990).

[41]Cleary, *How Latin America Saved the Soul of the Catholic Church*, 1.

[42]Maldonado, "Liberation Ecclesiologies," 589. Similarly, e.g., E. A. Wilson, "Latin America (Survey)," in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, rev. and expanded ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 157; this survey provides a meticulous country-by-country look at Pentecostalism with statistics and bibliography (pp. 157-67).

[43]Two formative Pentecostal contributions to social concern and ethics are Douglas Petersen, *Not by Might nor by Power: A Pentecostal Theology of Social Concern in Latin America* (Oxford: Regnum, 1996); and Eldin Villafañe, *The Liberating Spirit: Toward an Hispanic American Pentecostal Social Ethic* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993). See also the important discussion in Miroslav Volf, "Materiality of Salvation: An Investigation in the Soteriologies of Liberation and Pentecostal Theologies," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 26 (1989): 447-67. Also highly useful is Luis N. Rivera-Pagán, "Pentecostal Transformation in Latin America," in *Twentieth-Century Global Christianity*, ed. Mary Farrell Bednarowski (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 190-210. An excellent discussion by sociologists of religion is Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

[44]Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*, 1st ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 216.

contexts in South America, including Brazil, Colombia, Chile, and Peru.[45] The theological motivation behind these impulses is well summarized by American Pentecostal Doug Peterson, who has labored in the area of social concern in various locations in South America for decades:

> Pentecostals are exceptionally optimistic about both their present and future existence. Their theological conviction that the God who performed mighty works in the New Testament continues to act in miraculous ways through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit provides the great majority of Pentecostal believers with a sense of hope for the present. . . . It is quite clear that the eschatological certainty of eternal life gives freedom to risk one's present life. The Pentecostals' personal relationship with a caring and compassionate God encourages them also to celebrate their experience of transformation in the present within a community of mutual love and respect.[46]

[45]For bibliographical resources in this paragraph I am indebted to Richard E. Waldrop, "Pentecostals and the Poor: Introductory Observations for Our Dialog" (paper presented to the International Lutheran-Pentecostal Dialogue, Casa de Retiro San Francisco Javier, Santiago, Chile, October 8-11, 2018). For Brazil: R. Andrew Chestnut, *Born Again in Brazil: The Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997); and Cecília Loreto Mariz, *Coping with Poverty: Pentecostals and Christian Base Communities in Brazil* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994). For Colombia: Rebecca Pierce Bomann, *Faith in the Barrios: The Pentecostal Poor in Bogotá* (Boulder, CO: Rienner, 1999). For Chile: Frans H. Kamsteeg, *Prophetic Pentecostalism in Chile: A Case Study on Religion and Development Policy* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow, 1998). For Peru: Darío López Rodríguez, "Evangelicals and Politics in Fujimori's Peru," in *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Latin America*, ed. Paul Freston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 131-62.

[46]Petersen, *Not by Might*, 107-8. See further V.-M. Kärkkäinen, "Are Pentecostals Oblivious to Social Justice? Theological and Ecumenical Perspectives," *Missiology: An International Review* 29, no. 4 (October 2001): 417-31.

9

THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL CONTEXT AND CONDITIONS IN AFRICA

THE AFRICAN CONTEXT

Not for nothing did Andrew Walls, the senior theological expert on all things African, about two decades ago claim that "anyone who wishes to undertake serious study of Christianity these days needs to know something about Africa."[1] But can anything general be said about the African worldview as a foreword to studying the nature and identity of Christian communities in the midst of literally thousands of ethnic groups and languages? Just think of the size and complexity of the myriads of cultural, social, political, and religious contexts. In the words of senior female theologian Mercy Amba Oduyoye of Ghana:

> Writing about Africa is a hazardous enterprise. One needs to draw up many parameters and make explicit the extent of the study. This becomes even more difficult considering the subject in hand. Whose experience of God are we dealing with? What is the extent of the Africa we are talking about?[2]

Nowithstanding the utter complexity of the task, it seems safe to list the following kinds of features routinely assigned to diverse African contexts:[3]

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[1]Andrew F. Walls, "Eusebius Tries Again: Reconceiving the Study of Christian History," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 24, no. 3 (2000): 106.

[2]Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "The African Experience of God Through the Eyes of an Akan Woman," *Cross Currents* 47, no. 4 (1997/98): 493, www.crosscurrents.org/african.htm. See also her important contribution, idem, *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986).

[3]In addition to specific references, for this section I have gleaned from Tokunboh Adeyemo, "Unapproachable God: The High God of African Traditional Religion," in *The Global God: Multicultural*

- Perhaps the most common characteristic of the African worldview (as well as much of Asian and Hispanic cultures) is that religion permeates all of life. In the words of John S. Mbiti: "There is no formal distinction between the sacred and the secular, between the religious and nonreligious, and between the spiritual and material areas of life."[4] Illustrative of this integral link between religion and the rest of life and the cosmos is the Kenyan-based Nigerian Jesuit priest A. E. Orobator's recital of a modern East African prayer:

  > Glory be to the Father, the Creator and Source,
  > To the Nursing Mother, to Jesus, the Healer and Eldest Brother,
  > And to the Unsurpassed Great Spirit.
  > Amen.[5]

- The world of the spirits is as real as the visible world. The visible world is thought to be permeated and influenced by the invisible world of spirits and powers.[6]
- The African focus on the order of creation reflects a sense of harmony and well-being as manifested also in the seasons of nature as well as of human life.
- Life and world are believed to be governed by God, the ancestors, and (other) spirits.[7] There is a hierarchy of beings, from God to angels and powers to ancestors.
- All that said, somewhat counterintuitively to many, a this-worldly orientation is in the forefront of African mind. Although it does not of course exclude in any way the other-world reality, main attention is given to communal and personal well-being—the two realms being integrally connected.[8]

Evangelical Views of God, ed. Aída Besançon Spencer and William David Spencer (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 127-45; and William Dyrness, *Learning About Theology from the Third World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), chap. 2. This section also draws from Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God: A Global Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 168-71.

[4]John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 2.

[5]Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008), 26.

[6]For a highly useful discussion of this and related issues, see Cyril Okorocha, "The Meaning of Salvation: An African Perspective," in *Emerging Voices in Global Christian Theology*, ed. William A. Dyrness (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 59-92.

[7]See further the study of a large number of African cultures, all of which have a sense of the divine presence and governance in one way or another: John S. Mbiti, *Concepts of God in Africa*, new ed. (London: SPCK, 1998); see also Charles E. Fuller, "God of African Thought and Life," in *God in Contemporary Thought: A Philosophical Perspective*, ed. Sebastian A. Matczak (New York: Learned Publications, 1977), 19-47.

[8]See Cyril C. Okorocha, "Religious Conversion in Africa: Its Missiological Implications," *Mission Studies* 9, no. 1 (1992): 168-81.

Complicating the study of African theology in general and ecclesiology in particular, much of the theology is in oral form and in sources other than typical written theological treatises. This does not mean that Africans are necessarily less "theological" about their faith; they merely employ different forms of theologizing.[9] Stories, songs, dramas, dreams, and other nonconventional sources might serve African ways of doing theology very well, although they are suspect in Western academia.[10] Another distinctive feature of the context for God-talk in Africa is the tension between the persistent and growing influence of traditional religious beliefs and the conservative, often fundamentalist, versions of Christianity brought by many Western missionaries.[11]

AFRICAN REFORMATION

Africa has currently more Christians than any other continent.[12] This fact alone should alert us to the importance of ecclesiological visions and experiences originating from this huge and diverse continent.[13] Particularly visible and influential to the rest of the global church is the massive flux of African migrants into the Global North and beyond.[14]

The two main catalysts for the rapid growth of Christianity in the southern hemisphere are African Independent Churches (AICs) and various groups related to Pentecostal/charismatic movements.[15] Furthermore, Africa also houses the world's largest Lutheran church, Mekane Yesus of Ethiopia, with over eight million followers at the time of this writing. In addition, Africa is one of the Roman Catholic strongholds, as will be discussed below.[16]

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[9]For a useful discussion on "theological method" in Africa, see John Parratt, *Reinventing Christianity: African Theology Today* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), esp. chap. 2.

[10]See further Joseph Healey and Donald Sybertz, *Towards an African Narrative Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), esp. chap. 1.

[11]Highly useful discussions are E. Bolaji Idowu, "Introduction" and "God," in *Biblical Revelation and African Beliefs*, ed. Kwesi A. Dickson and Paul Ellingworth (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1969), 9-16, 17-29, respectively.

[12]The title of this section comes from Allan H. Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the Twentieth Century* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2000).

[13]Defining works are Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Africa: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995); and Ogbu U. Kalu, ed., *African Christianity: An African Story* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2007).

[14]Frieder Ludwig and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, eds., *African Christian Presence in the West: New Immigrant Congregations and Transnational Networks in North America and Europe* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2011).

[15]Walter J. Hollenweger, foreword to *African Initiatives in Christianity: The Growth, Gifts and Diversities of Indigenous African Churches—A Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. John S. Pobee and Gabriel Ositelu II (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998).

[16]See "The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus," Lutheran World Federation, accessed June 23, 2020, www.lutheranworld.org/content/ethiopian-evangelical-church-mekane-yesus.

The Christian church is no newcomer to Africa[17]—just think of some early church fathers from Tertullian to Augustine and beyond, who prominently helped shape theological tradition.[18] Routinely, the historical development of the church in Africa is presented in five stages:

1. The early church period up until the fifth century, with a strong presence in Africa.
2. The significant growth period during the second part of the first millennium and beyond, culminating with the emergence of the Holy Roman Empire, including the schism between the church of the Christian East and West in 1054. This period saw the birth and rise of Islam and its conquest of some former Christian regions such as North Africa.
3. Attempts by the Christians in Europe to evangelize Africa with very meager results during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the subsequent slave trade, often aligned with missions until the nineteenth century.
4. The heyday of the modern missionary movement and its alignment with colonialism, which resulted in unprecedented Christianization of Africa beginning from the second part of the nineteenth century.
5. The present stage reckoned from the mid-twentieth century, beginning from the gaining of independence by a number of African countries.[19]

Before advancing too hastily in the task of providing a neat exposition of African ecclesiology, one does well to heed the warning by a leading contemporary American-based African scholar Stan Chu Ilo, who says bluntly that "one cannot define an African ecclesiology"; rather, what suffices is "to describe the nature of churches in Africa and show how they are distinct from other forms of the church outside Africa." Or to put it another way: "The emergence of systematic theologies of the church in Africa is a very recent development, emerging

[17]Unparalleled and the most authoritative history of the African church is Bengt Sundkler and Christopher Steed, *A History of the Church in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). Also useful are Elizabeth Allo Isichei, *A History of Christianity in Africa: From Antiquity to the Present* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995); and John Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African Church History*, 2nd ed. (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2009).

[18]For a fine account of the many ways the church in Africa contributed to the universal church particularly during the formative centuries of the development of the spiritual, literary, and intellectual spheres of Christianity, see Thomas C. Oden, *How Africa Shaped the Christian Mind: Rediscovering the African Seedbed of Western Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 42-59.

[19]Steve de Gruchy and Sophie Chirongoma, "Earth, Water, Fire and Wind: Elements of African Ecclesiologies," in *RCCC*, 291-92; and Stan Chu Ilo, "African Ecclesiologies," in *OHE*, 626.

especially since Vatican II; but the history of the church in Africa is very old, going back to the time of the flight of Jesus to Egypt."[20]

A LIVED *KOINONIA*

If any features among diverse African cultures are virtually universal, they have to do with communality, togetherness—*koinonia* (communion), to use the biblical terminology: "The concept of *koinonia* is fundamental in understanding the ecclesiology of the AICs, mainly because the sense of community is the sine qua non in understanding African societies. Communal living is the way to promote and maintain the general well-being of the individual and of society in general."[21] This mindset reflects the deeply rooted African conviction that only in community do people find the meaning of life.[22] "Communal living is the way to promote and maintain the well-being of the individual and of society."[23]

> If I gain my humanity by entering into a relationship with other members of the family, both living and dead, then it follows that my humanity comes to me as a gift. This does not mean to say that it is not mine, that my being is part of the group, so that I have no individual value and destiny. It means rather that it is not something that I can acquire, or develop, by my own isolated power. I can only exercise or fulfill my humanity as long as I remain in touch with others, *for it is they who empower me*.[24]

Perhaps no one else has put it as succinctly as John Mbiti, citing an African proverb, "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am."[25] Some have therefore proposed that maybe the clan, rather than any Western type of structure, might be the appropriate model for ecclesiological being in the African context. When understood as a clan, the church communion displays values at the heart of the biblical idea of *koinonia* and traditional African cultures:

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[20]Ilo, "African Ecclesiologies," 619, 623-24, respectively. Similarly, Benezet Bujo, "On the Road Toward an African Ecclesiology," in *The African Synod: Documents, Reflections, Perspectives*, ed. Maura Browne (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 139-51.

[21]Cephas N. Omenyo, "Essential Aspects of African Ecclesiology: The Case of the African Independent Churches," *Pneuma* 22, no. 2 (2000): 235-36. That he speaks specifically of African Instituted Churches does in no way limit the principle to one church tradition as it is a universal African cultural characteristic.

[22]See further, Daniel J. Antwi, "Sense of Community: An African Perspective of the Church as *Koinonia*," *Trinity Journal of Church and Theology* 6, no. 1 (1996): 5-11.

[23]Omenyo, "Essential Aspects of African Ecclesiology," 236.

[24]Omenyo, "Essential Aspects of African Ecclesiology," 236, attributing the quote to Kofi Asare Opoku (without giving full bibliographic information for me to be able to trace the original source).

[25]Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 106.

> Hospitality and fraternity, a sense of belonging, participation and fellowship, and the common (clan) ownership of property are all features of traditional African communal life. Everyone has a role in contributing to the welfare of other members of the clan and there is no distinction between "public" and "private" spheres.[26]

A distinctively African way of speaking of communion in a comprehensive and integral sense uses the term *ubuntu*.[27] From its original meaning of "humanity" and "humanness" comes the idea that one cannot be a fully human person in isolation; rather, belonging, togetherness, and community are essential aspects of life. To again cite Mbiti, "Whatever happens to the individual happens to the whole group, and whatever happens to the whole group happens to the individual."[28] As with most any other assets, it can be used for constructive or destructive purposes: "Healthy *ubuntu* can bind people together across the borders of race, colour and gender. Unfortunately, there is also another side to *ubuntu*. When *ubuntu* extends only to the members of a particular group, it leads to xenophobia, nepotism and distrust of anybody outside that group."[29]

Alongside *koinonia*, another ancient Christian concept, that of *perichoresis* (mutual interpenetration), originally a trinitarian term, aptly speaks to the same togetherness, relatedness. All three concepts mean to say that it is

> in a relationship an African realises a different part of himself or herself. So the life of an African is within a context of interacting with forces visible and invisible and continues to make relationships whatever he or she becomes.
>
> When an African is hospitable and accommodating those who are in need and begins to form a relationship within the context of a community, then an individual becomes fully a person.[30]

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[26]Paul J. Sankey, "The Church as Clan: Critical Reflections on African Ecclesiology," *International Review of Mission* 83, no. 330 (July 1994): 440.

[27]Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (New York: Seabury, 2009).

[28]Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy*, 106.

[29]Gert Breed and Kwena Semeneya, "*Ubuntu*, *Koinonia* and *Diakonia*, a Way to Reconciliation in South Africa?," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*, 71, no. 2 (2015): art. #2979, www.scielo.org.za/pdf/hts/v71n2/23.pdf, citing J. H. Smith, M. Deacon, and A. Schutte, *Ubuntuin Christian Perspective* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University Press, 1999), 12.

[30]Jele S. Manganyi and Johan Buitendag, "Perichoresis and Ubuntu Within the African Christian Context," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 73, no. 3 (2017): a4372, www.scielo.org.za/pdf/hts/v73n3/63.pdf, making a reference to Augustine Shutte, *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2001), esp. 23-24.

It is no coincidence that the concept of *ubuntu* has been cherished and developed by some African theologians and ministers in the midst of racial, political, and civil conflicts. Of course, the most well known is the Anglican bishop Desmond Tutu, to whom it formed the center of the work of reconciliation.[31]

THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN AFRICA

One of the strongholds of the world's largest Christian community, the Roman Catholic Church, can be found in Africa. Prior to Paul VI's famous and highly influential visit to the continent in 1969—the first visit of a pope in modern history—he had issued an important encyclical titled *Africae Terrarum* (1967) in which he affirmed the importance of African Christianity in its own unique context. While this does not sound so revolutionary to our ears, it was something new and novel—and in keeping with the reforms of Vatican II.[32] John Paul II's apostolic exhortation *Ecclesia in Africa* (The Church in Africa or The African Church) acknowledged a number of challenges and obstacles to the maturation of the church on that continent but also readily acknowledged its rapid growth as well as the positive influence of the African cultural context on faith.[33] In the same spirit, the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Africae Munus* by Benedict XVI in 2011 opens with the celebration of "Africa's commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ," describing it as "a precious treasure."[34]

Despite a massive presence on African soil, the Roman Catholic Church still faces the continuing challenge of inculturation, in search of an authentic African form for living as the Church of Christ—a challenge not unique to that church, however.

> In spite of this growth in numbers, African Christianity and African theologies have not been accorded their rightful place in world Christianity. The challenge for theology in African Christianity is how to listen to what God is saying to Africa in the current Christian expansion in sub-Saharan Africa. Added to this is to discover

[31]Michael Battle, *Reconciliation: The Ubuntu Theology of Desmond Tutu* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2009).
[32]For details, see Ilo, "African Ecclesiologies," 616-17. (I was not able to find the English translation of the encyclical even on the official Vatican website.)
[33]John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa* (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation to . . . the Church in Africa), September 14, 1995, www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_14091995_ecclesia-in-africa.html. For the appreciation of African culture's relationship to faith, see particularly ##42-43.
[34]Benedict XVI, *Africae Munus* (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation . . . on the Church in Africa), November 19, 2011, #1, www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20111119_africae-munus.html.

how to valorize the agency of African Christians in their buoyant religio-cultural spirituality in bringing about an ecclesial life which meets the spiritual and material hunger of Africans.[35]

AFRICAN INITIATED CHURCHES: A FORM OF INDIGENOUS ECCLESIOLOGY

Alongside the established churches and independent Pentecostal communities, the third major form of African Christianity is the complex and complicated family of African Initiated Churches.[36] The acronym AIC stands for several interrelated and often interchangeable titles: African Indigenous Churches, African Initiated Churches, or African Independent Churches.[37] Bengt Sundkler's *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*, published in 1948, was one of the first monographs to deal systematically with what we know today as the African Independent Churches.[38] Regardless of the nomenclature, these diverse movements are no longer newcomers. Similarly to Pentecostal/charismatic movements with which they have some affinity, they have been in existence now for over a century and have grown to tens of millions (a clear count, however, is very difficult to establish).[39]

Among the AICs, notwithstanding a great diversity and differences of emphases, charismatic evidence of the Spirit is typically more prominent and inclusive than

[35]Ilo, "African Ecclesiologies," 620. See also Stan Chu Ilo, Joseph Ogbonnaya, and Alex Ojacor, eds., *The Church as Salt and Light: Path to an African Ecclesiology of Abundant Life* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011); and Cecil McGarry and Patrick Ryan, eds., *Inculturating the Church in Africa: Theological and Practical Perspectives* (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2001). An interesting attempt toward inculturation by a senior Catholic theologian is Charles Nyamiti, *Christ's Ancestral Mediation Through the Church Understood as God's Family: An Essay on African Ecclesiology*, Studies in African Christian Theology 4 (Nairobi: CUEA Press, 2010).

[36]For a roughly similar kind of map of African churches, see Stephanie A. Lowery, "Ecclesiology in Africa: Apprentices on a Mission," in *The Church from Every Tribe and Tongue: Ecclesiology in the Majority World*, ed. Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Global Library, 2018), 74-92.

[37]For a brief description, see J. S. Pobee, "African Instituted (Independent) Churches," in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Nicholas Lossky et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 10-12; and Allan H. Anderson, "African Initiated Churches," in *Global Dictionary of Theology*, ed. William A. Dyrness and Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 5-7. For a wider discussion, consult Allen H. Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost: The Spirituality and Experience of Pentecostal and Zionist/Apostolic Churches in South Africa* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2000); and Rufus Okikiolaolu Olubiyi Ositelu, *African Instituted Churches: Diversities, Growth, Gifts, Spirituality and Ecumenical Understanding of African Initiated Churches* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2002).

[38]See further Stephen Hayes, "African Independent Churches: Judgement Through Terminology," *Missionalia* 20, no. 2 (1992): 139-46; and Paul Makhubu, *Who Are the Independent Churches?* (Johannesburg: Skotaville, 1998), 1.

[39]See Omenyo, "Essential Aspects of African Ecclesiology," 231-48.

in the older churches.[40] Healing and exorcism play an integral role in worship life and spirituality. AICs also distinguish themselves from most other communities in many other ways: "These indigenous churches usually involve a focus on prophetic and charismatic leadership, special dress code, rituals, song and dancing, and varied responses to traditional culture such as polygamy, ancestor veneration, food rules and healing practices."[41] Creative in their imagination, AICs have constructed a number of images and metaphors for the church, including the following: "Mt. Zion," "Where the Spirit Dwells," "Diverse Gifts—One Spirit," "Place of Power to Protect and Heal," and "Disciplined Community," among others.[42]

One of the differences between Western churches and the AICs grows out of the distinctive worldview prevalent among various African-based cultures. On the basis of their alternative worldview, Africans see spiritual and physical beings as real entities that interact with each other in time and space. African Christians reject both the secularist worldview and missionaries' Western conceptions of reality and spirit. Orthodoxy has left Christians helpless in real life, and so an alternative pneumatology has been needed that relates to the whole range of needs that includes the spiritual but is not limited to abstract otherworldly spiritual needs.[43] African religions in general, Christianity included, serve existential needs and relate to everyday issues more than their Western counterparts do. "Religion is expected to make life worth living, to maintain it and protect against illness, enemies, and death."[44] As Turner rightly observes,

> It is the independents who help us to see the overriding African concern for spiritual power from a mighty God to overcome all enemies and evils that threaten human life and vitality, hence their extensive ministry of mental and physical healing. This is rather different from the Western preoccupation with atonement for sin and forgiveness of guilt.[45]

[40]See the important discussions in M. L. Daneel, "African Independent Church Pneumatology and the Salvation of All Creation," in *All Together in One Place: Theological Papers from the Brighton Conference on World Evangelization*, ed. Harold D. Hunter and Peter D. Hocken (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1993), 96-126; and Allan H. Anderson, "African Initiated Churches of the Spirit and Pneumatology," *Word & World* 23, no. 2 (2003): 178-86.

[41]De Gruchy and Chirongoma, "Earth, Water, Fire and Wind," 299.

[42]Norman E. Thomas, "Images of Church and Mission in African Independent Churches," *Missiology: An International Review* 23, no. 1 (1995): 17-29.

[43]Derek B. Mutungu, "A Response to M. L. Daneel," in Hunter and Hocken, *All Together in One Place*, 127-31.

[44]Omenyo, "Essential Aspects of African Ecclesiology," 243.

[45]Harold W. Turner, *Religious Innovation in Africa: Collected Essays on New Religious Movements* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979), 210.

Allan H. Anderson has provided a typology of these churches based on their distinctive ecclesiological features:

1. "Ethiopian" and "African" churches make no claim for special charismatic manifestations or message. These represent older movements and typically originate from a stark reaction to European mission-founded churches.
2. "Prophet-Healing" and "Spiritual" churches, having their roots in Pentecostalism, claim charismatic endowments and powers.
3. "New Pentecostal" churches, to be distinguished from the former category, denote those more recent Pentecostal-type movements with emphasis on the power of the Spirit. They have arisen from both the European mission-founded churches and from the prophet-healing churches. These communities are often cautious about some traditional African practices.[46]

Of the many distinctive features of the AICs, perhaps the most visible is the strong emphasis on the Holy Spirit and pneumatology.[47] M. L. Daneel, from the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, has offered a contemporary picture of this uniquely comprehensive and world-embracing pneumatological vision. These genuinely African-based traditions envision the work of the Holy Spirit in four interrelated domains:

- the Spirit as the Savior of humankind
- the Spirit as the Healer and Protector
- the Spirit as the Liberator and Establisher of Justice
- the Spirit as Earthkeeper

Clearly, these roles reveal an emphasis on the this-worldly dimension of the Spirit's work, despite a strong evangelistic orientation. Yet the cosmic dimension of the Spirit's work is not set over against the Spirit's role in personal salvation.[48]

Understandably, these communities have elicited various reactions, from harsh judgments of heresy to cautious assessment to warm embrace. Be that as it may, there is no denying their great attraction across the African continent among various tribes and people groups and these believers' enthusiasm to rediscover what they consider authentic forms of Christianity. The AICs have the

[46]Allan H. Anderson, "Pluriformity and Contextuality in African Initiated Churches," n.p., accessed July 7, 2020, www.scribd.com/document/178133651/Allan-Anderson-pluriformity-and-Contextuality-in-African.
[47]See Allan H. Anderson, *Moya: The Holy Spirit in an African Perspective* (Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 1994).
[48]Daneel, "African Independent Church Pneumatology."

potential of embodying a type of Christian spirituality and faith that does not merely contextualize some superficial elements of Western interpretation of Christianity but rather represents a legitimate version of Christian faith, a non-Western religion, that has taken root in the distinctive heritage of that continent. Being rooted in African soil, the theological mode of the AICs is different from their Western counterparts; theirs is the oral and narrative style also so prevalent elsewhere outside the West.

THE "PENTECOSTALIZATION" OF AFRICAN CHURCHES

Although the rise of Pentecostal/charismatic movements globally and in Africa has been duly noted,[49] it does not suffice to mention only that. A significant factor, related theologically, ecclesiologically, and pastorally, is the wide and deep influence of Pentecostal-type spirituality for the rest of Christianity, particularly in Africa, albeit of course not limited to that continent. Especially when we think of the affinity between Pentecostalism and the AICs—even though their mutual relationship is also plagued at times by suspicion, competition, and even opposition—the process of the "Pentecostalization" of African Christian communities gains even more significance.[50] This means that even those churches that do not identify themselves formally with Pentecostal/charismatic movements often reflect spirituality associated with those movements.

Similarly to the AICs, a major attraction of Pentecostalism in the African context has been its emphasis on healing and exorcism. In these cultures, the religious specialist or "person of God" has power to heal the sick and ward off evil spirits and sorcery. This holistic function, which does not separate the physical from the spiritual, is restored in Pentecostalism, and indigenous peoples see it as a "powerful" religion to meet human needs. For some Pentecostals, faith in God's power to heal directly through prayer resulted in a rejection of other methods of healing.[51] Theological observers of Pentecostalism have rightly noted that these movements have successfully integrated into their spirituality local customs and

[49] In addition to resources listed in the chapter on Pentecostalism, note the following: Ogbu Kalu, *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[50] Allan H. Anderson, "African Independent Churches and Global Pentecostalism: Historical Connections and Common Identities," in *African Identities and World Christianity in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Klaus Koschorke (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2005), 63-76.

[51] Allan H. Anderson, "The Pentecostal Gospel, Religion and Culture in African Perspective," accessed June 23, 2020, www.slideshare.net/ipermaster/allan-anderson-the-pentecostal-gospel-religion-and-culture.

rituals, including the importance of the spirit world. Pentecostals respond to the felt need of men and women in proclaiming a holistic gospel of salvation that includes deliverance from sickness, sorcery, evil spirits, and poverty.

> All the widely differing Pentecostal movements have important common features: they proclaim and celebrate a salvation (or "healing") that encompasses all of life's experiences and afflictions, and they offer an empowerment that provides a sense of dignity and a coping mechanism for life.[52]

No doubt, this desire to embrace spirituality that is inclusive of all of life's problems helps explain the rapid growth and appeal of Pentecostalism in Africa and beyond.

[52]Allan H. Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 212.

10

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES ON ASIAN SOIL

THE ASIAN CONTEXT

To speak of Asia as one entity is a precarious choice.[1] A continent with more than half the world's population, a myriad of cultures and religions, and a diversity of political systems, escapes any neat categorization. The "Asian context can be described as a blend of a profound religiosity (which is perhaps Asia's greatest wealth) and an overwhelming poverty."[2] Asian religiosity is rich and variegated, and most living faiths owe their origin to that context.[3] The continent's size alone is simply mind-boggling. In the words of the Chinese American postcolonial feminist Kwok Pui-lan:

> More than half of the world's population live in Asia, a multicultural and multireligious continent that has undergone tremendous transformation during the past several decades. From Japan to Indonesia, and from the Philippines to Central Asia, people live in different socio-political realities and divergent cultural worlds. Divided into at least seven linguistic zones, Asia is also the birthplace of the major historical religions of humankind. For centuries, Asian people lived under the heavy yoke of the Portuguese, Spanish, British, French, Dutch, American and Japanese colonial powers. After World War II, many Asian peoples regained their

[1]This section regarding "The Asian Context" draws from Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God: A Global Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 185-89.
[2]Aloysius Pieris, "Western Christianity and Asian Buddhism: A Theological Reading of Historical Encounters," *Dialogue* 7 (May-August 1980): 61-62.
[3]Zhihua Yao, "In the Power of the Spirit," *Tripod* 16, no. 91 (1996): 28.

> independence, but the search for their national and cultural identities continues into the present.[4]

In Asia, modernization and cultural heritage meet in a manner only comparable to the African continent. Indeed, we could speak of "multiple Asias" in which "the waterbuffalo and the skyscraper" stand next to each other, with masses of the world's poorest and uneducated, even illiterate, people and some of the richest and most luxurious cities of the globe.[5]

Similarly to Africa, religion in Asia touches all aspects of life. In contrast to the Western modernist dualism of the sacred and the secular, religion is an irreducible part of all of life. Notwithstanding rapid developments in technology and education, Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Islam, and a host of other religions—most of them manifested in forms that used to be called "animistic" (having to do with spirits)—permeate all of life. As much as in Africa, "the spirit-world is alive and is doing well in Asia."[6] One of the defining differences between Asians and people in the Global North is that for the former the cosmos is "spirited" (another commonality with Africans). The distinction between "material" and "spiritual" is far less categorical for the Asian mindset. In stark contrast to post-Enlightenment Europe and North America, what is spiritual is primary while the material is secondary.

What about Christian theology? Only in recent times have distinctively Asian Christian theologies begun to emerge on a wider scale even though, ironically, "it was on a hill in Asia, at the far western edge of the continent, that Jesus said to his disciples, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel' (Mark 16:15)."[7] And "it was in Roman Asia that Jesus Christ was born."[8] Even nowadays there is a relatively small number of Christians in Asia, apart from some pockets in the Philippines, South Korea, areas in South India, and some other locations. Reasons are well known:

> It was largely colonization and evangelization in tandem that brought and propagated the western understanding of Jesus. . . . Not only was it foreign to Asia, it was also an understanding which was polemical against non-Christian religions,

[4]Kwok Pui-lan, *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2000), 12.
[5]Pui-lan, *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology*, 13.
[6]Choo Lak Yeow, preface to *Doing Theology with the Spirit's Movement in Asia*, ed. John C. England and Alan J. Torrance (Singapore: ATESEA, 1991), vi.
[7]Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, vol. 1, *Beginnings to 1500* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 4.
[8]Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia*, 1:6.

> disrespectful of indigenous cultures and insensitive to the injustices which colonialism brought about.[9]

Three main layers of Christian tradition are present in Asia. The first one, following the oldest tradition, is linked with Thomas, the apostle, who helped spread the gospel to the western and southern coasts of India. The second layer stems from the Catholic mission work after the discovery of the sea route to India and the rest of Asia in the later Middle Ages. The more recent Asian Christian layer is largely attributed to the modern missionary movement of European (and later American) origin, which was mainly Protestant.[10]

Perhaps India and Sri Lanka have been the most fertile soil for Asian theologizing. Because of the long tradition of English-speaking education in these countries, they have contributed significantly to the emerging international theologizing.[11] A rising center of theological thinking is Korea, with its phenomenal church growth. Korean theology ranges from conservative evangelical theology that cuts across denominational boundaries, to distinctively Roman Catholic tradition, to a more liberal strand of Asian pluralism and liberation theologies. Although in terms of the growth of the Christian church, in which mainland China currently plays a larger and larger role, distinctively Chinese theological production is yet to fully develop. Generally speaking, Asian Christian theology is still emerging and distinguishing itself after a long hegemony of Western influence.[12]

IN SEARCH OF AN ASIAN ECCLESIOLOGY

According to the leading expert on Asian theologies, the Vietnamese American Roman Catholic Peter C. Phan, defining and presenting a distinctively Asian ecclesiology is a highly demanding task. The reason is simple and obvious: the doctrine of the church does not play a major role in that continent's theology. The

[9]José M. de Mesa, "Making Salvation Concrete and Jesus Real Trends in Asian Christology," *Exchange* 30, no. 1 (2001), 2.

[10]George Gispert-Sauch, "Asian Theology," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, ed. David F. Ford, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1997), 455. For a more fine-tuned fivefold typology of major Asian areas and their Christianities, see Peter C. Phan, "The Church in Asian Perspective," in *RCCC*, 275-77. A highly useful resource is Scott W. Sunquist, ed., *A Dictionary of Asian Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001).

[11]For details, see Gispert-Sauch, "Asian Theology," 455-76; a massive new resource is Felix Wilfred, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); "Part I: Mapping Asian Christianity" gives a most detailed survey.

[12]Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988), 81-83.

difficulty of locating Asian ecclesiology has to do undoubtedly with the diversity and plurality of the continent as well. It is legitimate—and even necessary—to raise questions of "Which Asia? Which Christianities?" That said, Phan adds, "'a new way of being church,' to use a popular slogan among Asian theologians, arguably lies at the heart of pastoral ministry of Asian churches."[13] Phan's observation about the pastoral emphasis of Asian ecclesiologies is in keeping with the claim of Protestant theologian Simon Chan of Singapore that a viable way to approach the doctrine of the church is to speak of grassroots ecclesiology.[14] What also might contribute to the junior role of traditional ecclesiology and might appear, at least at face value, to marginalize the role of the institutionalized Christian community in Asia has to do with the fact that, unlike in the Global North,

> in Asia, the primary locus of religious life is the home. In Confucianism, the family "has always been the centre of Confucian life and ethics." Even the ruler-subject relationship is modelled after the family. . . . In Hinduism too, much of its ritual expressions occur daily at home. Unlike the church, worship in the Hindu temple is not congregational. Devotees go there only on special occasions such as on the feast day of a particular deity. . . . Thus, in Asia, religion blends seamlessly with family and social life.[15]

Be that as it may, what is noteworthy about Asian ecclesiologies is the absence of many topics pertinent to discussions and debates in Euro-American and other global settings, namely (to use the Roman Catholic framework), the infallibility of the pope, details of sacramentology, or the ordination of women. Phan surmises that this is because in an Asian theological mindset, questions having to do with the church's relation to the outside world rather than the church's inner life loom large. Particularly intense attention is paid to the relation to other religious communities as well as to sociopolitical problems and challenges. In keeping with this, Phan outlines as one of the key general features of pan-Asian ecclesiologies what he calls regnocentrism. This is to say that the church is "emptying" itself and pointing to the comprehensive rule or reign of God. Rather than an intellectual enterprise, Asian ecclesiology is primarily pastoral theology. This is not to undermine the role of the church per se but rather to elevate the importance of God's reign.[16]

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[13]Phan, "Church in Asian Perspective," 275.

[14]Simon Chan, "Asian Ecclesiologies," in *OHE*, 595-614.

[15]Chan, "Asian Ecclesiologies," 597.

[16]Phan, "Church in Asian Perspective," 277-78. The Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) has been active in particularly important ecclesiological work and pastoral guidance in Asia and has produced a number of important publications; for details, see www.fabc.org.

The kingdom-centered orientation makes the church missionary by nature, both in the service of people's everyday felt needs and in openness to dialogue with other religious communities. Speaking from a distinctively Catholic perspective, Phan outlines the following salient features in the life and mission of local churches, which "build on communion and equality":

1. A communion between the pastors and the laity, in the service of a common cause
2. An acknowledgment of absolute equality among all church members in shared communion
3. Common participation and collaboration of all church members
4. A dialogical spirit that leads to witness and sharing with people of all backgrounds
5. A church with the prophetic spirit in search of a transformation brought about by God's rule[17]

"CHURCH-LESS" CHRISTIANITY

Expressive of the somewhat ambiguous role of the church in some Asian contexts, and consequently the junior role given to ecclesiology, are distinctive orientations known under several nomenclatures such as "Church-less Christianity," "Non-baptized Believers in Christ," and (the distinctively Japanese) "Non-Church Movement." These speak to the cultivation of the Christian faith without any defined church or within a Christian community with porous and elusive boundaries.[18] Just consider as an example the "Non-baptized Believers in Christ" (NBBC) in India:

> The majority are women, for whom, not surprisingly, the place of greatest significance is the home. They have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ but do not belong to any Christian church. Many came to experience Jesus personally through answered prayer and miraculous healing, but they want to remain within a Hindu or Muslim cultural setting. A common reason given is that baptism would disrupt the harmony in the family and certain family religious practices like the *puja* (daily acts of worship). Since, in Hinduism, one is free to worship a god of one's choice, for the NBBCs, Jesus is their chosen God. Usually the God who answers prayer is the God to be served.[19]

[17]Phan, "Church in Asian Perspective," 279-81.
[18]See further, Herbert E. Hoefer, *Churchless Christianity* (Madras: Asian Program for Advancement of Training and Studies India, 1991).
[19]Chan, "Asian Ecclesiologies," 600, based on Hoefer, *Churchless Christianity*.

