The Pacific Journal

of

Baptist Research

CONTENTS

The Pacific Journal
of
Baptist Research

EDITORIAL

ANDY GOODLIFF

Belle Vue Baptist Church

Southend-on-Sea, England

It is a privilege to be asked to write this brief editorial that seeks to highlight that this edition of the journal honours the contribution of Professor Paul Fiddes to Baptist life and theology. Three articles serve to engage with important areas of Professor Fiddes' theology. Frank Rees offers a response to Fiddes' (relatively) early work on atonement, *Past Event and Present Salvation*. Chris Tilling puts Fiddes' work on the doctrine of the Trinity into conversation with the recent work of Wesley Hill on (the apostle) *Paul and the Trinity*. Finally, Andrew Picard picks up Fiddes' work on covenant in the context of Baptists in Aotearoa New Zealand.

If you visit Regent's Park College in Oxford at the moment you will find down one corridor a set of photographs taken of the college faculty and students from the early 1970s up to the present day. Apart from noticing the growth in the size of the student body in the last forty years, the other thing you will see in every photo, save one, is Paul Fiddes.[1] Here is an opportunity to see Paul age before your eyes (!), as through the years he has moved from being a Research Fellow, a Tutor, the Principal to his current role as Research Professor. It is a visual reminder that Paul has been at the heart of the life of Regent's Park College from 1972. And yet, as this edition of the *Pacific Journal of Baptist Research* demonstrates, Paul's impact as a theologian has gone wider than just Regent's Park College and even the University of Oxford, which awarded him the title Professor of Systematic Theology in 2002. Paul's impact can be seen in the life of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the European Baptist Federation, the Baptist World Alliance, and beyond.

Let me indicate in some more detail the debt we owe Paul. When Leonard Champion (Principal of Bristol Baptist College at the time) argued that there was an 'urgent task' to offer a clearer, more coherent and more widely accepted theology amongst British Baptists, it was Paul, with some friends, who took up the challenge.[2] Through the 1980s and 1990s Paul and his friends gave themselves to the task of doing theology in a Baptist way.[3] This produced a number of short works which began to offer a Baptist theology centred around the concept of covenant, which had implications for ministry, associating, mission, and baptism.[4] The culmination of this was Paul's vision for Baptist life and theology, which was published as

---

[1] Paul is missing from the 1976 photo due to the fact that he spent this year at the University of Tübingen, studying alongside Jürgen Moltmann and Eberhard Jüngel.

[2] See Leonard Champion, "Evangelical Calvinism and the Structures of Baptist Church Life," *Baptist Quarterly* 28 (1980): 196-208.

[3] There was a gap of nine years between Paul publishing *Freedom and Limit: A Dialogue between Literature and Christian Doctrine* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1991) in 1991 and *The Promised End: Eschatology in Theology and Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) and *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000), both in 2000. This gap can perhaps be best explained by Paul's appointment as Principal in 1989 and then his heavy involvement in, and dedication to, the life of the Baptist Union and the theological division of the European Baptist Federation.

[4] Including *A Call to Mind: Baptist Essays Towards a Theology of Commitment* (London: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1981); *Bound To Love: The Covenant Basis of Baptist Life and Mission* (London: Baptist Union of Great Britain, 1985);

Tracks and Traces in 2003. Sean Winter, in his *Baptist Quarterly* review, described it as "the most important piece of Baptist ecumenical scholarship in several decades" and a "work of deep theology."[5]

In terms of the Baptist World Alliance, Paul's contribution can be seen in his chairing of conversations with the Anglican Communion (2000-2005) and the Roman Catholic Church (2006-2010). Paul has always understood that being a Baptist theologian means also being a catholic and ecumenical theologian, and he has sought, through the practice of receptive ecumenism (even before it was given that name), to build common ground or (to borrow the language of the BUGB and Church of England report, which he also chaired from the Baptist side) *push at the boundaries of unity.* Paul has tirelessly tried to find a way to bring Baptists and other Christians closer in terms of baptism, arguing for a common process of initiation.[6] While much of this ecumenical work may appear outside the everyday life and mission of local Baptist churches, internationally it has put Baptists on the ecumenical map as a people with theological depth. Paul's work has also given confidence to those of us who are distinctively Baptist and yet also see ourselves, in the words of Curtis Freeman, "contesting catholicity", not from outside, but within.

In addition to these ecumenical conversations, Paul was the main writer of the BWA response to the Islamic letter to the Christian Church, *A Common Word.*[7] This has developed more recently into an ongoing interest and dialogue with Islamic theology, seen most particularly in the Love in Religion project he has helped set up in the University of Oxford and based at Regent's.[8]

Outside of these more specific Baptist contributions, Paul is held in high regard internationally as a theologian who has provided the academy and the church with work on the atonement, the Trinity, eschatology, ecclesiology, and the communion of saints. He has done this in conversation with literature, film, even the music of Madonna, and also law, medicine, and philosophy. This high regard was demonstrated by a festschrift *Within the Love of God: Essays on the Doctrine of God in Honour of Paul S. Fiddes,*[9] presented to Paul in November 2014, with contributors including Jürgen Moltmann, John Webster, Frances Young, Paul Helm, David Burrell and Keith Ward.[10]

In a recent Facebook conversation, Paul was described as "one of our most distinguished Baptist theologians in the world." This generated the response from another Baptist theologian of some note: "what do you mean 'one of'?" This reflects the view so many of us share of Paul. He has championed theological thinking to a Baptist constituency which has too often tended to be suspicious of theology and enamoured

---

Reflections on the Water: Understanding God and the World through the Baptism of Believers (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 1996); *Something to Declare: A Study of the Declaration of Principle of the Baptist Union of Great Britain* (Oxford: Whitley, 1996); and *Doing Theology in a Baptist Way* (Oxford: Whitley, 2000).

[5] Sean Winter, "Review of *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology*," *Baptist Quarterly* 41 (2006): 339.

[6] Admittedly Paul has had limited success with British Baptists on this subject. He was bitterly disappointed that the report, "Pushing at Boundaries of Unity" was largely dismissed by the Baptist Union Council in 2006, especially when it chose merely to 'receive' the report, rather than 'welcome' it.

[7] See http://www.acommonword.com/ACommonWord-Baptist-World-Alliance-Response.pdf.

[8] See https://loveinreligion.org/about/.

[9] Anthony Clarke and Andrew Moore (eds.), *Within the Love of God: Essays on the Doctrine of God in Honour of Paul S. Fiddes* (Oxford: OUP, 2014).

[10] At the same time Paul was also honoured with a second festschrift: Anthony Clarke (ed.), *For the Sake of the Church: Essays in Honour of Paul S. Fiddes* (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2014), to which a number of Baptist friends and colleagues contributed.

with a pragmatic spirit. Paul has issued the church a call to the mind *and* also a call to the world.[11] In all this Paul has been a great example, and, more importantly, a great encourager to many of us. His witness has not only been in what he has written, but in the way that he has done theology: with humility, with generosity and with a passion for God, into whose life, Paul has sought to remind us, we are continually being drawn.

---

[11] This is most clearly displayed in his 2005 Bampton Lectures published as *Seeing the World and Knowing God: Hebrew Wisdom and Christine Doctrine in a Late-Modern Context* (Oxford: OUP, 2013).

WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED? A CRITICAL RESPONSE TO PAUL FIDDES, *PAST EVENT AND PRESENT SALVATION*

FRANK D REES

Whitley College, University of Divinity

Melbourne, Australia

One of the more dramatic stories found in the Acts of the Apostles recounts the incident when Paul and Silas were released from prison, following an earthquake (Acts 16. 16 - 40). At the heart of the story, the jailer wakes to find that the prison doors have all been thrown open by the earthquake and, supposing that all the inmates have escaped, he is about to kill himself. It is understood that he would be held responsible for their escape and his livelihood and indeed his life are lost. But Paul intervenes, urging him not to harm himself "for we are all here". Then the jailer asks the question which has since become the focus of countless evangelistic sermons and tracts: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Exactly what he meant by being saved can only be a matter of conjecture, but the story that follows speaks of him becoming a believer in God.[1]

The simple inference drawn from this story is that what we must do to be saved is to believe. In her studies of the faith experience of women, however, Elisabeth Moltmann Wendel found that although they had accepted and believed the doctrine of justification by faith, many women did not did not *experience* the freedom and forgiveness promised to them by their faith. Their salvation had not become a reality in their lives. The issues are addressed in Paul Fiddes' book *Past Event and Present Salvation*.[2] In this essay we will begin with an outline of Fiddes' approach and proceed to a critical appraisal of his insights and contribution. The question posed by Paul Fiddes' book is immensely relevant: What has the death of Jesus two thousand years ago got to do with our present need of salvation? How and in what sense does such an event effect "present salvation"? As we consider this question, it is also necessary to place it in a broader context. In what sense, if at all, is anyone asking today, "What must I do to be saved?" What is the most crucial need people face today? We live in a time when natural disasters such as earthquakes, violent storms, drought and other extremes in the climate threaten lives and whole communities. The context of that jailer's question was just such an event and the meaning of his question may not be as "spiritual" as so many of the sermons based upon it imply. What is the meaning of salvation, in the face of climate change, or the situation of some 43 million people living as refugees and displaced persons today?

---

[1] Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel, *A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey* (London: SCM, 1986). See particularly Chapters 5, 10 & 11.

[2] Paul Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation: The Christian Idea of Atonement*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1989).

THE BASIS AND DIRECTION OF FIDDES' ARGUMENT

Past Event and Present Salvation is dedicated to his former teacher Frederick Dillistone and several features of Fiddes' approach reflect Dillistone's ground-breaking work, *The Christian Understanding of Atonement.*[3] Dillistone argued that all understandings of atonement identify or at least imply an understanding of human need: if we are saved, there is something from which we are saved. Furthermore, there are many ways of explaining this need and consequently many ways of describing atonement or salvation. Dillistone describes multiple frameworks of interpretation, both in scripture and within the Christian tradition. As Fiddes says, the church over the centuries "has never made any one understanding of atonement official or orthodox".[4]

Fiddes begins with an exploration of the human need of salvation.[5] He identifies three broad categories of need or difficulty, towards which models of atonement may be addressed. The first is *alienation* or estrangement: This is essentially the idea of division or brokenness. In the human condition, family relationships are often broken, there is division, polarization, and open conflict, and often people experience a fundamental alienation from reality itself. We may not be sure where we belong or may feel that reality is in some way indifferent to us. In all these situations, we are estranged.

Secondly, Fiddes writes of *falling short,* or *unfulfilled potential.* Another constant in the human situation is the sense of what might have been, the sense that our lives are unfulfilled. The Apostle Paul speaks of "falling short of the glory of God" (Romans 3. 23). There are many other ways of describing and imaging this sense of lost potential. Some of these are closely linked with the idea of estrangement too: we are estranged from our true selves, or what we might have been. It is important to add that this image does not always imply failure or decline. It may refer more to the sense of "not yet"—a destiny as yet unfulfilled, coupled with a question about whether we actually have the capacity or will to achieve that potential.

Finally, Fiddes writes of *sin as personal and as rebellion*—"a failure in personal relationships between human beings and their creator due to rebellion from the human side."[6] This idea of sin is grounded, he argues, in a lack of trust. We do not trust God, we do not believe and obey the way of God and so rebel and go our own way, trying to centre everything upon ourselves and or own efforts; but as a consequence we fall into both alienation and a loss of potential.

At this point, let us note several critical questions to which we will return later in the discussion. Do these images actually relate to all people and are they sufficient as an appreciation of the human predicament? On the one hand, it is arguable that some people today have little or no sense of any of these things: they live moderately happy, fulfilled, contented lives. They don't feel particularly alienated, guilty, unfulfilled or broken. They may not consider themselves to be part of this "human predicament", described in these ways. Do they need salvation? Tom Smail has identified this issue, quoting a Belgian study which found that as many as forty percent of people surveyed did not acknowledge any level of guilt or regret in

---

[3] Frederick Dillistone, *The Christian Understanding of Atonement* (London: SCM, 1968, 1984).
[4] Paul Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation,* 5
[5] Ibid., Chapter 1.
[6] Ibid., 6

their lives.[7] On the other hand there are those for whom these images are too small: perhaps because they are too individualistic and too human-centred. Such people may sense that what is broken or needing fulfilling is more cosmic than these three images suggest and the need for salvation is greater, not less than, what is envisaged by these categories.

Here, then, is the challenge for salvation theology. It needs actually to address what people are concerned about and to offer a coherent and credible account of that past event and present (and future) salvation. Kenneth Surin has stated that the "acid test" of any book on atonement is how Christian reflection engages with human narratives of "pain, dereliction and death".[8] In short, atonement theology must not only focus on a past event, but offer some coherent experience of present salvation.

There are further elements in Fiddes' distinctive approach to these issues we need to identify, before we proceed to the detail of his argument. Fiddes' approach to soteriology is distinctively theological and not only christological. In a chapter entitled "Salvation as event and process", he reminds us that God's life as *creator* and as *redeemer* are not two entirely separate dimensions or activities. Scripturally we see the unity of creation and redemption: "a frequent way of portraying God's creation of the world was as a deliverance from the hostile forces of chaos".[9] Furthermore, both creation and redemption are presented as continuous processes. God is perpetually engaged with the suffering of the world, seeking to redeem it and recreate it. Nonetheless, scripture also presents the idea of a "decisive event of salvation", specifically with regard to the death and resurrection of Jesus.

In reflecting upon these aspects of biblical faith, Fiddes helpfully distinguishes the *subjective* and *objective* dimensions in atonement. It is interesting that here he uses the term 'atonement' rather than salvation. What he means by the 'objective' dimension is that something happens and effects a change with regard to God and in our relation to God. If we are "at-oned", then this is an objective occurrence. Atonement is a reality which exists in itself, in a sense whether or not we know it or believe it. On the other hand, the "subjective" dimension of atonement is about how this reality impacts upon us: Do we experience it and does it change us, in the present? In his exploration of models of atonement Fiddes is interested, then, in how these images help us to understand and appropriate both the subjective and objective dimensions. Clearly a model that provides insight and impact in both dimensions is superior to one that does not.

MODELS OF ATONEMENT

It has long been observed that a distinctive feature of Western theology, in the latin traditions, is to seek to *explain* the mysteries of faith, such as the efficacy of sacraments and the means of atonement. A substantial section of Fiddes' book is devoted to five models of atonement. While we cannot examine the details of these chapters, it is helpful to note the ways in which he evaluates these models, in each instance asking about the objective and subjective dimensions of atonement.

---

[7] Tom Smail, *Once and For All: A Confession of the Cross* (Eugene, OR.: Wipf & Stock, 1998), 41.
[8] Kenneth Surin, "Review of *Past Event and Present Salvation,*" *Theology* 93 (1990): 400-401.
[9] Paul Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation,* 17.

The first model considered is the idea of Christ's death as a *sacrifice*. Fiddes attempts to clarify the significance of sacrifices within ancient Israel, seeking both the objective and subjective dimensions. He concludes that "according to the Israelite and early Christian conceptions, [sacrifice] is not something human beings do to God (propitiation) but something that God does for humankind (expiation)."[10] While genuine repentance is needed, this in itself does not effect atonement. It is God who forgives, offering the possibility of expiation. Sacrifices, then, are more a response to God's offer of forgiveness than a means of bringing it about. Christian theology, however, came to see the offer of forgiveness through Jesus as the final sacrifice: "the cross of Jesus had been the decisive act of God in dealing with human sin" and was "like a sacrifice".[11] In exploring these ideas, Fiddes strongly rejects the idea of propitiation, the need for sacrifice to appease an angry or vengeful God. Rather, it is God who offers the sacrificial atonement to humanity through the life and death of Jesus. Having sought to explain these ideas and their development in Christian history, though, in the end Fiddes finds this image inadequate and concludes that "the image of 'expiation' does not in itself explain how one event can so decisively destroy sin in our lives".[12] As an idea of atonement, it functions overwhelmingly on the "objective" side, without a coherent explanation of how sacrifice effects present salvation.

Next comes a discussion of atonement understood in terms of the *justice* of God. It was Anselm who most clearly developed this idea of salvation as justice. Sin is understood in terms of a lack of balance in the scales of justice, and order must be restored: God's justice must be satisfied. The need for justice could be satisfied in two ways: either by something which satisfies the honour of the Lord, or by an appropriate punishment. Anselm's idea was that the death of Jesus satisfies the honour of God.

Fiddes finds some crucial problems with this idea: chiefly that the whole concept of honour and satisfaction is not available to us. It no longer explains why Jesus died and how that saves us. He also suggests that this idea all too easily slips into Calvin's legalistic notion of penal substitution, once it is separated from its cultural base that this results. Fiddes concludes that this idea of divine satisfaction is all too objective: what it doesn't show us is how *we* are saved, or indeed why. While the "justice" of God may be satisfied, it all seems to happen in God, over our heads as it were: what part do we have in all this?

Another model concerns God's *victory*, given new currency in the last century through Gustav Aulen's book *Christus Victor*.[13] The basic idea is that the human predicament is a situation of enslavement: we are simply not able to be and do what we could be and might hope to be. In Christ's life, death and resurrection God has broken the power of sin, and though it is not yet complete the victory is assured. Here the death and resurrection are apocalyptic and eschatological in character. In his explanation of this model

---

[10] Ibid., 71.
[11] Ibid., 68.
[12] Ibid., 79.
[13] Gustav Aulen, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement* E.T. by A G Herbert, (London: SPCK, 1931, 1970).

there are many hints of Fiddes' other works, relating to the creative and redemptive suffering of God and the character of hope.[14]

Clearly one of the merits of this model is that it directly relates to the suffering and anguish of the human condition and does not see them in entirely "objective" terms. Similarly, the model envisages salvation as impacting upon lived experience in the present—calling forth redeemed living in freedom and hope. While Fiddes finds a number of difficulties with the actual exposition of this model in Aulen and in Barth's theology, it is clear that he sees merit in it and his own idea of the "journey of forgiveness" includes aspects of God's choice to overcome sin through redemptive, patient suffering and hope.

Next Fiddes turns to the very familiar idea of salvation as God's *forgiveness*. His initial consideration deals with Calvin's idea of penal substitution, which he finds inadequate for many reasons, including the suggestion that Calvin has made atonement into a matter of law, which he says is exactly contrary to the teaching of Jesus. Overall, though, Fiddes' concern is that the ideas of Anselm, Luther and Calvin, for whom atonement as the payment of a debt or an atoning punishment, is too objective. It does not sufficiently relate to us. It doesn't help us to know about God's salvation.

Up to this point, Fiddes has been considering models that primarily focus upon the "objective" and somewhat forensic aspects of atonement. In a vital turn in his argument, he examines what is known as the *moral influence* theory developed by Peter Lombard (1096 - 1164). The emphasis here is upon the impact of God's love, revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Fiddes explains that Lombard wanted both to emphasize something objective—the love of God—*and* its capacity to evoke a loving response from us and thus draw us into its saving power. Here Fiddes sees the balance he has been seeking, between objective and subjective dimensions. "Abelard believes that the love of God revealed in the cross has the power to *move* human hearts and minds to a similar love." It is the revelation of God's love, in the power of the story of Jesus, that saves us.[15]

Clearly appreciative of these arguments, Fiddes nonetheless sees a number of limitations as well. This approach he finds highly individualistic, in its focus on the subjective experience of individuals. A second concern is an apparent separation of the work of the Spirit, in impressing the love of God upon us (the "moral persuasion") from the actual events of Christ's life and death in the past, and thus a question arises about how the two are in fact related. Finally, Fiddes names what is surely a critical issue for all these approaches to salvation theology: "why love should be revealed in a *death* ... the sight of a man dying by means of a prolonged and agonising torture does not immediately arouse a sense of the love of God."[16]

These challenging questions lead Fiddes to his own excellent theological explorations, drawing upon Karl Barth's emphasis on Christ as the revelation of God's freedom for us, 'the one who loves in freedom', and Bonhoeffer's insistence that we must know and find Christ in the 'secular' world today.[17] The thrust of

---

[14] Of particular note here: Paul Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) and Paul Fiddes, *The Promised End: Eschatology in Theology and Literature*, Challenges in Contemporary Theology Series (Oxford: Blackwells, 2000).

[15] Paul Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation,* 141, 145.

[16] Ibid., 155.

[17] Ibid., 162-64.

this argument is that the revelation of God's love is not only in a past event, but in the continuing presence of the humiliated and crucified Christ, taking shape in the people and events of the world around us. To see and meet this suffering God who comes to us *from* the cross, Fiddes says, is "to enter into the interweaving of relationships which is God's own life". Here we see a clear indication of the trinitarian theology later developed in *Participating in God*.[18] The critical point here is that Fiddes has articulated a theological framework for better understanding Abelard's affirmation of the transformative love of God.

On this basis, then, Fiddes returns again to the models of atonement, to offer his own distinctive account, the idea of *the journey of forgiveness*. Unsurprisingly, this is both an account of the experience of forgiveness (arguing "from below") and a richly theological idea of the activity and experience of God, who initiates and makes this journey.

THE JOURNEY OF FORGIVENESS

Drawing upon another seminal work in this area, H R Macintosh, *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness,* Fiddes begins with a focus on the actual experience of being forgiven, including both objective and subjective aspects.[19] Forgiveness includes the activity of one who forgives (we are forgiven) and the appropriation of that gift (we experience a freedom from previous guilt). What is distinctive in Fiddes' analysis, though, is his development of Macintosh's idea that the one who forgives must engage in a kind of voyage or journey.

There are several elements or stages in the journey of forgiveness, for the one forgives. The first of these Fiddes calls the *journey of discovery*. This involves the often painful recognition and acknowledgement of the reality of the situation: "there is a brokenness in relationship that has to faced up to if it is going to be healed, and so the forgiver needs to bring the injury done to him (sic) back to mind, and has to live again through the pain of it".[20] In doing so, the forgiver will also empathically consider (Fiddes actually says sympathetically) and "discover" the perspective of the offender also. Only in the light of this discovery can the forgiving person go to the offender and say, "I forgive you." At that point, then, the offender must also undertake a journey of discovery, both acknowledging the broken relationship and the offer of forgiveness, exploring what it might mean to accept it.

This first stage, in a sense, establishes the objective dimension of forgiveness, but by itself it is never enough. The second element Fiddes calls the *journey of endurance.* The one who forgives must wait, possibly for a significant period, while a process of emotions and even aggressive reactions takes place, until the subjective reality of forgiveness comes to the offender and she or he submits to it, accepts it and the relationship is indeed restored. Thus forgiveness becomes a reality, both objectively and subjectively. That the gift of forgiveness is not always accepted is also a sad reality in human life and community.

One valuable contribution of Fiddes' work is his development of these dynamics in theological terms. He explains the life and death of Jesus in exactly this way: Christ enters into the experience of those who

---

[18] Paul Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2000).
[19] H. R. Mackintosh, *The Christian Experience of Forgiveness* (London: Nisbet, 1934).
[20] Paul Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation,* 173.

have offended against God and life itself—the journey of discovery. Then as he declares from his cross "Father forgive them", Jesus "provokes the guilty into awareness of the wrongs they would prefer to hide".[21]

It is crucial to note that Fiddes sees God's forgiveness demonstrated in Jesus' life and actions, not only in his death. But the focus is mostly upon the cross as the supreme outworking of the journey of forgiveness. In a sentence that draws upon the ideas of moral persuasion and his own desire to link past event and present salvation, he writes: "In this one past event the God who was and is always willing to forgive gains through the cross that experience of the human heart that gives him a way into our hearts."[22] Fiddes goes on to suggest an objective change in God, which is not a change from wrath to love, but rather a change in God as a result of moving us, changing us.

While Fiddes makes this declaration, though, it would seem to be a little premature to say that God has achieved the atonement or forgiveness sought, since this is but the first part of the journey. There is yet to be the acceptance of the gift, through the journey of endurance. The remainder of the chapter engages with problems of guilt and the difficulties we have in forgiving others, before a final and superb theological affirmation. Here is the recognition that the atonement is not complete without the present and "subjective" fulfilment in human acceptance and restoration. Thus Fiddes speaks of God's capacity not only to enter into human estrangement, but in doing so God does not cease to be God. Even as God "becomes strange to himself" and willingly enters into an element of the unknown, there is the power of resurrection, yet to be fully completed and appropriated. This continues to be God's journey voyage of discovery and endurance in hope.

The final sections of the book consider the problems of suffering and political engagement, leading to the conclusion that the creative power of God's love, revealed in the death and resurrection of Jesus, gives meaning to present suffering. Just as God was present at the cross, so too God perpetually makes the journey of discovery into our lives and invites us to respond with imagination and hope. Here Fiddes is drawing upon his more extensive work on the creative and redemptive suffering of God, which not only has " a persuasive power, moving us to trust him" but is itself definitive of God's own being. God is the one who overcomes death by taking it into Godself, in Jesus Christ and perpetually so in the ongoing work of salvation.[23]

CRITICAL RESPONSE: THE MEANING AND MEANS OF SALVATION TODAY

There are many things in the argument of *Past Event and Present Salvation* to applaud and at the time of its publication numerous scholarly reviews expressed appreciation of these strengths. First of these is the fundamental question to which the work is addressed: exactly how can an event in distant history effect salvation today? In engaging with this issue Fiddes consistently explores the subjective and objective dimensions of salvation, showing how some models of atonement are more able to explain one or the other,

---

[21] Ibid., 176.
[22] Ibid., 178.
[23] Paul Fiddes, *The Creative Suffering of God*, 267.

while he works towards a model that maintains both. His gathering together of the various models is itself a helpful contribution, while his critical appraisal of them is insightful and offers many valuable clarifications.

Other particular strengths arise from Fiddes' theological perspective, reminding us that salvation theology should not be separated from creation theology. Then in his own constructive approach he makes clear that God's life as revealer and as Holy Spirit are also integral to the process of salvation. What is especially valuable here is Fiddes' stress upon the importance of what he calls the "subjective" dimension of atonement. Faith cannot be merely a matter of belief in something "objective", which has no impact upon our lives and in a sense makes no difference. This stress upon the need both for some objective and subjective dimension provides a powerful basis for critique of models and also a direction for his own insights into the character of forgiveness. These insights in turn lead back the wider theological perspectives already noted—God as creator, Holy Spirit and revealer. There is a deeply integrated and wholistic aspect to this theology.

Finally, it is worth noting how this early work of Paul Fiddes indicates significant directions in which his wider theological writing has developed. Here there are clear links with his work on the creative suffering of God, his understanding of eschatological hope and a hint of the idea that in our quest for healing and community we participate in the divine life. So this is indeed a very valuable and important book in the theological corpus of Paul Fiddes.

Nonetheless there are a number of critical issues which need to be considered, both in regard to the specific content of Fiddes' argument and then in the wider area of soteriology today. At the beginning we noted that one of the key issues is not just the means of salvation but the meaning of salvation. We begin with a criticism of Fiddes' preferred model, the idea of the journey of forgiveness. The fundamental question here concerns the very concept: forgiveness presupposes guilt, the need to be forgiven, and that is the basis for our question here. Just why does Fiddes presume that the essential need of humanity is to be forgiven? At the outset, he established that there are many ways of understanding the human predicament, but at this later stage of his argument the focus on forgiveness seems to have narrowed the concern to a question of guilt.

Earlier in this essay we raised the possibility that there may be some people who sense no particular need at all to be "saved". Cyril Rodd, in his review of this book, names this as "the essential modern problem: people today have little sense of sin in the traditional sense, few believe in demonic powers, and few have any sense of the need of redemption." [24] Even if we wanted to deny that, and insist that all people are in some way needing God's salvation, it is not so clear that the need is always and everywhere to be understood as a problem of guilt in need of forgiveness. Donald Capps, for example, has argued that in our time the central concern of humanity is not guilt but shame.[25] Others might argue that a sense of meaninglessness, perhaps a sense of the futility of life, or alienation from self and others, or from community and the world at large, is a much more significant concern. Certainly we can say that the idea of guilt in need of forgiveness

---

[24] Cyril Rodd, "Talking Points from Books", *Expository Times* 101 (1989): 4.
[25] Donald Capps, *The Depleted Self, Sin in a Narcissistic Age* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 90-94.

is not a sufficient conception of the human predicament, especially since it is prone to an individualistic and moralistic focus. When set against the challenges of social injustice and poverty on a massive scale, the plight of refugees and the great threat of global warming and its potential to exacerbate these other evils, the problem of individual sins needing to be forgiven seems somewhat less significant and the concept of salvation as forgiveness of those sins might be considered less compelling.

Fiddes himself does not allow his own concept of forgiveness to become exclusively individualist nor moralistic. Still, his own critiques of models of atonement identifies the dangers or tendencies of those models towards legalism, for instance, and it seems fair to raise here the strong tendency today to reduce ideas of guilt and forgiveness to individualist and moralistic concerns.

This brings us to a cluster of issues relating to Fiddes' idea of the journey of forgiveness as a model of atonement and salvation. Just as Fiddes himself has sought to offer an essentially *theological* account of atonement, there are a number of questions about his concept of God. William Abrahams wrote that Fiddes' account "needs a much richer pneumatology", though he also says he cannot precisely see how this would "improve on" Fiddes' discussion.[26] For Abrahams, Fiddes has been too much influenced by the German approaches, in seeking a theology of God from a theology of the cross without sufficient attention to natural theology and the analysis of religious language. While there may be some merit to these later concerns, the central issue here is the doctrine of God. This is the specific focus of Colin Gunton's critique. He is especially critical of the claim that God "increases in experience" through the cross.[27] Gunton sees a "virtual identification" of the Father and the Son in what happens, which makes it difficult he says to maintain the importance of the Son's representation of humanity before God. Gunton also asserts that the stress on the subjective or experiential aspects of atonement, including for God, has diminished the real and active renewal of the creation (the objectivity of the atonement), with the result that the resurrection is seen "mainly as divine protest against evil".

If we take these various criticisms together, it is clear that the central issue is with Fiddes' conviction that God is not only engaged in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus in the past, but that what is revealed in these past events is indeed the perpetual character of God. God is what we see in Christ, engaging and experiencing the alienation of creation and humanity, but also working through redemptive suffering to restore, forgive and renew all life. But if this is the character of God, then "the atonement" is in a very important sense not complete. This difficulty is evident in fact in the final pages of the book, where the strongest theological argument is made for this model. As already noted, Fiddes suggests that God gives meaning to the cross and reveals God's love in the present, thus perpetually engaging in the journey of discovery. God is, as the Apostle Paul puts it, continually appealing to us to be reconciled with God and to become participants in that reconciliation process (2 Corinthians 5. 18 - 20). This means, as Fiddes sees it, that God is perpetually engaged in the journey of discovery—and endurance—hoping that those who need forgiveness or salvation will be so moved by the love made evident in Jesus as to receive it.

---

[26] William Abrahams, "Review of *Past Event and Present Salvation,*" *Perkins Journal* 43 (1990): 40.
[27] Colin Gunton, "Review of *Past Event and Present Salvation,*" *New Blackfriars* 71 (1990): 209-10. Gunton's quotation is from *Past Event and Present Salvation,* 110.

There are two important implications here. The first is that God's work of salvation is in some degree dependent upon its recipients. What is reflected here is what is sometimes called an "open" doctrine of God. Ultimately, God cannot determine who will be saved but waits upon the journey of discovery on the part of those who need salvation. Here we are confronted by the issues of election and determinism, somewhat beyond the scope of this essay. The point is simply that in Fiddes' account of salvation these implications are indeed open. For him, this is the nature of the Gospel. For others, this indeterminacy undermines their sense of the sovereignty of God. Fiddes' own response to these issues is evident in his Trinitarian theology, which fully embraces the idea that God in inherently relational and open to our participation in the divine life.

A second issue, however, is one of credibility: Is this a compelling and credible argument for the salvation of the world? When Fiddes says that God makes the story of Jesus present and available for us, offering meaning to other human stories of suffering and need, is this a convincing and credible account? At this point, the challenge is not so much that the argument fails, but that this "meaning" needs to be presented in a way that effectively transforms human lives and situations.

Fiddes might respond that this revelatory effect is nothing less than the task of preaching the Gospel, in relationship, deeds and words, itself dependent upon the work of the Holy Spirit. That would be a reasonable response and a worthy outcome of a work of salvation theology: to inform and provoke the proclamation of the Gospel. But in itself, that proclamation has to be a credible Gospel, an appropriate and effective response to the human predicament, and it is this difficulty we have been raising. How does the message of the cross acquire such meaning and relevance to the needs and concerns of people today? What must we do to be saved? It would seem from the preceding arguments that in order to convince people to engage with this journey of discovery and forgiveness, we need a stronger and more compelling understanding both of the means and the meaning of salvation. The difficulty here flows into the question of Jesus' death as "the central saving event" and it is to these issues we now turn.

THE CROSS AS SAVING EVENT?

Salvation theology today is not only confronted by a plethora of issues with regard to the meaning and need for salvation, but also in relation to the emphasis placed upon the death of Jesus as the means of salvation. In this regard, there is a cluster of arguments and issues we need to take into account.

The first argument is an objection to the focus on Jesus' death in virtual separation from his life. When atonement theories focus upon Jesus' death as sacrifice or ransom, in what Fiddes rightly sees as a legalistic and objective way, there is indeed a great danger that this death becomes separated from the life and ministry which led to his arrest and execution. It has to be acknowledged, though, that many fine works in atonement theology, including Fiddes' own work, resist this separation. Fiddes gives examples of how Jesus offered forgiveness during his life and ministry.[28] In his classic work *God Was In Christ,* Donald Baillie

---

[28] Paul Fiddes, *Past Event and Present Salvation,* 176.

says quite bluntly that what led to Jesus' death was his love for sinners, the way he lived with and for those "on the outer".[29]

Nonetheless, there is a very powerful theological tradition that places the cross at the very heart of the Christian gospel, with the implication that Jesus came in order to die, to save us from our sins. This emphasis is greatly enhanced by the fact that the creeds of the Church do not mention Jesus' life and ministry at all: only his birth, death and resurrection. Not only that, but in this commonly held perspective, dying in atonement for the sins of the world was Jesus' own intention. In the many works of N T Wright, this case is made consistently. Wright offers an impressive account of the message and mission of Jesus and on the basis of this research argues that Jesus saw his life and death in these terms. Jesus expected to go to his cross as implicit 'king' of the world and through his resurrection God would reveal him to be such, in contrast to the powers of Rome and all other earthly kingdoms. "Jesus seems to have believed that this would occur, uniquely and decisively, in and through his own suffering and death … he would win the victory that would establish him as Israel's true messiah and transform the kingdom from its current present-and-future state into a fully present reality."[30]

While there is much in the New Testament that can be adduced to support this view, the difficulty is that it seems to imply that until Jesus died and was raised there was no salvation. This flies in the face of the entire corpus of Scripture. Ted Grimsrud has presented a very powerful case to this effect.[31] The critical focus of Grimsrud's argument the idea of atonement as necessary in order for retribution to be made: God seeks to punish sinners and 'salvation' is made possible by an appropriate act of retribution. Grimsrud argues that this is not a biblical view of God: all through the Bible, God is one who *offers* salvation as gift. Central to this case is a review the place of sacrifice in ancient Israel—an argument partially seen also in Fiddes' chapter on sacrifice. It was never the case that sacrifices would in some sense persuade God to forgive sinners or the sinful nation. Rather, the cult sacrifices were a means of appropriating and giving thanks for God's already-existing forgiveness and mercy. "Contrary to the logic of retribution, we find mercy at the very core of Old Testament sacrifice theology."[32] So it is with the teachings of the prophets, who are presented as "guardians" of God's way of wholeness. Crucial to this argument is the view that the Law is in fact a way of salvation, albeit Israel did not always follow its promise and hope. The implication of this argument, then, is that Jesus did not come to institute or inaugurate the way of salvation. He came, rather, as an advocate for the salvation available through the Law and the Prophets. He came as the servant of this same God and his life and death are to be understood within this theology. Thus Grimsrud argues that the death of Jesus should not be seen as something "extra", something needed "to change God's disposition towards human beings or to enable God to overcome limitations imposed on God's mercy by 'holiness' or

---

[29] D. Baillie, *God Was in Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement* (London: Faber and Faber, 1956), 182-83.
[30] N. T. Wright, "The Crux of the Faith', Chapter 6 in Marcus J. Borg and N. T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 98.
[31] Ted Grimsrud, *Instead of Atonement: The Bible's Salvation Story and Our Hope for Wholeness* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013).
[32] Ibid., 44.

"justice'".[33] Rather, Jesus' message and mission was simply to announce, as his name actually means: *God saves.*

On this basis, Grimsrud interprets the death of Jesus as the offering of his own sacrifice *to us.* He is willing to die so that the love of God can be revealed. Jesus offers forgiveness to sinners as an outworking of the forgiveness that already exists. Thus, when Grimsrud presents his case "instead of atonement", he is not in fact rejecting all models of atonement but is rather offering an interpretation similar in some ways to Fiddes' own case for the journey of forgiveness and, in other aspects, to Abelard's idea of the transforming gift of love. There are two distinctive things in Grimsrud's work: first, the rejection of any element of retribution in all biblical understandings of salvation and then a very significant exploration of the implications of salvation in terms of restorative justice and healing, in the face of "the powers" which threaten human life and society today. In these aspects, then, this work can be seen as an effective development of the directions set out in the latter parts of *Past Event and Present Salvation.*

A further line of critique of the focus upon Jesus' death as the central "saving event" is the argument that this theology implies a violent God. While there have been many developments of this case, I will draw briefly upon the recent work of J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent God.* In an increasingly violent world, there has been a strong theological impetus to oppose any claim that violence, and perhaps especially religiously motivated violence, can claim a theological imprimatur. Those who set forward the idea of a God who requires the death of his own son, as propitiation of divine wrath, are most vulnerable to this critique; but so too are all views of atonement which celebrate the death of Jesus as the expiation or sacrifice which brings peace or forgiveness. In all these approaches, the implication is that the end justifies the means. These arguments are vulnerable to the charge that they approve of some violence, at least, and imply a blood-thirsty God, at worst. As Weaver puts it succinctly, "The logic of satisfaction atonement leads to a violent image of God. God emerges as the chief avenger or the chief punisher."[34] The subsequent argument in Weaver's book suggests an alternative reading of the significance of Jesus' death, giving due weight to his own rejection of violence and thus a theology of God's reign involving restorative rather than retributive justice.

Here it is important to note that Fiddes' argument tries to avoid any implications of a violent God, albeit that he presents with some approval the ideas of expiation—though not propitiation of a vengeful God. Consistently Fiddes suggests that Christians saw the death of Jesus as *like* a sacrifice, in the sense that Jesus' death could be seen as a gift of God, the offering of expiation. While this somewhat blunts the critique, it might still be argued that it still implies that the gruesome death of an innocent man is somehow a good thing.

This line of criticism is greatly strengthened, however, in an extraordinary new study which suggests that the central focus of Christian faith and theology upon the atoning death of Jesus was actually a development that took place almost one thousand years after the event. In the opening words of this study,

---

[33] Ibid., 87.
[34] J. Denny Weaver, *The Nonviolent God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2013), 65.

Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Ann Parker say, "It took Jesus a thousand years to die."[35] In this work, Brock and Parker argue that late in the first Christian millennium the focus of spirituality and theology shifted from celebration of life with God in the present world, itself created and redeemed by God through the death *and resurrection* of Jesus, to a much more specific focus upon the death of Jesus as a source of atonement. It is noteworthy that all the models of atonement discussed earlier were articulated after the first millennium, including Abelard's, which can be seen as a form of resistance to the newly developed stress upon the cross as atoning sacrifice—though it has to be acknowledged that atonement theology is clearly evident in much earlier periods, such as the works of Augustine, for instance.

Brock and Parker suggest that the Black Death plagues and the Crusades had a crucial part to play in the need for a different theology of death, offering meaning to the early and gruesome deaths experienced in the plague and providing a spiritual significance to the sacrificial deaths of Christians in the Crusades.[36] In effect, these soldiers of Christ were entering into his death and receiving salvation through that sacrifice. Brock and Parker undertook extensive research into Christian art throughout all of Christian Europe and found that there are virtually no representations of the cross prior to this period. On the other hand, with the development of this new emphasis on atonement theology, an impressive number of works were created, feeding the imagination of the faithful. Furthermore, it was at this time that new liturgies for the Eucharist were written and mandated, expressing this theology, with a stress upon the death of Jesus as a victim, "a pure victim, a holy victim, an unspotted victim", as the Carolingian liturgy stated, inviting believers to hope and pray that their own lives and deaths might also have such significance.[37]

While there might be some objections to the sweeping nature of Brock and Parker's conclusions, their argument has considerable impact. The issue that arises for our present consideration is, then, to consider the nature and means of God's salvation in the present. Brock and Parker have made a strong case for re-considering the way atonement theology has claimed a central place for the death of Jesus, largely without reference to his life, his message of creative life with God in the present, against the powers of "empire". Their understanding of the Christian faith as grounded in the resurrection of Jesus and an affirmation of God's creation, invites us to re-consider the nature and foundation of our life with God and thus also to a radical re-appraisal of atonement theology. This brings us back to Paul Fiddes' fundamental question: How can an event in the distant past effect salvation for us today?

At the beginning we noted two critical aspects of our enquiry: the meaning and the means of salvation. We have argued that in several ways, especially with the idea of a journey of forgiveness, Fiddes' argument becomes too narrowly focussed on the problem of guilt, as if this is the definitive element in the human predicament. In the wider reaches of his argument, however, and especially through its strong emphasis on the need for "present salvation", having its impact and power in the present experience of individuals and communities today, we can find a corrective to this limitation. In fact the corrective involves all of the

---

[35] Rita Nakashima Brock and Rebecca Anne Parker, *Saving Paradise: How Christianity Traded Love of This World for Crucifixion and Empire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2008), ix.
[36] Ibid., Chapters 10-12.
[37] Ibid. See particularly 233-253.

elements Fiddes himself identified in his discussion of the human predicament. Our problem, theologically named "sin", is much more than a matter of moral misdeeds needing forgiveness. We are alienated from ourselves and our potential. We fall short of the meaning and significance our lives and communities could have. Even if our lives are comfortable and individually fulfilled, we may so easily succumb to self-satisfaction or indeed selfishness in the face of global poverty. Furthermore, our lives are threatened by ecological disaster on a grand scale, much of it the result of our mistreatment of the earth and our pretense that we are in fact the masters of the universe.

The good news offered to us in the biblical witness, however, is that God does not hold our sins against us. Nor will God stand aside and allow sin and suffering to destroy the creation. Rather, God is ever creatively working towards our redemption: offering us present salvation. If we are not appropriating God's salvation, that too indicates another dimension of our sin—our rebellious pride, in wanting some other form of salvation, perhaps through merit or favour. The converse reality, though, is that God's salvation is already available to us and here again we find helpful indications in Fiddes' thought as to what this actually means. The meaning and the means of salvation for us today is the work of the Spirit, enabling us to participate in God's new creation.

The invitation of the Gospel, then, is to participate in the trinitarian life of God, as Fiddes has later argued, to journey with God into the discovery not only of our sin and need of salvation but also to endure with God, in the creative and redemptive suffering and hope, until there is indeed present salvation.

PAUL, THE TRINITY, AND CONTEMPORARY TRINITARIAN DEBATES

CHRIS TILLING

St Mellitus College

London, England

"The twentieth century" so write Christophe Chalamet and Marc Vial, "can be seen as the century of a rediscovery of trinitarian thought".[1] As they point out, this had led to a number of controversies, including the definition of "personhood" and the relationship between the "economic" and the "immanent" Trinity. But perhaps most importantly, the latest debates concern the claim that this rediscovery presents nothing other than "thoroughgoing departures from the older tradition, rather than revivals of it". This, at least, is the judgment of Stephen Holmes.[2] It is a damning assessment of so-called "social" or "relational" models of the Trinity, which speak of divine ontology in terms of relationality, movement, dance etc., i.e., those that resist "static" notions of Being parsed in terms of a doctrine of divine simplicity. Hence, the recent Counterpoints book, *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, which gave space for representatives in this debate to discuss matters head on, is an important service to the wider ecclesial and theological community.[3] In this volume, Paul Fiddes presents a defence of the "relational" model of the Trinity, precisely that which Holmes claims is an illegitimate development away from the tradition.[4] In the following I will reflect on a number of concerns in this debate as they emerge from the perspective of the writings of the apostle Paul. I begin by discussing Paul and the Trinity in dialogue with Wesley Hill's recent monograph of the same name. In light of this, I present a few reflections on this contemporary theological debate, largely by critiquing aspects of Holmes' thesis from the perspective of Pauline exegesis.

FROM PAUL AND THE TRINITY TO PAUL'S TRINITY

I know of only one modern monograph dedicated specifically to Paul's writings and the Trinity, namely Wesley Hill's important and lucid recent work.[5] It will thus be necessary to engage with his claims in the following. I do this as a launch pad for engaging Paul's letters more inductively, precisely because in so doing, I will argue, light will be shed on the debates noted above.

---

[1] Christophe Chalamet and Marc Vial, "Introduction," in *Recent Developments in Trinitarian Theology: An International Symposium*, ed. Christophe Chalamet and Marc Vial (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 3.

2. Stephen R. Holmes, *The Holy Trinity: Understanding God's Life*, Christian Doctrines in Historical Perspective (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012), xvi.

3. Jason S. Sexton, ed., Stephen R. Holmes, et al., *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, Counterpoints: Bible & Theology (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2014).

4. "[T]he doctrine of the Trinity that we have witnessed in recent decades in fact misunderstands and distorts the traditional doctrine so badly that it is unrecognizable" (Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*, xv).

5. Wesley Hill, *Paul and the Trinity: Persons, Relations, and the Pauline Letters* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2015).