A very distinctive ecclesiological movement in Japan, known as *mukyōkai*[20] and founded by Kanzō Uchimura, emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century.[21] Uchimura did not have any intention of beginning an indigenous church in Japan; rather, he wished to investigate the nature of the true *ekklesia*. On the one hand, Uchimura wanted to affirm the central tenets of the Protestant Reformation—biblical revelation, justification by faith, and especially the priesthood of all believers. On the other hand, the *mukyōkai* movement criticized the Reformation churches for an incomplete and less than satisfactory work of reform. That said, "*Mukyokai* is not opposed to church as such, but to church being dominated by its organizational life, formal assent to doctrines, rituals, etc. Joining a church often means being isolated from family and community. *Mukyokai* seeks to cultivate in the individual the essence of Christianity without isolating him or her from the community."[22]

PENTECOSTAL/CHARISMATIC AND INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Nowadays one cannot do justice to the rich diversity of Christian communities on Asian soil without mentioning other nontraditional church forms. One of them is called "Local Churches," a movement currently present in the Global North as well, particularly in the United States. This vibrant movement is stronger in mainland China and Taiwan, and it is also spreading elsewhere thanks to its missionary outreach. Founded by Watchman Nee and Witness Lee, this movement focuses on lay ministry and mission and a comprehensive Christian discipleship.[23]

[20]Akio Dohi, "The Historical Development of the Non-Church Movement in Japan," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 2 (1965): 452-68; Richard H. Drummond, "Uchimura, Kanzo," in *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 1998), 687, accessed June 24, 2020, www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/t-u-v/uchimura-kanzo-1861-1930/; and Hiroyasu Iwabuchi, "An Evaluation of the Non-Church Movement in Japan: Its Distinctives, Strategy and Significance Today" (DMiss diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission, 1976).

[21]See further Mark R. Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1998), 54-67; and John F. Howes, "Christian Prophecy in Japan: Uchimura Kanzō," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 34, no. 1 (2007): 127-50.

[22]Chan, "Asian Ecclesiologies," 600, based on Raymond P. Jennings, *Jesus, Japan, and Kanzō Uchimura* (Tokyo: Kyō Bun Kwan, Christian Literature Society, 1958).

[23]For a brief, concise description with excellent bibliographic resources, see Chan, "Asian Ecclesiologies," 605-11; see also Bob Laurent, *Watchman Nee: Man of Suffering* (Uhrichsville, OH: Barbour, 1998). A massive up-to-date resource is the United States–based Living Streams Ministry's website (www.ministrybooks.org/), which contains, among other things, most writings of Nee and Lee in an accessible electronic form.

There is no need to justify the mentioning of Pentecostal/charismatic movements in many locations of Asia.[24] Just think of the world's largest local church, the Yoido Full Gospel Church in Seoul, Korea, founded by Yonggi Cho. The church claims about a million adherents with living cell-group gatherings.[25] The Korean Pentecostal movement at large has already left a living legacy, not only in that land but also globally through its aggressive missionary enterprise.[26] These and many other smaller communities represent Independent and Free Church traditions in Asian contexts, a rapidly growing segment of the Christian church—and expressions of Christianity routinely ignored in academic presentations.[27]

This brief survey of some distinctive Asian ecclesiologies does not do justice to the unbelievable diversity and plurality of this continent. Particularly noteworthy is the omission of Chinese ecclesiologies and church expressions, which come in many forms, from the established Three-Self Patriotic Movement[28] to House Church movements[29] to other popular expressions of Christian community.[30] With all their diversity, these and other ecclesiological expressions of this huge land are testimonies to the profound significance of Christianity among other religious communities.[31]

[24]An accessible short account with bibliographic sources can be found in Chan, "Asian Ecclesiologies," 601-3. For a more detailed study, see Allan H. Anderson, "Pentecostalism and Charismatic Movements in Asia," in Wilfred, *Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia*, 158-70; and Paul Joshua, "Forms of Asian Indigenous Christianities," in Wilfred, *Oxford Handbook of Christianity in Asia*, 171-79.

[25]Consult the following resources: Wonsuk Ma, "Two Tales of Emerging Ecclesiology in Asia: An Inquiry into Theological Shaping," in *The Church from Every Tribe and Tongue: Ecclesiology in the Majority World*, ed. Gene L. Green, Stephen T. Pardue, and K. K. Yeo (Carlisle, Cumbria, UK: Langham Global Library, 2018), 63-70; and Younghoon Lee, "Yoido Full Gospel Church: A Case Study in Expanding Mission and Fellowship," in *Called to Unity for the Sake of Mission*, ed. Jon Gibaut and Knud Jørgensen (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 275-84.

[26]See Sebastian C. H. Kim and Kirsteen Kim, *A History of Korean Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and Wonsuk Ma and Kyo Seong Ahn, eds., *Korean Church, God's Mission, Global Christianity* (Oxford: Regnum, 2015).

[27]Ma, "Two Tales of Emerging Ecclesiology in Asia," 70-73.

[28]Philip L. Wickeri, *Seeking the Common Ground: Protestant Christianity, the Three-Self Movement, and China's United Front* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988).

[29]Jie Kang, *House Church Christianity in China: From Rural Preachers to City Pastors* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); and Yalin Xin, *Inside China's House Church Network: The Word of Life Movement and Its Renewing Dynamic* (Lexington, KY: Emeth, 2009).

[30]Chan, "Asian Ecclesiologies," 595, refers to Lian Xi, *Redeemed by Fire: The Rise of Popular Christianity in Modern China* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); see also Michael Nai-Chiu Poon, ed., *Christian Movements in Southeast Asia: A Theological Exploration* (Singapore: Genesis Books, 2010).

[31]David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing: How Christianity Is Transforming China and Changing the Global Balance of Power* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 2003).

11

THE CHURCH IN WOMEN'S IMAGINATION AND CRITIQUE

THE EMERGENCE AND DIVERSITY OF WOMEN'S THEOLOGIES

To my great surprise, even at the time of this writing, it is still customary to speak of "feminist theology" as if that nomenclature would capture all the diversity of female voices.[1] Of course, it does not. It is better to speak of women's or female theologies in order to do justice to the growing plurality of this segment of liberation theologies.[2] There are three main categories of women's or female theologies in the English-speaking world currently. The term *feminist* refers to white women's approaches; they represent the first generation of female interpretations and almost as a rule come from upper-middle-class white women, typically with educational and financial advantages. The term *womanist* refers to the perspectives of African American, Black women. Their concerns are not only about gender but also very much about sociopolitical liberation and economics. The term *mujerista* denotes Latina (Hispanic) women with an agenda that combines both feminist and womanist concerns within their own specific communities and constituencies. Although that term does not encompass all Latina voices, it is used loosely and inclusively here. In addition to these women's

[1]This first section in the chapter draws from Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God: A Global Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 147-49.

[2]See Mary Grey, "Feminist Theology: A Critical Theology of Liberation," in *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, ed. Christopher Rowland, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 105-22.

theologies based in North America (and, regarding the feminists, also in Europe), the global scene also features a proliferation of voices from Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Without in any way lumping together these diverse groups, it is also the case that "even with all their diversity, feminist, womanist, and *mujerista* theologies have one thing in common: they make the liberation of women central to the theological task."[3]

Although women's experiences are hardly uniform across cultural diversity, some common features can be tentatively outlined. First, the body and embodiment constitute an important category—not least because women have experienced their embodiment as something negative in many Christian and other religious traditions.[4] This is at least partially due to the influence of dualism that places soul over body and maleness over female. Women have been associated more directly with "flesh" and earth and hence considered to be at a lower level. When incarnation theology—the heart of the Christian trinitarian view of God—has been forgotten in this conversation, the divine has been connected with the "higher" realm of reality, the soul.[5]

Second, women from different contexts have experienced many kinds of oppression. Whereas the patterns of domination and submission vary, they are persistent and manifold. In the church, the headship of Christ over his church has often been taken as the paradigm for ordering relationships at home, making the husband the "head" over his wife, not seldom leading to the subordination of women.

Third, relationships and interrelatedness have always been highly appreciated by women. These categories speak of community and belonging. Fortunately, in recent times the importance of relationality, communion, and interrelatedness has been rediscovered in all of life. This rediscovery is evident in various academic disciplines from psychology to sociology, in cultural movements such as postmodernism, and in constructive Christian theologies. Rightly, Jürgen Moltmann places the question of sexism in relation to God in this wider

[3]Mary McClintock Fulkerson, "Feminist Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 109. For global diversity, see Serene Jones, "Feminist Theology and Global Imagination," in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology*, ed. Sheila Briggs and Mary McClintock Fulkerson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 23-50.

[4]See further, Lisa Isherwood and Elizabeth Stuart, *Introducing Body Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998).

[5]See further, Neil H. Williams, *The Maleness of Jesus: Is It Good News for Women?* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011).

perspective of community and belonging. Specifically, the biblical teaching of the human being as the image of God relates to both men and women in their wholeness. Truly, the experience of God is "the social experience of the self and the personal experience of sociality."[6]

In light of these and related widely shared female experiences, it is obvious that what unites different female approaches to theology is the conviction that a masculine and male-driven orientation is in need of radical correction and that it could be redeemed to serve equality and justice between women and men.[7] The majority of female theologians believe that the corrective, balancing, and reorienting task is both possible and desirable.

IN SEARCH OF AN ECCLESIOLOGY IN FEMALE THEOLOGICAL IMAGINATION

Contrary to my first expectations, in researching for resources in the doctrine of the church from women's perspective I discovered that there are precious few ecclesiological studies and full-scale presentations.[8] Even more astonishingly, to my knowledge no major presentation of the doctrine of the church has been produced by a female author![9]

A promising way of constructing a more balanced view of the church and its doctrine is to reevaluate women's place in the Christian community. While it is of course true that women have been undermined, mistreated, and frustrated in seeking opportunities throughout the centuries, it is also true that the historical picture is far more complex and complicated. A groundbreaking contribution to this quest is the landmark work by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza titled *In Memory of Her.* Rather than merely describing the historical place and role of women in early Christianity, this feminist writer seeks to reconstruct and reimagine their place, particularly in the earliest Jesus-movement, whose boundaries were far more flexible than those of the Christian church. This reconstruction reveals a

[6]Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 94.

[7]See the section "Destabilizing the Patriarchal Divinity," in Wonhee Anne Joh, *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 91-101.

[8]Case in point, here are two recent resources, neither of which devotes any section to ecclesiology or the church: Briggs and Fulkerson, *Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theology*; and Stephanie Y. Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002). It is noteworthy that in the latter there is, however, a brief section on "pastoral theology" (pp. 124-29), implying that the lack of female voices in ecclesiology is more a "practical" and pastoral concern than a "theological" question.

[9]The same was observed also in Natalie K. Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology* (1996; repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 5.

picture of the activities and responsibilities of women in early Christian communities more profound and central than the standard subjugation and subordination narrative tells us.[10] It has also been noted by the historians of the church that the Protestant Reformation provided the former nuns living in convents an opportunity to find their vocations in everyday life as mothers, citizens, friends, and companions.[11] All this means that it "is possible to read the history of the church as one of women's suffering, or an institution that has gone out of its way to exclude, to marginalize, to oppress women often purely on the grounds of their being women . . . [or that] the church, though excluding women from some of its most meaningful moments, has also been the space in which women have been able to develop their own discourses of faith, often against or in spite of patriarchy." In other words, the picture is one of ambivalence.[12]

What should a women's ecclesiology look like? Natalie Watson helps avoid a potential pitfall, prefacing her primer *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology* in this way:

> This is not another book about "women *in* the church" or even "women *and* the church." A number of these have appeared over the years. The problem with titles such as "women *in* the church" or even "women *and* the church" is that somehow they make it look as if women and the church are two separate entities or as if women are something with which, or even a group of people with whom, the church has to deal as one of those challenges it has to face at the beginning of a new millennium: something along the lines of "the church and worship" or "the church and democracy." Or even the "Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women."[13]

Instead, Watson rightly argues: "*Women are church and have always been church.*"[14] To bring that point home, women ecclesiologists working in the spirit of liberation conceive their theology as subversive, even transgressive. Indeed, "feminist ecclesiology recognizes the ambiguity of male-defined boundaries for women and their discourses of faith, theology and spirituality, transcends them and also

[10]Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1983).
[11]Susan A. Ross, "Church and Sacrament—Community and Worship," in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*, ed. Susan Frank Parsons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 228.
[12]Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 2-3; see also chap. 2, titled "The Ambivalent Legacy of History."
[13]Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 1 (emphasis original).
[14]Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 1 (emphasis original).

seeks to find ways of working constructively within them."[15] One constructive task is to reconsider the typical models of church, most of them centered on the church as an institution typically based on patriarchal notions. As a way of correcting and balancing, models and metaphors of the Christian community birthed by female ecclesiologies are organic, living, flexible, and elusive.[16]

Natalie Watson summarizes helpfully the desiderata of a viable feminist ecclesiology under these rubrics:

1. "The question is not: what is the church? But who is the church?"
2. The focus shifts from the church as an institution to the church as a community.
3. The focus on embodiment, including sacramental celebration, based on an incarnational narrative, embraces not only women's bodies but all bodies, including those of the disabled.
4. The church advocates and lives out the virtues of justice, equality, and fairness.
5. It is an open rather than a closed ecclesiology in which all are in rather than out.
6. It imagines "a church as being in need of mysticism, prophecy, poetics, healing and justice" in anticipation of God's eschatological consummation.[17]

A full treatment of women's ecclesiologies would also include topics such as the theology of ordination and the language used in worship; these and related matters will be dealt with in part three in the context of discussing the church's ministers (chapter fourteen) and worship/liturgy (chapter fifteen).

With these desiderata and considerations in mind, let us delve deeper into some leading constructive proposals by female ecclesiologists and theologians from diverse perspectives. We will begin with feminists, not because they should be given a place of primacy but simply because (upper-)middle-class white women have been in the forefront of ecclesiological explorations. Thereafter, womanist, *mujerista*, and Asian (American) interpretations will be discussed.

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[15]Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 10-11.

[16]For suggestions of some models of the church from women's perspectives, consider chap. 3 in Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*.

[17]Watson, *Introducing Feminist Ecclesiology*, 118-20.

FEMINIST CRITIQUE AND RE-CONSTRUCTION OF ECCLESIOLOGY

The challenge of sexism and patriarchy.

> I have always found it difficult to walk away from the church, but I have also found it difficult to walk with it. . . . The alienation is shared with many other women and men whose pain and anger at the contradictions and oppressions of church life lead them to challenge the very idea of talking about a feminist interpretation of the church. It is also increased by knowledge of the disdain and anger of those theologians and church officials who consider women like me to be the problem rather than the church itself.[18]

> The question is often asked of me: "Why don't you leave the church if you don't agree with the church's opinion and teaching?" In the past years, I have encountered this challenge again and again from right-wing Catholics and feminists alike. However, to seriously entertain this question already concedes the power of naming to the reactionary forces insofar as it recognizes their ownership of biblical religions.[19]

These quotations from two leading American feminist ecclesiologists, one Protestant and the other Roman Catholic, reveal the anguish and dilemma many women share concerning the way the church reacts to women. Letty Russell's comment brings to surface the built-in tension that feminist and other liberationists share about the locus of the Christian message: "It is impossible for me and for many other alienated women and men to walk away from the church, however, for it has been the bearer of the story of Jesus Christ and the good news of God's love."[20]

Living as we are now in an age of "hermeneutics of suspicion," we find many conventional ways of talking about religion threatening. Mary Daly insists that the image of God as Father as a symbol of patriarchy is one of the most obvious. She also claims that the image of the Father-God facilitates and empowers the oppression of women by the hand of male dominance.[21] Even though, generally

[18]Letty M. Russell, *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 11.
[19]Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: Critical Feminists Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 3.
[20]Russell, *Church in the Round*, 11.
[21]Mary Daly, *Beyond God the Father: Toward a Philosophy of Women's Liberation* (Boston: Beacon, 1973). See also Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1983).

speaking, it might be an overstatement that the symbol of divine fatherhood has been the source of misuse of power in terms of violence, rape, and war, it is true that language not only reflects reality but also constructs it.

Not all feminist theologians are convinced that just working with existing churches and helping them become more like "Women's Church" would be enough.[22] The most vocal critic of more moderate feminist theology, as represented by Russell and Schüssler Fiorenza, has been Rosemary Radford Ruether. Her idea of "Women-Church" is more radical in nature and approach. She calls women, not just a few individuals but whole communities, to separate themselves for a while from men to avoid patriarchy. This ideology of separatism would not be an end in itself but rather a stage in a process, "a stage that is absolutely necessary, . . . a stage toward a further end in formation of a critical culture and community of women and men in exodus from patriarchy."[23] Such a period of withdrawal from men and communication with each other is essential for the formation of the feminist community "because women, more than any other marginalized group, have lacked a critical culture of their own," Ruether contends.[24] The approach of Ruether, in other words, is not content with changing structures of the church but seeks to form a new community—for a certain period—with its own structures, leadership, and ethos. While Ruether's voice is widely heard, any response in the form of practical action has been quite meager, and so the approach of Russell and Schüssler Fiorenza and like-minded women seems to be the majority feminist voice in ecclesiology.

Sexism is a key target of all feminists. Jürgen Moltmann places the question of sexism in a wider perspective, namely, that of community. Actually, it is not enough just to criticize traditional theologies for neglecting feminine terminology and women's concerns and merely attempt to replace the masculine with another limited, exclusive usage. Moltmann insists that, according to biblical ideas, what makes us *imago Dei* (image of God) is not the soul apart from the body. The image of God consists of "men and women in their wholeness, in their full, sexually specific community with one another." Rather than in my own

[22]For the Women-Church Convergence of the US Roman Catholic Church, see www.women-church convergence.org/, accessed June 26, 2020.

[23]Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women-Church: Theology and Practice of Feminist Liturgical Communities* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 60.

[24]Ruether, *Women-Church*, 59.

subjective experience, God of the Bible is known in the social experience of men and women. The experience of the Spirit is thus social.[25]

The agenda of feminist ecclesiology. The questions posed by feminist theologians relate to many aspects of our addressing the Holy Trinity. How does Jesus' maleness relate to the other half of humankind? Is the Spirit masculine or feminine? And most importantly for this topic: How should we address the triune God in worship, prayer, and proclamation? (This topic will be taken up in chapter fifteen.) Beyond gendered language, the challenge of sexism relates to roles and relationships between women and men.

A feminist church attempts to reach to the margins and searches for liberation from all forms of dehumanization, be it sexual, racist, or any other. This means following in the footsteps of Jesus, who crossed boundaries, reached out to the outcasts, and lifted up the honor and dignity of women and children.

> Those of us who "fall in faith" with this man and his story of God's welcome experience cognitive dissonance, a contradiction between ideas and actual experience, when we turn from reading the Gospels to looking at the way this message has been interpreted in the church through the ages. . . . We find ourselves seeking out communities of faith and struggle that speak of life in the midst of all forms of death-dealing oppression.[26]

Feminist ecclesiologists join this liberation tradition in giving voice to those on the margins of society and the church, those who are considered to be powerless and insignificant. One useful tactic is to learn to read the Bible "from the margin"[27] and do what Russell calls "talking back to tradition."[28]

Feminists' agenda is a liberationist agenda, and part of their passion is to work for healing and restoration as manifested, for example, in the work for the healing of AIDS communities and individuals affected by that disease.[29] Russell rightly notes that sexism and gender bias get in the way of healing because too many people offer no inclusion or affirmation of AIDS patients. As a result, "salvation has been sexualized, privatized, futurized, and restricted to a chosen few."[30]

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[25]Moltmann, *Spirit of Life*, 94.
[26]Russell, *Church in the Round*, 23.
[27]See for example, Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 8-29, for a feminist reading of the story of Sarah and Hagar.
[28]Russell, *Church in the Round*, esp. 35-42.
[29]See further, Letty M. Russell, ed., *The Church with AIDS: Renewal in the Midst of Crisis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1990).
[30]Russell, *Church in the Round*, 114.

Personal morality, especially conformity to conventional sexual norms, is emphasized while rampant sins of injustice in the structures are overlooked. Aligning with liberation theologies, feminist theologies recognize salvation as holistic shalom, social and physical wholeness and harmony. Salvation is understood relationally, between human beings and in relation to God.[31] Only that kind of holistic approach can equip the church to fulfill its task in promoting justice, peace, and wholeness.

Church in the round. One of the most innovative approaches to feminist ecclesiology is Letty Russell's *Church in the Round*, which utilizes the symbolism of the table to create new images of the church. As is well known, in many cultures the table symbolizes hospitality and sharing. So much in the home happens around the kitchen table, and some of the most precious memories go back to table fellowship. The table also speaks of God's hospitality and inclusive attitude. The "church around the table" is a *Discipleship of Equals*, the title of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's feminist ecclesiology. One could also express the core of feminist ecclesiology by describing the church as connective; there is a living, dynamic connection between men and women and between God and human beings. "If the table is spread by God and hosted by Christ, it must be a table with many connections."[32]

In a hospitable, affirming, and sharing community, we also hope to find "Leadership in the Round," to use another apt nomenclature of Russell's.[33] Leadership in the church both mirrors its ethos and shapes it. Those churches that restrict ordination to men only encounter immense obstacles in this regard. The feminist understanding considers ministry in the life of the church as the recognition of gifting from God and thus open to both men and women. Ministries are "*gifts* of God rather than *givens* of God." Feminist ecclesiology is also critical of the dualistic division of the church into "upper-class" clergy and "lower-class" laity.[34] Therefore, the core issue of ministry is not necessarily an insistence on the right of ordination for women but rather a revision of the whole concept of ordination.[35]

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[31]Russell, *Church in the Round*, 114-19.
[32]Russell, *Church in the Round*, 18.
[33]Chapter title in Russell, *Church in the Round*, 46.
[34]Russell, *Church in the Round*, 46-58 (50, emphasis original).
[35]See further, Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 23-38, where she asks critically, "Should Women Aim for Ordination to the Lowest Rung of the Hierarchical Ladder?"

In patriarchal styles of leadership, so characteristic of too many churches, authority is exercised by standing above, in the place of power.[36] Feminist styles of leadership would draw their model from a partnership paradigm that is oriented toward "consensual partnership."[37] In feminist styles of leadership, authority and power are shared and are based on the principle of equality. In this search for a new approach to leadership in the church, feminist ecclesiologists are drawing from the example of Jesus, who set himself against the power structures of the day and the society.[38]

Women's leadership style orients toward what enhances the mission of the church. Structures that enhance the participation of local churches in God's mission may take several forms, such as the "family type," usually of a smaller size with a proper diversity.[39] Along with liberationists such as Leonardo Boff, these feminists "assume that these groups *are* church when they gather as church and ask about how they are seeking to show this faithfulness in their structures and mission. What makes them distinctive is not their traditional church life but their willingness to be connected to the struggle of particular groups for freedom and full humanity."[40]

WOMANIST ECCLESIOLOGIES: THE CHURCH IN BLACK WOMEN'S IMAGINATION

Black (African American) theology is not only practiced by males but also by females—and that is named womanist theology.[41] Working toward the same goal as their male counterparts—liberation from white oppression—womanist theologies also share the general aim of feminist theologies, to set women free from patriarchy and male dominance.[42] That said, womanist theologians often remind their white female colleagues of their distinct focus regarding liberation: for womanists liberation is less about gender equality, although it also about that, but has much to do also with socioeconomic, educational, and work-opportunity issues.

[36]See further, Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 211-32, for the comparison between patriarchal structures and the discipleship of equals.
[37]Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 269-74.
[38]Russell, *Church in the Round*, chap. 2.
[39]See further, Letty M. Russell, "Forms of a Confessing Church Today," *Journal of Presbyterian History* 61, no. 1 (1983): 99-109.
[40]Russell, *Church in the Round*, 94.
[41]The sections on womanist, *mujerista*, and African women's ecclesiologies draw from Kärkkäinen, *Doctrine of God*, 154-57, 176-77.
[42]A useful survey is Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology*.

Some womanists criticize their Black male counterparts for ignoring the attitudes of inequality and inferiority within Black communities. The expression "Womanist theology"[43] emphasizes the positive experiences of African American women and seeks to make room for them and give them an equal place both in the Black community and elsewhere.[44] Promisingly, Black male theologians are increasingly working to dialogue with and listen to their female counterparts, as illustrated in works such as Garth Kasimu Baker-Fletcher's *Xodus: An African American Male Journey*, which offers an inclusive agenda.[45]

In her acclaimed 1993 book *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*, Delores Williams revisits the narrative of Hagar in the wilderness as the paradigm for womanist hermeneutics and theology.[46] Tutored by Hagar and other biblical figures, womanists speak of God as both "strength of life" and "empowering spirit": "God is neither simply the ultimate ground of being by which we are grasped in moments of mystical experience nor some ultimate point of reference whom we come to understand primarily by reason."[47]

For the womanists, an important theological asset is a holistic theology that would integrate into a single theological vision all aspects of human life. African American cultures, like most Majority World cultures, lean toward holism rather than the dualism typical of many Western worldviews. Influenced by Greco-Roman philosophies, Western cultures often (1) "make sharp distinctions between body and soul; (2) give preference to the spiritual/mental over the physical; and (3) believe that a universal, one-size-fits-all theology is possible."[48] This has led to isolation and undermining of community, along with despising the body and ordinary life as something in opposition to the spirit and the "spiritual." The womanist search for a holistic and life-affirming theology seeks to defeat those liabilities.

It is surprising that womanist theologians (at least to my knowledge) have not made any major constructive efforts regarding the doctrine of the church—as

[43]For the history and developments, see Dwight N. Hopkins, *Introducing Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), chap. 4.

[44]For a highly useful essay, see Jacquelyn Grant, "Black Theology and the Black Woman," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall (New York: New Press, 1995), 320-36.

[45]Garth Kasimu Baker-Fletcher, *Xodus: An African American Male Journey* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996); chap. 3 is titled "Taking Sisters Seriously."

[46]Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993); chap. 1 focuses on Hagar's story.

[47]Karen Baker-Fletcher and Garth Kasimu Baker-Fletcher, *My Sister, My Brother: Womanist and Xodus God Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1997), 23.

[48]Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology*, 35.

much as the importance of the community and relationships in general are routinely emphasized.[49] One only wishes that a major ecclesiological presentation would emerge from this important segment of North American Christianity.

MUJERISTA ECCLESIOLOGIES: THE CHURCH IN LATINA IMAGINATION

The programmatic book by Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango titled *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* (1988) was instrumental in helping to bring to academic awareness the agenda of emerging female Hispanic scholars.[50] Called *mujerista* theology, a number of Latina interpretations of theology (albeit not all because the terminology is still in the making, even as of this writing) have sought to give voice to an agenda as "a preferential option for Latina women, for our struggle for liberation."[51] Unlike mainline academic theology, *mujerista* theology "recognizes popular religion as a credible experience" of the divine.[52]

A hybrid concept, it brings together the *mestizaje* (mixed white and native people in Latin America) and the *mulatez* (mixed Black and white people), including their condition as racially and culturally mixed people.[53] *Mujerista* theology, therefore, gives voice to North American Hispanic women who are uneasy about identifying themselves fully with mainline feminist theology. María Pilar Aquino, another leading *mujerista* theologian, an immigrant brought to the United States as a child with her parents, rightly notes that the key to the prospering of the Latino/a church is the role of the poor and of women. She is fond of Boff's vision of ecclesiogenesis and its promise for the communities in which Latinas find their proper place and role.[54]

Similarly to all women's theologies, liberation and equality stand at the heart of this movement; for *mujeristas* specifically, "devotion to Latinas' liberation" is

[49] As mentioned, Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology*, almost completely misses the topic of ecclesiology. And it is no better with Monica A. Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), who speaks of the community but with no expressed theological intention to construct a Black women's doctrine of the church.

[50] Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988); for a pioneering Latin American contribution, see María Pilar Aquino, *Our Cry for Life: Feminist Theology from Latin America*, trans. Dinah Livingstone (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993).

[51] Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 61.

[52] Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 75.

[53] Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 64.

[54] For details and primary sources, see Jennifer M. Buck, *Reframing the House: Constructive Feminist Global Ecclesiology for the Western Evangelical Church* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 105-7.

the ultimate goal.[55] In her *En la Lucha: A Hispanic Women's Liberation Theology*, Isasi-Díaz regards highly "grassroot Latinas' religious understanding and the way those understandings guide their daily lives" among Latinas because "those religious understandings are part of the ongoing revelation of God, present in the midst of the community of faith and giving strength to Hispanic Women's struggle for liberation."[56] *La lucha* simply means "struggle." In keeping with the grassroots and practical orientation of the movement, Isasi-Díaz employs a novel term to speak of the kingdom of God that links it with intimacy, relationality, and communion, namely, *kin-dom* of God, "an utopian vision of being the family of God."[57] Unlike the typical term *kingdom*, it relates to the need for Latinas to cultivate loving and intimate relationships with God at the personal and communal levels.[58] An integral part of the kin-dom mentality is "Solidarity as Both Theory and Strategy for Liberation."[59] Solidarity means participating in the ongoing process of liberation. Salvation comes from God, but it is worked out between God and each human being and among human beings.

AFRICAN WOMEN'S ECCLESIOLOGIES

African women's theologies are routinely presented as embodying something like the values and characteristics listed below. Elusively and tentatively we can take them as programmatic descriptions:

- *doing* theology rather than *speculating*
- using the depth of oppression and suffering as the starting point
- dreaming and visioning as a way of empowerment and creativity
- cherishing the theme of church-as-community as the framework for theologizing
- focusing on the need for liberation as the guiding principle[60]

[55]Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 61.
[56]Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *En la Lucha / In the Struggle: Elaborating a Mujerista Theology*, 10th anniv. ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 21.
[57]Isasi-Díaz, *En la Lucha*, 4; see also 53.
[58]See further Ada María Isasi-Díaz, "Christ in Mujerista Theology," in *Thinking of Christ: Proclamation, Explanation, Meaning*, ed. Tatha Wiley (New York: Continuum, 2003), 157-76.
[59]From the subhead in Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 92.
[60]Ursula King, introduction to *Feminist Theology from the Third World: A Reader*, ed. Ursula King (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 16-19.

Challenges and problems to be tackled include not only oppression and denial of opportunities[61] but also patriarchy and male superiority.[62] Mercy Amba Oduyoye, the most noted African female theologian,[63] observes that "since in the Church in Africa men and the clergy presume to speak for God, and to demand the obedience of women, it is not easy to experience God as empowering and liberating when one is in the Church's ambit." No wonder she adds that "for many women, however, this is a clear substitution of the will of God for the will of the male of the human species."[64]

Instead of letting patriarchy or any other earthly ideology guide us, Oduyoye urges us to imagine the more meaningful and community-building diversity of Pentecost: "life in the Spirit of God as opposed to the mentality of 'let us . . . make a name for ourselves' (Gen. 11.3-4)." She notes that we are indeed united in our reading of biblical motifs and imagery, the exodus, the Magnificat, the proclamation from Isaiah that Jesus read at Nazareth, and so on.[65] This kind of imagination may foster new opportunities and lasting hope. While acknowledging the special situation of oppression and subjugation in most African countries, Oduyoye breathes hope:

> Happy and responsible in my being human and female, I shall be able to live a life in doxology in the human community, glorifying God for the gifts I receive in others and the possibility I have of giving myself freely for the (well-being) good of the community while remaining responsible and responsive to God. It is only thus that I can say I am fully human.[66]

"I did not have to imagine community, I *had* community,"[67] Oduyeye observes, and this statement is in keeping with her community-oriented African cultural milieu.[68] She further explains:

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[61]See Roxanne Jordaan and Thoko Mpumlwana, "Two Voices on Women's Oppression and Struggle in South Africa," in King, *Feminist Theology from the Third World*, 150-69.

[62]See Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1995).

[63]See further, Philip Kennedy, *Twentieth-Century Theologians: A New Introduction to Modern Christian Thought* (New York: Tauris, 2010), chap. 21, "Mercy Amba Oduyoye: b. 1934"; and Carrie Pemberton, *Circle Thinking: African Woman Theologians in Dialogue with the West* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), chap. 3, "Remaking African Theology: Mercy Amba Oduyoye's Theology of Resistance and Re-Imagination."

[64]Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "The African Experience of God Through the Eyes of an Akan Woman," *Cross Currents* 47, no. 4 (1997/98): 500, www.crosscurrents.org/african.htm.

[65]Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Reflections from a Third World Woman's Perspective: Women's Experience and Liberation Theologies," in King, *Feminist Theology from the Third World*, 24.

[66]Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Hearing and Knowing: Theological Reflections on Christianity in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1968), 137.

[67]Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Re-imagining the World: A Global Perspective," *Church & Society* 84 (1994): 83. See also Buck, *Reframing the House*, 82-93.

[68]Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Introducing African Women's Theology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), chap. 6.

> Absence of community and hospitality develops when we do not acknowledge the existence of the other. The people next door become invisible and inaudible to us. The many isolated and hidden persons whom we simply ignore or actively marginalise, are put beyond the bounds of our neighbourliness. When we pass by on the other side, we cannot even tell who it is we are avoiding. We simply deny their existence. All who are in need of affirmation, survival and healing, tend to exist for us as unacknowledged neighbours or as social problems—never as fellow humans.[69]

WOMEN, THE EARTH, AND THE CHURCH

Many women theologians have recognized that how we structure life in the church is also reflected in how we treat other communities, the community of creation included. In other words, there is interrelation between the community of God's people and God's creation. Another reason for a careful analysis of church structures derives from the impending natural crisis we are facing now. Elizabeth Johnson's *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit* is a groundbreaking study in that it combines the concerns of two complementary approaches: those of feminist theologies and ecological theologies. The thesis of the book is that "the exploitation of the earth, which has reached crisis proportion in our day, is intimately linked to the marginalization of women, and that both of these predicaments are intrinsically related to forgetting the Creator Spirit who pervades the world in the dance of life."[70] She is convinced that there is an integral connection between sexism and the exploitation of the earth, and, hence, ecofeminism is called for.[71]

Women theologians are weary of the prevailing hierarchical dualism in Christian theology that leads to abuse of nature, the other sex, and one's own body.[72] It has also affected the Christian understanding of God; often God has been depicted in hierarchical terms, and this leads to hierarchical conceptions of the church. Now it is the task of ecofeminist theology to seek a new wholeness, a new community of equals. Ecofeminist theology emphasizes unity between people and nature, women and men, and with us and our bodies, and so looks

[69]Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 54.
[70]Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 2.
[71]Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 10.
[72]For the dangers of dualistic anthropology and its influence on the church life, see also Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals*, 97-98.

favorably toward "kinship models."[73] Feminist ecclesiology and ecofeminism in particular draw resources from the wells of pneumatology. An ecofeminist "theology of the Creator Spirit overcomes the dualism of spirit and matter with all of its ramifications, and leads to the realization of the sacredness of the earth."[74] It leads away from a one-sided anthropocentric or androcentric model and toward a life-centered, biocentric model.

My brief survey of women's ecclesiologies has shown evidence of diverse and complementary approaches and emphases in agenda. They all work toward liberating women so they are universally recognized as equal human beings with men. As this survey has indicated, some champion more radical action, even to the temporary isolation of women from men's communities, and some prefer to work toward restructuring and shaping existing communities. Ecologically oriented feminists are not content with looking only at interpersonal relations in light of man-woman equality but also seek to extend the reform to our treatment of nature. In their view, how human beings treat each other is indicative of the way they treat creation.

[73]Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, chap. 4.
[74]Johnson, *Women, Earth, and Creator Spirit*, 59.

12

THE MOSAIC OF THE AMERICAN CHURCH

An Ecclesiological Laboratory

THE US ECCLESIOLOGICAL CONTEXT

Historical roots and distinctive features. Differently from all other Western, industrialized, highly developed societies, Christian faith still flourishes in the United States, and the attendance rate of Christians in church services and activities is astonishingly high even in the beginning of the third millennium. The religious roots of American Christianity of course run deep in European soil. Having immigrated to the United States, masses of European Christians, many of them in search of freedom from ecclesiastical and societal restrictions in the Europe, also brought with them an ever-increasing diversity of church expressions and denominational diversity. For many in traditional churches, from Anglicans (Episcopalians) to Roman Catholics to Lutherans and others, settling in North America meant a radical shift in status as they left behind the European Christendom model. Leaving a state- or folk-church, such as the Lutheran churches in Scandinavian countries, or an establishment institution with political power, such as the Roman Catholic Church in many locations in Europe, required an adjustment to what is closer to the Free Church status with the need to raise finances, take care of buildings, organize theological training, and so forth.[1]

[1]For a highly useful discussion, see Gregory Baum, "The Church in a North American Perspective," in *RCCC*, 327-30. See also Alan Wolfe, *The Transformation of American Religion: How We Actually Live Our Faith* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

It is ironic that even though legislatively church and society have been separated since the American Revolution (the separation took place in 1780), the presence and influence of Christian faith on society is amazing! Particularly noteworthy is the attempt of the Religious Right to usurp political power and so gain influence in politics and society at large.[2]

Although the Catholic Church is today the biggest ecclesiastical player, large numbers of the first generations of new settlers also came from various types of Protestant and Anglican constituencies in which particularly the nonconformists often felt marginalized and were even occasionally oppressed. As a result, the Free Church ecclesiality forms the "mainline" American church reality. Among the Protestants, Baptists of various stripes are the largest group and Pentecostals of various stripes are catching up rapidly.[3]

Alongside the historically unheard-of denominational plurality, a deepening and widening multiculturalism also characterizes the American experiment.[4] By 2050, so the statisticians are telling us, the majority of the US population will be nonwhite, and already by 2023 the majority of children will be other than white.[5] To express this intensifying hybrid ethnic composition of America, a new term—*postethnic*—has been coined. It "promotes multiple identities, emphasizes the dynamic and changing character of many groups, and is responsive to the potential for creating new cultural combinations."[6]

The mosaic of American Christianity.[7] Among the several major American-based ethnic group families, none grows as fast and proliferates as widely as the Hispanic American churches.[8] The special challenge and asset of Hispanic

[2]For an up-to-date, accessible account, see Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Michael J. McVicar, *The Religious Right in America*, Oxford Research Encyclopedias: Religion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), doi: 0.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.9. See also Gabriel J. Fackre, *The Religious Right and Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982).