— § 1.1. —

Hill's monograph claims that Pauline scholarship has become locked in an anti-Trinitarian agenda. Indeed, his concern is difficult to deny. Any suggestion that Paul could be fruitfully understood in Trinitarian categories is likely to be seen as problematic anachronism. So the spirit of the academy of biblical studies might say "Thrust such categories onto Paul and one will inevitably do violence to the interpretative task. Such attempts are worthy for church Bible study groups, perhaps, but let's keep them out of the academy"! Hence, so argues Hill, modern scholarship ignores the Trinity and concerns itself, instead, with the question of Christology, particularly to what extent that Christology is fully divine or not. Further, to answer this in a non-Trinitarian manner, a new term, "monotheism", has been inserted into the debate. Christology is then measured on a vertical scale: how high (or low) can one place Paul's Christology in terms of this (Jewish) monotheistic given?

Such is the lot of biblical scholars reading Paul, Hill argues. Does he have evidence? Plenty! So some scholars, as Hill notes, suggest that Paul's Christ cannot be allowed full divinity precisely because of the "restraining factor" of Jewish monotheism.[6] Others are confident that Paul's Christ is indeed divine, and in this camp he notes the contributions of Hurtado and Bauckham.[7] The problem is that both of these groups of scholars have adopted a rather inadequate interpretative paradigm, one which is too concerned with "vertical" metaphors alone (how "high" Paul's Christology is or not). So he asserts (not entirely fairly) that "all" of these interpreters "share a concern to distance their reconstructions of New Testament christology from later Trinitarian theology".[8] Instead, and this is Hill's constructive claim, the Trinitarian categories of "relations" offers a more fruitful and exegetically helpful perspective.

To make this claim, Hill draws on suggestive hints in the scholarship of Keck, Rowe and Watson,[9] all of which approve of a relational approach to Paul's language. But this, Hill thinks, is the first monograph

---

6. Among others, Hill notes James F. McGrath, *The Only True God: Early Christian Monotheism in Its Jewish Context* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009), the various works of Dunn (e.g., James D.G. Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?: The New Testament Evidence* [London: SPCK, 2010]), and Maurice Casey, "Monotheism, Worship and Christological Developments in the Pauline Churches," in *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism*, eds C.C. Newman, J.R. Davila, and G.S. Lewis (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 214–33.

7. See, e.g., Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), and Richard J. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008).

8. Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 18. He is also not fair to accuse these examplars of scholarship as concerned to discuss Christology as something "discussable, in principle, in relative isolation" (23). None of them pretend to be able to say something about Christology without keeping God-language in mind. This is especially true for Bauckham, who understands the contours of his Christology precisely in terms of faith in God, and vice-versa (see Richard J. Bauckham, *God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament* [Carlisle: Paternoster, 1998]). It is also not the case that an analysis of Christology on a vertical axis *necessarily* leads one to sideline relational matters, namely the interrelation of Father, Son and Spirit (as I understand him to argue in his first chapter). I respond by claiming that it depends entirely how the question is answered and how inductively one treats the interrelation of themes in Paul's texts. For my own part, and as we shall see again in what follows, I make claims about divine Christology in Paul (in ways he may align with Bauckham and Hurtado) precisely by making Paul's God and Spirit language vital to the task.

9. See, e.g., L.E. Keck, "Toward the Renewal of New Testament Christology," *NTS* 32 (1986): 362–77, Francis Watson, "The Triune Divine Identity: Reflections on Pauline God-Language, in Disagreement with J.D.G. Dunn," *JSNT* 80 (2000): 99–124, C. Kavin Rowe, "Biblical Pressure and Trinitarian Hermeneutics," *ProEccl* 11, no. 3 (2002): 295–312.

of its kind. Hill will understand Christology not in isolation, but in relation to God and Spirit language, all as mutually interpreting terms. This is not to say that he seeks to find the Trinity in Paul. He rather adopts Trinitarian categories to shed light on Paul's letters. This entails showing that "each [divine] person is only identifiable by means of reference to the others".[10] The contours of this project are not, therefore, idle theological anachronism. He presents what he considers to be "self-consciously *historical* readings" of Paul,[11] in such a way that (laudably) brings theology back into conversation with such exegesis.

Before he begins his exegetical work, Hill overviews the way relationality has informed Trinitarian discourse, both in "classical theism" on the one hand, climaxing in Aquinas' "subsistent relations", and in modern proposals on the other, which emphasise in very different ways more "personalist" ontologies (Zizioulas, Moltmann, Jenson etc.).[12] It is rather odd that Hill only makes extended use of classical Trinitarian discourse in his exegetical work,[13] which conceives of "relation" in restricted terms. Classical Trinitarian language uses the term as something "primarily logical, not personal", as Holmes summarises.[14] The single and limited exception to understanding God in strictly simple terms, is to understand the names "Father", "Son" and "Spirit" as *relations of origin*, so the argument goes.[15] And this is the classical Trinitarian heritage which Hill seems to endorse (his second supervisor was Lewis Ayres!) over against what has unhappily been called "social Trinitarianism".[16] But although Hill does speak of Paul's "Father" and "Son" in terms of origin, this only happens a couple of times,[17] and not at all in terms of the Spirit.[18] Simply put, Hill wants to say more in his exegesis about the relations of Father, Son and Spirit than can be reduced to matters of origin.[19] (The strategy of "redoublement" does, however, draw much energy from classical Trinitarian distinctions. He successfully shows this in chapters three and four.)

This leads, in chapter one, to an analysis of texts which understand God in relation to Jesus (Rom. 4:24; 8:11). He chooses these texts because he thinks that they involve "identity descriptions" of God in relation to Jesus. So, for example, God is identified, described, "picked out from the crowd" as "the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead".[20] This leads Hill to reject the use of the term "monotheism", as

---

10. Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 44.

11. Ibid., 45.

12. As noted by Hill. See, e.g., Robert W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology. Volume 1. The Triune God* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom: The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1981), J.D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), etc.

13. See his revealing comment in Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 103–4 n.89.

14. Stephen R. Holmes, "Classical Trinity: Evangelical Perspective," in *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Jason S. Sexton (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2014), 38.

15. On all of this, see Holmes, "Classical," 37; Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*, 199–200.

16. See his reference to Bruce Marshall's "penetrating critique of the twentieth-century trinitarian 'renewal'" (Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 36 n.124).

17. Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 77, 111.

18. As far as I could see.

19. Here I would note, as examples, his exegesis of 1 Cor. 15:24-28, which speaks of "particular actors and agents" (130). Even more telling, see his analysis of Paul's language relating to the Spirit and his role in resurrection (135-163). On all of this, see now the strong emphasis on personal language in Matthew W. Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and Spirit in New Testament and Early Christian Interpretations of the Old Testament* (Oxford: OUP, 2015). His person-centred exegetical procedure portrays Father, Son, and Spirit not simply in terms of procession of origin, but in terms of their "relentless affection and concern for one another" (7).

20. See Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 54.

deployed by the likes of Dunn, as the "larger explanatory category" in light of which Christology is assessed.[21] Rather, for Paul "there is no monotheism without christology".[22]

In chapters three and four, Hill examines passages that portray Jesus in relation to God. Here he examines Philippians 2:6-11, 1 Corinthians 8:6 and 15:24-28. These texts obviously require that Hill attend to the asymmetry in the relation between God and Jesus. God sends and himself isn't sent. Jesus is sent and doesn't send (the Father). These "subordination" texts (or subordination elements within these texts, as with Phil. 2:6-11), often seen as problematic for "high Christology" proponents, are tackled by Hill in a very different way. Using the Trinitarian strategy of "redoublement" (as termed by Ghislain Lafont), Hill takes seriously passages in Paul that subordinate the Son to the Father. These are not texts to be apologetically explained away, but are to be read in terms of the (Trinitarian) distinction between Father and Son. At least this is the first stage of reading. Given that Paul also uses language that implies the full divinity of Jesus, something Hill ties particularly to the title κύριος,[23] there is also a second reading, one which sees Christ as fully divine. So we end up with Christ as distinct from the Father, but fully divine. Orthodox Trinitarian categories here facilitate a better appreciation of the full scope of Pauline language, without having to minimise or demote anything.

The upshot is that, for Paul: "God and Jesus are identified with one another at the level of the shared divine name κύριος and yet they are also irreducibly distinguished from one another in that God is πατήρ and Jesus Christ is the raised, exalted one."[24] In chapter five, Hill turns attention to the Spirit in relation to God and Jesus. Taking his cue from Rowe's excellent essay, he analyses "the relational determination of the Spirit's identity".[25] Hill argues that the Spirit "derives 'his' character from God and Jesus".[26] In 1 Corinthians 12:3 and Galatians 4:4-6, Hill understands Paul to say that the Spirit mediates the presence of the risen Lord Jesus. In this way the Spirit is identified. Via analysis of Romans 1:3-4 and 8:9-11, Hill further maintains that the identity of God and Jesus in the economy of salvation is only specifiable by the Spirit. The sonship of Jesus, and so the fatherhood of God, is "constituted in and through the Spirit's role in raising Jesus".[27] I would quibble with some of his exegetical judgments at this point as I remain convinced by Fatehi's reading of 2 Corinthians 3:17. Plus, I think some of his arguments claim more than the texts allow.[28] But either way, there is much to enjoy in this chapter, and Hill proceeds into a justified broadside against talk of Pauline "binitarianism". Such language is "drastically misleading",[29] a conclusion with which we strongly agree (as we shall see below).

---

21. Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 71.
22. Ibid., 72.
23. See Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 112.
24. Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 133.
25. C. Kavin Rowe, "The Trinity in the Letters of St. Paul and Hebrews," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Trinity*, ed. Matthew Levering and Gilles Emery O.P. (Oxford: OUP, 2011), 50.
26. Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 137.
27. Ibid., 138.
28. Mehrdad Fatehi, *The Spirit's Relation to the Risen Lord in Paul: An Examination of Its Christological Implications* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 289–308.
29. Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 165.

In all of this, Hill hopes that his approach will shed fresh exegetical light on Paul. Arguably, Hill has succeeded in showing that certain Trinitarian categories are entirely appropriate for a better understanding of Paul's letters, and the nature of Paul's rhetoric concerning God, the Spirit and Jesus. He rightly notes that all such language overlaps and that to analyse, for example, Christology in isolation from pneumatology, would be to distort Paul. He is right that Paul's God-language is profoundly shaped by Jesus Christ. In all of this, Hill's monograph is an important contribution to contemporary Pauline studies.

I also found his deployment of "redoublement" helpful, albeit with one caveat. Namely, although he thinks that his strategy moves beyond the Pauline scholarly puzzlement at dialectic, where Pauline scholars, we are told, make "no attempt ... to press for a deeper coherence",[30] I think he overestimates the explanatory power of the solution he proposes. After all, it is not that redoublement solves the issues conceptually. The paradox is transferred into a particular and well-worked out idiom (involving language such as *prosopon*, *persona*, *hypostasis* and *subsistentia* on the one hand, and *ousia*, *substantia*, and *natura* on the other), but classical Trinitarian theology, at least, remained humble about its precision at this point. So Augustine stated: "[T]he formula three persons has been coined, not in order to give complete explanation by means of it, but in order that we might not be obliged to remain silent."[31] As another example, note that for Gregory of Nazianzus, too, an understanding of the unity of God and the distinctions within God were not metaphysical solutions or developed doctrines. In a sense, the matter remained mystery, known only to those "purified souls to whom the Trinity may make revelation" (*Or.* 23.11).[32]

What is more, given that Hill describes his task as "self-consciously *historical*" such that at "no point will a trinitarian conclusion be allowed to 'trump' what Paul's texts may be plausibly shown to have communicated within his own context",[33] some explanation remains outstanding. The question thus remains, How did *Paul* manage to hold this paradox given that he did not operate with the later philosophical distinctions involved in the language noted above? I agree that Trinitarian theology helps *us* to comprehend these texts together, as a retrospective strategy. But if no "trumping" is to happen, other routes may help as partial explanations. Precisely this is a matter I explored in an earlier publication which allowed me to affirm the presence of subordination texts without needing to explain them away.[34] And this was a proposal made more consciously on Paul's terms; it was "historical" exegesis, but in ways that correspond, I hope naturally and responsibly, with later doctrinal formulations.

This is to suggest that historical concerns involved in critical exegesis may not have been allowed enough breathing room in Hill's analysis. This is suggested also by Hill's reasonably sparse engagement with the variety of relevant and important second Temple Jewish literature. This is seen most poignantly in what

---

30. Ibid., 122.
31. *De Trinitate* 5.9.10. See also his comments relating both to Paul and our necessary posture of humility in 1.5.8.
32. On this, see Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 223.
33. Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 45.
34. See Chris Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2015²), 254–57. In a nutshell, I exploit appreciation for Paul's *relational* epistemology. This makes room for precisely such paradox in Paul without it becoming an incoherence Paul would recognise as such. This resonates, then, with at least the posture of Gregory of Nazianzus, noted above.

Hill completely ignores. So he (I think rightly) argues that Christ's distinction from God as Father does not mean the full divinity of Christ is jeopardised. But as Hill knows, precisely this distinction has been exploited by those who use the category of second Temple Jewish agency figures to understand Christ in Pauline terms. In many Jewish texts an exalted intermediary agent of some sort of heavenly glory reigns alongside God, bears God's name, receives worship and so on. Likewise, in this Jewish milieu, out of which Paul writes, Jesus Christ is in many ways much like one of these agents alongside God. A legitimate historical question thus remains: why would a Trinitarian conceptuality be preferred over this Jewish language of divine agency? Hill does not answer this. Or why, as a historically plausible proposal, should one accept that certain isolated passages be deemed "identity descriptions" (such as Rom. 4:24)? Hill needs to do more work to demonstrate that these exegetical decisions are not arbitrary. Other scholars could equally make appeal to different, potentially theologically difficult, passages as "identity descriptors", such as those which can be read to state that God isn't simply Christ's Father, but also his *God*.[35] Precisely these questions are explored by those exegetes from whom Hill wishes to distance himself (Hurtado, Bauckham, Dunn etc.). In other words, Hill needs to be careful that he does not allow his (appropriate) hermeneutical lens to diminish the vitality of very real and important historical concerns.

What is more, I was a little concerned to read the argument proffered in his second chapter, which suggests that deploying Trinitarian categories refutes those who think "the primary question [is] how to understand the exalted status of Jesus within a continuing affirmation of Jewish monotheism".[36] Instead, so his argument runs, better to focus on how God-language in Paul is indeed shaped by Christ. I accept this point to a degree.[37] A retrospective hermeneutic, as exemplified particularly in apocalyptic readings of Paul, is the most promising both exegetically and theologically, in my view.[38] However, there is a sense in which the givenness of Jewish monotheism cannot be so neatly brushed aside, as it effectively is in Hill's analysis. Its explication is a necessary (though of course not sufficient) historical task for understanding Paul. Imagine how different things would look if Paul's Jewish background was polytheistic! Understanding the role of the divine actors in Paul requires some accounting of his milieu. More than that, by keeping the general contours of Paul's God-language in mind, and our understanding of this in hermeneutical conversation with wider themes in Jewish monotheism, crucial light is shed on the depth and colour of Paul's language about God, Christ and the Spirit, a point to which we will return later. The concerns relating to epistemology in the "apocalyptic" school can be honoured in terms of a more complex, oscillating portrayal of hermeneutical

---

35. See, e.g., Rom. 15:6 (τὸν θεὸν καὶ πατέρα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), 2 Cor. 1:3 (Εὐλογητὸς ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστου), 11:31 (ὁ θεὸς καὶ πατὴρ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ). Naturally, scholars such as Dunn draw attention to these passages (e.g., James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 254).

36. Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 18–19.

37. And to the degree I do so, I accept it happily. This is one reason why I published Chris Tilling, ed., *Beyond Old and New Perspectives on Paul: Reflections on the Work of Douglas Campbell* (Eugene, Or.: Cascade, 2014).

38. See the seminal essay by J. Louis Martyn, "Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages: 2 Corinthians 5.16," in *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 89–110.

realities.[39] All of this is to suggest that there are more vigorous ways to bring historical exegesis and theology together. Indeed, and to put things as sharply as possible. Hill presents an analysis of Paul by means of trinitarian categories. And he does shed a good deal of light of matters. However, we are a long way from understanding *Paul's* trinitarianism, a matter to which we will attend below.

A final bone of contention is to suggest that by attending to Trinitarian relations in such straightforward terms (the relations between Son, Father and Spirit), there is a danger that the nature of Paul's own language will be sidelined, ignored or underestimated. Of course, Hill needed to decide on a particular focus, draw lines around his research to stop it becoming unwieldy. He needed to make judgment calls and focus on some passages, not others, certain themes and not everything at once. But I submit that to focus on just the relations between the divine actors is to potentially obscure matters when speaking about Paul and the Trinity. Summarising the import of Trinitarian theology, Hill states: "each [divine] person is only identifiable by means of reference to the others".[40] There is a sense in which this may be formally true, but for Paul, each divine person is identifiable, known, spoken about and confessed, also in terms of that Spirit animated and graced *human relationship* with God and Christ. Exegetical issues will otherwise be overlooked.

Indeed, these are also the dynamics inherent in the classical Trinitarianism Hill makes recourse to with such skill. As examples, I can draw attention to the foregrounding of a particular account of epistemology in recent expositions of Gregory of Nazianzus and Augustine. Of the former, Beeley writes:

> In Gregory's view, Christian theology involves and represent a dynamic, lived relationship between God and the theologian, and so it begins not with abstract information about God—as if this could ever be acquired neutrally—but with the transformation of the theologian within the horizon of God's presence and activity in the world, as it is recognized and celebrated in the life of the church. It is a common refrain in Gregory's work that spiritual progress and right belief unavoidably go together … it is impossible to separate Gregory's doctrine of God from his doctrine of the means by which God is known.[41]

Interestingly, Gregory derives some of these commitments from his reading of *Paul*.[42] As Beeley expounds at length, for Gregory the knowledge of the Trinitarian God does not come about by means of abstract doctrinal comprehension. It is about participation, "a form of knowledge that comes by faith and service to God".[43]

In *De Trinitate*, Augustine explains how theology approaches its "object", how humans may speak about God as Trinity. Luigi Gioia summarises a key strand in Augustine's answer:

> God does not make himself known in the Old and in the New Testament primarily through the communication of the set of propositional truths about himself—even though, of course, these are

---

39. Chris Tilling, "Campbell's Apocalyptic Gospel and Pauline Athanasianism," in *Beyond Old and New Perspectives on Paul: Reflections on the Work of Douglas Campbell*, ed. Chris Tilling (Eugene, Or.: Cascade, 2014), 69–72.
40. Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 44.
41. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 64.
42. See Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 69.
43. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus*, 229.

part of the process of revelation—but through the creation of the covenant, the *relation* with his creatures which involves all their existence, all their beings … Thus, knowledge of God and (covenantal) relation with him are coextensive and mutually conditioning.[44]

Similarly, I submit that to more adequately portray Paul's rich proto-Trinitarianism[45] is to grasp wider themes coloured by the relation between Christ and his church,[46] between God and the members of the body of Christ, and these as animated and actualised by the Spirit.

The following is a defence of this claim, but it is written also with an eye on the debates outlined at the beginning. This is to say that developing my point here will simultaneously address the initial controversy outlined above relating to different visions of Trinitarian ontology. It does this by building on Hill's case, avoiding some of the potential weaknesses on the way. In particular, I wish to work more thoroughly with the scope of language in Paul's letters, as well as show greater respect for the historical task. This will allow great precision when discussing Paul in Trinitarian terms. For just as Hill is correct to claim that a Trinitarian grammar, one which he carefully defines, sheds light on Paul's God, Christ and Spirit language, so too is it the case that God the Father and the Son, both by the Spirit, are known in such a way that irreducibly involves *human relation* with God and Jesus by the Spirit. Otherwise put, to know this God is to be in relationship with God. And this, we shall see, is of no small significance.

— § 1.2. —

Bearing these observations in mind, in the following I propose nine theses as crucial backbone for an alternative way of engaging with the question of Paul and the Trinity. This section will be shorter than it deserves as I have already detailed the main points to be here summarised in numerous publications.[47] It also needs to be stressed that the first three theses are formally provisional as depictions of second temple texts, for my point is to elucidate Paul's theology.

---

44. Luigi Gioia OSB, *The Theological Epistemology of Augustine's* De Trinitate, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: OUP, 2008), 4. For different emphases, see also Lewis Ayres, *Augustine and the Trinity* (Cambridge: CUP, 2010), 142–73.

45. I use this word with the prefix "proto" to acknowledge that Paul's theology is both worthy of the description "Trinitarian", but also that it is (obviously) not developed in terms of later, creedal formulations which parsed divine unity and distinctions with language-use alien to Paul. See also Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), 63 n.98.

46. Of course, to translate Paul's ἐκκλησία as "church" runs into problems. Needless to say, I do not wish to connote specific later ecclesial structures or suggest Paul is talking about a building. If my stubbornness in using the word "church" causes the reader to stumble, I suggest "Christ-assembly" as a good alternative (I credit Charles Puskas for this suggestion).

47. Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, especially 63–72, 76–90, 197–206, 228–40; Chris Tilling, "Ephesians and Christology," in *Christ, Spirit and the Church: Essays in Honour of Max Turner*, ed. Volker Rabens, Howard I. Marshall, and Cornelis Bennema (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011), 177–97; Chris Tilling, "Misreading Paul's Christology: Problems with Ehrmans' Exegesis," in *How God Became Jesus: The Real Origins of Belief in Jesus' Divine Nature. A Response to Bart Ehrman*, ed. Michael F. Bird (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2014), 134–50.

(1) The first thesis is that in second Temple Judaism, *God-language was expressed in terms of a broadly consistent and identifiable pattern*. As Bauckham has detailed, God is described in terms of his[48] relationship with all creation, such that God is spoken of as eternal and sovereign.[49] But this is not always obvious, and certain figures seem to blur these boundaries (e.g., Philo's *logos*) So more important, because it dominates second Temple material, is the way God is characterised as in relation *with humanity*, and particularly Israel of course. In this capacity, the usual themes that speak of this relation can be broken down in the following way:

- *Communication*. God is the one who speaks and addresses his people. God is, likewise, the recipient of human prayers. This is to say that there are channels of communication to and fro, between God and people.

- *Presence and activity*. God is active in the world in various ways.

- *Spirit*. This activity is the activity of the Spirit. It follows that all Spirit-language in second temple Judaism is God-language and speaks of "God's activity as he *relates* himself to his world, his creation, his people".[50]

- *"Absence"*. There remains, however, a sense in which God is "absent". The ambiguity involved in speaking of God as "not present" is inevitable. But it remains the case that God's absence can be expressed either existentially, or with spatial metaphors.[51]

- *Character*. God is characterised in typical ways, albeit with different emphases. God is faithful, just, wrathful, loving, etc.

- *Devotion*. The human response (and sometimes not just human!) is described with a variety of devotion-orientated language, a theme which encompasses the cult, but also necessary moves beyond the cult into the whole of life.[52] This devotion is typically expressed in ways that emphasise both complete and fervent commitment, and is contrasted with a familiar gamut of language (sin, idolatry, deception, and so on).

(2) It is to be noted that these broad brushstroke categories are consistently deployed in speaking of Israel's God. This corresponds with my second thesis, namely, the uncontroversial observation that within second temple Judaism, *faith in God was understood in relational terms*.[53] This is to say that God was not simply an object

---

48. I am sympathetic to concerns relating to the use of gender specific language, when speaking of God, but I will adopt the male pronoun in the following. On this, see now Paul R. Hinlicky, *Beloved Community. Critical Dogmatics After Christendom* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2015), 84–93.

49. See Bauckham, *God*, 1–22.

50. Fatehi, *Relation*, 303, italics mine, himself citing Lloyd Neve, *The Spirit of God in the Old Testament* (Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1972).

51. Samuel Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978).

52. Sven Petry, *Die Entgrenzung JHWHs: Monolatrie, Bilderverbot und Monotheismus im Deuteronomium, in Deuterojesaja und im Ezechielbuch* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

53. By "relational" I do not necessarily mean more than "[t]he way in which one person or thing is related to another" (Judy Pearsall and William R. Trumble, eds, *The Oxford English Reference Dictionary* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995], 1216). Depending on context, this could imply some kind of interpersonal relationship. Although Holmes may be correct that the fudging around this term on precisely this matter has created problems in modern theology, as I deploy it this will not be an issue (Holmes, "Classical," 28, 37–39).

of neutral discourse, but rather one to whom Israel was (or at least was meant to be) completely devoted. This comes to particularly poignant expression in the *Shema* (which I take to mean at least Deut. 6:4-9, not just 6:4), and its reception.[54] Waaler's study of the reuse of the *Shema* and the First Commandment in first century culture rightly claims that "to know that 'God is the only God' or that 'he is one' implies that one *relates* to one God only".[55] MacDonald's important study of the *Shema* in Deuteronomy argues that its confession is not about the non-existence of other gods. Rather, it emphasises the *personal and relational* in terms of the confession that YHWH is one. Monotheism, for MacDonald, is not simply "a truth to be comprehended". In Deuteronomy, it is "a relationship in which to be committed".[56] This seems consistent across second temple literature. Hence, the major Old Testament theologies arrange their material according to relational categories.[57]

(3) The third thesis follows from all of this: *the God-relation pattern is unique to God alone across the texts of second temple Judaism, and in this way the "transcendent uniqueness" of God was expressed and conceptualised.* Against those who speak of Jewish monotheism as either nonexistent, anachronistic, as "inclusive" (not "exclusive"),[58] and so on, Bauckham rightly speaks of the "uniqueness of YHWH that puts him in a class of his own", such that the one God of Israel was conceived, by Paul's Judaism, to be "transcendently unique".[59] However, this becomes clear only when the broader relational pattern is kept in mind, one evidenced to a usually greater than lesser extent across the texts of second temple Judaism that speak of God. There is another common mistake here, so let me be clear. This transcendent uniqueness of God was *not* based on monolatry, the exclusive worship (cultic or otherwise) of God alone. Worship was indeed part of the expression of that uniqueness, but the matter cannot be reduced to this. After all, the prophets would scorn such cultic worship (e.g., Isa. 58:1-14; Amos 5:21-27; Zech. 7-8) if it did not reach into the whole of life, as the *Shema* makes clear (see Deut. 6:4-9).[60] The transcendent uniqueness of God is seen in the God-relation language, which is only ever used with reference to the one God and not, in any second Temple texts, in terms of any intermediary figures, however exalted.[61]

---

54. I still find it difficult to believe that Ehrman does not reference the *Shema* once in Bart D. Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York: HarperCollins, 2014).

55. Erik Waaler, *The Shema and the First Commandment in First Corinthians: An Intertextual Approach to Paul's Re-Reading of Deuteronomy* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 202, italics mine.

56. Nathan MacDonald, *Deuteronomy and the Meaning of "Monotheism"* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 97.

57. Most obviously, one could mention Walter Eichrodt's two volume *Theology of the Old Testament* (Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament. Vol. 1*, trans. J. A. Baker [Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1961]; Walther Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament. Vol. 2*, trans. J. A. Baker [Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1967]), but in truth, these themes are in most comparable treatments.

58. I am referring to scholars such as William Horbury, Margaret Barker, and Peter Hayman. See Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, 17–19, for discussion and references.

59. Richard J. Bauckham, "Biblical Theology and the Problems of Monotheism," in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*, eds Craig Bartholomew, et al. (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004), 210–11.

60. Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, 60–61.

61. See Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, 196–233, for a substantiation of this claim in relation to three texts which supposedly problematise the transcendent uniqueness of the one God.

(4) *These three theses, which clearly correspond to one another, also find expression together in Paul's language relating to God.* Please note that in justifying this fourth thesis, I do not intend the following references to be exhaustive, but only illustrative.[62]

- *Communication.* We read that God speaks (2 Cor. 4:6; 6:1), and humans pray to God (Rom. 1:9-10; 10:1; 15:30; 2 Cor. 11:13; 13:7; Phil 1:3-4; 1 Thess. 3:10-13).

- *Presence and activity.* God is active (Rom. 4:17; 8:9; 9:16; 11:23; 13:1-2; 1 Cor. 1:29; 2:12) in Paul's mission (Rom. 14:20; 1 Cor. 2:4; 3:6; 2 Cor. 2:17; 3:4-6; 4:7; 6:7; 12:19; 13:4; 1 Thess. 3:11-13), in the church (1 Cor. 3:16; 7:24; 12:18, 24, 28; 14:25; 2 Cor. 6:16; 9:8, 14; Gal. 3:5; Phil. 1:6; 2:13; 4:19), in the church's worldly situations (1 Cor. 10:13), and in individuals (Rom. 9:16-18; 2 Cor. 8:16).

- *Spirit.* This presence and activity is spoken of also in terms of the Spirit (Rom. 5:5; 8:9; Gal. 3:5).

- *"Absence".* There is, however, a sense in which God is not fully present in the way he will be in the *eschaton* (1 Cor. 13:12; 15:28; 2 Cor. 4:18).

- *Character.* God is characterised in typical ways, as faithful (2 Cor. 1:18), loving (Rom. 5:5), wrathful (Rom. 5:9), gracious (Rom. 5:15), wise (Rom. 16:27), acting with forbearance and patience (Rom. 2:4), and so on.

- *Devotion.* It is expected that people serve, are slaves of and belong to God (Rom. 1:9; 6:22; 1 Cor. 3:9). They boast in God (Rom. 2:17; 5:11; 1 Thess. 1:9), know God (Rom. 1:19, 28; 1 Cor. 15:34; 2 Cor. 2:14; 10:6), love God (8:28; 1 Cor. 8:2), fear God (Rom. 3:18; 2 Cor. 7:1), hope in God (Rom. 4:18; 8:20), believe in God (Rom. 4:17, 20-22, 24; Gal. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:8), believers have turned to God (1 Thess. 1:9); are 'alive to' God (Rom. 6:11; Gal. 2:19), live to please God (Rom. 8:8; Phil 4:18; 1 Thess. 2:4, 15; 4:1), present themselves to God (Rom. 6:13, 16; 12:1), praise God (Rom. 14:11), and are eschatologically accountability before God (Rom. 14:12) etc. Naturally, God is strongly associated with Paul's ultimate goals, motivations and aims: (Rom. 11:36; 2 Cor. 1:20; 5:13; Phil. 1:11; 2:11; 4:20). God-devotion language is contrasted in typical ways. The wicked do not know God (Rom. 1:21, 28), do not please God (Rom. 8:8), nor fear God (Rom. 3:18). They practise idolatry instead of turning to God (Rom. 1:25), and so on. This God-devotion language is, of course, expressed in a way that shows it was energetic and lively devotion. So Paul speaks of serving God in his spirit (Rom. 1:9), that tongues, which is a language spoken to God (1 Cor. 14:2, 28), is something Paul practises 'more than all of' the Corinthians (1 Cor. 14:18). Likewise, Paul regularly speaks of his constant, day and night praying to God (Phil. 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:2-3; 2:13; 3:10-13).

The above list corresponds, of course, to our first thesis. It also reflects a Pauline *redoublement* of the second thesis. Dunn notes that Paul's speech about God was "Jewish through and through",[63] which means here that it is a relationally accented faith in God. This is not to deny that "God" is decisively reshaped and

---

62. More exhaustive references can be found in Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, 236–39. I have also lifted, and lightly adjusted, some of the following from those pages.
63. Dunn, *Theology*, 29.

rethought around Jesus and the Spirit.[64] Nor is it to deny that Paul's hermeneutic effectively amounts to an apocalyptic or retrospective reshaping. But certain themes, and the shape of the whole, bears family resemblance to what we find in Paul. Dunn writes the following about knowledge of God in Paul:

> It is not merely a theoretical acknowledgement that theism is a viable intellectual position. To know God is to worship him ... to know God is to be known by him, a two-way relationship of acknowledgment and obligation (Gal. 4.9). As in the (Jewish) scriptures, the "knowledge of God" includes experience of God's dealings, the two-way knowing of personal relationship.[65]

So in 1 Corinthians 8, containing a key text in the hands of Hill for explicating the relationship between the Father and Jesus, Paul frames the whole in terms of this relational "monotheism". As Wright summarises:

> Paul responds to the claim to γνῶσις by insisting on the primacy of (not love in general, but) the Jewish-style allegiance to the one God ... The real *Gnosis*, Paul is saying, is not your *Gnosis* of God but God's *Gnosis* of you, and the sign of that being present is that one keeps the *Shema*: you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.[66]

Further, this is placed in a context which sets this relational commitment over against idolatry (1 Cor. 8:4-5). Similarly, in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, Paul writes of how the Thessalonian Christians "*turned to God* from idols, *to serve* a living and true God". The rejection of idolatry was here not merely the intellectual conception that idols did not exist, but involved the life of the new believer, with "turning" expressed in "serving". One could also refer to 2 Corinthians 6:16 and Galatians 4:8-9, among other passages, to make the same point, but I have done this elsewhere.[67] Paul's knowledge of God was expressed and therefore conceived in relational terms. To know God was to be in relationship with God. But it follows from this that God's "transcendent uniqueness" for Paul was likewise so expressed and conceptualised. It was not understood simply as the abstract denial of other gods. The denial took shape in an exclusive commitment to the one God over against all forms of idolatry and evil, and so this God-relation pattern is what conceptualised God as "transcendently unique".

(5) In light of all of this, the thesis I propose and defend in *Paul's Divine Christology* seems natural: In dozens and dozens of passages across his letters,[68] Paul uses language about Christ which shows precisely the same shape as that used to speak of (exclusive) faith in God, as noted above. For Paul, the Christ-relation can be portrayed as follows.

- *Communication*. Christ is prayed to and Christ speaks back (Rom. 10:9-13; 1 Cor. 16:22; 2 Cor. 10:18; 12:8-9; 13:3; 1 Thess. 3:11-13).

---

64. To use language unnervingly like that regularly deployed by N.T. Wright, especially in N.T. Wright, *Paul: Fresh Perspectives* (London: SPCK, 2005) and N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013).
65. Dunn, *Theology*, 47.
66. N.T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 127.
67. Tilling, *Paul's Divine Christology*, 70.
68. I will refer in the following only to some.

- *Presence and activity.* Christ is present and active in various ways (Rom. 1:7; 8:9-10; 14:4; 15:18-19, 29; 16:20; 1 Cor. 1:3; 3:5; 4:19; 7:17, 25; 16:17, 23; 2 Cor. 1:2; 2:10, 12; 3:3; 12:7-10; 13:3-5, 13; Gal. 2:20; 4:6; 6:18; Phil. 1:2, 19; 3:21; 1 Thess. 3:11-13; 5:28; Philem. 3, 25).

- *"Absence".* Christ is at the same time also strangely "absent" (1 Cor. 11:26; 15:23; 2 Cor. 5:6-8; Phil. 1:20-24; 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:17; 5:10, 23).

- *Spirit.* So Christ is present and active by the Spirit (Rom. 8:9-10; 15:18-19; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19).

- *Character.* Christ is characterised in ways that overlap considerably with his own, and other, Jewish God-talk (Rom. 8:35; 10:12; 14:4, 9; 11:27-30; 15:45; 2 Cor. 4:13; 5:14; 10:1; 13:5; Gal. 1:1, 11-12; 2:20; Phil. 1:8; 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:6).

- *Devotion.* Paul expresses devotion to Christ—which includes so-called "cultic worship", but also goes well beyond it—in striking, lively and consistent ways. Just as in Jewish God-language, this devotion is contrasted with certain themes such as sin, idolatry and the like (Rom. 1:5; 12:11; 14:6-9; 16:5; 1 Cor. 1:7 [cf. also Phil. 3:20]; 1:31; 2:2; 6:13, 16-17; 7:25-38; 8:12; 10:9, 20-22; 11:23-26, 30-32; 12:3; 15:19, 58; 16:18, 22; 2 Cor. 3:16-18; 4:4-5; 5:9-10, 15; 8:5, 19; 10:7; 10:17; 11:2-3; 12:7-10; Gal. 1:10; 2:20; 3:29; Phil. 1:20, 23; 2:6-11, 21; 3:1, 8; 1 Thess. 1:2-3; 3:8; 4:17; 5:10; Phile 6).

This pattern of data found across all of Paul's letters is what I call the Christ-relation. It is a pattern that I argue Paul would also have recognised as such (i.e., as a pattern) as it constitutes, to a rather greater than lesser extent, an existential reality in Paul's life. These themes are not merely a collection of loose, unrelated ideas. They are also regularly found together in single arguments in Paul's letters. So the fifth thesis is obvious: *the Christ-relation, and only the Christ-relation, has the same shape, same major themes and basic content as expressed in Jewish God-language, Paul's included.*[69]

(6) This corresponds with Paul's "way of knowing". The sixth thesis: *for Paul, (theological) knowledge can be expressed as relationship.* Just as faith in God was expressed and understood in relational terms for second temple Judaism and for Paul within that milieu (theses two and three above), it is a natural step to recognise that Paul's way of knowing theology and Christology, his theological epistemology, was likewise relational. Indeed, Dunn claims that "whereas in Greek thought the term ["to know"] characteristically denotes a rational perception, the Hebrew concept also embraced the knowing of personal relationship".[70] Dunn considers Paul to be an example of this "Hebrew" approach. More important is the precise study of Ian

---

69. Bearing in mind Alan Torrance's objection that Moltmann's understanding of worship is "rather Pelagian" (Alan J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion: An Essay on Trinitarian Description and Human Participation, with Special Reference to Volume One of Karl Barth's Church Dogmatics* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996], 310–11), I do not mean to repeat the same mistake by implying that Paul's Christ-relation is likewise some kind of Pelagian basis for theology, as if it all depends on humans and the purity of their devotion. For Paul, relation to God and Christ is and remains a gift of sheer grace, one made possible only because of Christ's faithfulness to death and eternal life at the right hand of the Father (see, e.g., Rom. 6:4-5; 8:29-39; 15:17-18; Phil. 2:13).

70. Dunn, *Theology*, 46. A crude distinction between 'Greek' and 'Hebrew' should be challenged (Ian W. Scott, *Implicit Epistemology in the Letters of Paul: Story, Experience and the Spirit* [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006], 146–47), but exaggerations aside, there is salvageable truth in Dunn's claim.

Scott, as well as the collection of essays in the Healy and Parry edited volume.[71] So Scott submits that knowledge of God, for Paul, involves "a harmonious *relationship* with the Creator".[72] Mary Healy gets to the nub most profoundly when she argues that, for Paul*,* knowledge is expressed as relationship.[73]

Take 1 Corinthians 8 as an example again. Responding to the knowledge of the Corinthian "knowledgeable", Paul talks epistemology. They say "all of us possess knowledge" (8:1), so Paul responds by counterclaiming "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up". This is not to say that Paul was a crass anti-intellectual, as some have misread him at this point. No, for Paul goes on in the next verse to speak of a "necessary knowledge" (NRSV - δεῖ γνῶναι), knowing as one "ought to know" (NIV, ESV). In 8:3 this is further elucidated. That necessary knowing involves loving God and being "known by him". This strange formulation ("to know" as a passive perfect with God as subject) is likely to be understood in terms of the Hebrew word ידע (often glossed as "to know"). Schnabel explains: "ידע with God as subject means 'to attend to a person' and describes the special relationship between Jahwe and Israel or individual Israelites".[74] To speak of God's knowledge of humans is to speak of God's special relationship with his chosen people (see Amos 3:2, for example). Waaler therefore rightly concludes his study of 8:3 by maintaining that "to love God and to be known by God (1Cor 8:3) describes the personal relationship between the believer and God",[75] themes clearly echoed, of course, also in 8:6 where Paul draws on the language of the *Shema* to pursue his argument. It follows from all this that *Paul's Christ-relation is a form of knowing*. The Christ-relation is *Christology*.

(7) My seventh thesis is more combative. Many argue that divine agency figures are the key for understanding Christ in Paul's letters. Indeed, there is some obvious plausibility to this. Christ, Paul says, is at the right hand of God (Rom. 8:34). The Father is also "the God" of Jesus Christ (Rom. 15:6). And Christ can be spoken of with language you find associated with various exalted intermediary figures in Jewish literature around the time of Paul. They can bear the divine name, have passages from the Jewish Scriptures which speak about God applied to them, and they can even receive worship. So many will prefer this as the least anachronistic hermeneutic for grasping the significance of Christ, for Paul. However, when Paul's Christ-relation language as a whole is kept in mind, it becomes obvious that agency figures are less than helpful for understanding Paul's Christology. None of these intermediary figures, however exalted, are described in comparable fashion. None can be mapped on to the God-relation pattern. Indeed, even in those texts which say the grandest things about intermediary figures, it is the way God is spoken of *even in those texts* that corresponds best with Paul's Christ-relation. I offer a thought-experiment in *Paul's Divine Christology* at this point. Imagine Paul only had those texts (such as the *Similitudes of Enoch* and the *Life of*

---

71. Scott, *Epistemology*; Robin Parry and Mary Healy, eds, *The Bible and Epistemology: Biblical Soundings on the Knowledge of God* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007).
72. Scott, *Epistemology*, 150, italics mine.
73. Cf. the section title in Mary Healy, "Knowledge of the Mystery: A Study of Pauline Epistemology," in *The Bible and Epistemology*, eds Mary Healy, Robin Parry (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 142, as well as 145–56.
74. Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Der erste Brief des Paulus an die Korinther* (Wuppertal: R. Brockhaus Verlag, 2006), 442–43, translation mine.
75. Waaler, *Shema*, 351.

Adam and Eve) in front of him when developing his understanding of the significance of Christ. It would not be the exalted figures in these texts, such as Enoch's "Son of Man", but only the God-relation in these texts that would correspond with Paul's Christ. In other words, and this is my seventh thesis: *Paul's Christ-relation, seen in terms of all second temple literature, corresponds only with the Jewish God-relation.*

(8) My eighth and penultimate thesis makes a claim about Paul's Christology. It comes as something of a climax of the rest and presupposes them. *Paul's Christ-relation is Paul's divine Christology understood in precisely the way the "transcendent uniqueness" of the one God was expressed. It is the very Jewish way Paul speaks of Christ as "on the divine side of the line".* It is Paul's Athanasianism,[76] the kind of exegesis that corresponds with the later creedal language of *"homoousios* with the Father". As noted above, Hill claimed that "God and Jesus are identified with one another at the level of the shared divine name". My exegesis suggests that this formulation is not incorrect, just inadequate.

(9) But notice the crucial proto-Trinitarian point which constitutes the ninth thesis: *Both the God- and Christ-relations are actualised, made a relational reality by the Spirit, and only the Spirit.* Just as the Spirit is "God's activity as he *relates* himself to his world, his creation, his people" (Fatehi), so too is the Spirit the one who mediates the presence of the risen Lord.[77] This is why people in, say, Paul's Corinth could pray to Jesus and expect him to answer and order their lives. It is why Paul believed, according to 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13, that his prayers would mean that the risen Lord Jesus, who died and rose again in Jerusalem, would strengthen the hearts of certain Christians in Thessalonica, which is approximately 1,500 kilometres away! What makes God's relationship with his people real, and what makes Paul's Christology possible, is the Holy Spirit.

To recap the nine theses:

(1) In second temple Judaism, God-language was expressed in terms of a broadly consistent and identifiable pattern (God was present and active, devoted to, characterised in typical ways, communicated with, and so on)

(2) This Jewish faith in God was also understood in relational terms. It was never simply "a truth to be comprehended", but "a relationship in which to be committed".

(3) The God-relation pattern is unique to God alone across the texts of second temple Judaism, and in this way the "transcendent uniqueness" of God was expressed and conceptualised

(4) These three theses find expression together in Paul's language relating to God. I.e., we find this "transcendently unique" God-language pattern understood in relational terms.

(5) The Christ-relation, and only the Christ-relation, has the same shape, same major themes and basic content as expressed in the Jewish God-language pattern, Paul's included.

(6) For Paul, (theological) knowledge can be expressed as relationship. Paul's Christ-relation is a form of knowing. The Christ-relation is a Christology.

---

76. Tilling, "Campbell's Apocalyptic Gospel and Pauline Athanasianism."

77. On this, see also the work of my own *Doktorvater*, Max Turner, "'Trinitarian' Pneumatology in the New Testament? – Towards an Explanation of the Worship of Jesus," *AsTJ* 58, no. 1 (2003): 167–86.

(7) Paul's Christ-relation, seen in terms of all second temple literature, corresponds only with the Jewish God-relation.

(8) Paul's Christ-relation is Paul's divine Christology understood in precisely the way the "transcendent uniqueness" of the one God was expressed. It is the very Jewish way Paul speaks of Christ as "on the divine side of the line".

(9) Both the God- and Christ-relations are actualised, made a relational reality by the Spirit, and only the Spirit.

Armed with these theses, I finish by drawing out some implications for discussions relating to Paul and the Trinity, in dialogue with Hill. Due to space, I will limit myself to four points.

First, it needs to be stated that Hill is correct to draw attention to those passages in Paul which speak of the relations between Father, Son and Spirit as mutually identifying. Despite disagreements relating to exegetical details, the nine theses above suggests that Hill's procedure is basically correct. He has successfully illuminated the dynamic by which the three divine agents, in Paul, mutually constitute the divine identity. We also argue that the God- and Christ- relations are what they are because of the Spirit. We noted, too, that Paul's divine Christology is seen as such precisely by stressing the "transcendent uniqueness" of God in terms of a relational pattern. It is in these terms that the unity of the three agents is understood. The Father and Jesus are the only two subjects of the exclusively unique relation-pattern. The Spirit, for Paul, is likewise the unique and exclusive mediator of the personal presence of Father and the Son in this relationality.