[3]Statistics of the National Council of Churches (USA) for 2011 are available at Theosophical Ruminator, "Top 10 Largest Christian Denominations in the USA," *Theo-sophical Ruminations*, February 16, 2011, https://theosophical.wordpress.com/2011/02/16/top-10-largest-christian-denominations-in-the-usa/.

[4]See Jonathan Chaplin, *Multiculturalism: A Christian Retrieval* (London: Theos, 2011).

[5]United States Census Bureau, "U.S. Census Bureau Projections Show a Slower Growing, Older, More Diverse Nation a Half Century from Now," news release, December 12, 2012, www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-243.html.

[6]David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism*, tenth anniv. rev. and updated ed. (New York: Basic Books, 2005), 3-4.

[7]This and the following section draw from Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), 427-29.

[8]Zuania Ramos, "Rise of Hispanic Evangelical Church: *Time* Magazine Discusses Influence of Latinos in America's Religion," *Huffington Post*, April 10, 2013, www.huffpost.com/entry/hispanic-evangelical

communities in the United States is their ecumenical background in both Catholicism and Protestantism, lately also in Pentecostal/charismatic spiritualities.[9] As in other ethnic communities, Latino churches know the feeling of "in-betweenness" as they live in two cultures, both ecclesiastically (Catholic, Protestant) and nationally (United States and the country of origin).[10] Similarly to African American (Black) communities, defining ecclesiological-theological work is still in the making.[11]

Most recently, Asian-descent churches and movements have been gaining significance.[12] Predominantly evangelical in theological orientation, Asian American churches have mushroomed in many US contexts and in the near future will constitute a significant ecclesiological force.[13] Similarly to Hispanic American Christianity, that of Asian Americans reflects amazing diversity and plurality; we should speak, as a result, of "multiple Asian American ecclesiologies present in the form of ethnic churches, pan-Asian churches, and multiracial churches."[14]

Before the Hispanics and Asians, African American Christianity had already established its significant place in American religiosity. Black churches

-church_n_3055752, which discusses the April 15, 2013, issue of *Time*, "The Latino Reformation: Inside the New Hispanic Churches Transforming Religion in America," by Elizabeth Dias.

[9]Justo L. González, *Mañana: Christian Theology from a Hispanic Perspective* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990), chap. 4. See further, Juan Francisco Martínez, *Los Protestantes: An Introduction to Latino Protestantism in the United States* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 2011).

[10]See further Juan Francisco Martínez, "Historical Reflections on the 'In-Betweenness' of Latino Protestantism," *Common Ground* 12, no. 1 (2015): 26-30.

[11]It is instructive that the major textbook presentation on Hispanic (Latino/a) theology, González, *Mañana*, is virtually absent of ecclesiological discussion and has no section, even a short one, devoted to the church. For short treatments, see Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, "Ecclesiology: A *Dabar* Church; Pentecostal and Communal," in Loida I. Martell-Otero, Zaida Maldonado Pérez, and Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, *Latina Evangélicas: A Theological Survey from the Margins* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2013), chap. 6; Justo L. González, "In Quest of a Protestant Hispanic Ecclesiology," in *Teología en Conjunto: A Collaborative Hispanic Protestant Theology*, ed. José David Rodriguez and Loida I. Martell-Otero (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 80-97; and Natalia M. Imperatori-Lee, "Unsettled Accounts: Latino/a Theology and the Church in the Third Millennium," in *A Church with Open Doors: Catholic Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium*, ed. Richard R. Gaillardetz and Edward P. Hahnenberg (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2015), chap. 3. For an outline of a constructive Latino/a ecclesiology, see Oscar García-Johnson, *The Mestizo/a Community of the Spirit: A Postmodern Latino/a Ecclesiology* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009).

[12]For the difficulty and complexity in defining *Asian American* (whether using a cultural, marginality, or postcolonial approach), see Peter Cha, "Ethnic Identity Formation and Participation in Immigrant Churches: Second-Generation Korean American Experiences," in *Korean Americans and Their Religions: Pilgrims and Missionaries from a Different Shore*, ed. Ho-Youn Kwon, Kwang Chung Kim, and R. Stephen Warner (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2001), 141-56.

[13]D. J. Chuang, "9 Things About Asian American Christianity," *The Exchange with Ed Stetzer* (blog), *Christianity Today*, November 7, 2013, www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/november/9-things-about-asian-american-christianity.html.

[14]Daniel Lee, "Karl Barth, Contextuality, and Asian-American Context" (PhD diss., School of Theology, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, 2014).

continue to grow, whether one speaks of Episcopal or evangelical or Pentecostal communities.[15] A single Black Pentecostal denomination, the Church of God in Christ, is one of the largest non-Catholic church expressions in the United States.[16]

The growing influence of migrant and diaspora communities. After the term *globalization* had caught the eye of ecclesiologists and missiologists, the focus then shifted to *migration*, then most recently to the phenomenon of *diaspora*[17] and, correspondingly, to *diaspora missiology*.[18] This includes the continuing debate about the implications of migrations and diasporas for religion.[19]

According to 2013 Pew Research Center data, of over 200 million migrants (roughly 3% of the world's population), about one-half are Christians; the United States houses most of them. The next largest group is Muslims (about one-fourth), followed by smaller groupings of other religious affiliations.[20] In terms of origins, migrants globally come (in order from most to least) from the Asia-Pacific region, Europe (and migrate mostly within Europe), Latin America and the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and North Africa. The destinations from most to least frequent are the United States, Europe, Australia, and the Arab states of the Persian Gulf.[21]

Due to a massive intake of migrants, American Christianity diversifies unprecedentedly fast. As is well known, Christianity of Hispanic backgrounds is becoming a major form of Catholic, Protestant, and Pentecostal/charismatic expressions. Significant also are the emerging Asian-descent communities. Combined with an already diverse and plural population, migration and diaspora

[15]James H. Evans Jr., *We Have Been Believers: An African-American Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 119-20.

[16]See the official website for the Church of God in Christ: www.cogic.org.

[17]For basics, see Stéphane Dufoix, *Diasporas*, trans. William Rodarmor (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).

[18]The basic guide (even among those who are critical of some of its methodological and material claims) is Enoch Wan, ed., *Diaspora Missiology: Theory, Methodology, and Practice* (Portland, OR: Institute of Diaspora Studies, Western Seminary, 2011).

[19]See Matthew Krabill and Allison Norton, "New Wine in Old Wineskins: A Critical Appraisal of Diaspora Missiology," *Missiology: An International Review* 43, no. 4 (2015): 442-55.

[20]A standard reference work is Stephen Castles, Mark J. Miller and Hein de Haas, *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, 5th ed. (New York: Guilford Press, 2014). A standard missiological analysis is Jehu J. Hanciles, *Beyond Christendom: Globalization, African Migration, and the Transformation of the West* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008).

[21]General migration data can be found in the continuously updated database of the Pew Research Center: www.pewresearch.org/topics/migration/; for religious migration data, see Pew Research Center, "Faith on the Move—the Religious Affiliation of International Migrants," *Religion & Public Life*, March 8, 2012, www.pewforum.org/2012/03/08/religious-migration-exec/.

make the United States a new kind of laboratory for diverse expressions of ecclesial existence.[22]

Although Muslims are the largest migrant group in Europe (unlike the United States), Christian migrants in Europe have already left their mark on and continue to challenge the old bulwarks of Christendom.[23] Particularly visible is the presence of Pentecostal/charismatic immigrant and diaspora communities both in the United States and in Europe, a significant number of those being of African descent.[24] As could be expected, the impact of migrants and diaspora folks on and within churches is a continuously debated issue.[25] Should they be considered a new catalyst for mission and energy for church life or a burden and threat?[26]

What about nondenominational and independent communities? While not limited to the North American context, what has come to be called nondenominational Christianity or independent churches is a particularly significant and ever-growing phenomenon in the United States. Generally speaking, nondenominational communities are known for not being aligned with either mainstream or Free Church traditions. Oftentimes, they do not identify themselves as part of a particular confessional tradition. Although almost all of them subscribe to biblical and conservative forms of faith, a significant number are also self-professed fundamentalists both theologically and culturally. That said, almost without exception the nondenominationalists and independents consider themselves Protestants.

A part of the conservative Protestant family of faith, a favorite term in the United States and more widely in the English-speaking world is *evangelical*. A highly contested term in the beginning of the third millennium, in its widest meaning evangelicalism embraces various kinds of Protestant movements with an emphasis on biblical orthodoxy, an often conservative social stance, and desire for evangelism and social concern.[27]

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[22]Peggy Levitt, *God Needs No Passport: Immigrants and the Changing American Religious Landscape* (New York: New Press, 2007).

[23]Jan A. B. Jongeneel, "The Mission of Migrant Churches in Europe," *Missiology: An International Review* 31, no. 1 (2003): 29-33.

[24]Frieder Ludwig and J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, eds., *African Christian Presence in the West: New Immigrant Congregations and Transnational Networks in North America and Europe* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2011).

[25]Dennis M. Doyle, Timothy J. Furry, and Pascal D. Bazzell, eds., *Ecclesiology and Exclusion: Boundaries of Being and Belonging in Postmodern Times* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2012).

[26]For basic issues and debates, see Elaine Padilla and Peter C. Phan, eds., *Contemporary Issues of Migration and Theology* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

[27]See Mark Labberton, ed., *Still Evangelical? Insiders Reconsider Political, Social, and Theological Meaning* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018).

Nondenominational churches are a rapidly growing segment of American Christianity. Pew Research Center reported that in 2014 their share of US Protestants was 13 percent, and the number is undoubtedly already higher at the time of this writing.[28] They are not confined to North America either. Pockets can be found, for example, in Singapore and Malaysia, where they are not necessarily imported from outside but are also homegrown.[29] Particularly strong appeal for nondenominational churches is felt among millennials, who are also drawn to postmodernism and other third-millennium global trends.

While it is risky to define too strictly an emerging, growing, and diversified phenomenon such as this, according to the Hartford Institute's Religion Research project, the independents and nondenominational communities "appeared similar in several ways to other theologically conservative, denominationally-aligned churches" such as evangelicals and Pentecostals in terms of their social status. That said,

> the nondenominational churches, however, are distinctively different in that they have considerably younger memberships, are located in more urban areas, and have far more racially mixed congregations than these other conservative churches. In addition, the independent churches had been established more recently and therefore have far less members born into the congregation or religious tradition than do the conservative denominational ones.[30]

The newest and most complex set of ecclesiastical developments is linked with late modern/postmodern cultures, electronic communications, and new "tribalism." Those trends will be highlighted below. Before that, a special focus on African American churches' ecclesiological vision is in order.

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[28]Pew Research Center, "America's Changing Religious Landscape," Appendix B: Classification of Protestant Denominations, *Religion & Public Life*, May 12, 2015, www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/appendix-b-classification-of-protestant-denominations/. Another rich, research-based database is "Nondenominational & Independent Congregations," Hartford Institute for Religion Research with a number of statistics, reports, and other materials, accessed June 27, 2020, http://hirr.hartsem.edu/cong/nondenom.html.

[29]Edmund Kee-Fook Chia, "Malaysia and Singapore," in *Christianities in Asia*, ed. Peter C. Phan (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011), 90-91.

[30]Scott Thumma, "What God Makes Free Is Free Indeed: Nondenominational Church Identity and Its Networks of Support," published version of a presentation at Religious Research Association annual meeting, October 1999, http://hirr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/thumma_article5.html.

BLACK CHURCHES' ECCLESIOLOGICAL VISION

A Black theology of liberation.[31] The title of the celebrated classic *A Black Theology of Liberation*, written originally in 1970 by the Grand Old Man of American Black theology, James H. Cone, illustrates the core of Black or African American theology:

> The function of theology is that of analyzing the meaning of . . . liberation for the oppressed so they can know that their struggle for political, social, and economic justice is consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Any message that is not related to the liberation of the poor in a society is not Christ's message. . . . In a society where persons are oppressed because they are *black*, Christian theology must be *black theology*.[32]

According to James H. Evans, another senior theologian in that community, "Black theology differs from traditional theology in much the same way that African American Christianity differs from the Christianity of Europe and the North Atlantic. Since the first Africans set foot on this soil, people of African descent have had a singularly unique experience in the New World." They came with their stories, inheritance, struggles, and dreams.[33]

Inspired by such classic works as Joseph R. Washington's *Black Religion* in 1964[34]—which provocatively contrasted Christianity with "Black religion" and denigrated Black spirituality as a form of despised folk religion—and the emergence of the civil rights movement beginning from the 1950s, the Black Power movement[35] and Black Christian Nationalism[36] arose. Black theology as a movement started to form itself from the mid-1960s.[37] Its deep roots in the sad, centuries-long history of slavery and exploitation and its enormous suffering and

[31]This section repeats materials from Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Doctrine of God: A Global Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 135-36.

[32]James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, twentieth anniv. ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1990), v ("Preface to the 1970 Edition").

[33]James H. Evans, *We Have Been Believers: An African-American Systematic Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 2. A massive recent resource regarding all aspects of Black theologies is Katie G. Cannon and Anthony B. Pinn, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of African American Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[34]Joseph R. Washington Jr., *Black Religion: The Negro and Christianity in the United States* (1964; repr., Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

[35]Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton, *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (New York: Random House, 1967).

[36]Albert B. Cleage Jr., *Black Christian Nationalism: New Directions for the Black Church* (New York: Morrow, 1972).

[37]For a short description, see Dwight N. Hopkins, *Introducing Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 7-12.

oppression form the context of Black theology. James Cone, J. Deotis Roberts, Gayraud S. Wilmore, and others represent the first stage of the movement; later female theologians—womanists such as Delores S. Williams, Kelly Brown Douglas, and Jacquelyn Grant—joined the expanding front of the theological movement.[38] Finally, collaboration between Black theologians and liberationists from other contexts, particularly from South Africa and South America, emerged.[39]

According to Cone, there are six sources for doing Black theology: Black experience of life under white oppression; Black history; Black culture, the self-expression of the Black community in music, art, literature, and other kinds of creative forms; revelation not only of a past event but also God's present redemptive activity on behalf of Blacks; Scripture; and church tradition.[40]

In search of Black ecclesiology. In chapter eleven, we looked briefly at Black women's (womanists') ecclesiological insights. This section provides a platform from which to look more widely at Black churches in the United States. In the words of J. H. Evans,

> One of the most perplexing problems in black theology is that of ecclesiology. Early black theologians articulated unique views of the meaning of God, the person and work of Christ, and the nature and destiny of humanity. However, no comprehensive theological statement on the identity and mission of the church found ready expression in nascent black theology. This does not mean that black theologians had nothing to say about the Africa-American church, but that the distinctiveness of the black church (as church) was assumed and therefore its life and work were used in theological argument as warrant or substantiation for black theology.[41]

Why so? Evans himself responds with reference to the heterogeneous nature of Black congregations. Some of these communities define themselves in terms

[38]See further, Delores S. Williams, "Black Theology and Womanist Theology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, ed. Dwight N. Hopkins and Edward P. Antonio (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), chap. 5.

[39]These various stages ("generations") are analyzed and discussed with full documentation in Hopkins, *Introducing Black Theology of Liberation*, chap. 2 ("first generation"), chap. 3 ("second generation"), and chap. 5 ("third generation"). See also Edward P. Antonio, "Black Theology and Liberation Theologies," in Hopkins and Antonio, *Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, chap. 3.

[40]Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, chap. 2.

[41]Evans, *We Have Been Believers*, 119. The two recent attempts to provide a Black ecclesiology, significantly, end up being descriptive of church life without much attention to the theological distinctiveness of the doctrine of the church among these communities: Jeremiah A. Wright, "Protestant Ecclesiology," in Hopkins and Antonio, *Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, chap. 13; and Cyprian Davis, "Roman Catholic Ecclesiology," in Hopkins and Antonio, *Cambridge Companion to Black Theology*, chap. 14.

of a denomination while others regard themselves as the true and authentic Black church. There are also other criteria, such as whether the nature of worship is authentically African American. The other reason has to do with the centrality of community in Black culture, to the point that "the normal doctrinal explanations for church formation are not sufficient. The Black church was not born primarily out of doctrinal disputes and heresy trials, but rather emerged out of deep-seated cultural tendencies toward solidarity and association among African-American Christians."[42]

Both of the arguments above explaining the difficulty in discerning an African American ecclesiology touch this complex and foundational question: What is the Black church? This is not an easy question to tackle even in the United States, let alone if we speak more inclusively of the Black church also in the Caribbean and Great Britain, and elsewhere in the African diaspora.[43] Focusing here on the US context, the designation Black church "is a generic one, seeking to denote and describe particular faith communities in which black leadership, culture, traditions, experience and spirituality represent the norm and from which white, Euro-American traditions and expressions are largely absent."[44] It is intimately connected with the struggle against racism, oppression, and resistance by the majority culture and the church.

The American Black church manifests itself in a number of denominations, affiliations, and constituencies and is not easy to describe comprehensively by an outsider. The most well-known denominations are the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, the several Baptist conventions, the Christian Methodist Church, and Church of God in Christ, as well as a number of other Black Pentecostal communities.[45]

Toward a Black ecclesiology. Even though a pronounced ecclesiology among African American communities may still be in the making, it is possible to outline some general characteristics, including the following:

[42]Evans, *We Have Been Believers*, 119-20 (120).

[43]Anthony G. Reddie, "Black Ecclesiologies," in *RCCC*, 445-49, provides a globally inclusive categorization of Black churches.

[44]Reddie, "Black Ecclesiologies," 445.

[45]For an accessible resource, consult Anne H. Pinn and Anthony B. Pinn, *Fortress Introduction to Black Church History* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002). For standard histories of the Black church in the United States, consult the following: Carter G. Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church* (Washington, DC: Associated Publishers, 1921; available as an ebook: Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library, 2018); E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964); and C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence Mamiya, *The Black Church in African-American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990).

- Adherence to the Bible
- Distinctively Black worship style with music, movement, shouting, and other emotive expressions
- Powerful preaching, a hallmark of these communities
- The centrality of prayer[46]

As important as these features may be, there is no way to describe the nature and distinctiveness of the Black church in the United States without reference to a robust and solid liberationist agenda. Recall that from early on Black ministers became socially and politically active—during the times when most white pastors were not.[47] This orientation to struggle for equality, justice, and opportunity goes back to the very roots of the movement: "In its nascent form, rather than focus on the internal issues that are traditionally the subject matter of theological discourse on the church, black ecclesiology focused on the relation between the church and the world."[48] Cone even calls the Black church "a revolutionary community."[49] As a result, "Liberation is not just what the church *does*, it is what the church *is*."[50] Out of this liberative existence spring three interrelated tasks for the church:

- Proclaiming "the reality of divine liberation," which is nothing else but the New Testament gospel
- Sharing in the struggle for liberation
- Living out fellowship as "a visible manifestation that the gospel is a reality"[51]

To express its distinctive nature and the passion for helping African Americans in the hostile and inhospitable environment of the United States, a number of metaphors came to be used of the Black church. One of the most often applied nomenclatures was "the company of the elect," a chosen people of God, often applied to the people of God in the Bible. Another choice metaphor was "the family of God" in which people rejected and often ridiculed by the majority society found belonging, identity, and mission. The church family served as a refuge. Yet another, closely related to the first, employs nationalistic tones: In "the

[46]Reddie, "Black Ecclesiologies," 449-54.
[47]Evans, *We Have Been Believers*, 122.
[48]Evans, *We Have Been Believers*, 128; so also Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 132-35.
[49]Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 130.
[50]Evans, *We Have Been Believers*, 135.
[51]Cone, *Black Theology of Liberation*, 130-31.

nation of God," Black men and women found "the bond that is created among a people based on a common history, common values, and common political aims."[52]

CHURCHES FOR POSTMODERN TIMES: EMERGING CHURCHES AND FRESH EXPRESSIONS

As mentioned earlier, among the distinctive ecclesiological experiments and explorations in the United States belongs also the phenomenon of the Emerging (or Emergent) churches. While no longer uniquely an American experience, its roots and major global influence certainly can be found on this continent.

The postmodern condition.[53] What would the church look like in the postmodern world—a world in which the project of modernity (Enlightenment), though not left behind totally, is challenged, revised, and reconstructed?[54] Titles such as *ChurchNext* (2000) and *Liquid Church* (2002) testify to this ecclesial "post" existence.[55] Or consider this: *The Church Faces Death: Ecclesiology in a Post-Modern Context*.[56]

One of the "turns" of late (or post-)modernity has to do with a turn to relationality and community,[57] in defeat of modernity's hyperindividualism and autonomy.[58] In keeping with late modernism's dynamic and nondualistic

[52]Evans, *We Have Been Believers*, 128-34 (131).

[53]The subhead comes from the first part of the title of the programmatic, well-known book by Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

[54]See chap. 10 in David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991); Gerard Mannion, "Postmodern Ecclesiologies," in *RCCC*, 127-52; and more widely in Gerard Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007).

[55]Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000); Pete Ward, *Liquid Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002).

[56]Michael Jinkins, *The Church Faces Death: Ecclesiology in a Post-Modern Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999). See also Myron B. Penner, ed., *Christianity and the Postmodern Turn: Six Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2005); and Brian D. McLaren, *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006).

[57]I am indebted in this section (including for several bibliographic details) to the extended ecclesiological reflection on the effects of postmodernity through the lens of relationality and communion by Stanley J. Grenz, "Ecclesiology," in *Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 252-68.

[58]For the well-known analysis of the loss of "social capital," that is, networks and relationships lost in the hyperindividualized world of ours, see Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); for a constructive proposal to heal the problem, see Robert D. Putnam and Lewis M. Feldstein, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2003). For defining discussions, see further, Robert A. Nisbet and Robert G. Perrin, *The Social Bond*, 2nd ed. (New York: Knopf, 1977); and Derek L. Phillips, *Looking Backward: A Critical Appraisal of Communitarian Thought* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).

explanations, the turn to community does not mean neglecting the individual person; importantly, there is talk about the "person-focus" in communitarianism as well.[59] For some time *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*, by the late sociologist (of religion) Robert N. Bellah and his colleagues, has been a virtual bestseller in the academic world. The book is a critique of destructive individualism in American society, including religious communities, and a manifesto for a new kind of communitarianism in which persons can flourish.[60]

Emerging/Emergent churches as ecclesiological responses.[61] A few decades ago, ecclesiologists spoke of the baby-boomer generation. It was served by the so-called seeker-friendly suburban-based churches that catered to all kinds of needs of individuals and families.[62] Thereafter, "purpose-driven" churches and similar expressions caught our attention.[63] Most recently, these kinds of models, while still having an appeal with their own generation, are less popular with Generation X and other postmodern generations.[64]

The most significant ecclesiological response in the postmodern culture is the phenomenon known as the "Emerging church" in the United States and as "fresh expressions of the church" in the United Kingdom.[65] Highly active in virtual networks and ways of connecting, their ecclesiologies are fluid.[66] Nor do they always meet in sanctuaries but may instead rent comedy clubs or pubs. Deeply missional in orientation with a focus on practices and everyday Christian service, they do not typically bother to delve into theological debates about ecclesiology, although many of their leaders may have solid academic training in religion.

So far the most thorough study—ethnographic as well as theological—on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, *The Emerging Churches*, by American missiologists Eddie Gibbs and Ryan Bolger, suggests that Emerging churches (1) identify

[59]Grenz, "Ecclesiology," 253-54.
[60]Robert N. Bellah et al. *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986).
[61]The section draws from Kärkkäinen, *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World*, 430-31.
[62]For the Willow Creek Community Church (Barrington, IL), see www.willowcreek.org/.
[63]The concept was launched by Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Church: Growth Without Compromising Your Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).
[64]See George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society: An Investigation into the Changing Character of Contemporary Social Life*, rev. ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge, 2000).
[65]Ryan K. Bolger, ed., *The Gospel After Christendom: New Voices, New Cultures, New Expressions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012).
[66]See Tony Jones, *The Church Is Flat: The Relational Ecclesiology of the Emerging Church Movement* (Minneapolis: JoPa Group, 2011).

with the life of Jesus, (2) transform the secular realm, and (3) live highly communal lives. Because of these three activities, they (4) welcome the stranger, (5) serve with generosity, (6) participate as producers, (7) create as created beings, (8) lead as a body, and (9) take part in spiritual activities.[67] The church life and the emerging theological activity among these communities are an interesting mix of old and new. On the one hand, they harken back to some aspects of sacramentality and mysticism, as well as neomonasticism;[68] on the other hand, they desire to connect with the latest moves and techniques in postmodern culture and ways of communication. If it is true that at the center of postmodernity lie a number of radical shifts that have implications for how we relate to each other and communicate, then it looks like Emerging churches are connecting with the present culture. Just think of the moves

> from rational to experiential, . . . from representative to participatory, . . . from word-based to image based, . . . and from neither individual nor communal to a hybrid of both called connective.[69]

The basic difference between the United States–based Emerging churches and United Kingdom fresh expressions churches is that whereas the former is usually separatist, each forming its own community, in the latter category most communities are birthed by and stay within the Church of England (and other mainline denominations).[70]

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[67]Eddie Gibbs and Ryan K. Bolger, *Emerging Churches: Creating Christian Community in Postmodern Cultures* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 45. See also Gerardo Marti and Gladys Ganiel, *The Deconstructed Church: Understanding Emerging Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), available online at doi: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199959884.001.0001. Highly useful are the following: Ray S. Anderson, *An Emergent Theology for Emerging Churches* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006); Tony Jones, *The New Christians: Dispatches from the Emergent Frontier* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008); Scot McKnight, Peter Rollins, Kevin Corcoran, and Jason Clark, *Church in the Present Tense: A Candid Look at What's Emerging* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2011); Patrick Oden, *The Transformative Church: New Ecclesial Models and the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015); and Leonard Sweet, ed., *The Church in Emerging Culture: Five Perspectives* (EI Cajon, CA: EmergentYS, 2003).

[68]Graham Cray, Ian Mobsby, and Aaron Kennedy, eds., *New Monasticism as Fresh Expression of Church* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 2010); and Steven J. L. Croft, Ian Mobsby, and Stephanie Spellers, eds., *Ancient Faith, Future Mission: Fresh Expressions in the Sacramental Tradition* (New York: Seabury, 2010).

[69]Leonard Sweet, *Carpe Mañana: Is Your Church Ready to Seize Tomorrow?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 33. I found the citation in Brian McLaughlin, "An Emerging Ecclesiology: The Ecclesiology of the Emerging Church Movement" (ThM thesis, Calvin Theological Seminary, 2007), 16. See also Scott Bader-Saye, "Improvising Church: An Introduction to the Emerging Church Conversation," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 6, no. 1 (2006): 12-23.

[70]See the Fresh Expressions website: www.freshexpressions.org.uk/about/. The definitive source is the Church of England report "Mission-Shaped Church." For discussion, see Louise Nelstrop and Martyn

As the name *Emerging* suggests, it is yet to be seen—both by its critics[71] and by its supporters[72]—what the future holds for these new ecclesiological expressions. The word is out there that perhaps the movement is running out of steam or that having "emerged" it may well be swallowed, so to speak, by more established movements.[73] Others see its influence extending into the future.[74] Unlike with a number of other new ecclesiastical phenomena, at the time of this writing, no solid and representative research surveys could be found to look at the longer-term trends of this movement.

After the survey of historical and "mainline" ecclesiologies in part one and "contextual" and "global" in part two, the next main section of the book focuses on key ecclesiological issues such as mission, ministry, liturgy, sacraments, and ecumenism.

Percy, eds., *Evaluating Fresh Expressions: Explorations in Emerging Church* (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 2008).

[71]See, e.g., Donald A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church: Understanding a Movement and Its Implications* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005); and Robert Webber, ed., *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches: Five Perspectives* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007). For an assessment of and response to the critique, see Scot McKnight, "Five Streams of the Emerging Church," *Christianity Today*, January 19, 2007.

[72]See Doug Pagitt and Tony Jones, eds., *An Emergent Manifesto of Hope* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007).

[73]See Craig Nash, "Voices: Whatever Happened to the Emerging Church?," *Baptist Standard*, January 10, 2018, www.baptiststandard.com/opinion/voices/voices-whatever-happened-emerging-church.

[74]See Beth Seversen, *Not Done Yet: Reaching and Keeping Unchurched Emerging Adults* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), for how elements promoted by the emergent movement are still connecting with young adults.

PART THREE

THE LIFE AND MISSION OF THE CHURCH

ORIENTATION TO PART THREE

The Ministry of the Missional Church

After having surveyed some main ecclesiological traditions and insights of defining ecclesiologists in the history of theology and in the contemporary world, including a closer look at the global and contextual diversity, the third main part of the book will focus on key themes and issues in the doctrine of church. First, we will consider the meaning and implications of mission for our understanding of the church. In other words, we are looking not only at the *being* and *nature* of the church but also at its ultimate *task* in the world. In contemporary understanding, mission and church are so closely interrelated that neither one can be spoken of without the other—except that because of the limitations of the human mind, only one can be taken up at a time! As a result, nowadays we speak of the "missionary church" or the "church as mission." This missionary church has a ministry to carry on the many tasks to be accomplished. These tasks will be carefully considered.

Second, from the mission of the church, it is natural to move to consider more carefully and in detail the theology of the ministry and ministers in the local communities, and the related issue of the governance of the church. Although trained, full-time ministers are essential for the ministry of the church, current ecclesiology rightly places emphasis on the whole people of God as the "minister" of the church, on behalf of whom, and in whose service, the ordained persons serve. A highly disputed question in the contemporary church has to do with access of both men and women into ministry; hence, the question of the ordination of women is looked at in some detail as well.

The following two chapters in part three take a look at two interrelated central and wide ecclesiological issues: the worship (liturgy) and sacraments of the church. Notwithstanding dramatic differences in the form and organization of worship, all churches include in their regular gatherings prayer, adoration, preaching of the Word, and sacraments (called ordinances in some traditions). The way the liturgy and worship are carried out in different Christian traditions and in diverse global settings is not only a matter of taste, so to speak; it is also a pastoral-theological issue. Hence, a solid theology of worship is called for—the third topic. A burning issue with regard to liturgy and ministry has to do with the ways we address God: should we continue male-dominant language, or is there a need and a possibility for an inclusive approach?

The fourth main topic has to do with sacraments (or ordinances). While the older churches (Orthodox and Roman Catholic) celebrate seven sacraments, for all other Christians the two sacraments of water baptism and the Lord's Supper (Eucharist) are the norm. Therefore, a close scrutiny of the theology and meaning of them will be provided.

Finally, the challenging and complex issue of the unity of the church will be taken up at the end of part three. Whereas there are no churches that—at least in principle—would not hope for the unity of the one church of Christ on earth, there are radically differing views of what unity might mean and how to achieve it. This is the dilemma of ecumenism.

Part three is widely indebted to my recent comprehensive writing on the doctrine of the church, *Hope and Community,* volume 5 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), part two: "Community"; and *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), chapter nine, "Church." Each chapter will also list more precisely the specific locations from which the current text gleans. I am grateful to Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. for letting me take advantage of these two earlier publications.

13

THE CHURCH AS MISSION AND THE TASKS OF THE MISSIONARY CHURCH

THE MISSIONAL NATURE OF THE CHURCH

The church is missionary by its nature. It is an ecumenical consensus that the church is missionary by nature.[1] This means that mission is not only one of the tasks of the Christian community; rather, everything the church does—and, indeed, the church *is*—has to do with mission. But what does it mean to say this?

Against common intuition, the meaning of the term *mission* is not unambiguous, and, indeed, it has changed quite dramatically over the centuries. Whereas until the Reformation it was used in trinitarian theology to refer to the "sending" (from Latin: *missio*) of the Son by the Father, thereafter it was used to speak of the Catholic evangelization of non-Catholic peoples, mainly Protestants rather than non-Christians. Only in modern times did it adopt a meaning virtually synonymous with *foreign mission*. Finally, in recent decades its meaning in theology and missiology has become comprehensive and inclusive, referring to the basic nature of the church as a "sent" community, as Vatican II put it: "The pilgrim Church is missionary by her very nature."[2]

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[1]This chapter is indebted to Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Hope and Community*, vol. 5 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), chap. 16; and idem, *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), 408-16, 471-77.

[2]*Ad Gentes* (Decree on the Mission Activity of the Church, Vatican II), December 7, 1965, #2, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19651207_ad-gentes_en.html.

That said, the original meaning of the term *mission* is still not left behind; it is just put to another use in the contemporary missional understanding of the church. Calling the Christian community missional by its very nature is another way of saying that the church is a *sent* community. The Christian community participates in the saving sending process of the triune God because the Father has sent his Son in the power of the Spirit to usher in the kingdom of God. Here we come to the foundational topic discussed in the very beginning of this textbook, namely, the kingdom of God. Jesus' sending by his Father in the power of the Spirit meant the coming of the kingdom on earth and the beginning of the time of its final coming in the eschaton. The church is graciously invited by the triune God to be part of this saving process. The church's mission derives from and participates in this divine project.

Apart from terminology, in the beginning of the third millennium robust objections are being leveled against the work of mission and the idea of the church's missional nature. These objections have to do mainly with the problems of the past—Christendom and colonialism. Let us take a closer look at them.

Christendom and colonialism as threats to mission. We are still considering the grave implications of the rise of Christendom as a result of which the church shifted "from a marginal position to a dominant institution in society," a religio-political force rather than a gospel-driven pilgrim people endowed with a mission to all, particularly to the marginalized.[3] It is not of course literally true that "the Christendom model of church may be characterized as *church without mission*"[4] in light of the numerous missionaries and mission agencies, particularly of the various Catholic orders, throughout the medieval and later church. However, it is undeniable that the idea of the church as mission was nearly lost with the establishment of the church as custodian of the religion of the empire.

Similarly to Christendom, colonialism seeks power and earthly influence. Just think of the massive occupation of land and resources in the Majority World by the Western powers beginning from the seventeenth century. Colonialism is related to the sins of racial discrimination, economic poverty, and political marginalization. In its extreme form, namely slavery, it means making human beings a commodity. Sadly, colonialism is not limited to Western powers, as well-known

[3]Michael W. Goheen, *"As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You": J. E. Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology* (Zoetermeer: Boekencentrum, 2000), 2-3.

[4]Wilbert R. Shenk, *Write the Vision: The Church Renewed*, Christian Mission and Modern Culture (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 35 (emphasis original).

examples from the history of Asia tell us (Japan's subjugation of Korea or the over half-millennium-long imperium of the Ottoman Empire).

Although there is no denying that the Christian church was involved with the colonial expansion of modern times, that should not lead to uncritical and unnuanced debunking of modern missions, nor of the missionary nature of the Christian community. In light of the newest missions history, there is no doubt that missionaries also helped cultivate local languages ("mission as translation"[5]) as well as empower local economies and cultures by declining to further colonialists' agendas.[6] That same missionary translation also empowered Indigenous resistance to colonialism.

The evolution of the missionary consciousness among various churches. Let us now clarify the meaning and implications of designating the Christian community as missionary by nature. As mentioned, the current consensus holds that mission is not only one task—perhaps a department or a program—of the church. Rather, as the citation above from Vatican II stated, the church exists as mission. Importantly, several streams of missiological thinking coalesced in this new acknowledgment of the church's missionary nature.

A key role in the evolution and dissemination of this idea was played by the late United Reformed bishop Lesslie Newbigin, a long-term missionary to India. Having returned to his homeland, England, after four decades of missionary service in Asia, he was shocked at the lack of the church's testimony in a former Christian bulwark. Counterintuitively, he (among some other theologians and church leaders) began to call the West (Europe and the United States) a "mission field" as a result of which all churches everywhere should adopt a missional approach and existence.[7] In other words, mission was not only something the church did "out there" in the former mission fields; mission was the work of the Christian community here and now. One of the offshoots from this insight and experience was the establishment of an ecumenical network and research initiative by the name Gospel and Our Culture; soon it was followed by similar networks in the United States and beyond.[8]

[5]Lamin O. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, 2nd ed. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2009).

[6]Brian Stanley, "Conversion to Christianity: The Colonization of the Mind?," *International Review of Mission* 92, no. 366 (2003): 315-31.

[7]The best resource to get into basic ideas is Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989).

[8]Introduction, activities, and resources can be found at the Gospel and Our Culture Network website, www.gocn.org, accessed June 28, 2020.