Hill is quite correct to insist that care is needed here. For Paul, this isn't simply to say that Jesus is to be measured against some kind of pre-christological "monotheism". God, for Paul, is and always was "God the Father of the Lord Jesus". However, it is equally wrong to suggest that Paul's God-language can be understood in isolation from Jewish monotheistic concerns. Interpreting Paul involves a good grasp of the dynamics of Jewish monotheism, even when these concerns are reshaped or given different emphasis by Paul in light of Christ. Jewish monotheism remains a crucial element in Paul's cultural "encyclopaedia".[78] This is to suggest that, in practice, Hill's application of a Trinitarian hermeneutic was a little too one-sided. The interrelation of themes and concepts with Paul's letters took a backstage. When greater emphasis is placed on exegeting Paul himself as well as his own historical particularity, a number of further points can be developed.

To wit, and second, what emerges is the centrality of the epistemic conditions of Paul's proto-Trinitarianism. Recognising this leads to a greater appreciation for the mutuality between Paul and "the

---

78. The use of the word "encyclopaedia" in this context is informed by Umberto Eco. As Desogus remarks in his helpful essay: "the encyclopedia [in Eco's novel, *The Name of the Rose*] is akin to an immense library whose books accrue knowledge as it has been represented by cultures of different epochs. However, the library must not simply be considered an archive. The library is also a space wherein books talk with each other, generate intertextual links, and display possibilities of meaning that can be used in order to produce new signs" (Paolo Desogus, "The Encyclopedia in Umberto Eco's Semiotics," *Semiotica. Journal of the International Association for Semiotic Studies* 192, no. 1/4 [2012]: 501–2). See the suggestive comments also in Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2009), 990.

spirit of early Christian thought", as Robert Wilken would call it (particularly on the matter of the Trinity). We noted Gregory of Nazianzus and Augustine above, but many more could be brought into this discussion. Origen, "arguably the greatest and most influential theologian of the third century, whose teaching cast a large shadow on the trinitarian controversies of the fourth century",[79] contributed his best theology when operating within the same epistemic conditions. "To know", for Origen, meant to "'participate in something" or be "joined to something'", says Wilken.[80] Gregory the Great said that there "can be no knowledge of God without a relation between the knower and God".[81] Of course, one should also note that creedal language is framed in terms of "I/We believe". So Lash writes that the "threefold confession in the [Apostle's] Creed declares our *present* relationship with God".[82]

Precisely this aspect, it seems to me, is something Paul Fiddes has made uniquely central to his own articulation of Trinitarian doctrine in his illuminatingly titled monograph, *Participating in God*.[83] His discussions relating to Trinitarian dogma claims that it is not "the language of a spectator, but the language of a participant".[84] As we shall see in the next section, this informs Fiddes' ontological decisions.

Third, when things are framed as above with my nine theses, it becomes clear *why* a Trinitarian hermeneutic is a resource rather than a liability,[85] why, that is, Christ's distinction from the Father, in Paul's language, isn't better understood simply in terms of the divine agency of intermediary figures, exalted angels, Enoch's "Son of Man", and such like. The nine theses facilitate more sufficiently the theological task of assessing the appropriateness of a Trinitarian reading of Paul's language.

Fourth, by taking the historical particularity of Paul more seriously, we are better positioned to engage in more constructive discussion with Trinitarian theology. Rather than simply noting that the category of "relation" is important for both classical theism and 20th century, post-Barth, developments, Paul will indeed offer an adjudicating voice in contemporary debates. For just as Holmes notes, the development of the doctrine of the Trinity is "largely a lengthy exegetical debate".[86] This suggests a procedure. Fiddes rightly notes that, in speaking of the Trinity, we should "give primary written authority in making Christian doctrine to the Holy Scriptures".[87]

Indeed. So we turn, in our final section, to draw out the implications of this portrayal of Paul and the Trinity for a particular contemporary debate. I will proceed, all the while bearing in mind the work of Fiddes, by engaging the work of Holmes.

---

79. Khaled Anatolios, *Retrieving Nicaea: The Development and Meaning of Trinitarian Doctrine*, foreword by Brian E. Daley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2011), 16.
80. Robert Louis Wilken, *The Spirit of Early Christian Thought: Seeking the Face of God* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), 21. See also 12.
81. Cited in Wilken, *Early Christian*, 21.
82. Nicholas Lash, *Believing Three Ways in One God: A Reading of the Apostles' Creed* (London: Notre Dame Press, 1993), 30, italics his.
83. Paul S. Fiddes, *Participating in God: A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd, 2000).
84. Ibid., 37.
85. Cf. Hill, *Paul and the Trinity*, 31.
86. Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*, 54.
87. Paul S. Fiddes, "Relational Trinity: Radical Perspective," in *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Jason S. Sexton (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2014), 162.

THE APOSTLE PAUL IN DIALOGUE WITH RECENT TRINITARIAN DEBATES

Due to space limitations, my comments must now be more cursory and suggestive, rather than fully developed. And I am very conscious that I remain a humble *Neutestamentler* speaking into a highly specialised systematic theological domain.[88] With this in mind, it is not my concern to speak directly into the proposals developed by Fiddes. I do that tangentially. Instead, I will critically reflect on claims made by Holmes in three recent, important and learned publications.[89] Please also note that the following points are in a sense cumulative, rather than self-contained.

1. *Worship.* Holmes presents the popular theory that the emergence of Trinitarian dogma proceeded from the basis of monotheism, on the one hand, and the "New Testament worship" of Jesus Christ on the other.[90] But as I have stressed above, "worship" simply is not the defining feature of New Testament Christology, and it is high time that this misleading claim was given a decent burial. It is part of the matter, for sure, but only part. I suspect this judgment also informs Holmes' view of the Trinity as "necessarily and precisely useless" (out of a legitimate desire not to instrumentalise God's perfection), because he ties this directly to the human end to "glorify God".[91] However, as we have seen, for Paul and for the fathers, the knowledge of the Trinity involves *lives* of service and love. Worship is a part of that wider lived reality but not its sum total. Trinitarian faith is "a form of knowledge that comes by *faith and service to God*" (Gregory of Nazianzus). On this issue at least, it seems to me that Fiddes manages to hold the breadth of Christian participation in view, when speaking of the Trinity.[92]

2. *Scripture.* I must also register my concern that debates relating to the Trinity are moving not towards, but *away* from Scripture. A critique of Régnon's thesis, for example, is all well and good, and no doubt important. But although a correct reading of tradition is desirable, the tradition itself has always sought primarily to *exegete Scripture*. One need only read Augustine, or the Cappadocians, or Athanasius, or indeed any of the fathers, and one is confronted by page after page of Scripture citations, allusions and exegesis. Simply put, I do not see the same in Holmes (even though it is to his credit that he has a chapter on "the Trinity in the Bible" in *The Holy Trinity*). If Holmes' task was simply to describe the tradition, then this may not seem overly problematic. But he does intend to contribute towards contemporary theological conversations, as is made clear by his insistence that modern expositions of the doctrine of the Trinity "misunderstand" and "distort" the traditional doctrine "so badly that it is unrecognizable".[93] A profound

---

88. I.e., let me off lightly! Either way, it is surely best that we biblical scholars at least try to pursue these conversations, with humility, or biblical studies and systematic theology will unhappily continue to drift apart.
89. Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*; Holmes, "Classical"; Stephen R. Holmes, "Response: In Praise of Being Criticized," in *The Holy Trinity Revisited: Essays in Response to Stephen R. Holmes*, ed. Jason S. Sexton and Thomas A. Noble (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2015).
90. Holmes, "Classical," 31–34.
91. Ibid., 47.
92. Fiddes speaks of the Trinity in terms of a variety of life aspects in his pastoral account (Fiddes, *Participating*).
93. Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*, xv.

question that seems to be given too short thrift is to what extent the work of somebody like Fiddes represents good exegetical insight.

As noted in the first section above, I remain unconvinced that relations of origin best express the work Hill has undertaken in terms of the apostle Paul. He wants to say more about relations, and rightly so. Biblical exegesis is indeed hardly a friend of Holmes' portrayal of relations at this point. When presented with (I think clear) evidence in the New Testament of distinctions between the Father, Son and Spirit that go beyond distinctions of origin (Gethsemane, Rom. 8:26 etc.),[94] Holmes' responses effectively drive a wedge between the *logos asarkos* and the man Jesus of Nazareth.[95] But this move raises its own set of theological dangers. In particular, it leads to sundering God's Word from the life of Jesus Christ, a problem the Barthian tradition has seen most keenly.[96] This, in turn, creates a theological vacuum into which all manner of other "words" can gain access. Constructive theological proposals are more aware of the dangers involved here, it seems to me.

It is not, therefore, surprising to read the following revealing comment by Holmes in the response book to *The Holy Trinity*. He admits that "what we call 'the doctrine of the Trinity' is not a biblical idea, and is not defensible exegetically".[97] Of course, he means that processions and such like are part of an interpretative construct and are not directly biblical. But either way, his rather shocking point hangs ominously in the air: the Trinity is "not a biblical idea". This kind of language is more than a little bit worrying, for the result is to effectively rend biblical studies and systematic theology apart precisely when open conversation is most necessary (as the fathers modelled for us). The danger is clearly that it might result in dislocating the Word of God from constructive theological work.[98] If Holmes may respond to any of his critics with "the tradition says..."[99] I must insist that we be allowed to respond, "but Scripture says...and this tradition, in order to continue the tradition, needs to place itself continually under the judgment of God's Word".[100] I realise that this claim involves a number of unspoken theological commitments, but space is limited so I cite Donald Wood who, in dialogue with Barth, writes: "The church is obedient to the Word of God in scripture alone; responsible to the church fathers and to the confessions; and neutral with regard to all other voices".[101] If this is agreed in principle (is it?), then where is it in practice?

---

94. See Thomas H. McCall, "Relational Trinity: Creedal Perspective," in *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Jason S. Sexton (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2015), 117–27.

95. Stephen R. Holmes, "Response to Thomas H. McCall," in *Two Views on the Doctrine of the Trinity*, ed. Jason S. Sexton (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2014), 142.

96. On all of this, reference must, of course, be made to Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1969–80), II/2. I am aware of the "Princeton debate" between McCormack and Hunsinger. I suspect that Hunsinger misrepresents McCormack on these issues in his most recent, slightly less than irenic volume (George Hunsinger, *Reading Barth with Charity: A Hermeneutical Proposal* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2015]).

97. Holmes, "Response," 140.

98. By "Word" here, I do not mean simply "Scripture" (see Fiddes, "Relational," 162–63!). But neither can one drive a firm wedge between the Word and the words. At the very least to do so would constitute a firm break from tradition.

99. Please note how often the phrase "the tradition" is used in Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*. Nineteen on my count.

100. If this is not done, both the human aspect involved the task of dogmatics will be suppressed, and the sovereignty of God's Word will be compromised, which means God will cease to be God in theological discourse. On this, see now Christine Helmer, *Theology and the End of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 59–88.

101. Donald Wood, *Barth's Theology of Interpretation*, Barth Studies (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 161.

3. *Paul and the "transcendent uniqueness" of God.* In light of the previous exegetical section we can see that for Paul the divine unity is not simply about the word "oneness" understood in terms of essence.[102] So what constitutes the unity of Father, Son and Spirit? The exegetical evidence suggests a relational dynamic, a transcendent uniqueness which is conceived not simply as an objective truth "out there" for humans to analyse "objectively". It is rather a pattern of life, love and commitment, a concrete and dynamic relational pattern which speaks of God and Christ as related to by the Spirit. Of course, much of this sounds like Fiddes (but see n. 103). Hence, humans are postured towards the "oneness" of God *as disciples*. Precisely because this is so, it is not something which these disciples possess. The element of truth in apophatic metaphysics, at least seen from a Pauline perspective, is the asymmetrical nature of relationship with God. It is a relationship initiated and maintained by God's grace alone, by the power of his Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9-10).[103]

So much for my exegetical proposal. My question is whether this would be seen as a distortion of traditional doctrine, in Holmes' view? Should I keep such exegesis to myself, in the knowledge that Aquinas supposedly had it all figured out?

Let me anticipate an objection. Am I seriously suggesting that biblical scholars have the right to march into discussions that have busied systematic theologians for centuries, and willy-nilly turn over tables based on a few Bible verses under the banner of "back to the Bible" or of *semper reformandum*? By no means, and certainly not willy-nilly! But it is to put questions to the tradition and ask what sort of theological conceptualities make reading Paul meaningful. As Holmes helpful explains:

> '[T]he doctrine of the Trinity' is ... a set of conceptualities that finally allowed (or at least was believed to allow) every text to be read adequately. As such, it is not a 'biblical doctrine' in the sense of being the result of exegesis; rather, it is a set of things that need to be believed if we are able to do exegesis adequately as we hold to the truth of every text of Scripture. The doctrine of the Trinity is a conceptual framework that allows us to read every biblical text (concerning God's life) with due seriousness, but without discovering contradictions between them.[104]

So my question becomes: does a description of the unity of Father, Son and Spirit in terms of an abstract and apophatic "essence" help the Pauline exegete read his letters "with due seriousness"? Or is it not reductionist, perhaps even distorting matters? The question is an open one. If simplicity is taken to mean that to speak of God's oneness is to posit a different order of Being, one beyond our domestication, a "oneness" understood also in different orders of knowing,[105] then this may indeed offer the Pauline exegete

---

102. Holmes knows this. I was impressed by his recourse to the important scholarship of MacDonald, *Monotheism.*
103. Cf. Fiddes who proffers an interesting, if ultimately unconvincing, suggestion that the *apophasis* is the notion of relations without subjects (Fiddes, *Participating,* 45; Fiddes, "Relational," 170–71). A better exegetical explanation understands the *apophasis* in different terms, as noted above.
104. Holmes, "Classical," 35.
105. Cf. Scott R. Swain, *The God of the Gospel: Robert Jenson's Trinitarian Theology*, Strategic Initiatives in Evangelical Theology (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2013), 157–58.

(very vague) conceptual apparatus to read texts. But this is surely a minimalist understanding of the term. Holmes, I suggest, says more than this because of those proposals that he wants to exclude.

4. *Ontology*. We agree with Holmes when he speaks of the tradition's "ontological modesty". It may be that some relational approaches to the Trinity claim to know too much.[106] So when Fiddes argues that identifying "the divine persons as relations brings together a way of understanding the nature of *being* (ontology) with a way of *knowing* (epistemology)",[107] Holmes can respond by counter-asserting that Fiddes makes illegitimate argumentative jumps (leaps?). Indeed, we agree that Fiddes moves too fast in his argument at this point. More exegetical reflectiveness is necessary, at the very least, and with that in mind we shall meditate on these issues further below. A key goal is to construct second order proposals that make exegesis meaningful.

For Holmes, however, the point is made because of a commitment to the claim that the divine essence must remain unknowable, and therefore only distinctions of origin are "permissible".[108] Precisely at this point a doctrine of simplicity finds its place as "a property of the divine essence".[109] I am left with three questions.

Before I start, I raise these questions tentatively as a mere *Neutestamentler*. Indeed, as an act of preemptive and prophylactic attrition, I must also state that I realise there are many different ways to understand simplicity, and I don't pretend to understand them all. For the Thomists, it is foundational in a particular sense (famously, Aquinas kicks off the *Summa* with analysis of "simplicity").[110] Barth also affirms it, though on a different basis.[111] I am also aware that there may be a number of philosophical advantages to the doctrine of simplicity.[112] That said, there may be a number of potential philosophical disadvantages, too.[113] These pro and contra arguments are, likewise, beyond me. I also realise that this is a heated area of debate into which I can only venture hesitatingly. I am particularly stung by Hart's bold claim that "denial of divine simplicity is tantamount to atheism".[114] (Does not this suggest, in good Rahnerian fashion, that unless we assume all of the Apostles and Prophets were "Anonymous Simplicitarians", they must also have been atheists?). Hence, I largely reflect on simplicity *as deployed by Holmes*.

---

106. Holmes, "Classical," 36.
107. Fiddes, *Participating*, 38.
108. Holmes, *The Holy Trinity*, 200. As Roberto De La Noval kindly pointed out to me, for the fathers there may be things that make the Father, Spirit, and Son *in se* distinct in ways that are different from just sources of origination. But the point is that we cannot know that and are not to speculate on it. The point to make here, either way, is to ask to what extent specific understandings of divine mystery make biblical exegesis meaningful or not. In Scripture, distinctions other than one of origin seem obvious, as noted above. On different approaches to divine *Geheimnisse*, I found the comments in Barth, *CD*, II/2, p.146–51, rather helpful.
109. Holmes, "Classical," 39.
110. Gilles Emery OP, *The Trinitarian Theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Francesca Aran Murphy (Oxford: OUP, 2007), 38 n.9.
111. Barth, *CD*, II/1, p.440.
112. Holmes notes a few (Holmes, "Classical," 38).
113. See, e.g., R. T. Mullins, "Simply Impossible: A Case Against Divine Simplicity," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 7 (2013): 181–203.
114. David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God* (Yale: Yale University Press, 2013), 128.

So, and first, why is Holmes' argument about ontological modesty and simplicity not self-refuting, for simplicity so understood is a (controlling) ontological claim? After all, Holmes repeats the point that simplicity is the basis for proper apophaticism, that it is "at the heart" of the shared doctrine of classical Trinitarianism, and is something "all agreed on".[115] But Holmes likewise states that simplicity is an "ontological proposition".[116] So where has the ontological modesty gone?

My second question: as I do not want naively to claim we move directly from the exegesis of isolated Bible verses into ontology proper, is it not nevertheless correct to claim that ontological proposals need at the very least to make scriptural exegesis meaningful? We have urged above that the God-and Christ-relations, actualised by the Spirit, constitute Paul's proto-Trinitarianism. My question is reflected in Schwöbel's recent comment: "If the *homoousios* is simply taken to mean that Father, Son and Spirit instantiate the same divine essence three times over, without rooting how God is in relation to the world in how God is in God's own being, one has effectively made the doctrine of the Trinity meaningless for understanding the divine economy."[117] My concern is that simplicity, in Holmes' hands, precipitates a reductionist Pauline exegesis.

Third, if simplicity is indeed controlling, whence this knowledge of God?[118] On what basis is it claimed? In particular, How is this knowledge derived from the gospel? If it isn't, then what is the church doing courting it as foundational?

I can hear my imaginary interlocutors dismissing me as an unsophisticated "Barthian" already. Obviously I realise that Thomism is happy to court metaphysical speculation and natural theology.[119] But knowing this does not address my concern. Indeed, I pursue my question for a specific reason. Jenson begins his *Systematic Theology* by (uncontroversially) noting that "[t]heology is the church's enterprise of thought". But the fact of the matter is that the church is divided, and so it follows (unless one wants to claim that their confession is the one, true church) that "theology may be impossible in the situation of a divided church, its proper agent not being extant".[120] Instead of a counsel of despair, Hinlicky reads this to mean that theologians need "greater clarity today about the epistemic access of the theological subject than has been the case".[121] It is for precisely this reason that McCormack is correct to note this issue as an outstanding and "truly fundamental" difference between Barth and Aquinas.[122] So I need to press my

---

115. Holmes, "Classical," 36, 39, 41.
116. Cf. Holmes, "Classical," 35.
117. Christoph Schwöbel, "Where Do We Stand in Trinitarian Theology?" in *Recent Developments in Trinitarian Theology: An International Symposium*, ed. Christophe Chalamet and Marc Vial (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 23.
118. I have often heard my colleague, Lincoln Harvey, ask this question of theological proposals, and so I must credit him. See also Barth, *CD*, II/1, p.19.
119. On various misunderstandings of Barth relating to this language, see now Kevin Diller, *Theology's Epistemological Dilemma: How Karl Barth and Alvin Plantinga Provide a Unified Response*, foreword by Alvin Plantinga, Strategic Initiatives in Evangelical Theology (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2014).
120. Jenson, *Systematic Theology I*, vii.
121. Hinlicky, *Beloved Community*, xviii.
122. Bruce L. McCormack, "Processions and Missions: A Point of Convergence Between Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth," in *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth. An Unofficial Catholic-Protestant Dialogue*, ed. Bruce L. McCormack and Thomas Joseph White O.P. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2013), 100.

question. If one is committed to "essentialism" in the way Holmes appears to be, whence this knowledge of the divine? Is it not inevitable that natural theology and the *analogia entis* are now correlative commitments?[123] But why would a Baptist theologian prefer these over the revelation of the free Word of God attested in Scripture, as the source of theological meditation on the Triune God? Surely Fiddes is, here at least, more consistent, ecclesially speaking.

5. *Paul's proto-Trinitarianism.* I submit, further, that this theological vision of the epistemological priority of God's free and personal self-donation is what we find in Paul.[124] As Barth claimed: "the Bible always understands what it calls revelation as a concrete relation to concrete men".[125] Diller summarises Barth's theological epistemology in ways that resonate profoundly with what I have said about Paul's proto-Trinitarianism: "God makes himself personally known to us in relationship with us by the gift of communion with the Spirit, who is the subject of the knowing relation".[126] This is emphatically not to suggest that philosophical speculation has no place in the theological task. Rather, they must always be "second-order reflections, derivative of an dependent on the *actual knowing relation*".[127] Revelation is "fundamentally personal" and in this way it is "fundamentally rational".[128] So my concern: if the theo-foundation of the personal revelation of God in Jesus is itself determined by a second, external and regulative foundation (via natural theology), we are immediately distancing ourselves from Paul.

What is more, I doubt Paul's proto-Trinitarianism can be kept away from ontological reflection. My relevant exegetical results above can be summarised in the following twofold way, which I label χ1* and χ2*:

> χ1* God and Jesus Christ, by the Spirit, are *known* in interpersonal and relational ways. This is to say that the graced, human epistemic access to Paul's proto-Trinitarian theology happens in terms of *relationship* with the Triune God.

> χ2* Paul *articulates* a relational pattern which constitutes God's "transcendent uniqueness". The same constitutes his Christology as divine and, by the mediation of the Spirit, Paul's proto-Trinitarianism.

For some who need to protect ontology from personalism or relationality understood in terms that go beyond distinctions of origin, one could dismiss the ontological implications of the exegetical arguments

---

123. Ibid., 126.

124. Attempts to lock Paul into "natural theology" via mention of Romans 1:20 are highly misleading. On this, see now Campbell, *Deliverance*, 469–600, 948–49.

125. Cited in Diller, *Theology's Epistemological Dilemma*, 51.

126. Diller, *Theology's Epistemological Dilemma*, 55.

127. Ibid., 86, italics mine.

128. Diller, *Theology's Epistemological Dilemma*, 54. This is to say that not all rational, philosophically informed speculation, should be rejected by those who seek to allow their epistemological source to be servant to the living Word. Speculation is arguably inevitable, but there are healthy and unhealthy varieties. See Barth's distinctions in Barth, *CD*, II/2, p.135 (a passage not noted by Diller).

with the suggestion that Paul's letters evidence a relational epistemology, but not an ontology as such.[129] And if χ1* was all we had to go on, this strategy of dividing ontology from epistemology may prove plausible. However, as we also have to do with χ2*, which clearly corresponds with χ1* but goes beyond it, this distinction loses some appeal. The reason for this is simple. Left on its own, Paul's way of knowing could be captured or reframed in a very different ontological vision. But corresponding to χ1* Paul also *articulates* and therefore *conceptualises* God in relational form (χ2*), which means violence will be done to Paul's texts if we try to wrestle his language into alternative ontological structures, or rather dismiss proposals that emphasise relationality. In other words, χ1* and χ2* taken together are *ontologically* suggestive (even if we agree that we should not rush this argument, and that our ontology, informed by Paul, should remain modest).

What is the alternative to this conclusion? If χ1* and χ2* are to be *distanced* or even *formally divided* from theological ontology, then various problems are immediately evident. First, Scripture would then become formally separated from theological reflection at the level of ontology. Second, it would lead to the separation of the content of divine soteriological action, namely restored relationship with Christ and the Father by the Spirit, from theological reflection concerning ontology. These two points indeed insinuate a third problem, a greater tension between Holmes' ontological proposals and Paul's proto-Trinitarianism. Specifically, the Christ-relation and the Spirit's mediation of this relation, which Paul's Christology, understood in its historical particularity, *is*, must be taken as an analogy (or inadequate expression) of *something else*, something more fundamental (an ontology which allows only relations of origin). But as noted, whence this knowledge? And if an ontology which suppresses all but relations of origin is embraced, what is to speak against apophatic agnosticism when it comes to biblical language, even when it is grounded in salvation in Christ?

CONCLUSION

After critically engaging the work of Hill, I suggested that the valuable task of bringing Paul and Trinitarian categories into conversation needed greater focus on historical questions and the breadth of Paul's language. In other words, we still need to speak more about *Paul's* trinitarianism. To do this, I presented nine theses, and the upshot was a greater focus on the epistemic conditions of Paul's language (which, we saw, resonates well with Patristic concerns, too). This facilitated a more robust conversation to take place with modern debates relating to the interpretation of the Trinity. I chose Holmes as my interlocutor, and raised questions largely from the perspective of my activity as a Pauline scholar. Throughout I noted points of grateful and critical contact with Fiddes' constructive theological project, particularly his understanding of the nature of participatory epistemology. I end by noting my concern as in some way an outsider to many of these

---

129. Rehfeld's interesting monograph has attempted to depict Paul's ontology in relational terms, though not in light of Paul's proto-Trinitarian rhetoric, which I find odd. See Emmanuel L. Rehfeld, *Relationale Ontologie bei Paulus: die ontische Wirksamkeit der Christusbezogenheit im Denken des Heidenapostels*, WUNT II (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

contemporary theological debates. I am an exegete, I work with the biblical texts in my academic work. Because of this, I worry that the present return of some to (hyper) Thomism[130] has not only lead to an uncomfortably easy dismissal of all constructive theological endeavours that assume a potentially problematic reading of some (most?) Patristic sources, but that it is also in the process of isolating key aspects of theology from Scripture. As one who stands within a tradition which claims to be "Catholic and Reformed" (Anglicanism), my deep respect for classical theism and Thomas in particular is partnered by another instinct:

> The Church stands in the fire of the criticism of its Lord ... It has always needed, and it always will need, self-examination and self-correction. It cannot exist except as *ecclesia semper reformanda*.[131]

'ON THE WAY' AND 'IN THE FRAY' IN AOTEAROA: A PĀKEHĀ'S COVENANTAL REFLECTIONS FROM THE CONTEXT OF A TREATY PEOPLE

ANDREW PICARD

Carey Baptist College

Auckland, New Zealand

Paul Fiddes has made many important contributions to theology in general and Baptist theology in particular, not least being his theological development of Baptist covenanting. Fiddes' work, along with others, has generated many important possibilities for creative expressions of Baptist identity and a Baptist way of being church. These have found particularly fertile soil in the settings of the United Kingdom and the United States in both academic theology and church expression. [1] However, the generative possibilities of Baptist covenanting are yet to make a significant impression in academic theology or church expression in Aotearoa New Zealand. Whilst there has been much work done on Baptist history, there has been much less work done on Baptist theology in Aotearoa. Martin Sutherland's pioneering theological work has stood out as an important, yet solo, voice. As one Baptist leader from the United Kingdom observed from a recent visit, Kiwi Baptists are a fairly pragmatic bunch and "anyone talking about covenant (or even an ontological view of ministry) is seen as a bit catholic (or plain odd)."[2]

I want to argue that rather than being catholic or odd, covenant offers Baptists in Aotearoa a significant opportunity to resource the conversation on what it means to be Baptist in the twenty-first century. Not only do Baptists in Aotearoa New Zealand have significant resources to draw from out of their ecclesiological heritage, they also have significant resources in their national heritage. Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty of Waitangi) is widely acknowledged as the nation's founding document, and it was understood by many Māori[3] and Pākehā[4] to be a solemn covenant between two people who were bound together in bi-cultural partnership. This essay examines the Baptist theology of church covenanting in the context of the covenanting history of Aotearoa to explore some of the possible contributions that Baptists in Aotearoa can make to the wider exploration of Baptist covenanting.

---

[1] Paul S. Fiddes, "Communion and Covenant," in *Baptists and the Communion of Saints: A Theology of Covenanted Disciples,* eds. Paul S. Fiddes, Brian Haymes and Richard Kidd (Baylor: Baylor University Press, 2014), 133. See also Stephen R. Holmes, *Baptist Theology* (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 157.

[2] Neil Brighton, "Observing Baptist Life in New Zealand"
 http://neilbrighton.typepad.com/distinct_reflections/2015/05/observing-baptist-life-in-new-zealand.html

[3] Māori refers to an indigenous person of Aotearoa. Māori Dictionary, "Māori,"
http://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=m%C4%81ori.

[4] Pākehā refers to a person of European descent living in Aotearoa. Māori Dictionary, "Pākehā,"
http://maoridictionary.co.nz/search?idiom=&phrase=&proverb=&loan=&histLoanWords=&keywords=pakeh%C4%81.

PAUL FIDDES AND BAPTIST COVENANTING

Covenanting together has been an important part of Baptist self-understanding and it is finding a significant resurgence in modern Baptist thought as we seek to understand Baptist identity in our age. At this time, Baptists in Aotearoa are asking questions about our identity—what does it mean to be Baptist in Aotearoa today?[5] Of course, there is not a singular answer to this question, nor is there a fixity about Baptist identity. There will be a multiplicity of Baptist identities in Aotearoa, but these identities need to emerge from our understanding of a Baptist way of being. At the heart of Baptist distinctives is not a unique understanding of the Trinity, the Bible or salvation, but a distinctive understanding of the church as a gathered community living under the rule of Christ.[6] As Fiddes has rightly reminded us, it is not the individual convictions alone that are distinct, but the constellation of convictions. It is how Baptists have dynamically held these convictions together that is distinct. The Baptist genetic code finds its beating heart in the promised presence of Jesus Christ in the gathered local church.[7] The dynamic of living under the rule of Christ was expressed in many early Baptist churches by the making of a solemn church covenant which was central to ecclesial identity and faithfulness.[8]

Covenanting together was a vital aspect of the early Baptist way of being and Fiddes has reminded us of the significance of covenanting in the formative beginnings of the Baptist movement and its constructive possibilities for shaping Baptist theology. The Separatist church at Gainsborough, whilst not yet a Baptist church, had the two founders of the Baptist movement, John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, as their pastor and elder. The church at Gainsborough was bound together in covenant in which they "joyned themselves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a Church estate, in the fellowship of the gospell, to walke in all his wayes, made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavours, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting."[9] Early Baptists took very seriously the promise of Jesus Christ that "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). This passage led them to ask what it meant for Christ to "dwell in their midst". They discerned in the phrase an echo of the covenantal language of the Old Testament prophets where God's promise to "dwell among" people is combined with the formula "I will be your God and you will be my people".[10] The early Baptist covenants fused God's covenant of grace with humanity together with the local church covenant made between believers to be faithful to God and one another. God's eternal covenant of grace with humanity is

---

[5] The question of Baptist identity in relation to the freedom of the local church was at the centre of the recent debates regarding same-sex marriage. http://www.baptist.org.nz/news/35/22/Working-party-begins-deliberations-on-same-sex-marriage-and-issues-of-local-church-autonomy.

[6] Holmes, *Baptist Theology*, 6-7. Nigel Wright offers seven core convictions of the Baptist genetic code: The supreme authority of scripture on all of faith and conduct; a believer's church; believer's baptism; the priesthood of all believers; the autonomy of the local church; freedom of conscience; and separation of church from state. However, these convictions, when taken on their own, are not especially dissimilar from other ecclesial traditions. Nigel G. Wright, *Free Church, Free State: The Positive Baptist Vision* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2005). 42-43.

[7] Paul S. Fiddes, "Theology and the Baptist Way of Community," in *Doing Theology in a Baptist Way,* ed. Paul S. Fiddes (Oxford: Whitley Publications, 2000), 28.

[8] Holmes, *Baptist Theology*, 6.

[9] Cited in Paul S. Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces: Baptist Identity in Church and Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003), 21.

[10] Paul S. Fiddes, "A Response to David Carter's Review of *Tracks and Traces*," *Ecclesiology* 5, no. 1 (2005). 94.

made visible in the gathering of local believers in the bonds of covenant community. As Stephen Holmes notes, this is a striking elevation of the role of the local church.[11]

In his constructive work, Fiddes has developed the theme of covenanting through his characteristic theology of participating in God and his engagement with Karl Barth's christological account of election and covenant. Fiddes draws from Barth's theology of election to develop his own theology of Baptist covenanting in the context of the local church's participation in the Trinitarian fellowship. Barth's theology of election centred God's purposes in the person of Jesus Christ who is both the electing God and the elect human person in the unity of his being by the Spirit. "He in whom the covenant of grace is fulfilled and revealed in history is also its eternal basis."[12] As subject and object of election, Jesus Christ participates in the divine determination to elect humanity and he himself is the basis of that election that establishes the covenant between God and humanity. "If God elects us too, then it is in and with this election of Jesus Christ. It is He who is manifestly the concrete and manifest form of the divine decision—the decision of Father, Son and Spirit—in favour of the covenant to be established between Him and us."[13] In Christ, God has elected all humanity for fellowship and chosen God's own self as covenant partner with humanity. Fiddes notes Barth's caution regarding the use of covenant language to describe the inner divine relations, despite speaking of them in terms of election.[14] Barth's objections, according to Fiddes, are due to his concern over the juridical accounts traditionally associated with Calvinistic federal theology in which the divine persons are viewed as two subjects engaged in legal dealings with one another.[15] Fiddes believes that Barth's critique can be taken to redefine language of an inner divine covenant apart from the juridical assumptions. "We might say that *as* God the Father makes a covenant of love eternally with the Son in the fellowship of the Spirit, so simultaneously God makes a covenant in history with human beings."[16] In Christ and by the Spirit, the horizontal human dynamic of covenant making is taken up into the vertical dimension of God's eternal covenant with humanity in Christ. In this way the church participates not only in God's covenant with humanity but the inner covenant-making in God. "Church is what happens when these vectors [the horizontal church covenant and the vertical eternal covenant of grace] intersect, and God in humility opens God's own self to the richness of the intercourse."[17] Church is the community that the Spirit has gathered together in covenant through Christ to the glory of the Father to be God's community in time through radical commitment to God and one another.

A full account of Fiddes' theology of covenant would need to offer a careful engagement with his major theological motifs of the openness of God, *hypostases* as relations, and his characteristic theme of participation in God. However, the focus of this essay is to develop covenantal insights for and from the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. Of particular interest for and from the context of Aotearoa are the

---

[11] Holmes, *Baptist Theology*, 158.
[12] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV/1, eds. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance; Trans. G. W. Bromiley et. al. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), 7. (Hereafter *CD*.)
[13] Barth, *CD* II/2, 105.
[14] Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, 36. See also Fiddes, "Communion and Covenant," 135.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid., 135-36.
[17] Fiddes, *Tracks and Traces*, 79-80.

relational dynamics associated with covenanting in the setting of indigenous and settler relationality. Indigenous and settler relationality has a long and chequered history. Any suggestions for or from the relational dynamics of Aotearoa needs to engage this history and the ongoing struggle for indigenous and settler identity and belonging. As Fiddes has highlighted, John Fawcett's Baptist anthem, "Blest Be the Tie that Binds" is not a religious version of "Auld lang syne" but a call to radical and costly commitment to God and one another in the context of covenant love.[18] In the following section we will examine the work of Helen Dare, whose definition of Baptist covenantal dynamics as being "on the way" and "in the fray" provides an important framework for the contested space of relational covenant identity.

ON THE WAY AND IN THE FRAY: THE RELATIONAL DYNAMICS OF A COVENANTAL PEOPLE

In her recent Whitley lecture, Helen Dare suggests that Baptist hermeneutics should be shaped by the relational dynamics of a covenantal people who are "on the way" and "in the fray". These committed relationships provide the context for an open-ended and exciting journey of interpreting Scripture together for our day, if we are willing to accept the responsibility and possibility of the relational dynamics of covenanting.[19] The Bible is not there to be mastered, and nor are our fellow way-farers. Instead of individualistic approaches to Scripture, there is a need to fund a way of being in which the voice of the marginalised disorients the settled readings and discourses that emerge from our entrenched communal practices of biblical interpretation. Dare utilises the work of Walter Brueggemann to develop insights from the covenantal relationship of God with Israel which then inform her proposals for the covenantal dynamics of Baptist hermeneutics.[20]

Brueggemann famously categorised the Psalms into Psalms of orientation, disorientation, and new orientation to describe the complex relationship of Israel with God. Dare employs these categorisations as a heuristic tool for interpreting the dynamics of Baptist covenantal hermeneutics. Baptists often prefer the uncomplicated and well-ordered world of orientation to the risky experience of disorientation; the core testimony of the Psalms of orientation instead of the counter-testimony of the Psalms of disorientation. In such settings, disorientation and the encroachment of chaos and confusion tends to be internalised because they are perceived as an act of unfaithfulness to the settled truths about God, ourselves, and life. However, these polite views of God fail to engage God in the fray and they shelter us from the unexpected surprise of God's grace that is found in the midst of a complex world to which the Psalms of new orientation attest.[21] Attempts to uphold polite and well-ordered views of the world fail to note that the God of Scripture is to be found in the fray. "The God of Israel is characteristically 'in the fray' … Conversely, the God of Israel is

---

[18] Fiddes, "Communion and Covenant," 129-30.
[19] Helen J. Dare, *Always On the Way and In the Fray: Reading the Bible as Baptists.* The Whitley Lecture 2014 (Oxford: Whitley Publications, 2014), 25-26.
[20] Ibid., 6.
[21] Ibid., 8-9.

rarely permitted, in the rhetoric of Israel, to be safe and unvexed 'above the fray.'"[22] Through his covenantal loyalty, God binds himself to Israel in a relationship that profoundly impacts God and Israel as they walk together in a complex world. "Being in relationship with others, divine and human, makes demands of the partners, who are accessible to each other and changed by the interaction."[23]

As well as being in the fray, covenantal faith is set in the context of a journey on the way. Being on the way invites a relational dynamism in which life and faith are constantly negotiated with and for the other. Instead of a linear progress to a supposed enlightenment, there is a spiral of experience in which the community cycles through orientation, disorientation, and new orientation. Being on the way leads to an intensification of relationship in which the core testimony is enriched and matured through the witness of the counter-testimony. Orientation and disorientation are not oppositional options, but necessary tensions that need to be upheld and maintained for a full and honest account of the faith, as well as the depth and intensity of relationship that covenanting generates.[24] Faith on the way cannot be intensified by the imposition of the core testimony and the demand that the voice of counter-testimony conform. In such homogenising settings, sedimented power structures are legitimated and the dynamism of the journey is lost in coercive conformity. Instead of harmonisation and homogeneity, the dialectical and creative tension needs to be upheld in a community that are on the way *and* in the fray.

Congregational hermeneutics that seek Christ's will in the gathered community requires covenant members to relinquish individualised and privatised readings of Scripture and consider the divine and human other who may disorient the core testimony by their counter-testimony.[25] The call to covenantal relatedness is a commitment to othering in which we will be disorientated and changed by relational interactions as we seek together the will of Christ which is discerned by the gathered community. It is an ongoing commitment to a dynamic journey of negotiation because relational identity is contested identity. However, the calcified structures of our churches often disempower marginalised voices and silence their counter-testimony. Encountering voices of counter-testimony requires practices of listening and being together that are demanding and taxing. Listening to voices that are different is both difficult and stimulating as our assumptions are challenged and we wrestle with fresh perspectives about living under the rule of Christ. "Relatedness can be seen as the source of disorientation, but may also [be] the appropriate response to it: disorientation caused by an- o/Other requires not a withdrawal from community, but an intensification of the covenant relationship."[26] The intensification of relationship requires renewed thinking about how Baptists embody and enact the gospel in our gathered life.

Stephen Holmes has challenged the practice of church voting because it legitimates entrenched power structures, and suggested that Baptists embrace a necessary lack of competence in discerning Christ's

---

[22] Helen J. Dare, "'In the Fray': Reading the Bible in Relationship," in *The "Plainly Revealed" Word of God? Baptist Hermeneutics in Theory and Practice*, eds. Helen J. Dare and Simon Woodman (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2011), 240.
[23] Dare, *Always On the Way and In the Fray*, 16.
[24] Ibid., 19-20.
[25] Ibid., 28.
[26] Ibid., 32.

will in the gathered community. Holmes reminds us that the earliest Baptists did not use voting to discern the will of Christ, and when they did start using this system in the early nineteenth century they subverted it in the light of the gospel. When wider British society was limiting voting to the richest ten percent of male aristocrats, Baptist churches were allowing all members, male and female, to vote.[27] However, our current use of voting has become an act of cultural conformity in Baptist churches where the systems and power structures of the world are reinforced in ways which are inconsistent with the gospel. Seeking Christ's will is often left to those who are regarded as competent in leadership by worldly standards and as a result we assume that human agency can supply the miracle of grace required to discern God's voice in our midst and follow in his ways. Holmes rightly highlights that many of our church structures for seeking Christ's will are designed to suit those with power:

> Inasmuch as those of us who are powerful and educated and successful (and white, and middle class, and male) find it hard to accept and confess our utter incompetence, however, we continue to practice church meeting improperly. We construct and support practices that we find it easy to participate in and manipulate, and that exclude completely those who lack worldly social status and the confidence it engenders.[28]

Rather than greater competence in leadership, Holmes argues for a necessary lack of competence in discerning Christ's leadership. We discern Christ's leadership by reflecting on the Scriptures and praying for the coming of the Spirit. Even the world-class biblical scholar is dependent on the aid of the Spirit to discern Christ's leadership for the congregation.[29] Holmes' constructive quest for an alternative body politic engages the crucial issues of power and privilege that are at stake in covenantal communities who are journeying together on the way and in the fray.

Being on the way and in the fray is not an easy proposition, especially for those who are used to having power. However, voices of counter-testimony need not represent a threat. After all, in covenantal life we are on the way and in the fray in a community of faithful friends. According to Sean Winter, it is here that the art of conversation is crucial.[30] In this conversation we will find ways to share our views and interpretations honestly and openly whilst listening attentively to alternative views and irruptive interpretations, in trust that the richness of the conversation will lead us towards greater gospel faithfulness. This is not a journey out of truth into mere subjectivity, but a long and patient journey that takes seriously the demands of seeking Christ's truth in covenant community. These patient practices may mean giving up or reforming some of our treasured views in light of the journey on which God is leading us. But disorientation is central to the calling of a pilgrim people who are journeying together with God and one another in the dynamics of covenant love.

---

[27] Stephen R. Holmes, "Knowing Together the Mind of Christ: Congregational Government and the Church Meeting," in *Questions of Identity: Studies in Honour of Brian Haymes,* eds. Anthony R. Cross and Ruth Gouldbourne (Oxford: Regent's Park College, 2011), 182.

[28] Holmes, "Knowing Together the Mind of Christ," 185.

[29] Ibid., 183-85.

[30] Sean Winter, "Persuading Friends: Friendship and Testimony in Baptist Interpretive Communities," in *The "Plainly Revealed" Word of God?* 267-69.

The risky journey of covenant life is a much more difficult and interesting possibility than simply allowing the accustomed structures of power and authority to mediate Christ's will to us. In the relational dynamics of covenanting we learn that we cannot be complete without one another, and we cannot be faithful without genuinely learning how to love one another in the midst of all of our differences. This is the relational dynamism of a mature pilgrim people who are journeying towards a new orientation—ever greater embodiment of the gospel of the kingdom of God. "Being 'on the way' requires a willingness to embark upon a risky journey within the community that will necessitate a degree of struggle, whilst knowing that this has always been the way for God's people."[31] This risky journey is often expressed in struggle, but it is a mutual struggle towards faithfulness in which we submit to one another out of reverence for Christ and his will.

The acknowledgement of struggle upholds the otherness of the other, both divine and human. Proclamations of the relational dynamic of Baptist covenantalism need to be set within an apophatic modesty in which knowingness regarding divine and human others is set within an unknowingness; an apophatic relationality. The divine and human other cannot be mastered, but only encountered in the bonds of covenantal love. It is in the creative and dialectical tension of otherness and relatedness that we learn to be on the way and in the fray. For some this might seem like a recipe for yet another battle between bickering Baptists. But this need not be the case. There will be contention and there will be conflict, but conflict does not need be a conflict that destroys. Conflict is normal but it does not need to be destructive amidst the mutual love that the Spirit gives to a community of faithful friends who are seeking Christ's will together. Sean Winter helpfully observes that conflict can be a constructive part of intensifying a mature conversation.[32] Argument is not a departure from conversation but an important aspect of the conversation as we discuss some of the last truths about God, ourselves, and life, which may well aide in a new orientation to Christ's will in fresh and imaginative ways. It is in relational encounter with the other that our self-certainties are challenged and we are faced with the possibility of change and growth. As faithful friends journeying together in covenant love we discover "the other as other, the different as different" and therefore "the different *as* possible."[33]

BAPTIST COVENANTALISM AND TE TIRITI O WAITANGI[34]

Covenanting together is a call to be God's pilgrim people through relationships of love and trust as we are transformed together into Christ's likeness. Whilst Baptist covenanting is quite foreign to Baptists in Aotearoa, the concept of covenanting is at our nation's roots and was important to both Māori and Pākehā

---

[31] Dare, "On the Way and in the Fray," 34.
[32] Sean Winter, "Persuading Friends," 268.
[33] Ibid.
[34] On a recent visit to Aotearoa, Paul Fiddes and I met with David Moko, the leader of Manatū Iriiri Māori (formerly Baptist Māori Ministries), to explore possible insights that Māori may contribute to a Baptist understanding of the communion of saints through the importance of whakapapa. Whilst this is a very important, and potentially fruitful, area of study, it is beyond my capacity as a Pākehā to offer insight about the depth and meaning of the Māori concept of whakapapa. We look forward to the time when Māori Baptist theologians are able to give voice to these potentialities.

understandings of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is regarded as our nation's founding document. It is a broad statement of principles signed by representatives of the British Crown and various Māori chiefs for the founding of a nation state. The contents, meaning, and import of Te Tiriti o Waitangi are widely contested and it stands at the centre of contemporary debates about nationhood, colonization, and decolonisation. Whilst incredibly significant for contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand, these debates are beyond the scope of this essay which focuses on the relational dynamics of covenanting for and from the context of Aotearoa for Baptist theology.