In the American context, the 1998 book titled *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America*, a collection of essays by representatives of the Gospel and Our Culture Network, made an effort to bring World Council of Churches' discussions of *missio Dei* (the mission of God) and Newbigin's missionary insights to bear on North America.[9] The book urges the church to move away from a Christendom model that focuses on maintenance to a missional way of life based on outreach and expansion.[10]

That understanding helps correct the mistaken notion of a "mission-less theology and confession."[11] The missional understanding of the church, as mentioned above, tightly integrates ecclesiality (the being of the church) with its mission. Similarly, this understanding unites mission and the marks of the church. In the words of Darrell Guder:

> By "apostolicity," we do not merely mean "the church descended from the apostles," as important as that is. We mean "apostolicity" in the active sense of the New Testament verb, meaning "to be sent out," and the noun "apostle" as the "sent-out" one. The community formed by the Holy Spirit through the initial apostolic witness is called to be sent.[12]

The second mark, catholicity, would remind the church of "the message . . . to be made known to the ends of the earth, . . . [to be] translatable into the life and experience of every ethnicity, as concretely demonstrated at the first Pentecost."[13]

The theological conviction birthed among WCC churches about mission as *missio Dei*, God's mission, encapsulates this vision and is now widely embraced. This idea of course lies behind the anchoring of the church and its mission in the sending of the triune God. While universally embraced by all traditions, a healthy debate has been going on for decades about the focus and emphasis of the church's missionary nature and calling. The debate relates to the agenda provided by the

[9]Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).

[10]See Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st-Century Church*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013); and Craig Van Gelder and Dwight J. Zscheile, *The Missional Church in Perspective: Mapping Trends and Shaping the Conversation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011).

[11]Darrell L. Guder, "The Nicene Marks in a Post-Christendom Church," in *Called to Witness: Doing Missional Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 78-89, www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/reformingministry/pdfs/nicene_marks.pdf. Page numbering in the online version (pp. 1-16), which is used in the notes, differs from that in the published article; here it is p. 7.

[12]Guder, "Nicene Marks in a Post-Christendom Church," 9.

[13]Guder, "Nicene Marks in a Post-Christendom Church," 10.

world in relation to God's mission: Should the missional existence of the church be guided primarily by the agenda provided by the world with its socioeconomic, racial, gender, environmental, and other issues, or should it flow primarily from the mandate of proclamation, worship, witnessing, and serving the needs of the people? Slowly and painfully, a loosely defined middle stance has emerged. Simply stated, it seeks to balance both perspectives: it is not either-or but rather both/and. Both the world and the gospel set the agenda, but the gospel is the ultimate norm and criterion. If it isn't, we are not talking about distinctively Christian mission. And as will be detailed in the next section, this vision is conceived in a most holistic and world-embracing manner.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL MISSION AND MINISTRY OF THE CHURCH

As established, the church's existence as a sent community is rooted in the salvific sending process of the triune God, the sending God, in whose sending the church may graciously participate for the sake of the coming of God's kingdom. Throughout the ages, it has been typical to speak of at least four basic dimensions of the church's mission and ministry:

1. Edification and nurturing fellowship
2. Worship with word and sacraments and prayer
3. Proclamation and evangelization
4. Social ministry

While that template is still useful, also emerging is a more multidimensional and diverse ecumenical conception of the church's mission and ministry. It can be presented in many ways; the following is one representative description of the multidimensional nature of the church's ministry, which is also based on and nurtured by regular worship with word and sacraments, as well as common prayer and care for each other:

- Mission as evangelism and common witness
- Mission as healing and restoration
- Mission as social justice and equality
- Mission as reconciliation and peace building

Let us take a brief look at each of these dimensions, with the understanding that prayer, worship, liturgy, and sacraments will be discussed in the following chapters.

Evangelization, proselytism, and common witness. While evangelism, reaching out to those who either have never heard the gospel—or, even if they have heard, for some reason or another have drifted way—has always been a central task of the church, it is also true that throughout the centuries the church has become complacent about the task. Fortunately, in recent days we are testifying to a widespread resurgence of evangelism, not only in younger churches in whose life this task has always been vital but also in older churches, especially in the Roman Catholic Church.[14] In contemporary ecumenical understanding, "it is at the heart of Christian mission to foster the multiplication of local congregations in every human community [as the] planting of the seed of the Gospel will bring forward a people gathered around the Word and sacraments and called to announce God's revealed purpose."[15] There is wide agreement that since the gospel is meant for every human person, everyone has the right to hear it. Evangelization should be done in a holistic manner, following the example of Jesus.

Similarly to the term *mission*, the term *evangelism* (or *evangelization*) had not been used in Christian parlance in its current sense until the nineteenth century. And this notwithstanding that behind it is the biblical term *euangelion* (and related words), literally "good news." Of course the evangelistic work itself was carried on beginning from the New Testament times and throughout history.

While engaging in evangelization, a number of pertinent, interrelated theological issues routinely arise, including proselytism and common witness. These kinds of questions call for a careful consideration in our times: What are the role and justification of conversion and repentance—or does evangelism with that goal represent a perverted power play? What, if anything, is the difference between evangelistic persuasion with the aim of initiating a response and proselytism? Under what conditions could Christians from various churches collaborate in giving a common witness?

Over the issue of proselytism, there has been a vibrant debate and discussion for many decades. There has been, and still is, tension between historic churches and younger churches with enthusiastic evangelizing activities, as the latter are routinely labeled proselytizers. Fortunately, careful and painstaking ecumenical work has yielded constructive and helpful guidelines and agreements, including

[14]Ralph Martin and Peter Williamson, eds., *John Paul II and the New Evangelization* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995).

[15]World Council of Churches, *Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982).

important collaboration between Catholics and the WCC. An important WCC statement titled *Towards Common Witness: A Call to Adopt Responsible Relationships in Mission and to Renounce Proselytism* (TCW) in 1997 is an invitation to a wide participation of Christian communities.

First of all, what does the term *proselytism* mean? From its original meaning denoting conversion of non-Jews to Judaism, it came to be used of conversion to any other religion, and finally arrived at its current ecumenical meaning, namely, an unjustified and unfair means of trying to lure a church member to transfer to another Christian community in ways that "contradict the spirit of Christian love, violate the freedom of the human person and diminish trust in the Christian witness of the church."[16] Hence, rather than genuine evangelism, proselytism is "the corruption of witness."[17] Some of the features of proselytism in contrast to authentic evangelism include "unfair criticism or caricaturing of the doctrines, beliefs and practices of another church without attempting to understand or enter into dialogue on those issues, . . . presenting one's own church or confession as 'the *true* church' and its teachings as 'the *right* faith' and the only way to salvation . . . offering humanitarian aid or educational opportunities as an inducement to join another church," and similar unethical acts.[18] While all churches should condemn and reject these kinds of proselytizing activities and attitudes,[19] it is equally important not to confuse authentic evangelism and common witness with proselytism.

What, then, constitutes authentic Christian witness and evangelism? According to the ecumenical consensus, "common witness is constructive: it enriches, challenges, strengthens and builds up solid Christian relationships and fellowship" instead of the proselytizing "counterwitness," which "brings about tensions, scandal and division, and is thus a destabilizing factor for the witness of the church of Christ in the world." Furthermore, as long as the person decides to move from one Christian community to another out of one's own volition and

[16]Quoted from the Sergiev Possad consultation on "Mission and Proselytism." World Council of Churches, "II. Proselytism—A Counterwitness," in *Towards Common Witness: A Call to Adopt Responsible Relationships in Mission and to Renounce Proselytism*, September 19, 1997, www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/towards-common-witness.

[17]Quoted from "Revised Report on Christian Witness, Proselytism and Religious Liberty in the Setting of the WCC," in Minutes and Reports of the Central Committee of the WCC, St. Andrews, Scotland, August 1960, Geneva, 1960, p. 214. World Council of Churches, "II. Proselytism—A Counterwitness."

[18]World Council of Churches, "II. Proselytism—A Counterwitness" (emphases original).

[19]See the important Pentecostal contribution by Cecil M. Robeck Jr., "Mission and the Issue of Proselytism," *International Bulletin of Mission Research* 20, no. 1 (1996): 2-8.

freedom, charges of proselytism should not be leveled.[20] And, as affirmed by dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostal churches, "all Christians have the right to bear witness to the Gospel before all people, including other Christians.[21]

Although all churches have the right and the responsibility to engage in the work of evangelism, it is a task way too big to be carried on by any individual community. It is a shared task of all Christian communities. Here the phrase "common witness" applies: Christians and Christian communities collaborating with each other in giving a credible testimony to the gospel, "standing together and sharing together in witness to our common faith"—be it proclamation, worship, service, or evangelism in concert.[22]

Healing and restoration. Unlike in the early church of New Testament times, including the ministry of Jesus himself and his first followers, healing ministry has not been the hallmark of Christian mission for a long time, nor does healing occupy any place in standard theological discussions.[23] This is truly astonishing in light of the fact that healing and exorcism play an important role in the New Testament. Jesus was both a preacher/teacher and an itinerant healer and exorcist. Healings and deliverances acted as signs of the approaching righteous rule of God.[24] That work was continued by the early church. In the book of Acts, healings (and exorcisms) were a regular activity alongside prayer, liturgy, sacraments, and missionary outreach (Acts 5:16; 8:7; 13:6-12; 16:18; among others).[25] Importantly, the same focus continues in current church life in the Global South and among Pentecostal/charismatic communities globally.

While marginal, healing was of course never totally ignored in the history of the church's missional existence. Indeed, there is a great diversity of ways the church has continued this mandate:

- In the *"confrontational" model*, the emphasis is on liberty and defeat of powers of evil, as evident in some leading church fathers (Irenaeus,

[20]World Council of Churches, "II. Proselytism—A Counterwitness."
[21]*Evangelization, Proselytism, and Common Witness* (Report from the Fourth Phase of the International Dialogue Between the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders), 1997, ##94-95 (94), www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/pentecostals/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_1990-1997_evangelization-proselytism-common-witness_en.html.
[22]*Evangelization, Proselytism, and Common Witness*, #118.
[23]Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), chap. 9.
[24]Amanda Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 21.
[25]Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity*, 3.

Tertullian, Origen), as well as among some key figures of the nineteenth-century healing movements (such as the Reformed theologian J. C. Blumhardt), and a number of healing evangelists of recent times (John Wimber and others).

- The *"intercessory" model* calls upon the saints to intervene on behalf of the sick and suffering; this model is widespread throughout Orthodox and Catholic traditions.
- Closely related is the *"reliquarial" model*, in which relics are believed to have curative powers; this practice goes back to healing handkerchiefs and aprons touched by the apostles. The famous miracles at Saint Medard and pilgrimages to the Lady of Fatima's site represent this tradition.[26]
- The *"incubational" model* is related to the long history of establishing sanitariums, hospitals, and other "healing rooms" for patients for a longer period of restoration.[27]

Focusing on the contemporary scene, we can speak of "two paradigms for divine healing." For the "healing evangelists," there is typically an expectation of an instantaneous recovery. Typically, the charismatically endowed healer is the instrument. Even though the "pastoral healers" believe no less in instantaneous restoration of health, they are also open to gradual processes of healing. Here the healer's role (or that of a group of healers) is less spectacular.[28]

A predominantly sacrament-oriented approach to healing is central in some Christian traditions, particularly Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Anglicanism;[29] in others, charismatic gifts and hope for instantaneous healing are more typical, as in Pentecostal/charismatic movements.[30] With the expansion of Christianity to the Global South beginning from the

[26]For the latter, see the official Vatican endorsement and guidance: John Paul II, *The Message of Fatima* (Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith), 2000, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20000626_message-fatima_en.html.

[27]Ronald A. N. Kydd, *Healing Through the Centuries: Models for Understanding* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998). With all the emphasis on various types of divine healing, beginning from early Christianity, medical sciences and hospitals have been dear to Christian tradition (Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity*, 51-53).

[28]Pavel Hejzlar, *Two Paradigms for Divine Healing: Fred F. Bosworth, Kenneth E. Hagin, Agnes Sanford, and Francis MacNutt in Dialogue* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[29]For the importance of sacraments in healing, see the Orthodox George Mathew Nalunnakkal, "Come Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile: Called in Christ to Be Reconciling and Healing Communities," *International Review of Mission* 94, no. 372 (2005): 7-19.

[30]Kimberly Ervin Alexander, *Pentecostal Healing: Models in Theology and Practice* (Dorset, UK: Deo, 2006).

early twentieth century, healing practices, approaches, and theological interpretations are further diversifying.[31]

Fortunately, the main ecumenical players such as the WCC have developed a keen interest in the topic of healing, restoration, and deliverance and are producing highly useful guidelines and suggestions.[32] Wisely, the recent document produced in collaboration among the Vatican, WCC, and evangelicals advises regarding "discernment in ministries of healing" that "as an integral part of their witness to the gospel, Christians exercise ministries of healing. They are called to exercise discernment as they carry out these ministries, fully respecting human dignity and ensuring that the vulnerability of people and their need for healing are not exploited."[33]

While affirming the importance of healing and restoration to Christian mission and the church's ministry, it is essential to seek a balanced and solid theology of healing in order to avoid liabilities and, in some cases, even abuses. Although faith and healing are correlated in the biblical testimonies, there is no fixed formula like some "prosperity theology" advocates believe; they speak of a "name it and claim it" technique in which the believing person is supposed to merely "claim" healing by virtue of true faith. In the case that healing does not take place, the sick person may be blamed. In contrast, in the New Testament cases of healings, at times the faith (of the one healed) is mentioned, at other times it is friends' faith that counts, and every now and then faith is not mentioned at all. Second, although atonement, the reconciliation achieved by the triune God through the incarnation, cross, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, lays the foundation for healing and restoration, there is no kind of automatic healing-in-atonement formula that assumes every ailment is cured for every believing person. This is another fallacy of the healers working in the camp of the "prosperity gospel." Rather, the processes of decay and death are at work with every

[31]See further Porterfield, *Healing in the History of Christianity*, chap. 5; and Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), chap. 5 (including also exorcisms).

[32]Christian Medical Commission, *Healing and Wholeness: The Churches' Role in Health* (Geneva: WCC, 1990); and Jacques Matthey, ed., "The Healing Ministry of the Church," in *"You Are the Light of the World": Statements on Mission by the World Council of Churches, 1980–2005* (Geneva: WCC, 2005), 127-62, www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/you-are-the-light-of-the-world-statements-on-mission-by-the-world-council-of-churches-1980-2005.

[33]World Council of Churches, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, World Evangelical Alliance, "Principles," #5, in *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World: Recommendations for Conduct*, June 28, 2011, www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/christian-identity-in-pluralistic-societies/christian-witness-in-a-multi-religious-world.

generation of men and women, whether Christians or not, until the work of reconciliation finds fulfillment in the eschaton.

In correcting both of these misconceptions, the healings (and exorcisms) in the New Testament serve as signs of the coming kingdom of God in the eschaton, as was evident in Jesus' ministry. These signs point to eschatological consummation when death and decay will be removed and all sicknesses and bondages defeated. As an essential part of the sign function, healings and deliverances in this age are temporary, as every cured person will eventually die of a sickness or fatal event. Only with the eschatological consummation will signs give way to fullness and completion.[34]

On the other side of the spectrum, those churches that fail to include healing in their ministry, whatever the stated reason might be, should be encouraged and advised to correct that omission. While failing to engage healing certainly eliminates mistakes, it also results in a reductionist notion of the promises of the gospel. Finally, as much as the church should work for healing and restoration, Christian community should also equally care for those who continue to suffer and whose ailments are not being cured.[35]

Social justice and pursuit of equality. Alongside spiritual activities such as prayer, proclamation, counseling, celebration of the sacraments, and the like, the Christian community also cares for social, political, and economic concerns. This is not the mandate only for liberation theologians—a topic discussed in chapter eight—as much as their tireless work toward raising awareness might have contributed to the topic. Social concern is based on and derives from the gospel's holistic promise of salvation and shalom. The African theologian Gabriel Oyedele Abe puts it well: "The true gospel message of Jesus Christ should inspire theologians . . . to rescue the afflicted and liberate the oppressed, the victims of injustice. All forms of dominant inhuman and unchristian attitudes and structures which cause human suffering and agony should be analysed and vigorously combated for effective salvation of all."[36]

The missional community participates in the liberative work for its own sake; it is the right and Christian thing to do. At the same time, "being aware that all

[34]For a detailed discussion with documentation, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Spirit and Salvation*, vol. 4 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 368-85.
[35]For a detailed discussion, see Kärkkäinen, *Spirit and Salvation*, chap. 12.
[36]Gabriel Oyedele Abe, "Redemption, Reconciliation, Propitiation: Salvation Terms in an African Milieu," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 95 (1996): 3-12.

of its efforts are at best patchwork, bandages on the wounds of a hurting world, the church also witnesses with its action to a world that will be without anguish and suffering."[37]

The recent WCC statement on mission and evangelism, *Together Towards Life* (2012), reminds us that a particularly important duty for the church is attending to the margins of the globalized and hurting world: "Mission from the margins calls for an understanding of the complexities of power dynamics, global systems and structures, and local contextual realities." Hence, the church is urged "to recognize God's alignment with those consistently pushed to the margins," the duty the church has too often failed to fulfill.[38] Pursuing the well-being of the men and women at the margins, the church "seeks to be an alternative missional movement" on the side of those who are powerless and neglected.[39]

Often, particularly in the past, traditional churches have stood at the opposite extreme from younger churches, including a majority of evangelicals, when it comes to social concern.[40] Indeed, the younger churches used to be criticized for focusing primarily on the "salvation of souls" at the cost of social concern. Without denying this juxtaposition, it is also justified to speak of a rapprochement in view: a growing number of theologians among the evangelicals and younger churches hold a comprehensive, holistic vision of the church's mission and ministry. The late Canadian Baptist Stanley J. Grenz was one of the pioneers when he claimed that in order to "set forth a proper ecclesiology, we must view the church from the perspective of God's wider purposes . . . in his activity in history from creation to consummation." That is because "in history God is at work in bringing to pass his intention for all creation."[41] Similar theological convictions have also emerged, for example, among the Pentecostals. In their long-standing dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, they had an opportunity to express this emerging wider understanding:

[37]Hans Schwarz, *Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 371. For highly useful reflections, see Paul S. Chung, *Christian Mission and a Diakonia of Reconciliation: A Global Reframing of Justification and Justice* (Minneapolis: Lutheran University Press, 2008).

[38]Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, WCC, September 5, 2012, #37, www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes.

[39]Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, *Together Towards Life*, #38.

[40]For the background and key issues, see Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2004), 305-17; David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1991), 432-47.

[41]Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 487.

> Pentecostals have a great concern for the eternal salvation of the soul, but also for the present welfare of the body as is readily apparent on the high priority they give to the doctrine of divine healing. In addition, they have had a real concern for the social as well as for the spiritual welfare of their members, especially in the third world.[42]

Reconciliation and peace building. An even wider and more inclusive sphere of the church's ministry, alongside the tasks listed above, relates to the task of facilitating reconciliation between people and peoples as well as peace building at various levels. One current way to name this comprehensive calling is *reconciliation*, a term that is, of course, also used in a more limited sense, meaning to repair the estranged relations between God and humanity. In its current ecumenical understanding, reconciliation may denote the various dimensions and aspects of salvation, God's gift of shalom. The triune God reconciles the world in keeping with the eternal plan as revealed and executed through Jesus Christ (Col 1:19-20; 2:9).[43]

At its core, reconciliation is about restoring broken relationships and mending hostility and indifference between parties. Originally a secular concept, it was used particularly in international diplomacy in antiquity and subsequently adopted by Christians as a theological theme grounded in Christ. From here, it is no great stretch to widen the sphere of reconciliation to include working toward peace and easing conflicts. Another way of expressing the widest possible vision of salvation—"comprehensive salvation"[44]—is to speak of creation as the first salvific act, political liberation as "self-creation of man," and "salvation . . . [as] re-creation and complete fulfillment."[45] This does not mean, the liberationist Gutiérrez reminds us, making the church serve a short-term worldly cause of good will; rather, it means linking God's work in history with the redemption and renewal brought about by the coming of the new creation.[46] Promisingly, there are Christian traditions for which work toward peace building, alongside social concern at all levels, has been a hallmark; these include the Quakers[47] and the

[42]*Evangelization, Proselytism, and Common Witness*, #40.

[43]Ross Langmead, "Transformed Relationships: Reconciliation as the Central Model for Mission," *Mission Studies* 25, no. 1 (2008): 6; see Robert J. Schreiter, "Reconciliation and Healing as a Paradigm for Mission," *International Review of Mission* 94, no. 372 (January 2005): 74-83.

[44]Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 399-400; for debates about "salvation" in mission, see also pp. 393-99.

[45]Gustavo Gutiérrez, *A Theology of Liberation: History, Politics, and Salvation*, trans. and ed. Sister Caridad Inda and John Eagleson (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1973), 153-60.

[46]Gutiérrez, *Theology of Liberation*, 160-68.

[47]See "Resources," *Quaker United Nations Office*, accessed June 28, 2020, https://quno.org/resources.

Mennonites[48] (Anabaptists), who have adopted peace building and the renouncing of violence as a key value in mission and ecclesial existence.

Knowing that the ultimate reconciliation of peoples and groups can only happen in new creation does not lead the church into passivity, let alone apathy. The church is joining the work for liberation and justice exactly because it knows that thereby it participates in the work of the trinitarian God.[49]

The mandate to further peace and conciliation is a task uniting all religions and women and men of good will. Recall the untiring clarion call of the Catholic Hans Küng:

> No peace among the nations without peace among the religions.
>
> No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions.
>
> No dialogue between the religions without investigation of the foundations of the religions.[50]

Fittingly, the recent document by WCC, *Together Towards Life*, summarizes this comprehensive Christian vision:

> God did not send the Son for the salvation of humanity alone or give us a partial salvation. Rather the gospel is the good news for every part of creation and every aspect of our life and society. It is therefore vital to recognize God's mission in a cosmic sense and to affirm all life, the whole *oikoumene*, as being interconnected in God's web of life.[51]

[48]See, e.g., "Resources," *Peace & Justice Support Network*, Mennonite Mission, accessed June 28, 2020, www.pjsn.org/Resources.

[49]Leonardo Boff, *Liberating Grace*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979), 152. I am indebted to Schwarz, *Eschatology*, 156.

[50]This can be found, e.g., in Hans Küng, *Islam: Past, Present and Future*, trans. John Bowden (Oxford: OneWorld, 2007), xxiii.

[51]Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, *Together Towards Life*, #4. See also the comprehensive vision of salvation in Amos Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out on All Flesh: Pentecostalism and the Possibility of Global Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 91-98.

14

THE MINISTRY, MINISTERS, AND GOVERNANCE OF THE CHURCH

THE PEOPLE OF GOD AS THE MISSIONAL MINISTER

Contrary to what a poll on the street—or in the church pews—would most probably reveal, the answer to the question of who is the minister of the church is not first and foremost the paid minister but the whole people of God. Indeed, with full justification, it has to be said that the missional minister of each local community is the people of God.[1] This is not to undermine in any way the role of those set apart for a particular calling, whether bishop, pastor, or deacon, but to emphasize the importance and necessity of every believer in the community. All men and women are called and endowed (1 Pet 2:9). This is an ecumenical consensus, including nowadays even in Roman Catholic theology, in which the role of the specially designated priest has served and still serves a more pronounced role.

The concept of the whole people of God as the minister is often expressed as the "priesthood" of all believers. As is well known, it became a leading theological theme in Luther's ecclesiology.[2] Even though Lutheran tradition in its confessional definitions made the ordained ministry necessary for the sake of church order,[3] Lutheran theology refused to grant any special status to ministers; the

[1]This chapter is indebted to Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Hope and Community*, vol. 5 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), chap. 18; and idem, *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), 495-503.
[2]Luther, *To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation* (1520); *LW* 44:125-31.
[3]Augsburg Confession, #14; *BC*, 36.

ministers are merely set apart by the community for the community.[4] Other Reformers, including Anabaptists, enthusiastically followed this lead. Here is a theological difference between the Reformers and the Roman Catholic Church, which even at Vatican II ruled that ordination into the priesthood confers a qualitative difference between the ordinary faithful and the ministers.[5] No ecumenical consensus is anticipated with regard to this matter.

All Christians agree that, notwithstanding different charisms and callings, there are no classes or hierarchies compromising the equal status of all men and women regardless of sex, ethnicity, social status, or other human markers (Gal 3:28). According to the New Testament, the "*whole* people, filled (by) with the Spirit of Christ, becomes a priesthood set apart; all Christians are priests."[6]

What about the administration of sacraments? It is clear without any debate that the New Testament sets no restrictions: all baptized men and women have the right to baptize and serve the Lord's Supper. That most churches have in the course of history reserved this right to the ordained clergy may be justifiable for the reason of order, as mentioned, but even then New Testament teaching and practice should be kept in mind as the leading principle.

WHAT IS MINISTRY?

The term *ministry* is one of those words that seem to be self-evident until one probes more deeply into the topic. The New Testament does not use any particular term equivalent to our term *ministry*. Of the two terms used that come closest to *ministry*, the first is *charism*. For Paul (Rom 12; 1 Cor 12; 14; Eph 4) and others (1 Pet 4), a normal part of the church's worship and ministry is the exercise by the body of believers of various types of charisms, spiritual gifts. The second term is *diakonia*, "service." It refers to the work of serving food and waiting at table, tasks despised by all free Greek citizens. In Jesus' teaching and example, ministry focuses on living for and serving others, even to the point of self-sacrifice.[7] Even though churches throughout the centuries have tended to elevate the status of their

[4]Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity* (1520), *LW* 36:113.

[5]*Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II), November 21, 1964, #10, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

[6]Hans Küng, *The Church*, trans. Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967; repr., Garden City, NY: Image Books/Doubleday, 1976), 473-76 (475) (emphasis original).

[7]Norbert Greinacher and Norbert Mette, eds., *Diakonia: Church for Others*, English ed. James Aitken Gardiner, Concilium (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988).

leaders in a way that is closer to the mentality of this world than to the kingdom of God—and not seldom some individual leaders have usurped earthly power and prestige—the diaconal, selfless, sacrificial model should be kept as an ideal.

On the basis of this twofold New Testament understanding of ministry, it is appropriate to speak of both the "diaconal structure" and the "charismatic structure" of the Christian community.[8] Miroslav Volf says the same when he sets forth the participatory principle of ministry: "The church lives through the participation of its members, that is, the laity and the office holders, and is constituted through them by the Holy Spirit."[9] This leads to a "polycentric community" model of communion with the participation, gifting, and responsibility of all instead of the traditional "bipolar" model in which those in office do the church work and the laity observes.[10]

Consequently, ministries and offices of the church "only come into being by virtue of the common commissioning of the community itself." Those people are not separated or isolated from the community but render service among the people and on their behalf.[11] Lutheran ecclesiology rightly anchored the acceptance of ordained ministers in the need to take care of public ministry and order. Importantly, it presupposes a "general call" by the church.

Moltmann makes the convincing argument that, following the New Testament testimonies and intuitions, any commissions, charges, or ministries can "be full-time or part time. They can be carried out by men and women, by the married and the unmarried, by the theologically trained and people without any theological training. They can be exercised by individuals and groups. None of these circumstances and aptitudes amount to a law."[12] That not all churches follow this recommendation is understandable, and there is room for negotiation here. Yet it seems that the participatory diaconal-charismatic vision and example of the New Testament church supports Moltmann's vision.

Let us take a closer look at the meaning of the charismatic structure of the church. This is important for a number of reasons, not least to defeat the common assumption that only some churches are supposed to be charismatic.

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[8]Küng, *Church*, 502.

[9]Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 222.

[10]Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 224-25.

[11]Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM Press, 1977), 302-3 (302).

[12]Moltmann, *Church in the Power of the Spirit*, 308.

THE CHARISMATIC STRUCTURE OF THE CHURCH

The basic claim concerning the charismatic structure of the church is simple and profound: In the New Testament, each and every Christian and church is charismatic, not only some. Even though it might be justified in the contemporary world to call some communities "charismatic" because of their special focus on the Spirit's empowerment and gifting, this should never be understood in a sense that would blur the foundational New Testament idea of every church being charismatic.

What does the word *charism* mean? It stems from the Greek *charis*, "grace." It is important to note this rootedness of charism in grace as it reminds us of the divine and free origin of the charismatic gifting. While Christians are urged to strive for the charisms (1 Cor 12:31), men and women are not able to generate them. They are gifts of grace.

The term *charism* is used loosely and nontechnically in the New Testament with reference to various types of charismatic endowments, giftings, and capabilities. They range from extraordinary (miraculous works, words of wisdom, prophetic words) to fairly mundane (teaching, exhortation, giving generously), and there is no fixed number of them (1 Cor 12, 14; Rom 12:4-8; Eph 4:11-13; 1 Pet 4:10-11; among others).[13]

Charisms are gifts for the whole church rather than ways of "entertaining" individual believers, let alone providing them opportunity to boast. It is noteworthy that Paul's teaching on charisms to the Christian communities in both Corinth and Rome is embedded in the body analogy. Similarly to the human body, in which various members have a particular gifting and responsibility, in the body of Christ, believers function the same way. The ultimate goal is service to each other and maintaining the unity of the one church, for the glory of God.

It is interesting to note that already in the New Testament some communities appear to have had a more pronounced interest in the charismatic workings and endowments of the Holy Spirit. It seems justifiable to draw from this the following observation: Christian communities that have followed more closely the ministry patterns present in the Pastoral Epistles have tended to prefer order over spontaneity and structure over improvisation. Those communities in the footsteps of the Pauline teaching for the Corinthian and Roman (and Thessalonian) congregations have sought a continuing, fresh experience of the charisms and

[13]Max Turner, "Spiritual Gifts Then and Now," *Vox Evangelica* 15 (1985): 7-63.

spiritual manifestations. Without pitting these New Testament traditions against each other, it is vital for the church of the third millennium to rediscover the charismatic structure of the church and its integral link with the diaconic structures of ministry.

Four important principles can be drawn from the New Testament teachings and testimonies, particularly in Pauline literature.[14] First and foremost, the charisms are distributed and delivered by the sovereign Spirit of God, who disburses the gifts individually according to his pleasure and will (1 Cor 12:11). At the same time, as mentioned above, Christians are urged to strive for the gifts (1 Cor 12:31).

Second, as also mentioned, charisms are not only exceptional and sensational phenomena—although there are those, including glossolalia, powerful works, exorcisms, and healings (1 Cor 12 and 14; Acts 10:46; Mk 16:17)—but also everyday ministry energies and giftings, from giving and exhortation to helping and leading, from teaching and discernment of spirits to acts of mercy and administration (Rom 12:7-8; 1 Cor 12:8, 10; 1 Pet 4:10-11). All are meant to serve the common good of the community of God (1 Cor 12:7).

Third, charisms are diverse and plural. There is no definite or exhaustive list of gifts anywhere in the New Testament; rather, we find various types of descriptions, open-ended in nature (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:28-31; Eph 4:11-13; 1 Pet 4:10-11).

Fourth, there is a universal distribution of charisms, for every Christian is charismatic (Rom 12:3; 1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4:7; 1 Pet 4:10). No member is without any charisms, although there might be some who are yet to discern and acknowledge them. Hence, we can speak of the principle of common responsibility for the life of the church.

Attention to the common calling of the whole people of God and the diaconal-charismatic structure of the church determines the kinds of governance and community structures appropriate for missional existence.

THE GOVERNANCE AND DESIGNATED MINISTERS OF THE COMMUNITY

Ministerial patterns and roles. The way the community decides to organize itself and the way it designates ministers, such as bishops, pastors, and deacons, are closely related. Therefore they are treated here in tandem.

[14]Following closely Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 228-33; and Küng, *Church*, 236-50.

Biblical scholarship has not been able to establish the one acceptable scriptural model or way of organizing the church. From the scattered New Testament examples, testimonies, and anecdotes, we can gather that there was no one uniform pattern even in the early church. It is important to acknowledge the improvised and fluid emergence of church structures in the New Testament and early Christianity.[15] Just consider the long-term and still-continuing scholarly debates about the diverse list of "offices" and ministers in 1 Corinthians 12:28-29 alone.

Even in the latter New Testament period, routinely designated "early Catholicism," the organizational structures were still flexible. Along with the logistical needs of the early church (as evinced in the selection of the first deacons in Acts 6), the unity of fellowship and need to care for the fledgling communities seem to have been the major catalysts behind the appointment of leaders. In that sense, Lutheran ecclesiology's refusal to endorse any particular kind of ministry pattern or church structure is in keeping with the New Testament witness.

It appears that the New Testament church functioned with two kinds of ministerial categories, that is, (1) bishops and elders (often indistinguishable from each other in the meaning of the terms) and (2) deacons. The office of the bishop (*episkopos*), literally, "the one who oversees" (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 3:1-2; Titus 1:7), has background both in the Jewish temple overseer and in secular Greek office structures. The elder (*presbyteros*; Acts 20:17; 1 Tim 5:17-19; Titus 1:5; Jas 5:14) similarly comes from both Hebrew and Greek cultural backgrounds. At times, these two office designations seem to be used interchangeably (Acts 20:17-28; Titus 1:5-7). It is clear, however, that the essential task had to do with pastoral care and leadership. The other main category goes by the name *diakonos*, "deacon," which denoted "waiting at the table" and thus meant "to help, assist." The first installment of deacons in the New Testament church in Acts 6 made charitable service their main task. But importantly, at least some of them also served in proclamation and evangelism (Acts 8). Indeed, soon in the early church the deacon's task became that of assisting the bishop.[16]

As early as the second century, this two-tiered structure gave way to the threefold ministry as the distinction between the bishop and pastor/priest established itself. Though we do not know the evolutionary process, it is safe to assume that the latter office developed out of that of the *presbyteros*; suffice it to say that

[15]Adam Hood, "Governance," in *RCCC*, 536-49.

[16]See further, Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 558-60.

only after the Council of Nicaea (325 CE) did that office become established firmly.[17] Although, the New Testament applies the term *priest* not to any specific persons (except for Christ) but rather to all Christians,[18] as early as the time of Tertullian (early third century), priests as ordained persons are mentioned along with bishops, presbyters, and deacons.[19]

Importantly, the office of the bishop moved away from the life of the local community. The bishop came to be the leader of communities in a certain area (synod). Ignatius of Antioch played an important role in the rise of the episcopacy, which he saw first and foremost as the needed instrument for ensuring unity with regard to internal struggles, not least related to still-developing self-identity and leadership problems, as well as external challenges.[20] The central tasks given to the bishop included presiding over the liturgy, particularly the Eucharist; teaching; and governance. This kind of episcopal assignment has continued throughout history. The pastors/priests served under episcopal supervision and under the bishop's auspices in the sacramental ministry since the bishop could not preside at all individual baptisms and eucharistic celebrations. The deacons functioned as the bishop's assistants and carried out the church's social work. All that said, we do not have a firm knowledge of the extent to which our contemporary conception of the bishop corresponds to the early episcopacy.

Although the three-tiered ministry structure has this ancient pedigree, it is doubtful if it could—or should—be designated as normative for all Christian communities in this pluralistic and diverse world of ours. The flexibility of structures in the New Testament alone should make us cautious. On that account, the highly useful discussion of ministry and ordination in the widely embraced ecumenical *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* document (1982) should yet be mildly criticized with regard to its assumption that in practice the traditional threefold office structure of bishop, pastor/priest, and deacon should be normative.[21] What ultimately matters is the theological judgment by the community as to which structures best facilitate missional ministry in the given religiocultural and societal context. The same can be said of the wider governance structures of the church.

[17]Roger J. Haight, *Christian Community in History*, vol. 1, *Historical Ecclesiology* (New York: Continuum, 2004), 195-96; and Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 560.
[18]Küng, *Church*, 466-73.
[19]David Rankin, *Tertullian and the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 63.
[20]Just consult Ignatius, *To the Philadelphians* (esp. 1-4) and *To the Magnesians* (esp. 3-7); see also Haight, *Christian Community in History*, 1:153-54.
[21]*BEM*-M, part 3.

Models of governance. In a historical and contemporary perspective, it is typical to distinguish three different models of governance—each with nuances and differences of detail.[22] First is the *episcopal* model.[23] In this model, the bishop stands at the top of the community and under him (usually a man) are pastors and deacons. The bishops form a college of bishops. The most robust episcopal tradition is the Roman Catholic Church, in which one of the bishops chosen from the college (of the cardinals, that is, the senior level of bishops), the bishop of Rome, presides over the whole church and has a special status assigned to him (as explained in chapter two above). Whereas there is no pope in the Eastern Orthodox Church—as even the Bishop of Constantinople is only senior among the colleagues but not superior in the Roman sense—each of the patriarchates form episcopal communions headed by the senior among them, and all patriarchates (ideally, though seldom in real life) are joined together as equals. In the Anglican Church, the bishops, presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury, belong to the ecclesial nature of the communion; hence, episcopacy is not optional.

Contrary to these three traditions, in the Lutheran Church episcopacy is optional, based on the rule of the ecclesiality of the Augsburg Confession #7 (as explained in chapter three). As a result, there are Lutheran churches with bishops (usually, with the archbishop as the senior) and those with no bishops. The "thinnest" form of episcopal governance belongs to those Methodist churches (such as the United Methodist Church) that are episcopal. Finally, there is a widespread use of the title *bishop* among churches such as Black Pentecostals in the United States and various parts of Africa, as well as a number of Pentecostals of Eastern Europe. Theologically, those churches are not episcopal, and some of them have not always had bishops.

The second form of church governance is *presbyterian*. In that model, leadership and authority reside in a group of elders, presbyters, a model harking back to the Jewish synagogue life: "The authority is exercised in a series of governing assemblies."[24] In contrast to the episcopal model, there is no bishop, and, hence, there is only one level of ministers, notwithstanding administrative posts for

[22]For lucid exposition, see Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 549-51; and Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3 vols. in 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987), 1070-83.

[23]The term *episcopal* here (lowercase) does not denote a particular denomination, Episcopal (Anglican) Church, but rather is a theological designation related to the model of governance.

[24]Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1076.

supervision and leadership. The Presbyterian (Reformed) churches are the textbook example of this model.

In the third standard governance model called *congregational*, neither an individual leader, such as a bishop, nor a college of elders but the whole congregation is the locus of authority. Typically, each local congregation is considered autonomous even if, for the sake of collaboration, various kinds of ecclesiastical associations may be formed. Understandably, neither bishops nor levels of clergy can be found in this model. Baptists, Congregationalists (as a denomination), some Methodists, and non-episcopal Lutherans, among others, represent this governance type.

While there are other forms of governance, particularly among the Independents and the new Emerging communities, it suffices for the purposes of this primer to highlight these three.[25] More important than the form selected is the principle of the missional organization of the community structures. Ministry patterns, leadership models, administrative procedures, and other aspects of the structures of the community should be in the service of mission. As Craig Van Gelder aptly puts it, "the church organizes what it does."[26] As practical and hands-on as the question of structures is, ultimately it is a deeply theological and ecclesiological question. Rather than fixed patterns, Scripture clearly underdetermines instructions concerning structures and what we call polity.[27]

ORDAINED MINISTERS IN THE SERVICE OF THE COMMUNITY

What is the meaning of ordination? Above, it was established that the minister of the community is the whole people of God. This is not to deny the importance of some specially designated—typically full-time—ministers who serve on behalf of the community. While the appointment of these ministers varies from church to church, ordination of some sort is practiced in most churches. Although, as

[25]For these three and some other adaptations, see further, Steve B. Cowan, ed., *Who Runs the Church? Four Views on Church Government* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004); Chad Owen Brand and R. Stanton Norman, eds., *Perspectives on Church Government: Five Views of Church Polity* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2004); and Edward LeRoy Long Jr., *Patterns of Polity: Varieties of Church Governance* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2001).

[26]Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 37.

[27]See Barry Ensign-George, "Denomination as Ecclesiological Category: Sketching an Assessment," in *Denomination: Assessing an Ecclesiological Category*, ed. Paul M. Collins and Barry Ensign-George (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011), 11-12.

mentioned, the term *priest* in the New Testament is applied not to any specific persons (except for Christ) but rather to all Christians, as early as the time of Tertullian, priests/pastors as ordained persons are mentioned along with bishops, presbyters, and deacons.

What does ordination mean? Is it a sacrament? With much justification Luther was troubled about the way the theology and practice of the priesthood had developed in his former church. He refused to include ordination as a sacrament, not only because in his understanding there was no promise of grace attached to it in the New Testament[28] but also—polemically—because he found the contemporary view of ordination into a sacrificial priesthood repulsive to evangelical faith. It is clear in light of the New Testament teaching that Luther's rejection of a sacrificial priesthood was correct. At the same time, Luther did not of course reject ordination per se. Rightly, Luther and other Reformers also highlighted the importance of preaching and caring in the work of the pastor, whether a bishop or a minister.

It is currently an ecumenical consensus that we should place the ordained ministry within the church community, the missional communion, rather than over it or separate from it. This locus properly honors the principle of mutuality between all church members and the calling of the whole people of God as minister. The ordained and lay members work together and need each other. Hence, ordination is a "public reception of a charisma given by God and focused on the local church as a whole . . . [and] an act of the entire local church led by the Spirit of God."[29]

In summary, we can list the following interrelated aspects and effects of ordination:

- Reception of the gift of the Spirit (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6-7)
- Public commissioning (Acts 13:3)
- Acknowledgment of God's gifting and calling in the ordained person's life
- Commissioning of the person by the local church
- Mutual commitment between the community and the ordained
- Public declaration to the world outside the church since the ordained person will minister in and to the world[30]

[28]Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*; *LW* 36:106.
[29]Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 249 (emphasis removed); so also *BEM*-M, #42.
[30]I am indebted to Miroslav Volf, "Systematic Theology III: Ecclesiology and Eschatology," unpublished lecture notes, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, Summer 1988. See Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 563-70.

It is clear from the teaching of the New Testament concerning the church office that leaders should not consider themselves to be above the community but rather a part of it, in the service of others.[31] The biblical teaching does not endorse any kind of attitude of superiority (see Mk 9:33-35; 10:42-45; and parallels).[32] The following kinds of ethical and personality characteristics are to be sought and cultivated by all assigned for the ministry in the church:

> Now a bishop must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil; moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.
>
> Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for gain; they must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. (1 Tim 3:2-9; see also Titus 1:5-9)

Traditionally, only male Christians have been ordained into the public office in the church. In recent years, a question has risen—and, indeed, a fierce debate—about the suitability of female believers for ordination. Let us take a closer look at this vital issue.

Women's ordination. Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches—alongside a number of the most conservative Protestant churches—do not allow female ordination, whereas Anglican and most mainline Protestant churches do. Obstacles to the ministry of women, however, constitute a wider question than merely the rite of ordination. Other concerns include problems of patriarchal top-down structures dominated by males, a strongly biased androcentric writing of church history, and others. That said, let us focus here on ordination since that is the most concrete example of the exclusion of women from equal ministry opportunities.

What are the typical objections to ordaining women in the church? It might be helpful to categorize them according to the following list, which may not be comprehensive but will serve as representative:

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[31]See also Küng, *Church*, 465.
[32]See further *BEM*-M, ##15, 16.

- biblical-exegetical (focused on well-known New Testament passages seemingly barring women from ministry: 1 Cor 11:3-16; 14:34-35; 1 Tim 2:11-15)
- traditional-historical (related to beliefs about the lack of access of women to ministry during history)
- anthropological/gender-related assumptions (based on conceptions of women's nature and role according to Christian theological understanding)[33]

What about the challenges and rebuttals to the objections? Many believe nowadays that they have been successfully defeated. Concerning the alleged biblical prohibitions, the following types of counterarguments and rebuttals have been set forth.[34]

- Equality in Christ of both men and women is a central affirmation (Gal 3:28).
- The gifts of the Spirit have been promised for both men and women (Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17-18).
- The hermeneutics of passages used to prohibit female ordination in the New Testament (particularly in 1 Cor 11, 14; 1 Tim 2) have been successfully defeated with reference to lack of authenticity, cultural conditioning of texts, the occasional nature of prohibitions, translation alternatives, and so forth.
- The presence of female leaders in the New Testament such as Lydia (Acts 16:40), the four daughters of Philip (Acts 21:8-9), Priscilla (Acts 18:18; Rom 16:3), and Euodia and Syntyche (Phil 4:2-3), among others, is established.
- Furthermore, the appeal to the precedent of twelve male apostles lost its scholarly credibility long ago; this is even acknowledged by some Catholic critics of their own church.
- We have to agree with the feminist theologians that the gender of Jesus is not a problem; the way Jesus' maleness is used in tradition to establish hierarchy, exclusivity, and power structures is the problem.

[33]E.g., Franjo Seper, *Inter Insigniores* (Declaration on the Question of Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood), October 15, 1976, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19761015_inter-insigniores_en.html; the typology used is from Una Stroda, "The Ordination of Women: The Experience of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia" (MA thesis, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago, 2008).

[34]Any major critical commentary can be consulted for details of exegesis and hermeneutics, including arguments pro and con. Some useful general discussions are Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995); Ian Jones, Janet Wootton, and Kirsty Thorpe, eds., *Women and Ordination in the Christian Churches* (London: T&T Clark, 2008); and Geoffrey Kirk, *Without Precedent: Scripture, Tradition, and the Ordination of Women* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016).

While the debate and discussion continues, and is unlikely to be resolved totally, a growing number of Christian communities are opening up ordination to women. That said, the world's largest church, the Roman Catholic Church, and the large Orthodox Church seem not to be finding ways of negotiating the issue. Be that as it may, the question of ordination and ministry should be placed in the wider context of the equality, inclusivity, and hospitality of the Christian communion vision: "Where Christ is present, human barriers are being broken."[35]

[35] *BEM*-M, #18.

15

THE WORSHIP AND LITURGY OF THE CHURCH

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN WORSHIP?

Formally defined, *worship* simply means "reverence offered a divine being or supernatural power."[1] In that sense, it is true that "worship is a universal human instinct, and people of other religions worship even though they are not Christians"—as evinced in the presence of all kinds of sacred rites, rituals, and ways of approaching the divine. That said, "there is something distinctive about Christian worship that arises out of a particular story—the story of God's saving work in Jesus Christ."[2]

Of old, Christian worship has been understood as "the enjoyment of God"[3] revealed in the Scripture and manifested to us in the person of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. Not for nothing does the beginning of the *Westminster Larger Catechism* (1647) tell Christians: "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him forever."[4]

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[1]"Worship," in *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, online version: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/worship, accessed June 29, 2020. This chapter is indebted to Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Hope and Community,* vol. 5 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 359-68; and idem, *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), 469-71, 478-83.

[2]Glen O'Brien, *Christian Worship: A Theological and Historical Introduction* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015), 15.

[3]O'Brien, *Christian Worship*, 15.

[4]Answer to Question #1, *Larger Catechism*, Orthodox Presbyterian Church, accessed June 29, 2020, www.opc.org/lc.html.

It is routinely noted, helpfully, that the root of the English term *worship*, that is, "worth-ship," is a rightful key to its meaning: to ascribe worth to the deity. The idea has a solid biblical background:

> Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,
> ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
> Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name;
> worship the LORD in holy array. (Ps 29:1-2)

Another way of putting this is to speak of glorifying, giving glory to God, another typical biblical way of speaking of worship: "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen" (Rev 7:12). Whatever expressions are used in Christian worship, it is always "a human response to God's own self-revelation."[5]

Worship includes a number of facets. To use more technical language, we can define Christian worship like this:

> Christian ritual constitutes a complex symbolic system—employing verbal, gestural, and material signs—by which the Church and the churches explore, describe, interpret, and fashion reality; express and form their thoughts, emotions, and values; and communicate across time and space in ways that both build and convey traditions as well as both allowing and reflecting social relations in the present.[6]

WORSHIP AND LITURGY AT THE CENTER OF THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY'S LIFE

Worship is essential to church life. Vatican II's *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy," opens up with this lofty statement on worship:

> For the liturgy, "through which the work of our redemption is accomplished," most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist, is the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church. . . . While the liturgy daily builds up those who are within into a holy temple of the Lord, into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit, to the mature measure of the fullness of Christ, at the same time it marvelously strengthens their power to preach Christ, and thus shows forth the Church

[5]O'Brien, *Christian Worship*, 17.

[6]See Geoffrey Wainwright, "Christian Worship: Scriptural Basis and Theological Frame," in *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), chap. 1 (p. 16).

> to those who are outside as a sign lifted up among the nations under which the scattered children of God may be gathered together, until there is one sheepfold and one shepherd.[7]

No wonder, then, that "every liturgical celebration, because it is an action of Christ the priest and of His Body which is the Church, is a sacred action surpassing all others; no other action of the Church can equal its efficacy by the same title and to the same degree."[8] Indeed, worship and liturgy is "the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows."[9] If so, then it means that nothing less than Saint Augustine's concise rule of worship suffices: "God is to be worshipped with faith, hope, and love. . . . [That is] what we are to believe, what we are to hope for, and what we are to love."[10] Worship is not just an occasional act of the Christian life and community. It touches on all aspects of Christian life at the personal and communal levels. Indeed, whatever else the church is, it is the gathered communion around the gospel and sacraments as well as prayer and worship. The church community gathered around the gospel, sacraments, and worship constantly feeds, renews, and reinvigorates its spiritual life. As stated by the Eastern Orthodox George Florovosky, "The Church is first of all a worshipping community. Worship comes first, doctrine and discipline second."[11] Then, and only then, may Christians hope to experience "The Earthly Heaven," as Bishop Kallistos memorably put it.[12]

The focus of Christian worship is none else than the triune God. This trinitarian orientation is in keeping with the evolving trinitarian consciousness of the biblical witness: "The worship of the one God of the Hebrew Scriptures is affirmed in the Gospels through Jesus's practice and command of worshipping God as Father and leads us to sanctify and honor 'our Father in heaven' (Matt. 6.9)." At the same time, there is of course also a christological focus of worship in the New Testament, beautifully and dramatically evident in the great liturgical hymn

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[7]*Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), December 4, 1963, #2, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html.

[8]*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, #7.

[9]*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, #10.

[10]Augustine, *Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love*, chap. 3.

[11]George Florovsky, "The Elements of Liturgy in the Orthodox Catholic Church," *One Church* 13, nos. 1-2 (1959): 24; in finding the source, I am indebted to Timothy (Kallistos) Ware (Bishop of Diokleia), *The Orthodox Church*, new rev. ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 266.

[12]Chapter subhead in Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 264.

in Revelation 5, in which "the Lamb receives the very same kind of worship as the Almighty YHWH does in chapter 4." Similarly, the Spirit as the bond of love between Father and Son, as well as between God and humanity, is attached to the worship patterns of the New Testament—although the church, wisely, has been very cautious in focusing its worship directly to the Spirit (if not for other reasons, then because of the scarcity of biblical guidance).[13]

In Ephesians 1, we can find an important template of worship to the triune God: the Father is blessed for the blessings stemming from the sending of the Son, whose work of reconciliation and redemption is communicated to us via the sealing and work of the Holy Spirit.[14] The trinitarian shape of worship was also importantly recorded in the ecumenical creed: "And [we believe] in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver-of-Life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, who spake by the prophets."[15] With this biblical and creedal guidance in mind, it is appropriate to say that Christians worship the Trinity and with the Trinity.[16]

With its focus on the triune God and his saving work, Christian worship both looks into the past, the saving work of the triune God in sending his Son in the power of the Spirit, and anticipates the final consummation in the final coming of God's righteous rule.

> If worship is the activity of the church in which it proclaims and celebrates God's person and redemptive work, then worship must be eschatological. For, in worship, especially in the liturgy of the Eucharist, God comes to us in the person of the resurrected Christ, through the Spirit, engaging us as the One who has already realized the victory promised to us in our own resurrection on the last days.[17]

Recall that the eschatological direction is present in the texts of institution both in the Gospels (Mt 26:29) and in Paul (1 Cor 11:26).[18]

The link between the eschatological, the "heavenly," and earthly worship communions is beautifully depicted by the author of the book of Revelation to

[13]Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology: An Evangelical and Ecumenical Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 86-87 (86); see also James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community, and the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), chap. 1.

[14]See further, Harper and Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology*, 87.

[15]Available in *NPNF*2 14:163.

[16]Robin A. Parry, *Worshipping Trinity: Coming Back to the Heart of Worship*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012), importantly titles chap. 5 "Worshipping with the Trinity" and chap. 6 "Worshipping the Trinity."

[17]Harper and Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology*, 88.

[18]Harper and Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology*, 88-91.

whom was shown "in heaven an open door" (Rev 4:1) to enter the 24/7 chain of worship and liturgy "round the throne" of the Lamb and elders. Revelation 5 draws from several prophetic sections of the Old Testament (Ezra 1; Is 6; and so forth) with its vision of the "scroll" (obviously signifying some kind of divine narrative of history) opened by the Lamb who is worthy of glory and honor.[19] The same heavenly direction is present in the worship vision in Hebrews 12. The worshipers of God

> have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant. (Heb 12:22-24)[20]

Vibrant, dynamic, and God-centered worship and liturgy also serve as the fountain of the ministry and mission of the sent community. Importantly, John Paul II's encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* (1990) reminds us that the same Spirit of God who is sending out the church to serve and minister to the world is also the energy behind "Missionary Spirituality,"[21] cultivated and sustained in regular prayer, reading of Scripture, and sacramental-liturgical participation. Similarly, the recent WCC missionary document *Together Towards Life* highlights spirituality as the energy of mission: "Authentic Christian witness is not only in *what* we do in mission but *how* we live out our mission. The church in mission can only be sustained by spiritualities deeply rooted in the Trinity's communion of love."[22]

Recall the ancient missional rule of the church of the East, "mission as liturgy after liturgy." Or recall the experience of contemporary Pentecostals, well known for enthusiastic mission engagement and dynamic, vivid worship life. At the heart Pentecostal missional dynamism is

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[19]For details (and useful bibliographic resources), see Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language: Introduction to Christian Worship; An African Orientation* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 69-78. Throughout this section, I am also acknowledging John R. K. Fenwick and Bryan D. Spinks, *Worship in Transition: The Liturgical Movement in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Continuum, 1995); and Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

[20]I was inspired by William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 223-24.

[21]Heading for chap. 8.

[22]For the whole section titled "Transformative Spirituality," see Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, WCC, September 5, 2012, ##29-35 (#29, emphases original), www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/mission-and-evangelism/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes.

> the personal and direct awareness and experiencing of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit by which the risen and glorified Christ is revealed and the believer is empowered to witness and worship with the abundance of life. . . . Characteristic of this way of life is a love of the Word of God, fervency in prayer and witness in the world and to the world, and a concern to live by the power of the Holy Spirit.[23]

Nowhere else is this deep and wide connection between liturgy, sacramental life, and missionary orientation as evident as in the life of the first church in the book of Acts. The emerging and flourishing small Christian communities adopted the Jewish rituals but recentered them on the salvific history and victory of Jesus the Christ:

> And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.
>
> And fear came upon every soul; and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Over the centuries, the church has developed a number of helpful guidelines to direct the church's liturgical life. The following guidelines represent wide ecumenical consensus and can be creatively applied in diverse ecclesiastical settings:

1. Christian worship should be biblically based and anchored, including reading and meditating on Scripture.
2. Christian worship is ideally a dialogic event in which, through the Word and Spirit, we speak to God and expect God to be speaking to us. An important way of talking to God is prayer.
3. Christian worship is covenantal in that in each gathering of the community Christians are reminded of and even receive a confirmation of God's

[23]Cited in Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Spiritus ubi vult spirat: Pneumatology in Roman Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (1972–1989)*, Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft 42 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola Society, 1998), 50-51; see also idem, "'Encountering Christ in the Full Gospel Way': An Incarnational Pentecostal Spirituality," *Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association* 27, no. 1 (2007): 5-19.

gracious covenant on our behalf. In that respect, each worship event is an occasion for recommitment to God.

4. Christian worship, as detailed above, is trinitarian.
5. Christian worship is communal. As important as the cultivation of one's personal faith may be, every believer also needs to be part of the "communion of the saints." Communal worship is more than just individuals coming together. As the body of Christ, the church is a corporate entity before its Lord.
6. Christian worship should aim at hospitality and a welcoming spirit in which ideally there is no place for self-centeredness and self-serving. Differences of personality, age, profession, and so forth are being transcended in the common orientation to God.
7. Christian worship should be in but not of the world. It reflects a particular location, culture, and setting. At the same time, it also challenges and enriches the cultural location.
8. Christian worship should be a generous and excellent outpouring of ourselves before God. Worship should not be stingy.
9. Ideally, Christian worship is both expressive and formative. While authentically expressing the experiences, emotions, and ideas of the people—similarly to what happens for example in the Psalms—worship should also shape, challenge, and stretch Christians and the community.[24]

In order to cultivate an atmosphere of inclusion, welcome, and hospitality, the worshiping community should also consider carefully its ways of communicating, that is, the language it uses.

THE LANGUAGE OF WORSHIP

One of the important questions in current ecclesiology, conducted under the inspiration and leadership of women theologians of different orientations, has to do with the nature of language used for the triune God in worship and liturgy.[25]

[24]Carrie Titcombe Steenwyk and John D. Witvliet, eds., *The Worship Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2013), 16-17. See also Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 490-95; Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History*, vol. 3, *Ecclesial Existence* (New York/London: Continuum, 2008), 205-10; and Wainwright, "Christian Worship."

[25]This section on the language of worship draws directly from chap. 14 in Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Revelation*, vol. 2 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014).

The basic question is this: Can the nomenclatures and metaphors used of Father, Son, and Spirit be balanced and enriched to make them more inclusive? Or should they be kept as they are for the sake of tradition? Or should they be replaced? The history of Christian theology with regard to women is a sad story, although in no way different from the wider culture and from other religions. The history of negative attitude toward women and their ministry opportunities is well known and well documented.[26]

As widely as the issue of traditional exclusive language of the church is acknowledged, there is a spectrum of responses available. For the sake of this primer, we may classify them into three positions. Let us name the first one the *mediating* position, which believes that, notwithstanding grave problems with regard to traditional naming of God, it can be redeemed by correcting, balancing, and enriching. We are reminded that ways of naming God are not neutral. They communicate and set the agenda. Metaphors of the divine are powerful![27] To put it another way: metaphors and symbols used of the divine are not innocent. Furthermore, the mediating position rightly reminds us that the biblical talk of God's fatherhood does not denote maleness, for the simple reason that God is not defined by categories from the created world; God is uncreated. The strategy of the mediating position, then, is to redeem Christian trinitarian discourse from a sexist and partriarchal nature without replacing Father, Son, and Spirit with other names, but at the same time arguing that other complementary names should be utilized as well. Proponents firmly—and rightly—believe that Christian tradition does not ascribe maleness to the divine and thus does not necessarily contribute to oppression: "The mystery of God is properly understood as neither male nor female but transcends both in an unimaginable way."[28] As a result, attempting to make traditional terminology more inclusive does not mean leaving behind the traditional terminology. Indeed, the traditional names should be kept primary and normative in the sense that metaphors and symbols chosen be compared for their appropriateness against this standard. Women theologians who take this approach carefully search Christian tradition, including Scripture, for female ways of speaking of God to balance the masculine.[29]

[26]For a historical overview, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: Critical Feminists Ekklesia-logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 151-79.

[27]Janet Martin Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 62-63.

[28]Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, twenty-fifth anniv. ed. (New York: Crossroad, 2018 [orig. 1992]), 70.

[29]For such an attempt, see, e.g., Johnson, *She Who Is*, part 3; for details and sources of this discussion, see also Kärkkäinen, *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World*, 83-85.

The second position can be named the *substitution* approach, according to which there is no way to heal the traditional language; instead, it has to be changed and other ways of addressing the divine substituted. In other words, some female theologians desire to replace all traditional talk of God based on predominantly masculine metaphors. Differently from the mediating position, these theologians argue that, being metaphors, terms such as *Father* and *Son* can be exchanged for more appropriate ones at the theologian's wish. The substitution position considers traditional trinitarian language not only sexist but also supportive of oppressive structures. A whole new repertoire of descriptions of God is thus to be invented, including Source, Word, and Spirit; Creator, Liberator, and Comforter; Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; Parent, Child, and Paraclete; Mother, Daughter, and Spirit.

The third position comes from those male theologians and some few women[30] theologians who believe that even the mediating position is too radical, let alone the substitutionist tactics. Let us call it the *conservationist* position. This strategy rejects any attempt to replace *Father*, *Son*, and *Spirit* with other terms. The American Lutheran theologian Robert W. Jenson argues that traditional trinitarian names form the proper name of God and therefore are not subject to change.[31] Jenson is not alone here; for example, the famed late German Lutheran Wolfhart Pannenberg argued similarly. According to him, the term *Father* has nothing to do with gender and, hence, is not related to sexism.[32] The late American evangelical theologian Donald Bloesch went so far as to suspect that any change to traditional ways of naming God might be liable to make a "resymbolization" of God that could hinder our recognizing the right God.[33] That said, however, Bloesch also believed that continued use of traditional exclusive language does not imply sexism and exclusion.

Having clarified the theological principles of worship and liturgy, including the language used, it is important to identify what kind of worship and liturgical patterns might be appropriate for the global, ever-diversifying church.

[30]See Elizabeth Achtemeier, "Exchanging God for 'No Gods': A Discussion of Female Language for God," in *Speaking the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism*, ed. Alvin F. Kimel Jr. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 1-16.

[31]Robert W. Jenson, *The Triune Identity: God According to the Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), xii.

[32]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 1:262-63.

[33]Donald G. Bloesch, *The Battle for the Trinity: The Debate over Inclusive God-Language* (Ann Arbor, MI: Vine Books, 1985), 1.

Is there only one way of worshiping, or should we cultivate a diversity of approaches?

WHAT KIND OF WORSHIP PATTERNS ARE "APPROPRIATE" IN THE GLOBAL CHURCH?

Worship as body language. Worship, as much as any other church activity or rite, does not take place in a vacuum. It is deeply contextually colored and shaped. Contemporary ecclesiology is beginning to realize this fact and to acknowledge it in a more robust manner.[34]

For Christians in the Global North, liturgical activities may appear to be merely spiritual in the sense that they are removed from all bodily and earthly aspects of our lives. For many men and women in the Global South, however, the worship experience is also deeply bodily in nature. In the words of the American-based Nigerian Catholic Elochukwu Uzukwu's book title, we can speak of *Worship as Body Language*.[35] After the long dominance of body-soul dualism in Western culture, embodiment has had a hard time in Christian theology—even though intuitions are emerging of *The Physical Nature of Christian Life*.[36]

Importantly, some theologians from the Global South, particularly from African contexts, are reminding us of the significant place given to the body in their cultural settings. While deeply spiritual in nature, worship is an act that expresses movement toward God, and it engages the whole human being. A corrective is needed for the traditional (and in many cases, even contemporary) church culture that eschews bodily gestures, movement, and enthusiasm and has instead made rigid immobility in liturgy the norm. Just think of dance: for a long time, it was not considered proper in worship because of its sensuous and bodily aspects. Not surprisingly, dance and movement are still objects of ridicule by critics of the African Instituted Churches, African American churches, and Pentecostal/charismatic communities. These communities' worship patterns are deemed too enthusiastic with movements, shouts, and emotional expressions.[37]

Highlighting the embodied nature of liturgical life not only does justice to the diversity in the global church. It also saves worship from a narrow "spiritual"

[34]For a thoughtful and useful discussion, see chap. 8, "Worship in the Modern and Post-Modern World: From Tent to Kaleidoscope," in O'Brien, *Christian Worship*.
[35]Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language*.
[36]Warren S. Brown and Brad D. Strawn, *The Physical Nature of Christian Life: Neuroscience, Psychology, and the Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[37]See further Uzukwu, *Worship as Body Language*.

reductionism and thus makes space for a holistic participation of men and women. In this regard, it is useful to recall that the term *liturgy* comes from the Greek word meaning "work (of the people)." This is not meant to undermine the importance of the liturgy also as ritual, an ordered and planned event; as is well known, every kind of repeated activity gets ritualized, and that in itself is not a negative judgment at all.[38]

A proper acknowledgment of embodiment, dynamic enthusiasm, and ritual has the promise of yielding an experience of the heavenly liturgy that is grounded in earthly realities of Christian life and is spiritually enriching. A creative example of this is feminist theologians' effort "to develop a theology of the Eucharist that holds together the materiality of bodies and ordinary things as they are lifted up and shared in liturgical practice" in the holy meal.[39] This orientation helps link spiritual liturgy deeply and solidly with this-worldly, earthly experiences.

The role of the deceased and ancestors in Christian worship. A burning issue for Christians in many locations in the Global South has to do with whether to engage in worship of ancestors and others who have passed away. All Christians agree that based on the New Testament testimonies, communion between believers in God stretches beyond the boundary of physical death (Heb 12:1). This communion links our lives to the lives of those who have gone before and sets before us the hopeful future to which we aspire. Notwithstanding this foundational theological consensus, Christian traditions have differing opinions with regard to implications for church life. In many global locations, honoring ancestral relations is an essential part of the culture, particularly in various African and Asian cultures.[40] The Nigerian Jesuit priest A. E. Orobator speaks of "warm communion with the ancestors" as a way to underline the intimacy of the connection.[41]

Understandably, no unanimity can be found among Christian churches with regard to the propriety of honoring the deceased as part of worship. Whereas in early Christian theology and in Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic traditions

[38]Even the most enthusiastic worship styles such as Pentecostal/charismatic ones get ritualized, as detailed in Daniel E. Albrecht, *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999).

[39]Andrea Bieler and Luise Schottroff, *The Eucharist: Bodies, Bread, and Resurrection* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 3.

[40]Choon-Sup Bae, *Ancestor Worship: The Challenges It Poses to the Christianity Mission and Ministry* (Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag, 2008); and Helen Hardacre, "Ancestor Worship," in *ER*, 1:320-25.

[41]Heading in Agbonkhianmeghe E. Orobator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2008), 115.

throughout church history, the extension of the communion of saints beyond the faithful living in the same age has also led to certain prayers and ritual practices; Protestant communities have basically renounced these. Only very recently have some Protestant churches begun to engage the topic.[42]

Theologically, the defining question is the avoidance of idol worship, which is strictly prohibited in the Bible (Ex 20:3-5). Hence, the all-important theological question has to do with what might constitute making "another god," that is, an idol, of any object. No object in itself is an idol. Humans make idols by their worship. Worship in this sense has to be understood as a qualitatively unique way of honoring and giving allegiance to the object. Should that happen, idolatry follows, which is rejected by all Christian traditions. On the other hand, as long as the religiocultural understanding considers ancestors not in terms of (divine-like) idols worthy of worship but rather as images or symbols that recall the dead ancestors, there is hardly any danger of idol worship. Rather, honoring the memory of the deceased seems more like a Christian memorial service. That is not to say that particularly in folk religiosity, including Christianity's diverse folk religion forms, this border might not be easily transgressed. It is to argue that should ancestral homage be practiced, careful guidance and teaching are needed to direct it.

Ecumenically there are promising attempts to help various Christian communities find appropriate ways to honor the deceased even if a unified theology of the departed saints or of shared rituals might not be in view.[43] Churches also have much to learn from each other in terms of how best to incorporate this aspect of the communion of saints in their life and liturgies.

In a related ecumenical project, the WCC has worked toward a common "ecumenical martyrology,"[44] a continuing pressing need for the global church. As is well known, there have never been as many martyrs as in the last century.[45]

Cultural liturgies. The final topic in our reflection on global and contextual aspects of Christian worship and liturgy has to do with a newly coined idea of

[42]Samuel Anye Ndingwan, "Ancestor Veneration Among the Mankon of the Cameroon Republic" (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, School of World Mission, 1981); Bong Rin Ro, ed., *Christian Alternatives to Ancestor Practices* (Taichung, Taiwan: Asia Theological Association, 1985).

[43]World Council of Churches, "A Cloud of Witnesses: Message to the Churches from a Symposium in Bose," November 2, 2008, www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/unity-mission-evangelism-and-spirituality/visible-unity/a-cloud-of-witnesses-message-to-the-churches-from-a-symposium-in-bose.

[44]Guido Dotti, "The Bose Monastery's Ecumenical Martyrology," lecture, Bose, Italy, July 9, 2013, www.strasbourginstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Bose-Monastery.docx.

[45]Lawrence S. Cunningham, "Saints and Martyrs: Some Contemporary Considerations," *Theological Studies* 60 (1999): 529-37.

"cultural liturgies," which is based on the conviction that liturgy deals not only with the private and personal but also with the public domain of life, including politics. One of the recent insights into the nature of liturgy and worship has to do with the recognition that the community's liturgical life expresses not only cultural, religious, and social values and characteristics but also ethical, even political, values. In other words, liturgy has a public side. With this in mind, some postcolonial thinkers have attempted to develop liturgical patterns mindful of social and political implications.[46] Similarly, women theologians, as already discussed, have reminded us of the ways that society's and culture's values are manifested in how we address God in worship and beyond.

The public nature of liturgy has also occupied the mind of the American Reformed philosopher James K. A. Smith in his provocative and innovative "Cultural Liturgies" project. Smith advances the claim that whatever else the human being is, she or he is *homo liturgicus*, a worshiping animal. Or, to put it another way, following Augustine: "We are what we love." We are not only rational, thinking beings, or even believing beings, although we are also that. We are also desiring (loving) creatures who express our desires and love in liturgies. Smith sees "persons as embodied agents of desire and love." "Rather than being pushed by beliefs alone, we are pulled by a *telos* that we desire."[47]

Smith reminds us that we discern these cultural liturgies in the shopping mall or at school or on the football field or as a citizen of the nation. What we desire and value in these ordinary life contexts gives clues to what we envision as the good life and whether we find the good life in God or whether we worship idols. Rather than worshiping idols, Christians are meant to practice true worship that is guided by the love of God. True worship redirects and corrects our liturgical orientation.[48]

[46]See also Cláudio Carvalhaes, ed., *Liturgy in Postcolonial Perspectives: Only One is Holy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); and Michael N. Jagessar and Stephen Burns, *Christian Worship: Postcolonial Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

[47]James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 46-47, 54, respectively.

[48]Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 88.

16

THE SACRAMENTS AND ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

WHAT IS THE SACRAMENT?

Virtually all Christian churches celebrate sacraments.[1] While the number of sacraments varies among the Christian communities, water baptism and the Eucharist (Lord's Supper) are the common ones for all of them. The number of sacraments in Eastern Orthodox theology (usually named "mysteries")[2] and in the Roman Catholic Church is seven: baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, penance, anointing the sick, ordination, and matrimony.[3] For Protestants and Anglicans, the number is two (although the Lutheran confessions also know confession as the third).

With the exception of the (original) Quakers, even Free Churches, following Protestantism, practice sacraments—some Pentecostals and members of other churches also practice foot washing.[4] Often, instead of *sacrament*, these

[1]This chapter is indebted to Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Hope and Community*, vol. 5 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 368-99; and idem, *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), 483-95.

[2]See further, John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), 191-92; Timothy (Kallistos) Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, new rev. ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), chap. 14 (esp. p. 275 for the number of sacraments).

[3]*Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II), November 21, 1964, #11, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html. The number seven established itself definitively at the Council of Lyons in 1274 and since has been the norm for Rome.

[4]Most ironically—and this is yet another indication of the complexity and fluidity of the term *sacrament*—foot washing certainly seems to meet the basic requirements of sacraments, namely, divine command (Jn 13:14-15), and so "institution" by Christ, even by his own example, and "material" element. Yet the church at large never adopted foot washing as a sacrament; see Harold D. Hunter, "Ordinances,"

communities speak of *ordinances*.[5] For these communities, the ordinances signify obedience: baptism and the Lord's Supper are to be celebrated because they have been "ordained" by the Lord in the Bible. Rather than divine acts bringing about what they symbolize, ordinances are primarily a means of human response to God's command.[6]

What does sacrament mean? What is its unique nature and function in Christian life?[7] The Bible does not use the term. Instead, out of the biblical word *mystery* (*mysterion*; Eph 3:3, 4, 9, among others) emerged *sacrament* in early patristic theology, ratified by the North African theologian Tertullian.[8] The Latin term *sacramentum* meant originally a "military oath" and thus signified dedication and obedience.

Notwithstanding differences with regard to the meaning and scope of the sacraments, all (Western) Christian traditions build on Augustine's teaching on the sacraments as signs.[9] With reference to Christ's sacrifice, Augustine speaks of "the visible sacrament or sacred sign of an invisible sacrifice."[10] He bases this on a thematic distinction between the sign and the thing signified.[11] While not equated, they are closely and intimately related. Signs point to the thing, and a sacramental sign and the thing are always combined with the Word. Speaking of baptism, the bishop puts it succinctly: "Take away the word, and the water is neither more nor less than water. The word is added to the element, and there results the Sacrament, as if itself also a kind of visible word."[12] This means that in the sacramental event, "what is signified is received. Thus sacraments are effective because Christ and the Holy Spirit act through them."[13]

in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. van der Maas, rev. and expanded ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 948-49.

[5]For *ordinances*, see Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 512-18.

[6]Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 514-15. Consult also John D. Rempel, "Sacraments in the Radical Reformation," in *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, ed. Hans Boersma and Matthew Levering (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 298-312.

[7]An excellent, nontechnical orientation can be found in Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, 6th ed. (Malden, MA: Wiley and Sons, 2017), chap. 16.

[8]For details and sources, see J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 193-99.

[9]For background, see Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 422-28.

[10]Augustine, *The City of God* 10.5.

[11]Augustine, *On the Christian Doctrine* 1. 1 and 2; for the nature and variety of signs, see 2.1.

[12]Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 80.3; see also Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 3:349.

[13]Günther Gassmann and Scott Hendrix, *Fortress Introduction to the Lutheran Confessions* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1999), 88.

To put it nontechnically, in the classic Christian understanding, the sacrament brings about what it promises, for example, forgiveness of sins in the Eucharist and new birth in water baptism. This "realistic-effective" understanding of sacrament finally established itself by the beginning of the second millennium—over what could be called the "softer" understanding, namely, the "symbolic-spiritual" one that was not endorsed. The authoritative theologian to help establish this originally Augustinian sense of the sacrament was Peter Lombard. He "clearly stood in the Augustinian tradition when he taught that every sacrament is a sign and resembles the reality of which it is a sign." He did this by introducing the term *cause*. The "sacrament is the visible sign of an invisible grace of God and causes what it signifies."[14]

Thomas Aquinas, building on this foundation, further clarified that sacraments, indeed, are necessary for proper faith and salvation. Sacraments commemorate Christ's salvific work, demonstrate grace, and anticipate the consummation of salvation. Thomas's special contribution, which also led later to a dispute with Protestant Reformers, had to do with his confirmation of the emerging consensus in medieval theology about the sacraments' efficacy, usually designated *ex opere operato*, "by the work performed." This means that the sacrament in itself is efficacious regardless of the quality of the administering minister or the receiving faithful. While its positive meaning is to guarantee the objective effect of the sacrament as opposed to changing human dispositions and failings, its great liability was the turning of sacramental acts into semiautomatic mechanistic acts—often apart from faith and the Word of God. This latter fallacy became the object of Protestant Reformers' rejection of *ex opere operato* even if they held onto the Augustinian-based understanding of the sacraments' being efficacious. Luther's early formative pamphlet *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520) and a number of later writings harshly criticized the popular abuses of the sacramental teaching culminating in indulgences.[15]

The Protestant Reformation also helped rediscover the idea of the necessity of the Word of God and faith in a sacramental act, a teaching part of the original Augustinian tradition but often undermined or neglected in later traditions. According to the Lutheran Reformation, "those who by the proclamation of the gospel have not reached the point of accepting baptism have not yet fully

[14]Gassmann and Hendrix, *Fortress Introduction to the Lutheran Confessions*, 88.
[15]A nontechnical discussion can be found in Gassmann and Hendrix, *Fortress Introduction to the Lutheran Confessions*, 88-91.

understood the meaning of the message concerning Christ as promise and appropriated it in faith."[16] With the tight linking of the sacrament with the Word of promise, we can say that "Christ's own presence at the Supper fulfills the promise contained in the words of institution."[17] With the Word and promise in mind—but only so doing—it is justified to maintain what Thomas Aquinas defined as the core of sacraments, namely, that "they effect what they signify."[18] In other words, while the Reformers rejected the technical *ex opere operato* teaching, they preserved classic sacramental teaching.