Martin Sutherland has rightly noted the "breathtaking potential" of a contextual bicultural Baptist theology. Sadly, as Sutherland cogently remarks, Baptists "have proven the least able of the traditional denominations to learn from Maori ways and thought forms."[35] Unlike the missionary beginnings of the other mainline denominations, Baptists in Aotearoa were settlers. As a settler church, Baptists often upheld a social imaginary that remained largely unaware of Māori as those whose counter-testimony might be the source of disorientation that could lead to new orientation. Avril Bell develops an account of the settler imaginary that draws from Charles Taylor's definition of social imaginaries as the ways people imagine their social existence, their expectations, their relationships with others, and the normative notions that underlie these expectations.[36] Bell defines the settler imaginary as that which assumes values, ideas, discourses, and mythologies about identity and normativity which give legitimacy to the seasoned structures of power and the unjust dynamics of colonial relations with indigenous peoples.[37] The settler imaginary is a helpful lens through which we can understand Baptist engagements with Māori.

Despite an early unsuccessful attempt of mission among Māori,[38] Baptists were rarely drawn into relation with Māori before "the long, painful birth of Baptist Māori Ministry" in the 1950s.[39] This is tellingly highlighted by the fact it took seventy two years before a Māori delegate spoke at the national Baptist Assembly. In his report on the 1954 Baptist Assembly, the editor of the *New Zealand Baptist* wrote, "In the discussion on the Maori report the Assembly heard, perhaps for the first time in its entire history, a speech from a Maori delegate."[40] For much of their history, Baptists in Aotearoa have been neither on the way nor in the fray with Māori. The lack of relation between Māori and Baptists in Aotearoa is the lamentable result of the settler imaginary which has dominated much Baptist thought. The settler imaginary shielded Baptists from the disorienting relational engagement with Māori that might have been the source of the unexpected surprise of God's grace that is found in the complex world of new orientation. As Sutherland concludes in

---

[35] Martin Sutherland, "Seeking a *Turangawaewae*: Constructing Baptist Identity in New Zealand," *Baptist History and Heritage* 16 (2001): 248. See also Martin Sutherland, "Gathering, Sacrament and Baptist Theological Method," *PJBR* 3 (2007): 57. See also Martin Sutherland, "On Method: A Baptist *Tikanga*," in *Talking Theology: 2001-2002 Proceedings,* ed. Martin Sutherland (Auckland: R. J. Thompson Centre for Theological Studies, 2003), 128-29.

[36] Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2004), 23.

[37] Avril Bell, *Relating Indigenous and Settler Identities: Beyond Domination* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 11-12.

[38] R. F. Keam, *Dissolving Dream: The Improbably Story of the First Baptist Maori Mission* (Auckland: R. F. Keam, 2004).

[39] Des Jones, "The Long, Painful Birth of Baptist Maori Ministry," *The New Zealand Journal of Baptist Research* 1 (1996): 58-61.

[40] *New Zealand Baptist*, December 1954, 274.

his lament over the lack of Baptist relation to Māori, "The forging of strong identity requires openness as well as commitment."[41] In Dare's words, it requires us to be on the way and in the fray.

Sutherland is right that the possibilities of a contextual bicultural Baptist theology are breath-taking, especially given the significance of covenanting in the Baptist story and the story of Aotearoa. However, in his quest for a Baptist way of being in Aotearoa, Sutherland deems Te Tiriti as an inadequate source for a bicultural Baptist theology and opts for other possible sources.[42] In the following section, I will linger longer over Te Tiriti and its covenantal basis, which is deeply grounded in the gospel, in the hope that Baptists in Aotearoa might discover more of what it could mean to be on the way and in the fray in our own context for the benefit of the whole church.

TE TIRITI O WAITANGI AS KAWENATA (COVENANT)

For many of the Māori and Pākehā signatories, Te Tiriti o Waitangi was understood as a sacred kawenata (covenant) in the biblical sense.[43] In some recent historical accounts, which draw especially from Māori oral tradition, the Māori understanding of Te Tiriti as his been emphasised.[44] At the historic Waitangi Tribunal inquiry into the meaning and effect of Te Tiriti, Ngāpuhi (a northern Māori tribe) gave evidence regarding their understanding of Te Tiriti as kawenata. This understanding was preserved in various karakia (prayer) and waiata (song) that were given by Ngāpuhi rangatira (chiefs) at the signing of Te Tiriti. Ngāpuhi chiefs who gave evidence to the Waitangi Tribunal had learnt their kōrero (address) from tribal schools of learning that were established to preserve and maintain sacred tribal traditions and knowledge, much of which had never been shared in public before.[45] These oral traditions and knowledge serve as an important counter-testimony to the written Pākehā accounts that have dominated discourse on Te Tiriti.[46] Ngāpuhi elders began their evidence to the Waitangi Tribunal by citing waiata and karakia that were constructed at the time of the signing of Te Tiriti which reiterate the sacredness of Te Tiriti to Ngāpuhi. "He [Rima Edwards] described it as a 'kawenata tapu', or sacred covenant, bearing the tohu tapu (sacred marks) of the claimants' tūpuna [ancestors]."[47] The sacredness of the document also demanded a holistic understanding of Te Tiriti and its overall emphasis upon creating a relationship. This holistic approach, based upon understanding Te Tiriti as a covenant, stands in contrast to common Crown approaches that have sought to dissect Te Tiriti phrase by phrase, and place certain elements and phrases in conflict with one another. In his evidence, Patu

---

[41] Sutherland, "Seeking a *Turangawaewae*," 248.
[42] Sutherland, "On Method: A Baptist *Tikanga*," 128.
[43] Tui Cadogan, "A Three-Way Relationship: God, Land, People. A Maori Woman Reflects," in *Land and Place He Whenua, He Wāhi: Spiritualities from Aotearoa New Zealand*, eds. Helen Bergin and Susan Smith (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2004), 31.
[44] This is especially important in the evidence given by Ngāpuhi to the Waitangi Tribunal as part of Te Paparahi o te Raki inquiry *He Whakaputanga me te Tiriti / The Declaration and the Treaty: The Report on Stage 1 of the Te Paparahi o Te Raki Inquiry.* (Hereafter Wai 1040.) See also Susan Healy et. al., *Ngāpuhi Speaks: Commissioned by Kuia and Kaumātua of Ngāpuhi. He Wakaputanga o te Rangitiratanga o Nu Tireni and Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Independent Report. Ngāpuhi Nui Tonu Claim* (Kaitaia: Te Kawariki and Whangarei: Network Waitangi Whangarei, 2012).
[45] Wai 1040, 448.
[46] Wai 1040, 448-50.
[47] Wai 1040, 448.

Hohepa, former Professor of Māori language at the University of Auckland, stated his concerns over the dissective way the Crown has interpreted Te Tiriti. "Essentially these questions have separated out certain strands from the covenant in an effort to place them in conflict with each other…. The Crown's search for conflict within the document negates its overall context which was the desire to create a relationship."[48] Many Māori and Pākehā uphold this historic emphasis upon Te Tiriti as a covenantal relationship instead of the forensic and litigious approaches to Te Tiriti.

The early missionaries drew upon the biblical notion of covenant to interpret the meaning of Te Tiriti. At Waitangi, Henry Williams (a leading CMS missionary) told Māori that they and Pākehā could be one people under God in both a physical and spiritual sense.[49] Hone Heke and Patuone spoke of Te Tiriti as the New Covenant with all the connotations of Christ and his new covenant. As Christ fulfilled and surpassed the old Mosaic Law, Heke stated, so Te Tiriti could be likened to the New Covenant through its promise of a new relationship between the Crown and Māori.[50] Claudia Orange writes, "The idea had been echoed at Kaitaia when one young chief expressed the hope that "if your [British] thoughts are towards Christ as ours are, we shall be one."[51] Later Government attempts to assert its sovereignty over Māori rights for self-governance and establish Māori allegiance to the Crown, in the face of Māori resistance, drew heavily upon the concept of Te Tiriti as covenant. The Crown held a conference with over 200 "friendly" Māori chiefs from at Kohimarama in 1860, in which "the rebels" were excluded.[52] The conference was held in Te Reo Māori and translations into English were given by Donald McLean, the Native Secretary and Chief Land Purchase Commissioner. Claudia Orange suggests that he used his knowledge of Māori language and thought to the Crown's advantage and deliberately manipulated his translations from English to Māori to guide Māori towards the Crown's aspirations. One of the vital semantic tools that McLean employed in his Crown propaganda to Māori was to translate Te Tiriti (Treaty) as Te Kawanata (Covenant) o Waitangi because he knew the religious significance this held with Māori.[53] Māori understandings of Te Tiriti as covenant were common, especially amongst Ngāpuhi where Te Tiriti was originally signed.

As part of their historic settlement with the Crown, Ngāpuhi elders showed that Te Tiriti did not arise in a vacuum. The concept of Māori and Pākehā coming together in sacred covenant no doubt owed much to the influence of missionaries, but it also owed much to Māori. Te Tiriti was preceded by He Whakaputanga (The Declaration of Independence) which was signed in 1835 and considered by Ngāpuhi to be "te kawenata tuatahi [the first covenant]."[54] Ngāpuhi have argued that the roots of this covenantal understanding are found in Hongi Hika's[55] personal visit and relationship with King George in 1820, twenty years before Te Tiriti, and not the later written documents. As a result, He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriti need

---

[48] Wai 1040, 452.

[49] Claudia Orange, *The Treaty of Waitangi* (Wellington: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 90.

[50] Ibid., 57.

[51] Ibid., 90-91.

[52] Claudia Orange, "The Covenant of Kohimarama: A Ratification of The Treaty of Waitangi," *New Zealand Journal of History* 14 (1980): 64-54.

[53] Ibid., 70-73.

[54] Healy et. al., *Ngāpuhi Speaks*, 74.

[55] Hongi Hika was an important Ngāpuhi chief.

to be understood as two parts of one relational conversation.[56] "A relationship of a particular character was created between Ngāpuhi and the British monarchy, beyond the strategic benefits. Speakers [at the Tribunal hearings] described the relationship between Hongi and the King as a sacred, everlasting relationship as in a covenant."[57] Ngāpuhi stress that the basis of the relationship was created face to face and not through written documents such as He Whakaputanga and Te Tiriti. Both of the written documents are written expressions of the *preceding* covenantal relationship that had already been personally established. "The rangatira's [chief's] use of their ngu moko (patterns from the nose) in their signatures to He Wakaputanga attest to the solemnity of their commitment to the relationship with the British Crown. To use the ngū moko is to be present, as in a face-to-face agreement."[58] Importantly, the sacred covenant between Hongi Hika and King George was understood to be binding for future generations, and the later documents only acknowledge the pre-existing reality of covenant.[59]

Whatever the ongoing significance of these findings, and they are very significant,[60] I draw attention to them to highlight two things. Firstly, the importance of covenant for understanding Te Tiriti and, secondly, the insight it offers Baptists about the nature of covenanting relationships. In the following section we will examine the nature of covenanting relationships between Māori and Pākehā as a lens through which we can consider what it might mean to be on the way and in the fray in Aotearoa.

ON THE WAY AND IN THE FRAY IN AOTEAROA

Anne Salmond, Professor of Māori Studies and Anthropology at the University of Auckland, has given a fascinating insight into the colliding worlds of Māori and Pākehā in a recent reflection on the Waitangi Tribunal's acknowledgement that Ngāpuhi did not cede their sovereignty.[61] In 1992, Salmond was asked to prepare a report for the Waitangi Tribunal regarding the Muriwhenua Land Claim. Together with other researchers, she concluded that Māori had not ceded their sovereignty. But, in the settled core testimony of the Crown, this was not a question they were asking let alone trying to answer at the time. The Crown simply wanted Salmond to help them figure out how much restitution was required for breaches of the Treaty.[62] Here the core testimony of the settler imaginary sought a way of silencing the counter-testimony of indigenous identity without disorientation.

Twenty years later, Salmond was involved with the Ngāpuhi claim and two worlds collided again. This time Māori leaders employed a politics of recognition that ensured that the disorienting voice of

---

[56] Ibid., 65-74.
[57] Ibid., 74.
[58] Ibid., 75.
[59] Ibid., 75-77.
[60] The Waitangi Tribunal's inquiry resulted in the historic acknowledgement that Māori did not cede their sovereignty in signing Te Tiriti.Wai 1040, 526-27.
[61] Anne Salmond, "Ontological Quarrels: Indigeneity, Exclusion and Citizenship in a Relational World," *Anthropological Theory* 12: 115-41.
[62] Ibid., 117.

counter-testimony was engaged on its own terms.[63] When the Tribunal members arrived at the marae, they were met with a fiery challenge. "Members of Ngāpuhi held up flags and portraits of chiefs who had signed Te Tiriti, brandishing ancestral weapons including muskets, taiaha (fighting staffs) and long-handled tomahawks. In their opening speeches, Ngāpuhi leaders vehemently contended that they had never ceded sovereignty to the British Crown. Rather, their ancestors had forged a relationship with Queen Victoria."[64] Rima Edwards, an elder trained in one of the ancestral schools of learning, recited ancient chants about the origins of the cosmos and traced his lineage to the beginnings of the world. He and other Ngāpuhi elders spoke only in Te Reo Māori, held up ancestral portraits, and brandished ancient weapons as an attempt to bring the Tribunal and the conversation within Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) so that the dominant understandings about Te Tiriti could be challenged.[65] Kingi Taurua challenged the core testimony and assumptions of the Tribunal which sought to discuss the English and Māori versions of Te Tiriti. "[The Tribunal] looks at both Treaties, the Pākehā [English version] and the Māori, which is totally wrong. We did not sign the Pākehā. We signed the Māori version. We are here to talk about the Treaty that we in Ngāpuhi did not sign, and they are here to judge in English what our tūpuna [ancestors] signed in Māori."[66]

Salmond reminds us that as much as this was a debate about what had happened historically, it was also a debate about how to understand reality as two worlds collide—as the voice of counter-testimony disoriented the core testimony. The two worlds continued to collide throughout the Waitangi Tribunal hearing as the Tribunal conducted the hearing as if it were in a courtroom. Members of the Tribunal sat at a long table to hear evidence, used legal protocols, and conducted cross-examinations of expert witnesses. "As much as a debate about what had happened in the past, this was a struggle of ontological proportions."[67] Here were two worlds colliding on the way and in the fray. The settler imaginary encountered the voice of counter-testimony of indigenous sovereignty, which resisted the assimilative impulses and homogenising forces of the core testimony. Among the many outcomes of the Tribunal's inquiry into Ngāpuhi's claims was the historic conclusion that the chiefs who signed Te Tiriti o Waitangi did not cede their sovereignty. This was not a mere concession, but a fundamental reinterpretation of the history of Te Tiriti with extensive implications that arise from the voice of counter-testimony speaking on its own terms and disorienting the core testimony.

In the Tribunal hearings, the voice of counter-testimony, which demanded to be heard and understood on its own terms, transformed imaginations and led to renewed and revised understandings of our history, our current context and the possibilities of our future, much of which awaits realisation.[68] These are the possibilities of what Avril Bell calls the relational imaginary and it finds resonances in the Psalms of new orientation. The new orientation is not a return to the core testimony of orientation, but the unexpected surprise that emerges in the midst of a complex world. The possibilities do not arise from a cosy relational

[63] Bell, *Relating Indigenous and Settler Identities*, 12.
[64] Salmond, "Ontological Quarrels," 117.
[65] Ibid., 117-18.
[66] Ibid., 118.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Wai 1040, 528.

togetherness, but the acknowledgement of the unknowable difference and otherness that stand at the heart of the relational imaginary. At the heart of the relational imaginary is an apophatic relationality in which the other cannot be fully known by the hidden desire for mastery that comes in the guise of a romanticised unity. The otherness of the other disrupts and decentres our self-certainties and causes reflection and change.[69]

Alison Jones suggests that the colliding of these two worlds is an invitation to an interminable struggle as we try to walk together in relational bonds. The continued attempts to find synthesis between the Pākehā thesis and its Māori antithesis assume a redemptive solution on Pākehā terms.[70] The desire to learn, understand, and know the other needs to be tempered with an acknowledgement of the unknowability of the other, lest the romance of unity becomes another pretext for conquest and mastery of the minority.[71] Mythological or perceived Māori respond as Pākehā wish-fulfilment which renders the other invisible in the static fixity of non-persons. The relational imaginary requires an acceptance of apophaticism towards the other that acknowledges the other can never be finally known. Jones advocates an adoption of the politics of disappointment that accepts that uncertainty characterises all forms of knowing and understanding the other.[72] This ignorance of the other is productive because it demands the ongoing openness of intersubjective relationality through which we know the other as an other. What is needed is not a redemptive solution that homogenises the otherness of Māori and Pākehā, but a commitment to engage in the struggle of otherness-in-relation. The otherness of Māori and Pākehā is not merely different, but incompatible.[73]

Jones draws from Rewi Maniapoto's phrase he employed when Colonial troops called on him to surrender, "ka whawhai tonu mātou, ake ake ake" [we will fight on against you for ever and ever], to suggest that the way forward is commitment to a relational struggle without end.[74] "All that becomes possible is a tension. Contradictory and irreconcilable realities sit **in interminable tension** with the other. And in the *tension* between contradictory realities is the *ake ake ake*, the endless struggle—to know, to read, to understand, to work with, *to engage with*, others."[75] This does not mean a battle to see who wins, but the intensification of relationship with an other that comes with the shift from a settler imaginary to a relational imaginary. A relational struggle is not a battle where we fight for winners and losers, it is an interminable struggle in which the incomprehensibility and unresolvability of difference is genuinely acknowledged and becomes the source of renewed possibilities and new orientations. The acknowledgement of struggle shows that we are engaged in a relationship—it is an acknowledgement of engagement, not disengagement. "To

---

[69] Bell, *Relating Indigenous and Settler Identities*, 174-82.

[70] Alison Jones, "*Ka Whawhai Tonu Mātou*: The Interminable Problem of Knowing Others" (unpublished inaugural professorial lecture presented at the University of Auckland, 24 October 2007), 9. https://cdn.auckland.ac.nz/assets/education/about/schools/tepuna/docs/Inaugural_Lecture.pdf.

[71] Bell, *Relating Indigenous and Settler Identities*, 184.

[72] Alison Jones, "The Limits of Cross-Cultural Dialogue: Pedagogy, Desire, and Absolution in the Classroom," *Educational Theory* 49 (1999): 315.

[73] Jones, "*Ka Whawhai Tonu Mātou*," 7, 9.

[74] This title was used by Ranginui Walker for his Māori history. Ranginui Walker, *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou: Struggle Without End* (Auckland: Penguin, 1990).

[75] Jones, "*Ka Whawhai Tonu Mātou*," 10.

struggle with another is to give active and proper *attention* to the other, to *relate* to the other. Even as an enemy you are *hoariri*—an angry 'friend' you are one with whom it is worth engaging, someone with whom you have a *relationship* of struggle. *Ake ake ake* makes the engagement or relationship *permanent*."[76] The disorientation of the core testimony by the counter-testimony offers possibilities of new orientation in the midst of a complex world. Here is the call to be on the way and in the fray and it is in the midst of the interminable tension that things get more complicated, and more interesting.

BAPTISTS ON THE WAY AND IN THE FRAY IN AOTEAROA

The relational dynamic of Baptist covenantalism has much to offer Baptists in Aotearoa, especially when it is placed in the context of our nation's bi-cultural journey. However, the possibilities remain unrealised as covenanting and relational encounter with Māori as Māori has not played a major part of Baptist identity in Aotearoa. Nonetheless, the context of Aotearoa as a covenanting people offers insight into the relational dynamic of journeying together on the way and in the fray. The journey of orientation, disorientation and new orientation does not offer a pathway to a settled relational destiny that alleviates tension, but an ongoing cyclical journey of intensified covenant life with God and one another. This tension is not a problem that needs solving, but a searching gift in which the quest to know and master the other is relinquished for the sake of encountering the other as other. The unknowability of the divine and human other calls forth an interminable tension which lies at the heart of engagement and encounter on the way and in the fray. This tension, which upholds orientation *and* disorientation, is the generative source of deeper relations and renewed orientations towards God's eschatological purpose to unite all things in Christ.

Like Dare and Holmes, Ani Mikaere suggests that the first step to overcoming the sedimented structures of power is for those with privilege to give up control of decision making and entrust minorities to lead through their own personal agency. Without such trust the minority group is forced to submit to the terms of the majority and the imbalanced norms remain undisturbed by the gospel.[77] In the setting of the covenanted church in Aotearoa, this will mean that power is given over to Māori to lead the church in a process towards greater Gospel faithfulness which Pākehā do not control. The possibilities of this giving up, which is a participation in Christ's ministry and calling, are vast and untapped. However, as Mikaere states in regards to Pākehā dominance, it will take a leap of faith or else the minority will, once again, be assimilated into the *status quo*. Within the church this leap of faith is not only trusting Māori to lead as Māori, it is also a leap of faith in the God who has called us together into one body, in our rich variety, to be his people who display his wise purposes in the world on the way and in the fray.

On a recent noho marae (overnight marae stay), as part of a culture course at Carey Baptist College, Jordyn Rapana, a Māori student, suggested that the kete (traditional Māori flax baskets) offers an image of what it might look like for Māori and non-Māori to be in mutually flourishing relationships. She told us that

---

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ani Mikaere, "Are We All New Zealanders Now? A Māori Response to the Pākehā Quest for Indigeneity," in *Colonising Myths – Māori Realities: He Rukuruku Whakaaro* (Wellington, Huia, 2011), 117.

the kete is made of flax woven together and its strength comes from binding together front to back, over and under. Journeying together means sometimes our perspective and action will be at the back whilst others lead and we follow. Other times, our perspective and action will be at the front whilst others will follow and we lead. As James Liu has stated in regards to identity in Aotearoa, "Everyone should be marginal sometimes; no one should be marginal all the time."[78] It is the relational dynamic of being woven together that gives the journey strength. Here is a possible contextual image of a covenant people who are bound together by God to be on the way and in the fray. At a different marae visit for Carey Baptist College staff, Hohepa Renata, Taurahere Marae Lecturer at Unitec's Te Noho Kotahitanga marae, explained his understanding of biculturalism and multiculturalism by the phrase that Māori sometimes use in speeches to show that the group is united and ready to progress the purpose of coming together: Haumi-ē! Hui-ē! Tāiki-ē![79] He explained that the phrase is employed to bind a meeting together and is based on the image of lashing an axe head and a handle together by binding them with rope—two separate parts bound together as one instrument. What binds the distinct groups together are our shared stories and our willingness to journey together. Jordyn's and Hohepa's imagery offer important possibilities for contextual echoes of Fiddes' covenantal theology and the Baptist anthem, "Blest Be the Ties that Bind." [80]

Baptists in Aotearoa have rich resources from which we might develop a distinct way of being Baptist together in our context. The constructive possibilities of the twin streams of covenanting, the Baptist stream and the bicultural stream, lie ahead of us awaiting realization on the way and in the fray.