As mentioned above, for the Radical Reformation whose legacy was carried on by Anabaptists, Baptists, Congregationalists, and other Free Church communities, as well as Pentecostalism, even the Protestant Reformation's stance was too much. The Radical Reformers landed on the understanding of water baptism as a response of obedience to the biblical command and thus often named it an ordinance. The same applies to the Lord's Supper (the preferred name over the Eucharist).

Having now clarified the meaning of sacrament and its efficacy as well as the difference between traditional churches (notwithstanding differences among Catholics and Lutherans, to give an example) and Free Churches, it is time to delve into the details of the two sacraments/ordinances shared by all Christian communities—water baptism and the Eucharist.

BAPTISM

Baptism and Christian initiation. Water baptism has been part of Christian initiation from the beginning. All Christian churches practice water baptism, notwithstanding serious theological differences concerning the efficacy and meaning of baptism. The sacramental traditions (Orthodox, Catholic, Anglican, and Lutheran) understand it sacramentally: linked with faith and the Word of God, it brings about what it promises, new birth. The common, though in no way exclusive, mode of baptism in these churches is infant baptism.

Nonsacramental Christian traditions that typically name baptism an *ordinance* (or perhaps even use the term *sacrament* though theologically they do not consider it as such) understand water baptism as an act ordained by Christ.

[16]Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:351.
[17]Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:352.
[18]Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 3.62.1 (*The Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 2nd rev. ed., 1920, literally translated by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Online Edition © 2008 by Kevin Knight, www.newadvent.org/summa/).

Rather than a sacrament, it is a public response of a believer. Rather than infant baptism, as in Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and Lutheran churches, these Free Churches (Baptists, Anabaptists, Pentecostal, and a host of others) practice believers' (adult) baptism by immersion.[19]

Between these two polarities stands the Reformed family, within which there are well-known internal differences. For the Zwinglian part of the Reformed family, baptism indicates belonging to the people of God (somewhat similar to the Old Testament rite of circumcision). The Calvinist majority oscillate between Lutheran and Zwinglian understandings in the sense that while they do not consider the rite regenerative in the sense that the sacramental traditions do, they do consider it a "seal" of the covenant with God. As such, it is practiced with a view to forthcoming faith.[20]

These theological differences noted, it is worth repeating what was said in the beginning of this section, namely, that all Christian churches practice and value this rite. The reason is simple: it has a strong biblical background and legacy.

What does the New Testament teach about water baptism? While rites similar to Christian baptism can be found both in pagan and Jewish cultures, a distinctively new kind of understanding of baptism emerged with the birth of New Testament Christianity. Its immediate roots of course go to the predecessor of Jesus of Nazareth, John the Baptist, and, very importantly, to Jesus' own baptism by the Baptist—significantly recorded in all four Gospels. Understandably, the book of Acts, the first history of the emerging Christian community, provides the most baptismal data and examples of the first Christian baptisms. References to baptismal theology in Pauline and other New Testament writings further add to Christian theology of water baptism. According to the accounts in the book of Acts (chaps. 2, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 18–19, 22), Christian initiation typically included the following elements:

- hearing the gospel
- repentance
- faith
- forgiveness of sin
- reception of the Holy Spirit (at times with charismatic manifestations)

[19]Russell Haitch, *From Exorcism to Ecstasy: Eight Views of Baptism* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2007), chap. 2.
[20]Haitch, *From Exorcism to Ecstasy*, chap. 5.

Baptism followed conversion immediately, and all the baptized were in the age of responsibility (notwithstanding age-long debates about the meaning of a few references to household baptisms in the New Testament, as in Acts 16:15).

No information is given as to what kind of person performed baptisms. Immersion was the normal baptismal mode. Baptism was done in the name of Jesus (although the church adopted soon the trinitarian formula present in Matthew and elsewhere). Baptism was received from the community; one cannot baptize oneself.[21] It was not repeated. Baptism was a gate to church membership.[22]

In the Pauline and other New Testament epistles, the theology of baptism is depicted with the help of a number of images and metaphors, without any attempt at harmonizing. These include, for example,

- participation in the death and resurrection of Christ (Rom 6:3-5; Col 2:12)
- "washing away of sin" (1 Cor 6:11)
- new birth (Jn 3:5)
- enlightenment by Christ (Eph 5:14)
- re-clothing in Christ (Gal 3:27)
- renewal by the Spirit (Titus 3:5)[23]

That said, the New Testament hardly contains a single baptismal theology. When it comes to the spiritual effects of baptism, there are three orientations. First, there are passages that link regeneration with baptism (Jn 3:5; 1 Pet 3:21; 1 Cor 12:13). Second, one can also find passages that place repentance and faith before baptism (Mk 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:12, 13, 36; 10:45-48; etc.). And finally, there are sayings in which repentance and faith without sacraments are linked with regeneration and new birth (Lk 24:47; Acts 4:4; 5:14; 11:21; etc.). What can be concluded from this? Two broad conclusions seem warranted: First, in a number of passages baptism is seen as effecting or "causing" salvation. That said, second, baptism happens in the context of hearing the gospel, repentance, and faith. That speaks of the importance of human response to God's action. This dynamic divine-human aspect of baptism should be kept in mind when assessing how to define the way a person becomes a Christian in relation to baptism. And it is to

[21] *BEM*-B, #12.

[22] A major source for this section and the rest of the treatment of water baptism here is Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), parts 1 and 2.

[23] *BEM*-B, #2.

be kept in mind that all New Testament references to and teaching about baptism happen in the context of a person in an age of responsibility asking for the baptism.

The emergence of baptismal theologies and practices in the early centuries. For the sake of understanding the current debates and issues in baptismal theologies, it is useful and necessary to take a brief look at the history of this sacrament. This brief historical tracing shows important turns in the evolution of Christian understanding of this important rite.

The (early) second-century *Didache* offers the first known description of baptismal practice (*Did.* 7):

- Before baptism, preparatory teaching was given.
- The candidates were expected to have fasted.
- Baptism was done in the triune name in "living" (or running) water (where available).
- Eucharistic participation followed (*Did.* 9).
- Instruction for ethics and Christian life was provided (*Did.* 8).

In the theology of the leading second-century teachers, such as Irenaeus, faith, forgiveness, cleansing of sins, and reception of the Spirit are closely linked, following the New Testament patterns. Importantly, a three-year catechumenate for the sake of thorough instruction in faith before baptism became a norm. New components that seem to be established patterns in the West by that time include anointing with oil and exorcism.[24]

No one else exercised more influence on the theology and practice of water baptism (in the Christian West) than Augustine. While following the tradition prescribed above, he introduced innovative teachings that emerged out of his painful encounters with the Donatists and Pelagians. Against the former, he developed a thick theology of the sacrament in terms of its "indelible character": its efficacy is immune to the quality of the administrator or the recipient. Augustine also comes to strongly endorse infant baptism, which of course fits this framework. The fight with the Pelagians helped to further consolidate the doctrine of original sin that required infant baptism. Due to original sin, it was argued, the child is condemned and in real danger of facing eternal damnation unless baptized.[25] By the time of Augustine, infant baptism began to establish itself and soon became

[24]Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*; part 3 covers the second century and part 4 the third, with meticulous documentation.

[25]Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, chaps. 51 and 52.

the almost exclusive manner of baptism until the time of the Reformation when the Anabaptist movement rediscovered the original believers' baptism mode.

The rise of infant baptism and its challenge to original believers' baptism mode. In light of current scholarship, it is clear that infant baptism was a new development in relation to the New Testament and the earliest patristic theology. It emerged slowly and sporadically in various Christian locations; its legitimacy had to be demonstrated (Origen) and was sometimes outright rejected (Tertullian). This momentous shift developed gradually from the end of the second century. Not earlier than the end of the fourth and beginning of the fifth century, infant baptism established itself as the main mode of baptism.[26] For the first five centuries of Christian history, believers' baptism and infant baptism coexisted.

The first documented evidence for infant baptism comes indirectly from the end of the second century in the form of Tertullian's strict opposition to it; obviously, there had to have been a known tradition of that baptismal mode in order for it to be rejected by a leading theologian. Tertullian recommended delaying baptism in order to ensure proper instruction in faith. Related, Tertullian, in keeping with the theology of the early fathers, did not ascribe to a doctrine of original sin in the manner of later (Augustinian) tradition. Ironically, instrumental in the slow rise of infant baptism were debates about baptism by heretics/schismatics and "clinical" or deathbed baptisms, that is, the need to ensure that children receive baptism before their untimely death.

Disputes about infant baptism's legitimacy continued for a long time. The first authoritative ecclesiastical pronouncement in favor of infant baptism—along with adult baptism—doesn't come until the mid-third century (council presided at by Cyprian). The main theological justification was that the divine gift belongs to all, young and old.[27] Even then, it is likely that the term *child* did not typically refer to an infant but indicated a minor a few years old.

To conclude from the first five centuries, apart from the emergency baptism, with healthy children "there is no evidence that their parents presented them for baptism. The instruction to parents to baptize their children begins in the late

[26]In addition to Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, reliable sources are Hendrick F. Stander and Johannes P. Louw, *Baptism in the Early Church*, rev. ed. (Leeds, UK: Reformation Today Trust, 1994), chap. 1; David F. Wright, *What Has Infant Baptism Done to Baptism? An Enquiry at the End of Christendom* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2005); and idem, *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective: Collected Studies* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2007).

[27]Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, chaps. 23 and 39.

fourth century, . . . and the routine baptism of babies belongs to the fifth century and after." Only with Augustine, as mentioned, at the turn of the fifth century did infant baptism become the norm, although believers' baptism of course did not thereby disappear at once.[28] Notwithstanding the rise of infant baptism, believers' baptism as the dominant form of Christian baptism survived at least until the fourth century and continued as an alternative, legitimate form at least until the fifth (or even sixth) century.

Infant baptism or believers' baptism: a continuing debate. One of the most common disputes between Christian communities has to do with the mode of baptism—whether infant or believers' baptism—and the underlying theological views behind it. We can summarize the three main options:

- Baptism as a means of regeneration and infant baptism: all traditional churches
- Baptism as a seal and sign of the covenant between God and human persons, typically with infant baptism, but allowing believers' baptism also: most Reformed communities
- Baptism as a token of obedience to the biblical command, as believers' baptism: Anabaptists, Baptists, and other Free Churches, including Pentecostals[29]

Although, as has been demonstrated, the debate regarding infant versus believers' baptism is integrally connected with a number of biblical and theological issues, not least regarding the efficacy and meaning of this sacrament, the disputes between the churches are often formulated as a question of whether infants or persons of responsibility are the proper subjects of baptism. Typical arguments in favor of infant baptism are the following:

- One must deal with original sin after the establishment of this doctrine with Augustine.
- Christian baptism may be considered a counterpart of Israel's circumcision or John the Baptist's baptism of repentance.
- The nature of grace is both undeserved and universal.
- The so-called household texts of the New Testament provide justification.
- It is an early Christian tradition, although not as early as believers' baptism.

[28]Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 627-28 (627).

[29]A highly useful, succinct discussion of each of these positions with biblical and theological arguments can be found in Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3 vols. in 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1987), 1090-97.

- The blessing of children by Jesus provides an example.
- There is no ban in the Bible on baptizing the children.

Arguments in favor of believers' baptism are as much a rebuttal of infant baptism (which, as was said, was later introduced as an alternative to the original New Testament practice) as they are positive arguments:

- The New Testament teaching and example knows only believers' baptism, and hard evidence for infant baptism is missing—an argument critical biblical scholarship unanimously endorses.
- The New Testament does not relate baptism to original sin.
- Circumcision cannot be taken as the counterpart to Christian baptism because the former is linked exclusively to initiation in a particular nation; similarly, the Baptist's baptism was never administered to infants, and it pointed to the need for repentance for people already belonging to the people of God.
- Rather than baptizing, Jesus blessed the children, and that custom has little to do with developed sacramental theology.
- Infant baptism is seen to undermine—or perhaps even do away with—personal faith.
- Infant baptism easily leads to nominal Christianity, as is evident in the history of traditional churches.
- If universality and the free nature of grace were the main point of baptism, all people should be baptized without any discrimination.
- The lack of a ban is of course an argument from silence and can hardly be taken seriously.[30]

Although it would be too much to expect a final resolution to a problem of this magnitude and age, there are hopeful signs on the horizon pointing to a more conciliar mutual understanding—without necessarily envisioning a uniform practice and theology. The groundbreaking ecumenical achievement here, still being considered by various Christian communities, is the so-called Lima document titled *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*. A result of years of common study and discussion, this 1982 joint statement by a number of churches widely

[30]These and related arguments can be found in any standard comparative discussion. Along with Haitch, *From Exorcism to Ecstasy*, see, e.g., John H. Armstrong and Paul E. Engle, eds., *Understanding Four Views on Baptism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007).

representing main Christian traditions, including infant and believers' baptism, laid a foundation for continuing ecumenical work on behalf of this central church act. The final segment of this discussion on baptism gleans from this document's rich contribution for the sake of outlining the prospects of a common understanding of the sacrament of baptism.

Toward a more conciliar and common understanding of water baptism. *Faith and baptism.* All churches understand that baptism and faith belong together. This is clear from the New Testament, in which faith normally precedes baptism and the act of baptism is a personal choice.[31] "Not the sacrament, but the faith of the sacrament, justifies," declared Luther.[32] Furthermore, faith commitment should follow the baptized throughout life. This is so because Christian initiation is just that—an *initiation*—rather than completion of the Christian life.

Hence, all baptized should be reminded of the need to continue the walk of faith. This reminder is particularly important for parents and mentors of baptized infants, or else the sacrament once performed may easily be lost.[33] Baptism places a lifelong claim on the whole life of the Christian as a responsible member of the community.[34]

That said, the relationship between baptism and human response is dynamic and mutual. Baptism is "both God's gift and our human response to that gift."[35] A solid understanding of this principle helps the community to avoid any kind of semimechanical sacramental understanding in which the deed merely done (*ex opere operato*) would suffice; at the same time, this dynamic view also saves the Christian from considering baptism a merely human act. Ultimately, baptism and faith do not "have their bases in themselves, but [are] alike in the saving act of God in Christ," in the eschatological act of salvation. In short, "baptism comes from faith, and faith leads to baptism."[36]

The close linking between baptism and faith understandably poses the following question to the advocates of infant baptism: How could the presence of faith be affirmed with an infant? This is not a new issue. In support of infant baptism in the absence of (at least observable) faith, various kinds of theological

[31]*BEM*-B, #8.
[32]Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520); *LW* 36:66.
[33]*BEM*-B, #8.
[34]*BEM*-B, #10.
[35]*BEM*-B, #9, #8, respectively.
[36]Hans Küng, *The Church*, trans. Ray and Rosaleen Ockenden (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967; repr., Garden City, NY: Image Books/Doubleday, 1976), 271.

tactics have been devised. Typical of these is Augustine's justification of vicarious faith of the infant (that is, parents or other believing adults believe for the child) with the reasoning that—similarly to original sin, which comes from outside the child (from parents)—the family members and the church bring faith on behalf of the infant.[37] Well known also is Luther's idea of "infant faith," that is, a disposition that, while certainly different from the conscious faith of the adult, may still be pleasing to God. In light of critical biblical scholarship and current theological-cultural intuitions, the general effort to find a "substitute" faith for that of the infant baptized is becoming more and more challenging. The reasons are many, not the least of which is lack of biblical support. The normal view of faith in the New Testament, as much as it is a divine gift communicated through the Holy Spirit, is a personal choice and leads to commitment. Furthermore, in the New Testament, no one is baptized without the person's request or consent. In contemporary culture, a further question arises as to whether baptizing infants may at least implicitly fail to honor each human person's integrity and inviolability. These are continuing themes and challenges for ecumenical discussions.

Believers' baptism as the theological norm. Because of biblical scholarship's universal agreement on believers' baptism as the original practice of Christian baptism and the weakness of a number of infant baptism arguments, an ecumenical consensus has emerged. It simply states this: believers' baptism should be adopted as the theological norm and standard when assessing various baptismal practices. The phrase "believers' baptism" refers not to the age of the candidate (although it is of course related) but rather to the baptismal act in which a candidate with personal faith requests to be baptized in accordance with the New Testament and early Christianity.[38]

Adopting believers' baptism as the theological standard, however, does not have to lead to discrediting infant baptism but rather helps those churches that continue this practice to constantly evaluate its theological value and propriety. This principle may also point to the rediscovery of believers' baptism in the future as the main mode of this sacrament.

Whatever the implications may be, it can be recommended that rather than continuing the often frustrating and unfruitful dispute over infant versus

[37] Augustine, *Against the Two Letters of the Pelagians* 1.40.

[38] *BEM*-B, #11; see also Jean Giblet, "Baptism—The Sacrament of Incorporation into the Church According to St. Paul," in *Baptism in the New Testament: A Symposium*, trans. David Askew (Baltimore: Helicon, 1964), 161-88.

believers' baptism, theologically trained persons should embrace the scholarly consensus and begin to work toward a common understanding. On the basis of this consensus, some tentative suggestions for renewed baptismal theology and practice are in order.

Ecumenical suggestions for a renewed baptismal theology and practice. All churches should make concentrated efforts to learn to recognize the baptismal practices of other churches. Sacramental churches ought to give up the misguided insistence on infant baptism as the only legitimate mode of baptism. Similarly, believers' baptism advocates, while possessing strong biblical precedent, could respect infant baptism as an honored, fairly ancient Christian practice. That would help churches strive toward mutual consideration of both infant and believers' baptism as parallel and legitimate practices.

Mutual acknowledgment of both modes of Christian baptism would open churches to a practical challenge and a vital opportunity: whereas believers' baptizers should seek to highlight more robustly that even before baptism all children are put under the care and grace of God, infant baptizers should avoid indiscriminate baptisms and continuously encourage parents and guardians to work toward helping the growing young person to find personal faith. Here much can be learned from the experiences of those churches that practice both forms of baptism.[39]

The long-term ecumenical goal should be, on the one hand, a full mutual acknowledgment of both modes of baptism and, on the other hand, gradual transition toward believers' baptism as the normal mode for the beginning of Christian initiation. Furthermore, keeping in mind the criteriological role of believers' baptism also means that all churches should consider carefully rediscovering the original mode of immersion because this "can vividly express the reality that in baptism the Christian participates in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ."[40] The practice of immersion is of course used widely in Eastern Christianity and is considered a norm by most churches practicing believers' baptism.

In the absence of and in place of infant baptism, a rite of blessing for infants and young children, ideally in the worship service setting, could be adopted as a

[39]World Council of Churches, *One Baptism: Towards Mutual Recognition: A Study Text*, Faith and Order Paper no. 210 (Geneva: WCC, 2011), #97; www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/ii-worship-and-baptism/one-baptism-towards-mutual-recognition.
[40]*BEM*-B, #18.

standard practice, as is already the case for most believers' baptism communities. That would match the New Testament example of Jesus' blessing of children.

Having now investigated in some detail the sacrament/ordinance of water baptism, it is time to delve into the other universally administered sacrament among Christian communities, the Eucharist/Lord's Supper.

EUCHARIST

Theological and spiritual dimensions of the Eucharist. What is traditionally called the Eucharist or Communion, is also widely named as the Lord's Supper particularly among various Protestant churches. Similarly to water baptism, virtually all Christian churches regularly practice the Eucharist (thus called in traditional churches) or the Lord's Supper (a more typical nomenclature in younger churches and other nonsacramental settings). The celebration of this sacrament has stood at the center of Christian worship from the beginning (Acts 2:44-46). Despite long-standing and ongoing differences in the interpretation of the meaning of the Eucharist, ecumenically we have come to a place where it is possible to discern a significant consensus about the basic dimensions and aspects of the meal, a profound embodiment of divine hospitality.[41] It is "the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit."[42] In the sacred meal, none other than the Lord and Savior hosts and presides.

A comprehensive summary of the significance and manifold meanings of this divine act of hospitality includes the following:

- Thanksgiving to the Father (the literal meaning of *eucharisteō*).
- *Anamnesis*, "remembrance," the memorial of Christ's passion and resurrection as the resurrected Christ himself has instituted (1 Cor 11:23-25). This remembrance re-presents to the gathered community the significance and meaning of Christ's suffering and victory over death. When Christians recall Christ's suffering and glorious resurrection and the words of institution are pronounced, the Holy Spirit effects Christ's presence among the gathered people. At the same time, the celebration anticipates the final eschatological consummation. Remembering is thus directed to the future as well.
- The invocation of the Spirit, *epiclesis*, the prayer for the descent of the Holy Spirit. This prayer has been rediscovered in recent times in Western

[41] *BEM*-E, #1.
[42] *BEM*-E, #2.

churches; in the Christian East, it has been part of the eucharistic liturgy since ancient times. The Spirit's role is to bring Christ's memory and presence to the church. This is in keeping with the integral link between Easter and Pentecost.

- Communion of the faithful. Nowhere else in the church is the Spirit-produced fellowship among the faithful experienced in such an intimate manner as at the celebration of the Lord's Supper. It knits together men and women with each other and with the triune God.
- As the meal of the kingdom, it points to the return of Christ (1 Cor 11:26; cf. Mt 26:29).[43]

Encompassing all these elements, the eucharistic celebration is also a profound venue of proclamation (1 Cor 11:26). Similarly to water baptism, which issues a claim on the whole life of the baptized person, the Eucharist also binds the celebrant to the values of the Lord of the Supper, particularly reconciliation with God and others. "All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged when we share in the body and blood of Christ."[44]

The presence of Christ in the Eucharist. There is no dispute among the Christian churches concerning the presence of Christ at the celebration—if not for other reasons then because of the New Testament statements that "this is my body" and "this is my blood." That said, how to understand these statements of Jesus is a debated issue regarding the mode of the presence. The basic options are fairly well known:

- Whereas strongly affirming Christ's presence, in keeping with its apophatic way of doing theology, Eastern Orthodox theology has refused to define it in any conceptual or analytic manner.
- According to the Roman Catholic transubstantiation theory, the elements become Christ's body and blood by virtue of the words of institution.
- The Lutheran version is consubstantiation (Christ "under," "in," and "above" the elements), the idea that Christ is truly present but without the elements changing their essence.
- In the Reformed family of churches, somewhat differing interpretations coexist. The Zwinglian version focuses on commemoration of Christ's work

[43]Based on and inspired by *BEM*-E, part 2.
[44]*BEM*-E, #20.

whereas the Calvinist view oscillates between the Lutheran and Zwinglian understandings, affirming commemoration but insisting on Christ's presence through the Holy Spirit.

- Among the Free Churches, Zwinglian understanding probably is the most common although detailed documentation is not easily available.[45]

It is important and useful for us to know that the Protestant Reformation's rejection of the technical Catholic interpretation of transubstantiation was in no way an attempt to undermine the full and robust presence of Christ in the Eucharist. What Lutheran tradition opposed was the Catholic Church making that particular "technical" interpretation exclusive.[46]

Without in any way whitewashing these continuing differences of interpretation about the mode of Christ's presence, it is important to see the common basis among Christian traditions. Employing a classical sacramental theological apparatus, the eucharistic celebration shows the intimate relationship between the sign (bread and wine) and the thing (Christ's presence)—unlike typically when the sign indicates the clear distinction between it and the thing (as in a signpost that points to the destination away from it). At the Eucharist, "sign and thing are together, as when the sign indicates the presence of the things signified."[47] Terms such as *transsignification*, invoked by some Catholic and Protestant theologians, might be useful here: it means a change in the "meaning" of an act, such as when a sheet of paper is "changed" into a letter but not in any literal or technical manner.

In the same spirit, it can hopefully be stated that intra-Protestant differences should be put in perspective. Zwinglians and Lutherans are seemingly on the opposite ends of the spectrum. The main reason why the former insists on the symbolic view is the difficulty in intuiting how the ascended heavenly Christ could have his body present at the table. On the other hand, the ingenious Lutheran solution of the "omnipresence" (ubiquity) of Christ's body due to *communicatio idiomatum* (that is, the idea that what pertains to Christ's divine nature also pertains to the human nature) allows a robust affirmation of his real presence. A solution toward a more conciliar interpretation between

[45]For details and sources, see Gordon T. Smith, ed., *The Lord's Supper: Five Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008).

[46]*Smalcald Articles*; *BC*, I.6.5, 311; for the Council of Trent's views, see Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:297-98.

[47]Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:299-300.

the Zwinglian and Lutheran view is the common, current understanding that the whole of Christ is present in the celebration, rather than (merely) the "body." Indeed, Calvin's "middle" position is useful here: in critique of Luther (and Catholics), he contested the "real presence" in the elements and, in critique of Zwingli, still insisted on a real *spiritual* presence through the Holy Spirit.[48] As long as Christ's presence is conceived personally, the abstract and forced options among the Protestant Reformers can be healed and overcome. To that also points Calvin's "representational" understanding, according to which—in contrast to Zwingli's anti-Catholic "memorial" or symbolic understanding—the elements "point beyond themselves to bring to heart and mind the reality of salvation."[49]

Eucharist and the unity of Christian communion. The celebration of the Lord's Supper is a most profound moment of Christian unity. The celebration of this sacrament reminds us of one body, the church, under one head, the Christ.

Unity is the concern of Pauline teaching in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11, addressed to this church that suffered from party politics, leadership quarrels, and a spirit of division. This concern for unity lies also behind what is often known nowadays as the "unworthiness" ban on partaking of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:27), which has been routinely conceived in terms of moral lapses. In other words, the Pauline exhortation to examine oneself first, before partaking in the celebration, has been interpreted in terms of whether the individual Christian has failed in his or her Christian walk. But that interpretation misses the key focus of Paul's teaching. Although, understandably, there is no reason to deny the importance of minding one's moral and spiritual condition when approaching the Lord's Table, contemporary exegesis is unanimous that Paul's appeal to discern "the body" (1 Cor 11:29) primarily had to do with church unity. The celebrants are warned seriously against splitting or dividing the one church body. Hence, the advice about self-examination (1 Cor 11:28) is less about scrutiny of one's own conscience as an individual person and more about paying attention to one's behavior and attitudes with regard to unity.

That interpretation also brings to surface weighty ecumenical issues—keeping unity among all who wish to come to the table. Not without reason, then, a call

[48]Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.31.
[49]Leanne Van Dyk, "The Reformed View," in Smith, *The Lord's Supper*, 70.

has been issued to open the Eucharist to all Christians as long as they desire fellowship with the Lord and his people.[50]

The last topic of part three, namely, the unity of the church and ecumenical work, hence, forms a natural sequel to the current discussion of the Eucharist and a fitting closure to this part.

[50]Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:329.

17

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE PROMISE OF THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

STRIVING FOR THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH—THE BIBLICAL MANDATE

Ecumenism simply means the work and search for the unity of Christian churches.[1] The term derives from the Greek word *oikoumene* (Lk 2:1; Acts 11:28), which means the whole inhabited world. Closely related to this word is the use of the term *ecumenical* with reference to ancient "ecumenical councils" such as that of Nicaea (325 CE) and the "ecumenical" patriarchate (of Constantinople).[2]

The most important answer to the question of why ecumenical work, striving for the unity of the church, is important is simply this: it is the biblical mandate. Indeed, the famed late ecumenist Harding Meyer goes so far as to state, "In brief,

[1]This chapter draws widely from several writings of mine: Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, "Ecclesiology in Modern Theology," in *Mapping Modern Theology: A Thematic and Historical Introduction*, ed. Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce L. McCormack (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 345-76; idem, *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), 503-8; idem, "Ecumenism," in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, ed. Joel B. Green, Jacqueline E. Lapsley, Rebekah Miles, and Allen Verhey (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 269-70; and idem, "Growing Together in Unity and Mission," in *Called to Unity for the Sake of Mission*, ed. John Gibaut and Knud Jørgensen (Oxford: Regnum, 2014), 59-70.

[2]For a classic definition of the term *ecumenism* and various facets of its meaning, see Willem Visser 't Hooft, "The Mandate of the Ecumenical Movement," *The Ecumenical Review* 70, no. 1 (Mar 2018): 105-117; see also W. A. Visser 't Hooft, "The Basis: Its History and Significance," *Ecumenical Review* 37, no. 2 (1985): 170-74.

the New Testament does not speak of the church without, at the same time, speaking of its unity."[3]

The importance and urgency of the unity of the church are expressed most profoundly in the prayer of our Lord Jesus in John 17:21. He prayed for the unity of his followers based on the unity between the Father and Son, "so that the world may believe." This prayer tells us that the unity of Christians is based on the unity of the Father, Son, and Spirit. The same prayer also highlights the integral relation between mission and ecumenism: the unity of the church, while essential in itself, is also needed for the sake of helping the world believe in Jesus.

Another key New Testament text is Ephesians 4:3-6, which urges Christians "to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" because "there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all." This New Testament idea goes back to the vision of the oneness of the people of God in the Old Testament (Deut 6:4).

Notwithstanding differences among Christian communities regarding how to best work toward unity and what its implications for church life and self-understanding are, all Christian traditions agree that ultimately unity is based on the unity of the triune God. This conviction is firmly anchored in the biblical witness. It is highly promising that even the youngest ecclesial tradition currently, Pentecostalism, in a long-term international dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, made this highly significant mutual statement:

> Both Pentecostals and Roman Catholics believe that the *koinonia* between Christians is rooted in the life of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, they believe that this trinitarian life is the highest expression of the unity to which we together aspire: "that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 Jn 1:3).[4]

This statement reminds us of the key New Testament term *koinōnia*. It is usually translated as "fellowship" (Acts 2:42; 1 Jn 1:3) or "sharing" (Phil 3:10), and it means sharing at spiritual, sacramental, social, emotional, and economic levels.

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[3]Harding Meyer, *That All May Be One: Perceptions and Models of Ecumenicity*, trans. William G. Rusch (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 8.

[4]*Perspectives on Koinonia* (Report from . . . Dialogue Between . . . the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Churches and Leaders), 1989, #29, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/pentecostals/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_1985-1989_perspectives-koinonia_en.html.

Any talk about ecumenism has to keep in mind the inclusion of the oneness/unity of the church as one of the four marks. When discussing this mark, we noted the great irony of rampant divisions among the churches throughout the centuries and, yet, the vision and goal of unity. Rightly, the late Lutheran Wolfhart Pannenberg notes that "for the first time . . . the scandal of divided Christendom has reached such a head that it has become intolerable for the faith consciousness of countless modern Christians."[5] Indeed, so much is at stake with the issue of divisions and unity that, to further cite Pannenberg, only "if Christians succeed in solving the problems of their own pluralism, they may be able to produce a model combining pluralism and the widest moral unity which will also be valid for political life."[6]

THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT AS THE PLATFORM OF THE WORK FOR UNITY

There is wide agreement that beginning from the turn of the twentieth century, "ecumenicity was the great new fact in the history of the church."[7] A number of initiatives and developments prepared for the coming into existence of the contemporary ecumenical movement, including important ecclesiastical unions and agreements in Europe, North America, India, and elsewhere, with the establishment of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948 as the most visible sign.

The Anglican *Lambeth Quadrilateral* in 1920 (originally issued in 1888) elevated Scripture, creeds, and the two sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, as well as the episcopacy as the basis of church unity.[8] The formation of the Church of South India from Anglican, Methodist, Congregationalist, Presbyterian, and Reformed churches, notwithstanding thorny issues such as the episcopacy, was a great step toward unity.[9] In a 1920 encyclical, the (Orthodox) Synod of Constantinople

[5]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 3:411.

[6]Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Christian Morality and Political Issues," in *Faith and Reality*, trans. J. M. Maxwell (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977), 38.

[7]Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)*, vol. 5 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 282. The most comprehensive and accessible resource on various facets of ecumenism and the ecumenical movement, including the WCC, is Nicholas Lossky et al., eds., *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, 2nd ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002). For key texts, see Michael Kinnamon, ed., *The Ecumenical Movement: An Anthology of Key Texts and Voices*, 2nd ed. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2016). A standard resource is also W. A. Visser 't Hooft, *The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982).

[8]Bishops of the Protestant Episcopal Church USA, *The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral*, adopted 1886/1888, accessed June 30, 2020, http://anglicansonline.org/basics/Chicago_Lambeth.html.

[9]See further, Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture*, 284-86.

suggested a fellowship of churches similar to the League of Nations. On the part of the United States, the formation in 1898 of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America—now The National Council of Churches, USA (NCC, USA)—was a significant ecumenical step in the efforts toward unity.[10] Church formations such as the United Church of Canada, made up of Methodists, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians, in 1925 and the United Church of Christ (USA), composed of Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church, in 1957 gave further indication of the growing desire for unity.[11]

Testifying to the close link between mission and ecumenism, mentioned above, a significant early twentieth-century push toward unity came from the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, whose centennial was celebrated in 2010 in Edinburgh. Before the establishment of the WCC, two highly important processes stemming from the first missionary conference—Life and Work, focusing on social issues, and Faith and Order, focusing on doctrinal issues—established in the 1920s were instrumental for the modern ecumenical movement. Even though the Roman Catholic Church, most evangelicals, and a number of Free Churches are not officially members of the WCC, its influence is unprecedented in lifting up the torch of unity.[12]

But what is the WCC? And what is its task? It is important to know that the WCC in itself is not a church but a "fellowship of churches," currently about 350 churches from all continents. Its self-understanding was established in the 1961 New Delhi basis statement:

> a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures, and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.[13]

The purpose of WCC is

> not to build a global "super-church," nor to standardize styles of worship, but rather to deepen the fellowship of Christian churches and communities so they may see in one another authentic expressions of the "one holy, catholic and apostolic church." This

[10]For history and current situation, see National Council of Churches, www.ncccusa.org/, accessed June 30, 2020.

[11]For all details concerning these few examples and a host of other impulses toward unity, consult this massive resource: Ruth Rouse and S. C. Neill, eds., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, vol. 1, *1517–1948*, 4th ed. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2004).

[12]For a highly useful discussion of the history, meaning, and activities of WCC, consult Roger Haight, *Christian Community in History*, vol. 2, *Comparative Ecclesiology* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 369-82.

[13]"The Basis of the WCC," *About Us*, World Council of Churches, accessed June 30, 2020, www.oikoumene.org/en/about-us/self-understanding-vision/basis.

> becomes the basis for joining in a common confession of the apostolic faith, cooperating in mission and human service endeavours and, where possible, sharing in the sacraments. All these acts of fellowship bear testimony to the foundational declaration of the WCC that the Lord Jesus Christ is "God and Saviour according to the Scriptures."[14]

An important part of the ecumenical work happens constantly in the form of bilateral and multilateral dialogues between Christian churches at the local, national, regional, and global levels.[15] In most countries there is a national council of churches (such as the NCC, USA) which works in close cooperation with Faith and Order facilitating ecumenical conversations, events, and projects at national, regional, and local levels. There are also a number of informal ecumenical contacts between leaders as well as laypeople at various levels, making a significant contribution to the search for unity. In other words, the term *ecumenical* has to be understood most inclusively and should in no way be limited to what might be called "official" or "formal" ecumenism (that is, the work done by the WCC and other such agencies). Recall that the two biggest players in the Majority World, namely Roman Catholics and Pentecostal/charismatics (as well as the majority of evangelicals) are not affiliated with the WCC (although Catholics collaborate in many projects).

While significant steps have been taken toward the unity of the church, there is no denying the massive and complex challenges facing the ecumenical movement in the beginning of the third millennium. A number of dividing issues with regard to ministry, sacraments, and, say, the issues of evangelism and proselytism, all call for patient, long-term consideration and mutual understanding. On top of these weighty issues—and in many ways, underlying them—is the continuing debate about what unity is, what it means, and what its implications might be. Understandably, different churches bring their own distinctive visions and perceptions to the task. Let us take a closer look at this central issue.

DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNITY AMONG CHURCH TRADITIONS

For the Orthodox Church, the division of the one Church of Christ and all schisms simply create an unbearable problem.[16] The Orthodox Church firmly

[14]"The WCC and the Ecumenical Movement," *Who Are We? Background*, World Council of Churches, accessed June 30, 2020, http://archived.oikoumene.org/en/who-are-we/background.html.

[15]For details, consult Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 126-34.

[16]This final section of the chapter draws directly from Kärkkäinen, "Growing Together," 59-70, which drew extensively from Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 15-36; and Risto Saarinen, *Johdatus Ekumeniikkaan* (Helsinki: Kirjaneliö, 1994), 81-110, 113-21.

believes itself to be standing in the unbroken line of the apostolic church. Not only that, but—and this might sound triumphalistic to outsiders—this "unity is expressed through the apostolic succession and the patristic tradition and has been lived up to the present day within the Orthodox Church."[17] No wonder that helping to rediscover and reestablish the unity of the whole church is a key concern for the oldest Christian ecclesiastical tradition, as is evident also in the standard prayers of the divine liturgy. For the Orthodox Church, the very minimum and the beginning point for overcoming divisions is the recognition of the apostolic succession of the episcopacy and sacramental priesthood in addition to the apostolic tradition as formulated in the ancient creeds. These are nonnegotiable givens.[18]

No other church has expressed its ecumenical vision, as an integral part of ecclesiology, more than the Roman Catholic Church has. Vatican II succinctly states that "the restoration of unity among all Christians is one of the principal concerns" of the council.[19] Along with the Orthodox Church, Catholics affirm only one church of Christ on the earth. Furthermore, not unlike the Orthodox, Catholics firmly affirm, "We believe that this unity subsists in the Catholic Church as something she can never lose, and we hope that it will continue to increase until the end of time."[20] Bishops, among whom the bishop of Rome, the pope, has the primacy, are the guardians of the unity of the church in the Catholic understanding of ecumenism.[21]

That said, Vatican II brought some new emphases and nuances, fruitful for the continued seeking of unity. As discussed, whereas in the past the Catholic Church regarded itself as the "perfect society," *Lumen Gentium*'s vision—the church still on the way—fosters dialogue, mutual learning, and correction while seeking unity together with other churches. *Lumen Gentium* also refuses to equate the Church of Christ with the Catholic Church (#8), thus making room for the acknowledgment of the true church in other communities as well. That said, unlike Protestants and Anglicans, Roman Catholics are not willing to consider other

[17]The statement of The Third Panorthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference in Chambesy, Switzerland, 1986, in *Episkepsis*, no. 369 (December 1968).

[18]See further, Constantin G. Patelos, ed., *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement: Documents and Statements* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1978).

[19]*Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism, Vatican II), November 21, 1964, #1, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decree_19641121_unitatis-redintegratio_en.html.

[20]*Unitatis Redintegratio* #4.

[21]See further, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, Vatican II), November 21, 1964, esp. #23, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html.

Christian communities (save the Orthodox) as *church* in the full sense of the term; rather, they are seen as Christian *communities*. Importantly, however, it is affirmed that the Catholic Church shares much in common with others, including Scriptures, the triune God, and the sacraments (#15).

For the Anglican Communion, as explicated in the "Thirty-nine Articles" (#19 and #34) of 1563 and 1571, the unity of the church is based on preaching of the Word of God and the sacraments. Importantly, a few centuries later the *Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral* (1888) went further in its specifications regarding unity and outlined four aspects as the condition for unity: Scripture, the Apostles' Creed, the two sacraments, and the episcopate.[22] This means that, similarly to the Orthodox and Catholics, but differently from the Protestants, for Anglicans the unity of the church requires the presence of a bishop.

As discussed, among the churches of the Reformation, minimum conditions are set for Christian unity, namely, the preaching of the Word of God and the right administration of the sacraments. As long as the Word and sacraments are included, a lot of flexibility can be had with regard to all other aspects of church life, ministry, liturgy, structures, and other issues.

The youngest Christian churches, the Free Churches, have entertained many kinds of suspicions, even doubts, concerning the idea of ecumenism. The guiding principle for them has been the idea of "spiritual union," according to which God-given unity already exists either between "true" churches or at least between "true" individual believers. The Free Churches have not located unity in either creeds or even the Bible, although for most of them these two have been very important, but rather in the believing hearts of individuals.[23] Whereas most Free Churches have not defined theologically their vision for the unity among Christian communities, it is safe to say that four aspects are highlighted in the Free Churches: personal faith, the local church as the focus, the priesthood of all believers, and reservations with regard to the idea of visible unity.[24] Currently the largest Free Church constituency and the most rapidly growing segment of Christianity, namely, Pentecostals, define their ecclesial self-understanding basically along the same lines.

[22]*Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral* (1886/1888), http://anglicansonline.org/basics/Chicago_Lambeth.html.
[23]For the Baptists, see William L. Pitts, "The Relation of Baptists to Other Churches," in Paul Basden and David S. Dockery, *The People of God: Essays on the Believers' Church* (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 235-50. For the Pentecostals, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Spiritus ubi vult spirat: Pneumatology in Roman Catholic–Pentecostal Dialogue (1972–1989)*, Schriften der Luther-Agricola-Gesellschaft 42 (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola Society, 1998), chap. 5.
[24]Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 24-27.

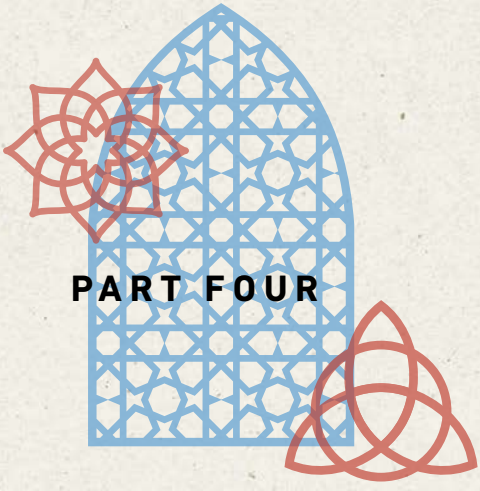
Integrally linked with the differing perceptions of the unity among various Christian communities is the most foundational issue of the contemporary ecumenical movement, namely, "visible unity." This is the idea that whatever spiritual and "invisible" unity there might be among all Christians and churches as members of the one Body under one Head, that unity has to be manifested also in a visible and tangible manner. Briefly stated, there are two foundational statements to be made with regard to visible unity. On the one hand, there is no universal agreement about its form and shape. On the other hand, the ecumenical movement at large has adopted visible unity as the main goal.[25] In other words, at least all traditional churches and the ecumenical movement have set visible unity as the stated goal and ultimate aim of the pursuit of unity. But at this point no one can tell definitively what the nature of visible unity is! In contrast, it is quite easy to state what visible unity is not: It is widely agreed that it does not mean one "world church," nor the deletion of denominational distinctive features, or similar solutions, fears common among Christians—particularly among Free Churches. The lack of consensus about the meaning of visible unity means that the nature of unity is a continuing agenda in ecumenical conversations and work.

Moreover, one development and process going on in the global church has everything to do with how unity may be realized: the constant and rapid emergence of new congregational models such as the Emerging/Emergent church and the rapid globalization of the church. The goal of seeking unity in the midst of these disparate, diverse, and organizationally disconnected movements of the globalizing church is a daunting challenge!

Without in any way whitewashing the utter complexity of the ecumenical task, it is also to be acknowledged that diversity in itself is not the root problem. Diversity belongs to all life and particularly to dynamic community life. Search for unity should also find ways of affirming constructive and fruitful diversity. As the important ecumenical document *The Nature and Mission of the Church* succinctly puts it, "Authentic diversity in the life of communion must not be stifled: authentic unity must not be surrendered."[26]

[25]See further, Meyer, *That All May Be One*, 10-15.

[26]World Council of Churches, *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement*, Faith and Order Paper no. 198, December 15, 2005, #62, www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-nature-and-mission-of-the-church-a-stage-on-the-way-to-a-common-statement.



PART FOUR

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AMONG RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

ORIENTATION TO PART FOUR

The Challenge of Religious Diversity

INTERFAITH CHALLENGE AS AN ECCLESIOLOGICAL ISSUE

Why would a primer on Christian ecclesiology include an introduction to and dialogue with visions of communities of other living faiths?[1] The simple answer is that we need comparative theology because the world in which we live in the beginning of the third millennium is deeply and widely religious! Indeed, though many had expected this to become a religionless world—or, at least, a world with religions on the margins—in the midst of modern progress it has become even more religious. At the global level, religions are flourishing and (in some cases) growing in numbers. Furthermore, no longer is religious plurality a matter for only certain particular locations and contexts; on the contrary, it is now a new reality over the whole globe, including the Global North.[2]

The global statistics alone support that claim. In the beginning of the third millennium, roughly speaking, a third of the world's population belongs to the Christian church (2.4 billion) and a quarter to the Islamic community (1.6 billion). The 1 billion Hindus make up about 15 percent, followed by Buddhists at half that number. Jews number 14 million, and over 400 million belong to various kinds

[1]This section directly gleans from Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Doing the Work of Comparative Theology: A Primer for Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020).

[2]See Charles L. Cohen and Ronald L. Numbers, eds., *Gods in America: Religious Pluralism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

of "folk or traditional religions." It is noteworthy that of the total population of the world (around 7.8 billion as of 2020), no more than about 16 percent (1 billion) label themselves religiously unaffiliated (even though the majority of them entertain some kind of religious-type beliefs and practices).[3] In sum, there are more religious people in the world than ever—even while forms of secularism are also flourishing in some parts of the world.

Religions are unevenly distributed in our globe. Hinduism and Buddhism are mainly regional (Asian) religions. This is dramatically different from Christianity and Islam, which are both global religions, Christianity being the most widely disseminated: "Roughly equal numbers of Christians live in Europe (26%), Latin America and the Caribbean (24%), and sub-Saharan Africa (24%)." Muslims are also fairly evenly distributed, although a majority (over 60%) live in Pacific Asia and the rest in Africa and the Middle East." Even if the statistics are somewhat fluid, changing all the time, it is clear that religions are not isolated from one another. Rather, they interact and mingle.[4]

This is why there is a need for theologians, religious leaders, laypersons, and students who know something about other faiths and are able to compare notes. This is particularly important for Christians and Muslims who together form over half of the world's population and who can be found everywhere. That said, acquiring even a basic knowledge of other religions—even of one world religion apart from one's own—is a daunting task and challenge![5]

How to do comparative ecclesiology? And what is it?

WHAT IS COMPARATIVE ECCLESIOLOGY?

There are three interrelated, yet distinct, disciplines that facilitate an interfaith engagement: religious studies/comparative religion, theology of religions, and comparative theology.[6] First, *comparative religion*, a subset of the larger domain of religious studies, investigates the phenomenon, spread, spiritual life, practices, teachings, and other facets of living religions. It focuses on an academic

[3]Pew Research Center, "Executive Summary," *The Global Religious Landscape*, Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, December 2012, p. 9, https://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2014/01/global-religion-full.pdf.

[4]Pew Research Center, "Executive Summary," 10.

[5]See Timothy C. Tennent, *Theology in the Context of World Christianity: How the Global Church Is Influencing the Way We Think About and Discuss Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 55.

[6]A useful discussion is Francis X. Clooney, *Comparative Theology: Deep Learning Across Religious Borders* (West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 8-16; and Kärkkäinen, introduction to *Doing the Work of Comparative Theology*.

comparison of religions' doctrines, teachings, and practices. Importantly for our purposes here, comparative religion seeks to do its work from a neutral, noncommitted point of view.

Second, *Christian theology of religions*, as the name indicates, is a confessional Christian discipline. It seeks to reflect critically and sympathetically on the theological meaning of religions in the economy of God. Its goal is to "account theologically for the meaning and value of other religions. Christian theology of religions attempts to think theologically about what it means for Christians to live with people of other faiths and about the relationship of Christianity to other religions."[7]

Third, since theology of religions operates at a fairly general level, yet another discipline is needed, namely, *comparative theology*. Gleaning resources not only from Christian theology and theology of religions but also from comparative religion, it investigates "ideas, words, images and acts, historical developments—found in two or more traditions or strands of tradition."[8] Comparative theology complements and corrects theology of religion's more generic approach. It seeks to investigate in detail specific topics in religious traditions. Whereas comparative religion, as noted, makes an effort to be "neutral" on faith commitments, comparative theology works from the perspective of a particular religion. Hence, it "marks acts of faith seeking understanding which are rooted in a particular faith tradition but which, from that foundation, venture into learning from one or more other faith traditions"[9] based on Christian tradition and teachings.[10] That said, the confessional nature of comparative theology does not mean therefore that comparative theology does not qualify as an academic discipline. It acknowledges that it is "tied to specific communities of faith [but] without being trapped by these communities."[11] Like any other academic discipline, it also exercises proper critical assessment.

[7]Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to the Theology of Religions: Biblical, Historical, and Contemporary Perspectives* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003), 20.

[8]Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 9. For historical precedents, see chap. 2, and for a survey of some leading contemporary comparative theologians, see chap. 3.

[9]Clooney, *Comparative Theology*, 10.

[10]See further James L. Fredericks, "A Universal Religious Experience? Comparative Theology as an Alternative to a Theology of Religions," *Horizons* 22, no. 1 (1995): 67-87.

[11]J. Wentzel Van Huyssteen, *Alone in the World? Human Uniqueness in Science and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 17.

WHY SHOULD CHRISTIAN ECCLESIOLOGY ENGAGE OTHER FAITHS?

As urgent as the interfaith issue might be, it is still not necessarily evident why Christian tradition should endeavor to relate its vision of the community with that of other faiths. In opposition, one could point to the virtual absence of such work coming from the perspective of other religions. There are, however, two reasons for taking up this task, which we can label practical and theological, for lack of better nomenclature. Practical reasons to engage the religious other include, first, establishing a pedagogical contact and preparing to witness to Christ in the matrix of religious convictions; second, helping Christians live in a civil way with the religious other, and so alleviating conflicts; and a third, related to the second, facilitating and advancing world peace and reconciliation. These reasons alone would suffice, but in addition there are weighty theological reasons.

One of the theological reasons for the interfaith mandate stems from the Abrahamic faiths' monotheistic nature. The English philosopher of religion Roger Trigg puts it well: "Christianity and Islam both believe that they have a universal message. If there is one God, one would expect that He would be regarded as the God of all people, and not just some." As a result, "monotheism can have no truck with relativism, or alternative gods. Beliefs may construct gods, but those who believe in one God cannot allow for other parallel deities, even in the sense that other people have their gods while monotheists look to their one deity."[12]

Another theological reason for robust engagement with the religious other stems from the common origin and destiny of humanity, an offshoot from monotheism. This was clearly set forth in the beginning of Vatican II's statement on other religions: "One is the community of all peoples, one their origin, for God made the whole human race to live over the face of the earth. One also is their final goal, God."[13]

On the basis of these two foundational convictions, the mandate for hospitably relating to the other establishes itself. It seeks to cultivate inclusivism, welcoming testimonies, insights, and interpretations from different traditions and contexts, so to foster mutual dialogue. A hospitable posture honors the

[12]Roger Trigg, *Religious Diversity: Philosophical and Political Dimensions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 114-15.

[13]*Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, Vatican II), October 28, 1965, #1, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

otherness of others as human beings created by the same God and reconciled by the same Lord. Hospitality also makes space for an honest, authentic sharing of one's convictions.

There is also a great benefit to be expected for the Christian church itself from careful comparative theological work.

> First, Christians can and should learn something about non-Christian religious traditions for the sake of the religious other; in fact, both the license and the imperative to do so rest on a biblical foundation. Second, Christians can and should expect to learn something about God in the course of that exploration, and the basis for such a belief can be found in who God has revealed Godself to be and how Christians have traditionally understood that divine self-revelation. Third, Christians can and should expect that their understanding of their own faith tradition will be stretched and challenged, but at the same time deepened and strengthened through such interreligious dialogue.[14]

But are the visions of the religious community among religions compatible enough to merit and make possible meaningful dialogue and comparing of notes? Let us take a closer look at this vital issue.

VISIONS OF COMMUNITY AMONG RELIGIONS

It is clear that what Christian theology calls ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church, is unique to that tradition—if for no other reason than the church's having been intimately connected with and brought about by the triune God. However, eccelesiology's location within Christianity does not prevent examination of comparisons with other faith communities. "It is part of the belief-structure of most religions that there should be a particular society which protects and sustains their basic values and beliefs, within which one may pursue the ideal human goal, as defined within the society."[15] Even if the nature, importance, and role of the religious community vary dramatically from tradition to tradition, particularly with regard to the community's relation to the Divine, an effort to compare seems to be a feasible task.

In terms of general orientation to the comparative task between Christian and Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu communities, it is useful to highlight three broad

[14]Kristin Johnston Largen, *Baby Krishna, Infant Christ: A Comparative Theology of Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), chap. 1 (p. 9).
[15]Keith Ward, *Religion and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1.

theologically ecclesiologically significant differences.[16] First, whereas the Abrahamic (Jewish, Muslim, and Christian) traditions are integrally and deeply communal in orientation, neither of the Asiatic faiths is. Related to this lack of communal orientation, the Asiatic faiths' visions of "salvation" focus neither on the whole of humanity nor on the reconciliation of the cosmos, as in the Abrahamic faiths. In Buddhism, the communion involves primarily the religious "professionals," the monks, and only indirectly the laypeople as they are in contact with the monks. Regarding Hinduism, it is difficult to determine the relationship between the personal pursuit of release and the community's role therein. It is clear, however, that the community's role differs drastically from that of Abrahamic traditions.

Second, whereas for Abrahamic traditions the religious community is deeply rooted in a "personal" God, that is not the case for Asiatic faiths. Particularly in the original (Theravada) form of Buddhism, which, while not denying the existence of deities in the manner of modern atheism, the role of the Divine is marginal; hence, the community is about ethico-religious pursuit. In all forms of Hinduism, including the theistic forms (which constitute the majority of popular religiosity throughout India), the communities' relation to the Divine (however diversely understood) is complex and ambiguous.

Third, whereas the Asiatic faiths major in the renunciation of society in pursuit of final release, the Christian faith in particular seeks to both renounce "the world" and penetrate it for the sake of its flourishing in this age and salvation in the eschaton. With Judaism and Islam, that issue is a bit more complex, although still essentially different from that of Asiatic faiths.

With each of the four religious traditions, three descriptions are attempted: first, the nature of the religious community; second, its liturgical and ritual life; and, third, the relation to other religious communities. Following that "neutral" presentation, an intentionally dialogical engagement from a Christian perspective is attempted with each of the dialogue partners.

Part four as a whole draws directly from the following publications of mine (the publisher has kindly permitted the use of these materials): Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christian Theology in the Pluralistic World: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2019), chapter nine; and *Doing the Work of*

[16]See the somewhat similar kind of reflection in Ward, *Religion and Community*, 1-4.

Comparative Theology: A Primer for Christians (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2020), chapter nine. These publications, in turn, are based on a technical and richly documented work of mine titled *Hope and Community*, vol. 5 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), chapters twelve and eighteen.

18

THE JEWISH SYNAGOGUE AND THE CHURCH

THE EMERGENCE OF THE JEWISH RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY AND ITS IDENTITY

Judaism as a religion is deeply communally oriented and community centered. In that respect, it is very similar to the two Abrahamic sister faiths, Christianity and Islam. The Jewish faith is unique in being the only living religion that originally was purely tribal and still continues to be ethnic. Doctrine and beliefs are not foundational for being a Jew, although uncompromising monotheism (Deut 6:4) was established as the cornerstone from the beginning. The basis of the Jewish identity "is not a creed but a history: a strong sense of a common origin, a shared past and a shared destiny."[1] Counterintuitively, it can be said that one's Jewishness is not cast away by a lack of faith or even atheism—an unthinkable situation for a Muslim or a Christian. One either is a Jew, by birth (of a Jewish mother), or one is not.

But what does the term *Jewish* mean? What is Jewish religion? So far, I have used the term in its everyday contemporary sense. But to be more precise, Judaism is the product of an earlier religion out of which it emerged over a millennium-long time span. The foundation of Jewish faith is the Israelite community, with Moses' legacy as the defining origin as recounted in the *Tanakh* (the Old Testament of Christians). Judaism emerged beginning with the renewals led by the leader Ezra following the Babylonian exile in the sixth century BCE.

[1]Nicholas de Lange, *An Introduction to Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 24.

(In that sense, Christianity's derivation from Judaism has some real parallels.) Judaism's identity is shaped primarily by the rabbinic tradition's Talmud, even more than by the *Tanakh*, which, of course, is the original source. The emergence of the synagogue as the religious community in that phase is a crucial event.

One cannot understand the Israelite religion apart from the nation's distinctive identity established in Yahweh's election of them as a "chosen people," based on the covenant and its call for total devotion to Yahweh. This divine election results in separation from other nations and in a claim for a specific territory, the Holy Land. Due to separatism, intermarriage has been forbidden in principle—despite having been common in some eras. Furthermore, because of this unique way of defining identity in Judaism, generally speaking conversions are not actively sought, although proselytism is possible under certain conditions.[2] That said, though Israelite religion has not been missionary in the manner of the later religions Christianity and Islam, there is some kind of missionary impulse built into the very center. This has to do with the Old Testament's mandate for Israel to bring other nations of the world to the knowledge of the name of Yahweh and to be a vehicle of divine blessings (Gen 12:1-3). As much as this calling is not active in making concentrated efforts to reach nonbelievers, a missionary instinct is still embedded in Israel's identity because of its expectation of a universal end-time pilgrimage of the whole world to Jerusalem to worship God (Is 2:1-4; Mic 4:1-4).

A further defining feature of Jewish identity and community is its continuing diaspora status. It began with the fall of Jerusalem in the sixth century BCE and has continued until the founding of Israel in 1948. Most Jews live in diaspora outside the Holy Land, with the majority in the United States. In 2017 the nation of Israel and the United States housed almost the same number of Jews (6.4 and 5.7 million, respectively).[3]

LITURGY AND RELIGIOUS CYCLE

As mentioned, the establishment of the synagogue was formative to the rise of Jewish religion.[4] It marks the beginning of (what became) rabbinic Judaism. The

[2]David Shatz, "A Jewish Perspective," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Diversity*, ed. Chad Meister (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 369-71.

[3]"Vital Statistics: Jewish Population of the World (1882-Present)," *Jewish Virtual Library*, A Project of AICE (American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise), accessed June 30, 2020, www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jewish-population-of-the-world.

[4]The Greek-derived word *synagogue* means "gathering together," that is, community, and thus resembles *ekklesia*.

synagogue stems from the sixth century BCE in the aftermath of losing the land and the temple.

The first synagogues were more like ordinary houses than religious sites. Only later, with a sense of holiness attached to the religious sites, did fairly elaborate sacred building structures emerge. Ten men are usually needed to establish the synagogue. Traditionally women have been separated from men in a different space in the synagogue; in modern and contemporary times that varies.[5]

Synagogues are led by an elected council or official. Each synagogue is autonomous and does not have any authoritative superstructure. Unlike most Christian churches, but similar to Islam, no professional clergy is needed to lead prayers and worship in the synagogue. That said, in practice the rabbi, the religious leader and teacher since the founding of (rabbinic) Judaism, presides over the liturgy—but a rabbi's status should not be confused with that of a priest.[6] Similarly to other religions, in the past rabbis were men. In contemporary diaspora Judaism, many Reform movements also endorse female rabbis, and they are fairly common, particularly in the United States.

Similarly to other religions, there is no one type of liturgy in Judaism. Contemporary diaspora, particularly in the United States, has produced a wide variety of liturgical patterns and orientations. In the midst of diversity, however, there are some common, ancient elements. The center and foundation of Jewish (rabbinic) liturgy is the Shema (Deut 6:4-9). Also very important are the Eighteen Benedictions (or prayers, the Amidah). Another ancient practice is the encouragement to recite one hundred prayers per day, covering all aspects of life and faith. No need to mention that the reading of Torah is an essential part of worship as well.[7]

Also similarly to other religions, a religious pattern orders both the Jewish person's life cycle[8] and the life of the community following the sacred calendar.[9] Unique to the Jewish community is the centrality of the weekly religious ritual of the Sabbath, beginning with the common pre-Sabbath service on Friday evening.

[5]Joseph Gurmann and Steven Fine, "Synagogue," in *ER*, 8920-26.
[6]De Lange, *Introduction to Judaism*, 121-22.
[7]Ruth Langer, "Worship and Devotional Life: Jewish Worship," in *ER*, 9805-9.
[8]De Lange, *Introduction to Judaism*, 110-12, 147-50.
[9]De Lange, *Introduction to Judaism*, 141-47.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AND OTHER RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Perceptions of the religious other. It was noted above that divine election forms the basis for Israel/Judaism's identity and also its relation to others. Although the covenant between one nation (Israel) and Yahweh could be understood as exclusive of others, it can also be taken as a token of the implication that the same God could also covenant with other nations. If so, then there is both particularity (separatism) and universalism (missionary calling). This seems to be what is taught in Deuteronomy 32:8-9, which, on the one hand, affirms Yahweh's universal distribution of areas for various peoples and, on the other hand, makes note of Israel's particular election:

> When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance,
> when he separated the sons of men,
> he fixed the bounds of the peoples
> according to the number of the sons of God.
> For the LORD's portion is his people,
> Jacob his allotted heritage. (Deut 32:8-9)

No wonder Israel's relation to other religions has fluctuated over the centuries between exclusivism and inclusivism. Understandably, the diversity of approaches has only intensified in our contemporary pluralistic and secular age.[10]

Alongside the Old Testament call for Israel to bring to other nations the knowledge of Yahweh, in rabbinic Judaism (based on the teaching of Talmud) there is also a significant strand of openness. This approach believes that "embracing Judaism is not necessary for a Gentile's entering the world to come" for the simple reason that "God wants to give all people just rewards."[11] This statement should in no way be interpreted to nullify or even undermine the particularist divine election of the chosen people; rather, it points to the complex dynamic between exclusivism and openness.

Jews and Christians as the people of God. A burning issue in Christian-Jewish relations—totally unlike relations between all other interfaith contexts—has to do simply with the question of the daughter religion's (Christianity's) relation to the mother religion (Judaism). Ironically, the encounter between Jews and Christians is so complex and unique because Jesus of Nazareth becomes the

[10] Alan Brill, *Judaism and Other Religions: Models of Understanding* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
[11] Shatz, "Jewish Perspective," 367.

"Savior of the nations" only after the Jewish people reject him as their messiah.[12] This state of affairs has sadly led too many Christian leaders and communities to affirm supersessionist ideology, which has tried to cancel the Jewish people's status as the people of God.[13] Ultimately and fatefully, this has resulted in Christian anti-Semitism, whose history makes horrible reading.[14]

However, supersessionism, the belief that the "new people" of God have succeeded Israel, the "old people," is not the only problematic approach. Christian dispensationalists make a categorical distinction between God's dealings with the church and Israel, and they expect a literal fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, including the rebuilding of the temple and its cult in the eschaton before the final consummation. This view also results in two peoples of God rather than one. Mainstream contemporary Christianity largely rejects these two interpretations.

Currently there are two dominant approaches to the issue. First, in what can be called the "revisionist" approach, there is ultimate redemption for both Israel and church. While for the latter it is through Christ, for the former it is not. The problem with this view is that it limits the scope of God's salvation in Christ as it excludes Israel. In other words, it seems to break the unity of the divine economy of salvation established by the triune God in Christ.

Second, there is the view that for many seems to negotiate more integrally the unique church-synagogue dynamic in a fruitful and promising way. Let us call it "reunionism." In that approach, God's covenant with Israel will never be annulled but will be fulfilled through Christ, who is the Messiah not only of Christians but also of the Jewish people. Ultimately both peoples of God, those of the Old Testament and of the New Testament, will be reunited and saved.[15]

In support of the reunionist vision, it seems clear that according to biblical testimonies God's covenant with Israel is irrevocable (Amos 9:14-15; Rom 11:1, 29). Although for Paul the church embodied the true Israel (Rom 2:29; 9:6; Phil 3:3), this did not mean God put Israel aside (Gal 3:17)—the supersessionist scheme.

[12]Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 2:312.

[13]For details, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, vol. 1 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 238-50.

[14]For details, consult Edward Kessler and Neil Wenborn, eds., *A Dictionary of Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge University Press, 2005); and Edward Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[15]Following, with minor modifications, Donald G. Bloesch, *The Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment, Glory* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 43-46 and chap. 10; this section as a whole is indebted to this source.

Furthermore, in the New Testament economy of salvation, in Christ and his work the line of enmity between the chosen people and Gentiles has been eradicated forever (Eph 2:12-22), hence making possible the coming eschatological reunion. All that said, the New Testament is not silent about the mystery of Israel's rejection of its messiah. Particularly for Paul, this rejection was a deep enigma and a source of sorrow even if he believed that Israel's current "hardening" was but temporary and, ironically, used by God to further God's plans for the salvation of the whole world (Rom 11:11-16).

In light of supersessionism's appeal among Christians throughout history and the horrific history of anti-Semitism, the church should take a careful and self-critical look at itself as the people of God.[16] A key is to avoid the idea of the church as the "new" people replacing Israel as the "old." When it comes to the Christian church's mission to the Jews, the unique relationship between the two religious communities has to be kept in mind. The gospel of Christ, even when rejected by Jews, is not calling the people of God into something "new" in the way Gentiles are being called. After all, Jesus Christ is Israel's messiah before he is the Savior of the world. Mission to the Jews should also include a contrite and repentant spirit and acknowledgment of guilt for the sins in which Christians have participated throughout history. At the same time, Christians should acknowledge their indebtedness to Israel for the message of salvation and the Messiah. As a leading American-based Jewish theologian puts it, the challenge is how "to be faithful to the New Testament command to witness for Christ to all peoples and to convert all nations, while, at the same time, affirming the ongoing validity of the covenant between God and Israel via Abraham and Moses."[17] At the center of this tension lies the obvious but important fact that "historically Christianity has been theologically exclusive and humanistically universal, while Judaism has been theologically universal and humanistically exclusive."[18]

Finally, while holding to the continuation of God's covenant with Israel, the Christian church and theology also should exercise critical judgment in not identifying that status with the current secular state of Israel. Israel's political sins and wrongdoings, similarly to those of its Arabic neighbors, should be subjected to the same kinds of ethical and theological judgments as are other nations' deeds.

[16]See further, Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:476-77.
[17]Michael S. Kogan, *Opening the Covenant: A Jewish Theology of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), xii.
[18]Kogan, *Opening the Covenant*, xii-xiii.

19

THE ISLAMIC *UMMAH* AND THE CHURCH

THE BIRTH AND DIVISIONS OF THE UMMAH

The rise of the Islamic community. The youngest among the Abrahamic faiths, Islam shares with Judaism and Christianity a deep communal orientation anchored in one God.[1] The term for the Muslim religious community, *ummah*, appears in the Qur'an over sixty times with diverse and varying meanings.[2] The incipient universal vision of early Islam is evident in the Qur'an (Q 10:19): "Mankind was but one community; then they differed," obviously implying an original "single *ummah* with a single religion."[3]

This openness to other religious communities during the Prophet's lifetime was a defining feature of the *ummah*. It is likely that the community included the faithful also from Jewish and Christian traditions since they are all believers in one God, the most critical test of faith in Islam. But toward the end of the Prophet's life, and particularly among his followers, a more narrow and soon an exclusivistic understanding of the community emerged. After the passing of Muhammad, not only religious-theological but also sociopolitical and juridical aspects came to define the boundaries of the *ummah*.

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[1]Keith Ward, *Religion and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 33.

[2]Abdullah Saeed, "The Nature and Purpose of the Community (*Ummah*) in the Qur'ān," in *The Community of Believers: Christian and Muslim Perspectives*, ed. Lucinda Mosher and David Marshall (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2015), 15-28; and Frederick Mathewson Denny, "The Meaning of *Ummah* in the Qur'ān," *History of Religions* 15, no. 1 (1975): 34-70.

[3]Brannon Wheeler, "*Ummah*," in *ER*, 9446.

It is highly interesting that alongside the early inclusivism, the idea of the superiority of this community was established with appeal to qur'anic passages such as, "You are the best community brought forth to men, enjoining decency, and forbidding indecency, and believing in God" (Q 3:110). However, this key passage is open to more than one interpretation (the details of which are beyond this brief survey). The passage also allows for a fairly hospitable interpretation that could include other God-fearing communities as exemplary. Another widely debated passage speaks of the "midmost community" (or "middle nation"; Q 2:143). According to one appealing interpretation, this phrase refers to Muslims as "just" and "moderate"—that is, between two negative extremes.[4]

The emergence of the Sunnis and the Shi'ites. The major division, marking a defining and still continuing deep break in the unity of the religion, that between the Sunnis and Shi'is, took place soon after the death of the Prophet in 632 CE. The division arose over the issue of the Prophet's successor. Abu Bakr, the father of Muhammad's beloved wife 'A'isha, was made the first leader by the majority in the community. But this did not settle the matter, as the minority of the community preferred 'Ali, the husband of Muhammad's daughter Fatima, as leader.

As can be imagined, both theological and political issues were involved with the split of the community. For the majority, the leadership choice after the passing of the Prophet belonged to the *ummah* at large; for the rest it was a divine choice falling on 'Ali—with the ambiguous and highly contested claim that 'Ali had divine endorsement as well as the Prophet's.

The majority of the community wanted to stay in the line of Mecca's dominant tribe, the Prophet's own tribe, Quraysh. In contrast, the minority received support from Medina. Full separation of the *ummah*, however, did not come about until after the brief leadership of 'Umar I and the longer office of the caliph Uthman, whose assassination in 656 brought 'Ali to power. 'Ali's leadership lasted longer, for half a decade, and it was marked by a sort of civil war. Finally, the definite division of the *ummah* was sealed, resulting in the majority Sunnis (currently over 80%) siding with leaders from Muhammad's tribe and the minority Shi'is following 'Ali's legacy. Both sides continued splitting internally, leading to the kind of complex denominationalism characteristic of most religions.

[4]Muhammad Asad, *Message of the Qur'ān*, on Q 2:143 (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980), cited in Saeed, "Nature and Purpose of the Community (*Ummah*)," 21.

The belief in the divinely ordered status of ʿAli as the successor to the Prophet is based on passages such as Q 2:124 and Q 21:72-73, whose relevance, however, to this issue is less than obvious and a debated issue among the various Muslim commentators. However, this divinely ordered status of ʿAli came to be a lasting legacy of the minority Shiʿis.[5] The largest and most important Shiʿite denomination, "the Twelvers," has developed a highly sophisticated genetic line of succession from ʿAli through his two sons (Hasan and Husayn) all the way to the Twelfth one. They believe that the last imam (after Hasan ibn ʿAli al-Askari of the ninth century), titled Muhammad b. Hasan, went into "occultation" (that is, concealment) and will return. This return is awaited among all Twelvers. In this interpretation, all imams are inerrant in order to be able to prevent the community from being led astray. That said, even among the Twelvers themselves widely debated issues arose and still remain about many details.[6] The other two important, though much smaller, Shiʿi factions, the Ishmaelites and the Zaydis, do not share (much) of the Twelvers' view concerning the line of succession and related issues.

Outsiders find amazing and confusing about the global Muslim community that their mutual relationships are so antagonistic and condemnatory despite how much they share in tradition and doctrine. The uniting things are many and foundational, including the same Qur'an, the same prophethood, and the same Five Pillars, including prayers, fasting, and other rituals (albeit somewhat differently nuanced and practiced).[7] Yet it seems that any kind of global ecumenical reconciliation is not on the horizon[8]—although the Qur'an mandates work for unity. "And hold fast to God's bond, together, and do not scatter. . . . Let there be one community of you" (Q ʿImrān 3:103-4; see also 3:105).

SPIRITUAL LIFE AND WORSHIP

All of Muslim life is centered on the two interrelated aspects of obedience: submission to Allāh, including willing service, and honoring *tawhid*, the absolute

[5]A highly recommended current resource is Najam Haider, *Shīʿī Islam: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[6]An accessible, basic introduction to the imamate is Haider, *Shīʿī Islam*, chap. 2; for Twelvers, see pp. 41-45, 94-98.

[7]Shmuel Bar, "Sunnis and Shiites: Between Rapprochement and Conflict," in *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology*, ed. Hillel Fradkin et al. (Washington, DC: Center on Islam, Democracy, and the Future of the Muslim World, Hudson Institute, 2005), 2:87-96.

[8]Feras Hamza, "Unity and Disunity in the Life of the Muslim Community," in Mosher and Marshall, *Community of Believers*, 74.

unity/oneness of God.[9] On this basis regular devotion consists of the Five Pillars: confession, ritual prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and alms. Typically, rites of purification, both physical and spiritual, prepare for the ritual.[10]

The ritual prayer is the most visible form of piety. Muslims ought to pray five times a day at designated times, regardless of their location. Prayer follows a prescribed form and content. Prayer is also the main activity in the mosque, the center of communal spiritual life.[11] In current times, the Friday afternoon gathering at the mosque includes a sermon. It goes without saying that Holy Scripture is highly honored in the community gathering.[12] Since there is neither clergy nor a theologically trained priesthood, in principle any male is qualified to lead; he is usually chosen from among those most deeply knowledgeable in the Qur'an and tradition.

Although the Qur'an as the divine Word is highly venerated in all Muslim denominations and Allāh's absolute uniqueness strictly enforced, the Prophet Muhammad, as an ordinary human being, is but honored for his function as the conveyor of revelation and teacher par excellence. Muhammad has no divine status whatsoever and therefore is not worshiped. That said, as often happens in folk religiosity, forms of Sufism[13] and folk Islam assign to the Prophet a status far higher than merely a human being. Indeed, in many grassroots forms of spirituality it appears as if he is a kind of (semi)divine object of veneration. Sufi mysticism also knows a number of saints similarly highly elevated, particularly ʿAli (even among the Sunnis). Unbeknownst to many Christians, Jesus is also highly respected in Muslim theology and spirituality. Indeed, as a prophet, he is second only to Muhammad. That, however, does not mean that the Christian claims of Jesus Christ's divinity, incarnation, and atoning death on the cross would be accepted in any form. It is Jesus' role as teacher, ethical guide, and miracle worker that is affirmed by Muslims.[14]

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[9]Vernon James Schubel, "Worship and Devotional Life: Muslim Worship," in *ER*, 9815-20.

[10]Frederick Mathewson Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, 4th ed. (New York: Routledge, 2016), chap. 5.

[11]Rusmir Mahmutćehajić, *The Mosque: The Heart of Submission* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007).

[12]On the importance of the Qur'an and its high authority in Islam across its denominational diversity, consult Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Revelation*, vol. 2 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 160-69.

[13]In this context, the term *Sufism* has two interrelated meanings: First, it is a particular mystically oriented denomination in Islam with local colors and emphases in varying global locations. Second, beyond its denominational boundaries, Sufism also exercises significant influence across the denominational diversity in terms of mystical—in Christian terminology also "charismatic"—grassroots spirituality with dreams, visions, healings, exorcism, and other spiritual experiences.

[14]For details, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christ and Reconciliation*, vol. 1 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 250-65, 388-95.

As in other religions, the annual life cycle follows a religious calendar, starting from the honoring of the date when Muhammad migrated from Mecca to Medina. One of the most important celebrations in modern times is the Prophet's birthday, *Mawlid*.[15] Friday is not considered a holy day, although it is the day of congregation. Instead, a number of other holy days commemorate significant days in the life of the Prophet and early *ummah*.[16] Globalization has caused much diversity in rituals and rites, but not in doctrine and prayers.

THE *UMMAH* AND OTHER RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

The dynamic tension between inclusivism and missionary outreach. Differently from Judaism but similarly to Christianity, Islam's outlook is universal. It is a missionary religion. The missionary calling is based on the qur'anic mandate to reach out to nonbelievers (Q 16:125). This is often expressed with the Arabic term *da'wah*, literally, "call, invitation, summoning."[17] During various historical eras, *da'wah* has been exercised with the help of military and political means, not unlike in Christian history, although the Qur'an prohibits evangelism by force (Q 2:256).[18] Alliance with earthly powers, militarism, and economic interests have all been employed to spread Islam with force and brutality. In other words, both Christianity and Islam bear a long legacy of colonialism.

Alongside this active missionary and proselytizing tendency, there is a definite inclusive (in this sense, universal) orientation in Islam, deeply embedded in Scripture. Echoing biblical theology, the Qur'an teaches that "'to God belongs the kingdom (*mulk*) of the heavens and earth' (e.g., [Q] 2:107)."[19] The Qur'an further teaches that "had God willed, He would have made them one community" (Q 42:8; see also 42:10). The key verse with regard to Islam's relation to other faith traditions and its universal vision is well known and foundationally important: "God is our Lord and your Lord. Our deeds concern us and your deeds concern

[15]For reliable basic information (on the details of which Muslim experts continue to debate, including the exact date itself), see "Mawlid, Islam," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, online edition, accessed June 30, 2020, www.britannica.com/topic/mawlid.

[16]George W. Braswell Jr., *Islam: Its Prophet, Peoples, Politics and Power* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 77-80.

[17]William D. Miller, "*Da'wah*," in *ER*, 2225-26.

[18]Miller, "*Da'wah*," 2225.

[19]J. Dudley Woodberry, "The Kingdom of God in Islam and the Gospel," in *Anabaptists Meeting Muslims: A Calling for Presence in the Way of Christ*, ed. James R. Krabill, David W. Shenk, and Linford Stutzman (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 2005), 49.

you. There is no argument between us and you. God will bring us together, and to Him is the [final] destination" (Q 42:15).

In this light it is understandable that the earliest qur'anic passages were not calling people to convert to a new religion; rather, the Meccans were called to "worship the Lord of this House [Ka'ba][20]" (Q 106:3). It was only later that a decisive break was announced because of opposition from the worshipers of local deities. Then, as a result of this changing ethos, the Islamic confession became "There is no god except God" (Q 37:35).

It is a well-established and well-known historical fact that in Medina the Prophet with his companions lived among the Jews. It is safe to conclude that he considered Islam to be in keeping with the faith of the Jews and most likely also with that of the Christians (Q 2:40-41). It is significant that at this time the term *muslim* (the submitter to God) could also be applied to non-Muslims such as Solomon (Q 27:15) and disciples of Jesus (Q 3:52). And it was only when the Jews rejected the Prophet that the direction of prayer changed from Jerusalem to Mecca (Q 2:142).

Even after the separation from the Jews and Christians had taken place, Abrahamic sister faiths were assigned a status different from other faiths. Between what Muslims call "the Abode of Peace and the Abode of War," a third region was acknowledged, "the Abode of the People of the Book," that is, Jews and Christians.[21] These two traditions enjoy a unique relation to Islam (Q 2:135-36; Q 5:12; 5:69). It is a common conclusion that in some real sense the diversity of religions is not only tolerated by Allāh but even planned and endorsed, at least when it comes to those who are the "people of the book" (Q 48:29; 5:48; 3:113).

That said, Islam retains a unique place in God's eyes in Muslim estimation. While other nations might have known God, only Muslims know Allāh intimately and are rightly related to God. This is most probably the meaning of the qur'anic statements that Muslims, in distinction from others, are "God's sincere servants" (Q 37:40) and "are of the elect, the excellent" (Q 38:47). Consequently, even Jewish and Christian traditions suffer from corruption and misunderstanding of the final revelation.

The tendency toward separation but with a missionary zeal combined with the universal and in some sense inclusive orientation is a built-in dynamic in Islam.

[20]The holiest place in Islam, in Mecca.

[21]William Montgomery Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters: Perceptions and Misperceptions* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 26-27.

Ultimately, Islam's goal of outreach is comprehensive, including social, economic, cultural, and religious spheres. Ideally, it would result in the establishment of Sharia law and the gathering of all peoples under one *ummah*.[22] According to Muslim understanding, this divinely sanctioned law is "given to be followed by all humanity, and not just by one special community."[23]

The relationship between the* ummah *and church in a theological perspective. In order to properly understand the current clash between Islam and Christianity—the two major world religions with a combined number of followers comprising about 60 percent of world's population—one must recall the historical background. The Christian church that the Prophet first encountered in the seventh (Christian) century was at least formally unified, unlike the current global diversity. Very importantly, the main segments of the church that early Islam engaged were either marginal or heretical in the eyes of mainstream Christianity.[24] Most ironically, many of the objections of Muslims against the orthodox Christian doctrine of the Trinity and Christology either stem from or are strongly flavored by these Christian divergences.[25]

That said, the relationship between the *ummah* and the church has fluctuated between a polite mutual acknowledgment and hostile opposition. Throughout history, there have been many misperceptions and misrepresentations, and even hostility. On the other hand, more often than not there has been more tolerance than would be expected from, say, medieval cultures.[26] In the contemporary world, a number of promising signs indicate that concentrated efforts are under way to continue constructive mutual engagement, heal memories, and improve understanding of the two faiths.[27] Recall the wise words from the Roman Catholic Vatican II document *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions):

[22]Badru D. Kateregga and David W. Shenk, *Islam and Christianity: A Muslim and a Christian in Dialogue* (Ibadan, Nigeria: Daystar Press, 1985), 79-81.

[23]Ward, *Religion and Community*, 31.

[24]Among the key Christian groups meant here are, first, the Nestorians, who were charged with separating Christ's divine and human natures in a way that compromised their integral union, and second, Monophysites (from Monophysitism, literally "one-nature" advocates), who were charged with lumping together Christ's divine and human nature such that the distinction of the two was compromised (i.e., making the divine the only "nature").

[25]Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters*, chap. 1.

[26]In addition to Watt, *Muslim-Christian Encounters*, consult also Clinton Bennett, *Understanding Christian-Muslim Relations: Past and Present* (London: Continuum, 2008).

[27]For A Common Word, see www.acommonword.com/; for The Building Bridges Seminar, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs, see https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/projects/the-building-bridges-seminar.

> The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion.[28]

After this engagement of Abrahamic sister faiths, the rest of this last part of the book delves into the meaning, role, and function of the religious community in the Asiatic traditions.

[28] *Nostra Aetate* (Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, Vatican II), October 28, 1965, #3, www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html.

20

HINDU SPIRITUAL LIFE AND COMMUNITY

IN SEARCH OF THE RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY FOR HINDUS

Notwithstanding dramatic differences between Abrahamic and Asiatic faiths, there are significant similarities between Jewish and Hindu religions[1] with regard to their origin and membership. Both traditions emerged over a long period of time, and neither one has a human founder. Furthermore, generally speaking, membership in both faiths is based on birth rather than one's own choice. One can be a Jew only by birth (through a Jewish mother). A person born in India is assumed to be a Hindu. (That there are proselyte Jews and Hindus outside of India or that not every Indian is Hindu does not nullify this general observation.) Differently from Christianity and Islam, doctrine does not determine belonging in either tradition, although holy scriptures are honored in both (and a Hindu is supposed to attribute some kind of divine authority to the Vedic Scriptures).

While every statement about Hinduism has to keep in mind an unbelievable diversity, it is safe to say that most Hindus at the grassroots level belong to what could be called theistic Hinduism (whose dominant stream is the constellation

[1]Similarly to Buddhism, to be discussed next, the application of the term *religion* to Hinduism is disputed and complicated, not only because the term *Hinduism* is a nineteenth-century Western invention and not the self-designation of a person called Hindu but also because it is an elusive umbrella concept embracing an astonishing variety of movements only loosely linked with and related to each other. See further Julius L. Lipner, "Ancient Banyan: An Inquiry into the Meaning of 'Hinduness,'" *Religious Studies* 32, no. 1 (1996): 109-26.

of movements under Vaishnavism, the cult of the Vishnu deity). This so-called *bhakti* spirituality,[2] based on the Bhagavad-Gita, the "bible" of the common folks,[3] is devoted to a particular deity. A widespread and well-known form of *bhakti* is focused on Krishna, the darling of India's *avataras*, "embodiments," of the Divine (in this case, of Vishnu).

A definite difference between Abrahamic faiths and Hinduism relates to the contrast in religious communities. Whereas community is essential to the Abrahamic traditions, its role for Hinduism is marginal and does not necessarily serve the same purposes. Hindu religion's main goal is the spiritual release of the individual rather than either reform of the society or a communal (let alone cosmic) eschatological renewal. This is not intended to diminish the deeply and widely communal orientation of Indian culture and, as part of that, the celebration of religious rites in communal settings in the family, village, or temple. However, one needs to recognize that the basic orientation of Hinduism lacks an internal and ultimate communal goal.

This may explain the fact there is no single term to describe the communal side of Hindu spirituality. Perhaps the term that comes closest in intention is *sampradaya*, which, however, is not universally nor even very widely used.[4] The term "refers to a tradition focused on a deity, often regional in character, into which a disciple is initiated by a guru," and *sampradayas* differ in orientations and ethos: some may require celibacy; others include whole households; most of them express the local context.[5] At times, terms such as *sects* or *movements* may be used more or less synonymously—even the term *religion* is so used.[6]

Because *Hinduism*, as used in the modern West, is an ambiguous term and relates to an amazing array of often quite loosely connected movements, an attempt to give any kind of definite description of its theology—let alone its

[2]*Bhakti* is one of the three main "paths of liberation" in Hinduism, alongside *karma* (work and action) and *jnana* (knowledge and insight). For a reliable, accessible account, see Klaus K. Klostermaier, *A Survey of Hinduism*, 3rd ed. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), chap. 8 (*karma*), chap. 11 (*jnana*), and chap. 14 (*bhakti*); the rest of part 2 of the book includes details on each of these. For a short account, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Spirit and Salvation*, vol. 4 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 223-26.

[3]An introduction to the vast sacred literature of Hinduism (and a comparison with Christian tradition) can be found in Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Revelation*, vol. 2 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 129-45.

[4]Gavin D. Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 134.

[5]Flood, *Introduction to Hinduism*, 134. It is interesting that Keith Ward takes *sampradaya* as the main concept of community in his *Religion and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), chap. 4.

[6]Eleanor Nesbitt and Elisabeth Arweck, "Retrospect and Prospect: *Sampradayas* and Warwick Fieldwork in Religions and Education," *Fieldwork in Religion* 2, no. 1 (2006): 52-54.

ecclesiology—is a virtually impossible task. Add to this the plurality of local deities to be worshiped (among theistic Hindu movements, by far the dominant form of that tradition). Hindu religious life allows for much more diversity, locality, and plurality than any other living tradition. Hence, the following sketch of Hindu spirituality with regard to its communal side is to be taken tentatively and elusively.

HINDU "SACRAMENTS" AND WAYS OF SPIRITUALITY

Unlike in Christian faith, in which there is often a marked distinction between what is considered secular and sacred, in India's worship life, "space and time are permeated [and filled] with the presence of the supreme."[7] Among the myriad forms of deity, the most profound is *mūrti*, or image, which can also be called "embodiment," the highest form or manifestation of the divine. In temples, the devout Hindus are surrounded and embraced by this divine presence.[8] In the presence of the divine, the devotees expect to experience *darśana*, a special kind of spiritual "seeing" or insight. Indeed, this "auspicious seeing" is mutual since the deity makes herself or himself to be seen and the god is "seen" by the devotee. Regular *pujas*, acts of worship to the deities, open to all Hindus, take place from day to day to celebrate the divine presence.[9] Closely related to the centrality of divine presence is a special kind of prayer rite, originating in Vedic religion, the mantra "OM," which functions as the representation not only of God (Brahman) but in some sense also of the whole of reality. It is typical for the head of the household to utter this word first thing in the morning after purification rituals.[10]

Without any claim for an artificial similarity between Christian sacraments and Hindu life-cycle-related *samskāras*, through which one becomes a full member of the community and society, the Christian interpreter may speak of them as something resembling "Hindu sacraments." Similarly to rites of passage in most religions, they cover all of life from birth to death, as prescribed in the sacred literature.[11]

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[7]Klostermaier, *Survey of Hinduism*, 263.

[8]Klostermaier, *Survey of Hinduism*, 263-69 and the whole of chap. 19.

[9]For details, see Paul B. Courtright, "Worship and Devotional Life: Hindu Devotional Life," in *ER*, 9823; and Theodore M. Ludwig, *The Sacred Paths: Understanding the Religions of the World*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2006), 109-10.

[10]Consult Nitin Kumar, "Om/Aum, mantra and symbol," Religion Facts.com, last updated March 22, 2017, www.religionfacts.com/om.

[11]Klostermaier, *Survey of Hinduism*, chap. 10.

Among a number of sacred rites, one of the most important is called "the second birth," which occurs at eight to twelve years of age. The exact time of this rite of initiation is determined by an astrologer, and it helps an individual make a shift from childhood to the first of the four ashrams, which is studenthood, including religious education (the other ashrams will be explained below).[12] On the other end of one's life cycle, an important role is played by the last rite, that of death, universally practiced by all Hindus, even secular ones. The funeral, in which the body is burned, includes elaborate rites and rituals. Following the funeral, ancestor rites typically continue over the years to "establish the deceased harmoniously within their appropriate worlds and prevent them from becoming hungry and haunting their living descendants."[13]

Not surprisingly, similarly to other religious traditions, along with rites of passage, a rich and diverse annual festival menu plays an essential part in Hindu devotion and worship life. Although the basic structure of festivals may be simple, to outsiders these festivals look extremely complex. They may last several days and exhibit unusually rich local and denominational diversity.[14] Another sacred act in keeping with many other religions has to do with pilgrimages, a common feature in all Indian religiosity.[15]

There is a "professional" religious class in Hinduism, the Brahmins. They are related to the ancient class system of India, formerly a caste society.[16] Whereas ordinary devotees have the Puranas, rich narrative and epic literature, as their holy scripture, only the Brahmins are experts in Vedic literature—so much so that only a tiny elite of Hindus ever get to read, let alone interpret, these formative, authoritative texts. Another related structure of Indian society and culture involves the four ashrams. Ideally, at the end of life one reaches the final stage of "renouncer," after studenthood, family life, and the period of forest hermit. Only a tiny minority of Hindus belong to the Brahmin class or reach the stage of renouncer. Along with these two classes, there are innumerable gurus of various sorts, many highly respected, others less so. Around the guru, a *sampradaya* is formed, a main community concept for masses of Hindus.[17]

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[12]Klostermaier, *Survey of Hinduism*, 149-50.
[13]Courtright, "Worship and Devotional Life," 9821.
[14]Klostermaier, *Survey of Hinduism*, 277-81.
[15]Klostermaier, *Survey of Hinduism*, 281-87.
[16]The four classes are Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras. Arvind Sharma, *Classical Hindu Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), chap. 19.
[17]Klostermaier, *Survey of Hinduism*, chap. 20.

HINDU COMMUNITY IN RELATION TO THE OTHER

The amazing diversity and plurality in the Hindu tradition, against popular misconceptions among outsiders, does not translate into the Western modernist idea of pluralism in which no tradition has the right to consider its own supremacy. Hindus, even in their tolerance of other rites and deities, typically take their own beliefs as true. Furthermore, Hindu tolerance has much to do with the idea that since God is bigger than any other concept of ours, various ways of approaching God are complementary in that the infinite God is beyond and transcends any particular path.[18] Differently from Christianity, Islam, and early Buddhism, Hinduism is not a missional religion. Rather, it considers itself the "original" religion and thus seeks to assimilate others under its own purview, not necessarily inviting them to change or convert.

Indeed, there is no standard, universal Hindu response to the religious other.[19] Understandably, Hinduism faces grave difficulties when encountering Christian and Islamic types of claims for the finality of revelation and uniqueness of God.[20] In keeping with the assimilationist principle, Hindus resist and oppose any efforts at evangelization by other traditions. In that light it appears inhospitable that some movements, such as Arya Samaj, have opposed the conversion of Hindus to Islam and Christianity while at the same time strongly advocating reconversion of recent converts to Christianity back to Hinduism.[21]

All in all, notwithstanding the hesitancy about conversion, Hinduism not only knows the reconversion of lapsed faithful but also engages in active missionary efforts to convert "pagans." This was certainly the case in the third to fifth centuries during the establishment of Hindu rajas in South India to replace Buddhism. Itinerant "evangelists" played a critical role in this enterprise. More recently, Hare Krishna and a number of less-known revival movements in the West have sought new converts.[22]

What about the relationship between Christianity and Hinduism? Because of the differences of orientation between Hindu and Christian traditions—namely,

[18]Ward, *Religion and Community*, 82-84, 96-99.
[19]P. S. Daniel, *Hindu Response to Religious Pluralism* (Pitam Pura, Delhi: Kant Pub., 2000), 233-36.
[20]Arvind Sharma, "A Hindu Perspective," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Diversity*, ed. Chad Meister (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 309-20.
[21]Kewal Ahluwalia, "Shudhi Movement: 85th Shardhanand Shudhi Divas—December 23rd," posted January 4, 2012, www.aryasamaj.com/enews/2012/jan/4.htm.
[22]Paul Hiebert, "Conversion in Hinduism and Buddhism," in *Handbook of Religious Conversion*, ed. H. Newton Malony and Samuel Southard (Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press, 1992), 15-16.

the former's individualistic pursuit of release and the latter's deeply communal faith—dialogue focused on ecclesiology yields fewer results and areas of shared concerns than between the church and the synagogue or the *ummah*. That said, it is important to recall that the roots of Hindu-Christian engagement and coexistence go far back in history. It is probable that there was a Christian presence in India as early as the first century. Syrian Christianity is believed to have been present beginning in the fourth century.[23] Notwithstanding the long and painful history of Western colonialism, of which the church was part, the relationship between the two traditions is not only that of distance and aversion. Consider the well-known spokespersons of Hinduism in the West, Swami Vivekananda, India's delegate to the World Parliament of Religions meeting in Chicago in 1893, and Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the former president of India. Known for tolerance and religious coexistence, they were also critics of Christianity.[24]

[23]Anantanand Rambachan, "Hindu-Christian Dialogue," in *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, ed. Catherine Cornille (Chichester, UK: Wiley & Sons, 2013), 325-45.

[24]Lowell D. Streiker, "The Hindu Attitude Toward Other Religions," *Journal of Religious Thought* 23, no. 1 (1966/67): 75-90.

21

THE BUDDHIST *SANGHA* AND SPIRITUAL PURSUIT

THE RISE AND DIVISION OF THE BUDDHIST COMMUNITY

Differently from the parent religion of Hinduism, Buddhism has a founder, Siddhartha Gautama. Notwithstanding the scarcity of details about Gautama's life,[1] the well-known narrative of the enlightenment experience of this former noble prince is the wellspring and origin of this tradition.[2] The teaching of this new religion is not centered on faith as much as on commitment to pursuing release from attachment to the world of impermanence and the resulting *dukkha* ("suffering").[3] Particularly the original form of Buddhism, while not atheistic in any sense like modern atheism, wanted to shift attention from divine beings to an ethical pursuit of the stated goal.

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[1]Gadjin Nagao and Mark L. Blum, "The Life of the Buddha: An Interpretation," *Eastern Buddhist*, 20, no. 2 (1987): 1-31.

[2]The debated question of whether Buddhism (particularly in its original form, Theravada) is a religion in the sense the word is used in the contemporary world goes well beyond the contours of this primer. It is safe to state the minimum: Buddhism, as we know it in the contemporary life, certainly functions like any other religion.

[3]Concerning the word *dukkha*, often translated as "suffering" (or "pain" or "stress") or "vanity," is best left without English translation to avoid misunderstanding. It is intentionally an ambiguous word related to the foundational Buddhist diagnosis of what is wrong with us, namely, the desire to cling to something that is not fixed but rather transient. With all their differences, all Buddhist schools consider *dukkha* the main challenge in life, and, consequently, extinction of *dukkha* to be the main goal. An authoritative, accessible guide to the main ideas is Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, rev. ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1974), chap. 2.

Following his enlightenment, Sakyamuni (Gautama) established the *sangha* (or *samgha*), a community with five initial disciples. Originally it was an inclusive community, open to both male monks and female nuns, the nuns living separately but as part of the community. That inclusive vision, however, came to be limited through the centuries, and it is normal (particularly in Theravada contexts) to have only male monks.[4]

Similarly to Christianity and Islam, the original form of Buddhism was a missionary faith.[5] Buddha began to send the enlightened monks out on missionary trips to preach the Dhamma, the Buddha's teachings. Particularly during the founding centuries, the missionary vision was fervent and, not unlike Christianity, also spread by merchants and other travelers.[6]

Following Buddha's *parinirvana* (complete liberation at death), the First Ecumenical Council was summoned, gathering together five hundred enlightened ones to whom Buddha's Dhamma was entrusted, comprising Tipitaka, the "Three Baskets" of teachings, the middle one of which (Vinaya Pitaka) contains all instructions and teachings for the life of the *sangha*.[7] Subsequently, the Second Council, one hundred years later, brought to the surface disagreements and strife. A number of other councils followed, along with deep disagreements and splits.[8]

Around the beginning of the Common Era, the most significant split occurred, giving birth to two main forms of Buddhist religion (both with countless subdivisions), namely, Theravada, the original form, and the Mahayana school, which grew out of the split. Mahayana is now by far the dominant form in numbers and the one through which Buddhism is known in the West.[9] Mahayana advocates a much more open access to the pursuit of nirvana for all men and women, not only to a few religious. It is theistically oriented and, unlike Theravada, knows the notions of grace and mercy, particularly in its later developments having to

[4]Heinz Bechert, "Samgha: An Overview," in *ER*, 8071-76; and D. N. de L. Young, "The Sangha in Buddhist History," *Religious Studies* 6, no. 3 (1970): 243-52.

[5]Jonathan S. Walter, "Missions: Buddhist Missions," in *ER*, 6077-82.

[6]Linda Learman, ed., *Buddhist Missionaries in the Era of Globalization* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2005).

[7]For a basic introduction to Buddhist Scripture and its relation to Christian tradition, consult Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Trinity and Revelation*, vol. 2 of A Constructive Christian Theology for the Pluralistic World (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2014), 145-60.

[8]Charles Prebish, "Councils: Buddhist Councils," in *ER*, 2034-39.

[9]Whereas Theravada is dominant in Thailand, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, Mahayana is currently present in India, Vietnam, Tibet (mainly in the form of Tantric Buddhism or Vajrayana), China, Taiwan, Korea, and Japan, among other locations. Mahayana is also the most familiar form of Buddhism in the Global North.

do with the Pure Land and related movements. Mahayana has also developed a growing tradition of spiritual exercises in pursuit of liberative insight.

The third major strand is commonly called Vajrayana (Diamond Vehicle), or Tantrism, and it can be found in Tibet. Broadly related to Mahayana, it has contextualized itself in rich Tibetan folk religiosity and mysticism with a focus on diverse rituals, mantras, and esoteric rites.

DEVOTION AND LITURGY

Differently from Jewish-Christian tradition, but in keeping with Hindu traditions, becoming a Buddhist does not usually require or provide any initiatory rite. If one wishes to become a Buddhist religious, a member of the *sangha*, the process takes a long period of discipline and teaching, culminating in "ordination" by a legitimate leader. What makes one Buddhist is simply taking refuge in Buddha, Dhamma, and *sangha*. Living as a Buddhist typically calls for adhering to the five precepts of abstaining from killing, stealing, adultery, lying, and drinking. At the same time, one commits oneself to the pursuit of liberation from *dukkha* following the Noble Eightfold Path.[10]

Although in Theravada releasing enlightenment is typically thought to be attained only by the monks, and even among them by few, Gautama also included laypersons of any profession in the sphere of the *sangha*. *Sanghas* are supposed to be located near the rest of society, distinct from but not so separated as to be isolated. Monks go out every morning to collect gifts and donations, and they also serve the people in the temples and homes in religious rituals.

While in principle there are no mandatory rituals or rites to perform, Buddhist lands are filled with elaborate devotional and worship acts and patterns, liturgy at the center. Furthermore, all denominations, astonishingly even Theravada, are highly animistic: in everyday religiosity spirits and spirituality are alive and well. Furthermore, not unlike most religions, "many Buddhists believe that ritual and devotion are also instrumental in bringing about blessings in life and even inner spiritual transformation."[11] Indeed, notwithstanding wide and deep variety in the Buddhist world, rites related to giving or offering in worship form the basic

[10]See Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 80; for a more extensive account, consult Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, trans., introduction to *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha*, a new translation of *Majjhima Nikāya*, ed. and rev. Bhikkhu Bodhi (Kandy, Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995), 32-34.

[11]Theodore M. Ludwig, *The Sacred Paths: Understanding the Religions of the World*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2006), 158.

structure. Buddha is honored with the help of candles, water, food, flowers, and other gifts. When it comes to giving food or money to support the *sangha*, a right motivation is the key to receiving merit.[12]

A defining feature across the varied Buddhist world is meditation, the aim of which is to bring about "a state of perfect mental health, equilibrium and tranquility." It is important to note that at its core meditation is not an exit from ordinary life but, on the contrary, deeply embedded in it. The goal of Buddhist meditation is mindfulness, an aptitude and skill to be developed throughout one's life.[13]

Because of the nontheistic orientation and nondivine status of Buddha, strictly speaking there is no prayer in original Buddhist devotion; "it is only a way of paying homage to the memory of the Master who showed the way."[14] That said, similarly to folk Islam (and Sufism), the founder is often elevated to a (semi) divine status. When it comes to the scriptures—as much as they are honored and venerated in many forms of (particularly Mahayana) liturgy—they are not considered to be divine revelation but rather guides to human effort. However, this is not to deny a high veneration and respect for the sacred texts.

Similarly to all other religions, Buddhism embraces daily rituals and worship patterns as well as holy days and festivals, including rites of passage from birth to initiation into (young) adulthood to death.[15] Counterintuitively, all over the Buddhist world, the worship patterns, rituals, and rites seem to be similar to those of theistic faiths, with a strong focus on devotion.

THE *SANGHA* AND OTHER RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Similarly to Hinduism, it is typical for Buddhist movements to consider other Buddhist movements through the lens of "hierarchical inclusivism," which resembles the attitude of Catholicism as well. All of these three traditions (Buddhist, Hindu, and Roman Catholic) consider their own movement to be the "fulfillment," while others are at a lower level and yet belonging to the same family. In the case of Buddhist "ecumenism," an important role is played by different canons:

[12]Peter Skilling, "Worship and Devotional Life: Buddhist Devotional Life in Southeast Asia," in *ER*, 9826-34.
[13]Martine Batchelor, "Meditation and Mindfulness," *Contemporary Buddhism* 12, no. 1 (2011): 157-64.
[14]Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 81. See also Rita M. Gross, "Meditation and Prayer: A Comparative Inquiry," *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 22 (2002): 77-86.
[15]Ludwig, *Sacred Paths*, 159-63.

whereas those who practice Theravada follow the original Pali-language Tipitaka, those who practice Mahayana accept this literature (also called Tripitaka in Sanskrit) alongside other writings (including, for example, early Chinese texts).

Encounters with the non-Buddhist religious other began from the start of the Buddhist (Theravada) tradition as it distanced itself from Hinduism in India. It also had to define its emerging identity in relation to Jainism and, with the spread to other lands, to Taoism, Confucianism, Shintoism, and others.[16] Although Buddhism's past—or present life—is not without conflicts with the other, occasional campaigns of coercion, and other forms of religious colonialism, by and large Buddhism has sought a peaceful coexistence.[17] That said, as can be said of Hinduism, one can hardly find many clear examples of what we Westerners call religious pluralism.[18] Only recently have a growing number of Buddhists, many of them scholars from or residing in the Global North, begun more systematic work toward Buddhist comparative theology and interfaith engagement.[19]

What about the relation to the Christian community? Christian and Buddhist theologies do not have a long history of dialogue and mutual engagement; indeed, until the nineteenth century, very little exchange took place, notwithstanding occasional encounters from the sixth to the eighth century (with the Nestorian Christians in India and China). The best-chronicled friendship-based and intimate knowledge of Buddhism among Christians comes from the sixteenth-century Jesuit Francis Xavier.[20]

When it comes to the beginning of modern times, the shadow of (Christian) colonialism has plagued relations between the two religions. More recently, a new challenge and opportunity has been the arrival of Buddhism in the Global North in new contextualized forms, from Zen Buddhism to Buddhist theosophical

[16]Masao Abe, *Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue*, ed. Steven Heine (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995); and David W. Chappell, "Buddhist Interreligious Dialogue: To Build a Global Community," in *The Sound of Liberating Truth: Buddhist-Christian Dialogues in Honor of Frederick J. Streng*, ed. Sallie B. King and Paul O. Ingram (Richmond, UK: Curzon, 1999), 3-35.

[17]Kristin Beise Kiblinger, *Buddhist Inclusivism: Attitudes Towards Religious Others* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005).

[18]David Burton, "A Buddhist Perspective," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religious Diversity*, ed. Chad Meister (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 324-26.

[19]E.g., Alexander Berzin, "A Buddhist View of Islam," in *Islam and Inter-Faith Relations: The Gerald Weisfeld Lectures*, ed. Perry Schmidt-Leukel and Lloyd Ridgeon (London: SCM Press, 2007), 225-51.

[20]See Hans Küng, "A Christian Response [to Heinz Bechert: Buddhist Perspectives]," in *Christianity and the World Religions: Paths to Dialogue with Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism*, by Hans Küng, with Josef van Ess, Heinrich von Stietencron, and Heinz Bechert, trans. Peter Heinegg (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 307-8.

societies, among others. This has also opened up new vistas for mutual dialogue and exchange of ideas.

In summary form, it might be useful to register some foundational differences between Christian and Buddhist "ecclesiologies":

- Although the *sangha* is an important part of Buddhist pursuit of spiritual liberation, as in Hinduism, spiritual liberation is ultimately a matter of each individual's effort. Hence, Buddhism is not, ecclesiologically speaking, a religion of communion.
- Although not atheistic in the Western sense, God(s) is marginal to Buddhists. One's salvation depends on one's own effort.
- Although Buddhism does not lack a social ethic or noble examples of working toward peace, reconciliation, and improvement of the society and world, as a religious-ethical system it is not optimistic about a future consummation. Ultimately, with Hinduism, it is a religion of renouncement.

What about mission? As mentioned, the early centuries of Buddhism, including also Mahayana, testified to a vibrant and at times very robust propagation of the new religious message. Thereafter, for the most part this religion has spread through presence and quiet appeal.[21]

What about women's status in religion and the religious community? Despite the inclusive vision of Buddha discussed above, almost as a rule throughout the Buddhist world, females are either completely banned from the highest religious calling—full monastic life—or relegated to lower monastic levels. Religious authority is kept firmly in men's hands.[22]

[21]Lisbeth Mikaelsson, "Missional Religion—with Special Emphasis on Buddhism, Christianity and Islam," *Swedish Missiological Themes* 92 (2004): 523-38.

[22]Suat Yan Lai, "Engendering Buddhism: Female Ordination and Women's 'Voices' in Thailand" (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2011).

EPILOGUE

Whither Ecclesiology in the Third Millennium?

Now that we have finished this long and winding road of Christian thinking about the church, it is time to look forward to future challenges of ecclesiology. What will be the future of theological thinking about the church? What will be the most significant challenges for ecclesiology? How would Christian theology of the church be transformed in a close dialogue with other faith traditions and their visions of the religious community? What about secularism and its power in the Global North? Questions such as these beg for answers at the turn of the third millennium.

Whatever we may dare to say about the future of Christian theology, one need not be a prophet to propose that the nature, purpose, and distinctive features of Christian community will occupy theologians' agenda. The reason is simply this: in our fragmented world, with so many people searching for their roots and for meaning, a community with purpose and hope for the future will be something to look for.

The great ecclesiologist of the past generation, the Reformed Emil Brunner, in his influential *The Misunderstanding of the Church*—a book with a telling title indeed!—begins his exploration with this question:

> WHAT is the Church? This question poses the unsolved problem of Protestantism. From the days of the Reformation to our own time, it has never been clear how the Church, in the sense of spiritual life and faith—the fellowship of Jesus Christ—is related to the institutions conventionally called churches.[1]

[1]Emil Brunner, preface to *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1953), 5.

This Reformed theologian sets forth the (in)famous claim that indeed—to follow the book title!—there is a deep misunderstanding in our midst about what the original biblical vision of the church was. He argues vigorously that whatever else the church might be, it is a fellowship of men and women, a fellowship of the Spirit, a *koinonia.* And this vision has been lost, according to Brunner. Regardless of whether this Swiss theologian's historical-theological analysis is totally valid, its challenge to us is noteworthy. Let me put it this way: How well—or poorly—the Christian church is able to grasp and live out its calling as the fellowship of men and women reflecting the eternal loving *koinonia* of the triune God and participating in God's saving mission to the world will determine how relevant the church is going to be for the third millennium. Alien forces of rampant individualism, egoistic politics, and intensifying conflicts between adherents of religions are testing the calling of Christ's community on the earth.

Our survey has shown that one's doctrine of the church is integrally related to one's denominational and theological background. The Roman Catholic ecclesiology looks different from, say, the Reformed and Free Church ecclesiologies. Yet it has also become evident that confessional boundaries do not limit thinking about the church. The great ecclesiologists studied in this survey testify to the desire and capacity to learn from others and work toward a common Christian understanding of the community. The ecumenical movement's contribution in this regard is not insignificant at all.

Indeed, the rise and consolidation of the ecumenical movement is a healthy reminder to all ecclesiologies of the major challenge to the Christian church, namely, the common destiny of all people of God under one God. Related issues such as joint witness and testimony before the world will continue to be significant issues for the church, which is by its nature missionary.

As has become evident in our survey, the future of Christian theology lies in global sensitivity: theologizing can no longer be the privilege of one culture, not Western or any other. Theology is fast becoming a harmony of various voices from all over the world—often a cacophony of dissonant sounds. What would a genuinely African ecclesiology look like? Or Asian? Or Latin American? Some scattered experiments are available, and we have listened to some rich and insightful voices from diverse contexts. But there is much more to come. Undoubtedly these new developments—hopefully culturally more akin to their contexts and more creative in their responses than their predecessors—dare not ignore the rich Christian

ecclesiological tradition developed mainly in the West. But neither will it suffice to add some cosmetic touches on the existing ecclesiologies. Classical Western theology may benefit in an unprecedented way from the encounter with these contextual and global voices. At its best, this dialogue may become an ecumenical exchange of gifts.

A plethora of other challenges and questions relate to some aspects of ecclesiology and need further attention as the church takes its first steps into the third millennium: How can a church and its structures fit both sexes, or minorities, or people with different mindsets? How can ministry patterns be created that will fuel rather than extinguish the flame of faith in the lives of ordinary Christians? What is the meaning of sacraments and the sacramental for people living amid an unprecedented rise of (neo)religiosity both in the West and elsewhere?

In light of the fact that Christian theology in the third millennium faces the challenge of how to relate to other faiths and theologies, ecclesiology can no longer accomplish its purposes in isolation from the rest of the world's religiosity. What is the distinctive nature of Christian community vis-à-vis other religious communities? How does the nature of the Christian church as *ekklesia*, a "called-out-people," relate to its lofty calling to be spread among the nations and become flesh in each particular cultural and religious setting? What will an ecclesiology of the next generation look like against that background? This textbook has taken a few baby steps to address that huge challenge. Much more work lies ahead of us.

AUTHOR INDEX

SUBJECT INDEX

PRAISE FOR *AN INTRODUCTION TO ECCLESIOLOGY*

"Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen presents us with an astute historical and global summary of ecclesial traditions and contemporary trends, shaping the plight of the church's mission today in this illuminating revised and expanded edition of *An Introduction to Ecclesiology*. Interreligious understandings of the church are essential in our ever-diversifying climate, and Kärkkäinen offers his significant perspective on its importance for us today. This updated book is a challenging book, as the church navigates through new territories and a changing global landscape."

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Roger E. Olson, professor of theology, George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University.

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