---

[78] James Liu, "History and identity: A system of Checks and Balances for Aotearoa/New Zealand," in *New Zealand Identities: Departures and Destinations,* eds. James H. Liu et. al. (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2005), 85.
[79] Māori Dictionary, "Whano, whano! Haramai te toki! Haumi ē! Hui ē! Tāiki ē!"
http://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/13579
[80] I am grateful to David Moko, Kaihuatu of Manatū Iriiri Māori, for his support of this research and the explorations of possible contextual echoes of covenanting.

GEORGE W. TRUETT AND *DIGNITATIS HUMANAE*: SEARCHING FOR A THEOLOGICAL ACCOUNT OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

DEREK C. HATCH, PH.D.

Howard Payne University

Brownwood, TX, USA

One of the signature Baptist theological convictions is religious freedom, considered by many to rest at the heart of genuine Baptist life and faith. Beginning with Thomas Helwys's *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity* (1612), Baptists have held that religious faith should be freely embraced and not coerced. In the twentieth century, many names come to mind regarding Baptist advocacy for this principle, but George W. Truett (1867-1944) has been hailed as perhaps its most prominent voice. Indeed, along with J.M. Dawson and James M. Dunn, Truett, who spent his entire career as a pastor in Texas, stands as the face of this distinctive Baptist emphasis.[1] The details of Truett's life, including his fundraising efforts to save Baylor University, his dedication to the founding of Baylor Hospital in Dallas, as well as his long pastorate at First Baptist Church in Dallas have been masterfully narrated in two biographies, one by his son-in-law, Powhatan James, and a recent volume by Keith Durso.[2] Of course, no event cemented George W. Truett's legacy in Baptist and even American life more than his speech on the U.S. Capitol steps on May 16, 1920[3] during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.[4] Walter Shurden notes that this address is "one of the most often quoted Baptist statements on religious liberty of the twentieth century."[5]

Clearly, Truett's significance exceeds his pastoral role, as is indicated by the numerous buildings and institutions throughout the United States that bear his name.[6] Nonetheless, while the prevalent Baptist narrative concerning religious liberty is well known, it is worth (re)considering it under a specifically theological lens. That is, while religious liberty has appeared in Baptist confessions of faith throughout the centuries, its present form must stand up to theological scrutiny, or else it becomes a distraction from central

---

[1] For more on Dawson, see his *Baptists and the American Republic* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1956); for more on Dunn, see Aaron Douglas Weaver, *James M. Dunn and Soul Freedom* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011).

[2] Powhatan W. James, *George W. Truett: A Biography* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1939); Keith E. Durso, *Thy Will Be Done: A Biography of George W. Truett* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2009).

[3] Cf. J.B. Gambrell, "A Historic Address," *Baptist Standard* 32.23 (June 3, 1920): 1; George W. Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," in *God's Call to America and Other Addresses Comprising Special Orations Delivered on Widely Varying Occasions* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), 28-67. This sermon has been reprinted several times. Cf. George W. Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," *Baptist History and Heritage* 33 (1998): 66-85; George W. Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," in *Proclaiming the Baptist Vision: Religious Liberty*, ed. Walter B. Shurden (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 1997), 61-84. References here will come from *God's Call to America*.

[4] This moment was re-enacted on June 29, 2007 at the Baptist Unity Rally for Religious Liberty at Fountain Plaza of Upper Senate Park, near the US Capitol. The event, sponsored by the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty, included some remarks by several U.S. Congressmen and the recitation of portions of 1920 sermon by nine Baptists. Cf. John Pierce, "Truett's Famed Religious Liberty Sermon Celebrated by Baptists in Nation's Capital," *Baptists Today* 25.8 (August 2007): 4-5.

[5] Walter B. Shurden, "Introduction," in *Proclaiming the Baptist Vision: Religious Liberty*, 5.

[6] For example, Truett-McConnell College in Cleveland, Georgia; Truett Auditorium at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; and George W. Truett Theological Seminary on the campus of Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Christian convictions. With this in mind, we must ask: are all forms of religious freedom the same? If not, how might Truett's articulation of religious liberty be evaluated theologically? Can an alternative account of religious freedom offer theological resources for Baptists that are currently lacking? In this article, Truett's argument for religious liberty and his understanding of the church's participation in democratic societies, which is found primarily (though not only) in his 1920 speech in Washington, will be examined via the theological categories of nature and grace. These terms, which have been used throughout the Christian tradition, point to the relation between the created order and God's economy of grace. After this treatment, this article will propose that, despite the limitations and drawbacks of Truett's form of religious liberty, the idea need not be discarded entirely. Rather, an alternative approach can be found in a more theological account of freedom in the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom, or *Dignitatis Humanae*.

TRUETT AND RELIGIOUS LIBERTY

After a rousing corporate singing of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," Truett delivered that 1920 address, entitled "Baptists and Religious Liberty," to a tremendous audience.[7] One of his most memorable statements from the speech was that "the supreme contribution of the new world to the old is the contribution of religious liberty. This is the chiefest [*sic*] contribution that America has thus far made to civilization. And historic justice compels me to say that it was pre-eminently a Baptist contribution."[8] Truett's speech remains one of the hallmarks of Baptist advocacy in this area. Virtually all articles and book chapters on the subject of Baptists and religious liberty at least mention this speech, and several treatments are relatively lengthy. In a note at the conclusion of the 1998 reprinting of Truett's address, an editor of *Baptist History and Heritage* declared that Truett's words from the Capitol steps are "a powerful statement of Baptist beliefs," and that they "[remind] Baptists of foundational principles and [defend] them eloquently and passionately."[9] Thus, Truett is generally remembered as a prominent exemplar of this "Baptist distinctive," one that has increasingly been elevated by some Baptists. Not surprisingly, Truett's address is congruent with several aspects of Baptist discourse at that time. Within the speech itself and Truett's thought as a whole, a love of democratic freedom emerges as paramount, one that dovetails nicely with Truett's (and prevailing Baptist) thought about personal salvation.[10]

For Truett, personal salvation places the focus on the individual who privately believes. He saw this emphasis as grounded in the Bible, stating, "When we turn to this New Testament, which is Christ's guidebook and law for His people, we find that supreme emphasis is everywhere put upon the individual."[11]

---

[7] James, 1-2. Cf. Dawson, *Baptists and the American Republic*, 22; E.W. Stephens, "At Washington with the Southern Baptists," *The Baptist* 1 (May 29, 1920): 8.
[8] Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," 32.
[9] See editor's note in Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," *Baptist History and Heritage*, 85.
[10] See Lee Canipe, "The Echoes of Baptist Democracy: George Truett's Sermon at the U.S. Capitol as Patriotic Apology," *American Baptist Quarterly* 21.4 (December 2002): 418.
[11] Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," 38.

Moreover, Truett elevated the individual's ability to read and interpret for him or herself, describing this as a right that was anthropologically grounded: "The right to private judgment is the crown jewel of humanity, and for any person or institution to dare to come between the soul and God is a blasphemous impertinence and a defamation of the crown rights of the Son of God."[12] Ultimately, along with fellow Southern Baptist E.Y. Mullins, Truett advocated for a direct approach to God: "Everyone must give account of himself to God. There can be no sponsors or deputies or proxies in such a vital matter."[13] Consequently, religious liberty was firmly grounded in the freedom of the individual's conscience to pursue voluntary and uncoerced belief (or lack of belief), a point that Truett makes in contrasting absolute liberty to toleration.[14]

Spurning any ecclesiology that produced a hierarchy of authority, Truett saw democracy as the hope of the church: "Christ's church is not only a spiritual body but it is also a pure democracy, all its members being equal."[15] Viewed through his focus on individualism in religion, Truett underwrites a form of political atomism, where each person and his or her actions are to be isolated as much as possible. In this way, liberty of conscience indicates that no other person can determine the truth for another, which is why toleration of others' religious beliefs is insufficient. Thus, Truett labeled the Protestant Reformation as an "arrested development," because the Reformers "turned out to be persecutors like the Papacy before them."[16] For him, then, the United States, despite retaining some of the remnants of church-state union, became a truly remarkable site where genuine religious and civil liberty could take root and flourish as the fruits of democracy, and, according to Truett, this was "pre-eminently a Baptist achievement."[17]

Truett understood separation of church and state to produce two separate realms with different functions.[18] After dividing the functions of church and state, he notes the implications of this division for Christians: "We are members of the two realms, the civil and the religious, and are faithfully to render unto each all that each should receive at our hands."[19] Consequently, each person has responsibilities to fulfill in both the religious and the civil realms. According to Truett, one does not supersede the other. Moreover, he does not indicate that these two realms will ever conflict with one another. That is, once separated, the state will never tread on the church's liberty.

With his emphasis on democracy over autocracy, both the civil and the religious arenas are constituted by individuals who participate in two different democracies, one for citizens and the other for believers. Truett's argument for the separation of church and state resonates quite strongly with the work of English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704). Moreover, even though no evidence can be provided that

---

[12] Ibid., 39.

[13] Ibid., 38. Truett stated in 1939: "The late President Mullins … affirms the competency of the individual, under God, in matters of religion…. Religion is a matter of personal relationship between the soul and God, and nothing extraneous may properly intrude here" (Truett, "The Baptist Message and Mission for the World Today," 113).

[14] "Toleration implies that somebody falsely claims the right to tolerate. Toleration is a concession, while liberty is a right. Toleration is a gift from man, while liberty is a gift from God" (Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," 33).

[15] Ibid., 42.

[16] Ibid., 48.

[17] Ibid., 50.

[18] Ibid., 43. To make this point, Truett references Matthew 22:21 ("Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's"; NRSV) and John 18:36 ("My kingdom is not from this world"; NRSV).

[19] Ibid., 53.

Truett actually read Locke, when viewed alongside one another, Locke clarifies and sharpens Truett's argument for religious liberty, perhaps standing far in the background of Truett's thought (i.e., influencing those whom Truett did read).

Locke argues that church and state should be understood as separate entities: "There is a twofold society, of which almost all men in the world are members, and that from the twofold concernment they have to attain a twofold happiness: viz. that of this world and that of the other: and hence there arises these two following societies, viz. religious and civil."[20] Following this statement, Locke systematically details the difference between "religious society, or the church" and "civil society, or the state," linking the civil sphere to the operations of the state and the religious sphere to the church.[21] In addition, Locke argues that the political point of departure (i.e., the state of nature) was one of individuality. Society, then, is constructed when "individuals come together on the basis of a social *contract*, each individual entering society in order to protect person and property."[22]

Two important points emerge from this discussion. First, civil government cannot decide on the truth of various religious claims since they are internal to each individual.[23] Second, religion is grounded in the individual who has been convinced of the truth of a particular tradition.[24] Because of this, churches serve as associations of like-minded people, choosing to assemble with one another for worship, an understanding which serves to undercut any substantive social nature of the church.[25] Finally, Locke's political philosophy offers a body/soul dichotomy,[26] articulating church/state separation so as to locate all genuine political activity in the state-centered public arena (i.e., as statecraft), leaving the church as an (apparently) apolitical, private entity concerned only for the salvation of souls.[27]

Echoing Locke, Truett argues that church and state must never be joined because the individual's liberty of conscience would be violated. He also employs a separation between body and soul, implying that responsibilities to the state are bodily while those of religion relate to the soul. For instance, while he consistently writes of the soul's uninhibited relation with God, Truett also identifies the causes worthy of giving one's physical life: "The sanctity of womanhood is worth dying for. The safety of childhood is worth

---

[20] John Locke, "On the Difference between Civil and Ecclesiastical Power, Indorsed Excommunication," in *The Life and Letters of John Locke*, ed. Lord Peter King (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1858), 300.

[21] Ibid.

[22] William Cavanaugh, *Theopolitical Imagination: Discovering the Liturgy as a Political Act in an Age of Global Consumerism* (London: T & T Clark, 2002), 17. Cavanaugh notes that a less palatable, though logically similar, description of this state of nature comes from Thomas Hobbes, who argues for individual freedom and equality of all human beings by stating that human beings are in a state of *bellum omnis contra omnem* (i.e., "war of all against all") (Ibid.)

[23] Locke did, however, argue against religious toleration for Catholics and atheists.

[24] "All the life and power of true religion consist in the inward and full persuasion of the mind" [Locke, "A Letter Concerning Toleration," in John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 219].

[25] "A church... I take to be a voluntary society of [people], joining themselves together of their own accord in order to the public worshipping of God" (Ibid., 220).

[26] "The care of souls cannot belong to the civil magistrate, because his power consists only in outward force, but true and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind..." (Ibid., 219).

[27] Like Truett, Locke exhibited confidence that this separation would preclude any conflicts between the civil and religious realms: "[I]f each of them [i.e., church and state] would contain itself within its own bounds, the one attending to the worldly welfare of the commonwealth, the other to the salvation of souls, it is impossible that any discord should ever have happened between them" (Ibid., 251).

dying for. . . . The integrity of one's country is worth dying for. *And, please God, the freedom and honour of the United States is worth dying for.*"[28] Curiously, Truett does not mention the Christian faith as worthy of similar bodily sacrifice.

With this divide between the body and soul, the church is left with no concerns for external (i.e., "worldly") affairs, only with saving souls. The church, as seen with Locke, is constituted as an association of like-minded individuals. Not surprisingly, Truett views Baptists as remarkably good citizens: "Happily, the record of our Baptist people toward civil government has been a record of unfading honour. Their love and loyalty to country have not been put to shame in any land."[29] Indeed, Truett does not seem to allow for the possibility that church and state might be counterposed, that love for country could come into conflict with love for Christ. Thus, rather than viewing them as opponents, he discusses the missions of church and state by using the same terminology, setting them up as parallel entities: "Democracy is the goal toward which all feet are travelling [*sic*], whether in state or in church."[30] Freedom, then, is the rhetorical link between the civil and religious spheres, as one scholar has noted: "Baptists stood for freedom in the spiritual realm, America stood for freedom in the political realm."[31] In other words, Truett was fully Baptist and fully American, indicating that the temporal and spiritual realms were separate, even if they were also parallel.

In theological terms, Truett's thought reflects a dualism between nature and grace. That is, without using these categories specifically, Truett tacitly segregated the sacred from the secular, the temporal from the spiritual. This manifests itself in a variety of ways. First, Truett deploys a dichotomy between citizen and believer, using the words of Jesus to justify this dualism. As he stated on numerous occasions, the separation of church and state is predicated upon a sharp divide between the religious and the civil realms. Even though he envisioned both arenas as democracies, they were never to be intertwined or intersect at any point. Each governed one aspect of human existence in separation from the other (e.g., body divided from soul).

Second, Truett's extrinsic relationship between nature and grace is most clearly evident in his notion of freedom. Freedom for Truett meant non-interference when linked to concepts such as soul competency and individualism, which encourage caution toward social entities (e.g., church) that might usurp the proper autonomy of the individual. This bears closer resemblance to liberal democratic concepts of freedom than a positive (i.e., more teleological) view of freedom. In other words, Truett maintained a concept of freedom that is more oriented toward freedom *from*, namely, a juridical-negative form of freedom.

Third, for Truett, the goal was to safeguard the freedom of individual conscience by removing any obstacles to the individual soul's relationship with God, but while Truett argued for a "free church in a free state," his understanding of the church as an association of like-minded individuals actually left the church as a non-public entity. Truett's emphasis on individual salvation, combined with liberty of individual conscience undercuts any freedom for the church to be a formative community. Instead, other sociopolitical

---

[28] Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," 57; emphasis added.

[29] Ibid., 53.

[30] Ibid., 65. In another sermon, he writes that democracy "is the goal for this world of ours – both the political goal and the religious goal" [George W. Truett, "The Prayer Jesus Refused to Pray," in *Follow Thou Me* (Nashville: Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1932), 43.

[31] Canipe, "The Echoes of Baptist Democracy," 420.

institutions (e.g., schools, American political parties and processes, economic structures and practices) and their respective ends (e.g., citizenship, profitability) garner virtually all influence of this sort. Thus, not only is citizen divided from believer, but in the temporal realm (which has rather expansive boundaries), the role of citizen (and even consumer) supersedes that of believer.

Therefore, Truett's arguments for the separation of church and state can lead Baptists to look to the nation-state as the arena of genuine political activity and ultimate guarantor of religious freedom. The church, while not entirely eliminated, is left without a politics, except insofar as it can facilitate the civil realm's achievement of its natural, political ends. Thus, Truett would benefit from a more theological notion of freedom. That is, what he lacks is a sense of the purpose of freedom (i.e., freedom *for*). Such an understanding of freedom would address the nature/grace relationship by treating the culture-forming aspects of grace that Truett neglects. Moreover, the church could play a significant role within that culture, forming the lives of Christians into conformity with the life and witness of Jesus and serving as a witness to the corporate body of Christ. This deficiency, then, is serious and requires thorough remedy, though this will take place by gesturing toward non-Baptist resources in developing a theological account of freedom that maintains an affirmation of religious liberty (i.e., non-coercion in matters religious) but also attends to the gaps in Truett's arguments.

TRUETT AND *DIGNITATIS HUMANAE*

Despite the observed problems with Truett's understanding of religious liberty, this does not mean that the concept need be abandoned altogether. Rather, an alternative to the extrinsic construal of the relationship between nature and grace can bolster efforts to put forth a theological account of freedom that could re-envision religious liberty. The groundwork for such work is found in portions of the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae* (1965). At first glance, however, placing Truett in conversation with a Catholic text might seem strange. In fact, like many of his Baptist (and Protestant) coreligionists, Truett was suspicious of Catholicism. That is to say, while his ideas cannot be reduced to mere anti-Catholicism, Truett was certainly representative of the pervasive Baptist anti-Catholic sentiments of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[32] Therefore, before discussing insights regarding a theological account of religious liberty found in *Dignitatis Humanae*, it is necessary to briefly describe the attitudes about Catholics shared by Truett and most Baptists of his time.

Extending from his emphasis on individualism, which he positioned against "absolutism," Truett saw democracy as opposed to what he considered to be autocracy, with little possibility for compromise. Even within the famous 1920 address, Truett saw the Catholic Church as antithetical to Baptist and even American ideals: "The Roman Catholic message is sacerdotal, sacramentarian and ecclesiastical. . . . The

---

[32] For more information, see Lee Canipe, *A Baptist Democracy: Separating God from Caesar in the Land of the Free* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2011), 138-39.

Baptist message is non-sacerdotal, non-sacramentarian and non-ecclesiastical."[33] Consequently, Truett counterposed the Catholic dogma of papal infallibility to individual interpretation of the New Testament.[34] According to Truett, not only did papal infallibility threaten unimpeded individual access to God by solidifying the place of the pope and the episcopal hierarchy as obstacles between the individual and God, but it also stood as a constituent part of the barrier to democratic religious freedom presented by the Catholic Church. Thus, Catholicism stands as the prime example of autocracy (of a spiritual variety) that is to be avoided.

In a 1939 speech in Atlanta, Truett elaborated: "Baptists are in conscience compelled to reject and oppose sacerdotalism that puts a priest between a soul and Christ; and sacramentarianism that makes external ordinances in themselves, vehicles of grace; and ecclesiasticism that puts a church between a sinner and salvation."[35] In short, even though Truett (echoing his Baptist forebears) defended Catholics' ability to practice their faith without imposing it on others, he saw Catholicism as in error and viewed Catholics as an "other" that stood on the fringe of (American) society.[36]

Further, Truett's views were not unique. They were also represented by the work of his friend J.M. Dawson and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs (BJCPA), where opposition to Catholicism was a prime concern during the first half of the twentieth century. According to Baptist historian Robert Torbet, the offices of the BJCPA were "strategically located where there is need for Baptists to defend religious liberty by raising their voices against encroachments of the state upon the church, and against what Baptists regard as Roman Catholic aggression in behalf of sectarianism in education and political favor."[37] Moreover, Dawson and many Baptists were associated with another group—Protestants and Other Americans for the Separation of Church and State (POAU)—for which Paul Blanshard, an anti-Catholic secularist, was a

---

[33] Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," 36; such words were repeated in 1939 at the Sixth Baptist World Congress in Truett's speech, "The Baptist Message and Mission for the World Today."

[34] "You recall that in the midst of all the tenseness and tumult of that excited assemblage [at the First Vatican Council], Cardinal Manning stood on an elevated platform, and in the paper just passed, declaring for the infallibility of the Pope, said, 'Let all the world go to bits and we will reconstruct it on this paper'... But what is the answer of a Baptist to the contention made by the Catholic for papal infallibility? Holding aloft a little book, the name of which is the New Testament, and without any hesitation or doubt, the Baptist shouts his battle cry: 'Let all the world go to bits and we will reconstruct it on the New Testament'" (Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," 37-38). It should be pointed out that the First Vatican Council did not initiate the Catholic understanding of papal infallibility; it dogmatically defined it. Further, the definition issued requirements that restrict the papal statements that are considered to be infallibly promulgated. That is, the definition of papal infallibility of 1870, while it was intended to solidify the papacy as an authoritative arbiter of ecclesial disputes, actually made it possible for Catholics to better distinguish between infallible statements and those that were authoritative to a lesser degree.

[35] Truett, "The Baptist Message and Mission for the World Today," 112.

[36] Recent Baptist scholars have attempted to distance themselves from Truett's apparent anti-Catholic sentiments. See the editor's note in Truett, "Baptists and Religious Liberty," *Baptist History and Heritage*, 85; and Walter B. Shurden, "Introduction," 5-6. While Canipe is dubious of these attempts to "decontextualize Truett's remarks in the name of ecumenism" (Canipe, "The Echoes of Baptist Democracy," 430n34), J. David Holcomb has offered a more sustained defense of Truett. See J. David Holcomb, "A Millstone Hanged about His Neck?: George W. Truett, Anti-Catholicism, and Baptist Conceptions of Religious Liberty," *Baptist History and Heritage* 43.3 (Summer/Fall 2008): 68-81.

[37] Robert G. Torbet, *A History of the Baptists*, 3d ed. (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1963), 455. Much of the concerns in this era centered on two Supreme Court cases, *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947) and *McCollum v. Board of Education* (1948). For more on these cases, see John T. McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 183-85.

lawyer.[38] Like the later POAU, Truett and many of his Baptist contemporaries held suspicions about Catholics in the United States, wondering if they "really believed" in the separation of church and state, concerns that some Catholics constantly felt obligated to refute,[39] and Dawson stated that those who did not hold to strict separation had "failed to become thoroughly Americanized."[40]

With this background in place, engagement of *Dignitatis Humanae* can proceed. The Declaration on Religious Freedom was promulgated by Pope Paul VI on December 7, 1965, emerging from several years of tense discussions and debates. The first half of the document (§1-8), with one exception, frames religious freedom within a constitutional argument, discussing the proper function of government and religious freedom as part of that role. Here, in language reminiscent of the First Amendment, the "free exercise of religion" is supported, and non-interference on the part of civil government is enjoined so that individual rights can be protected (§3, 6). Religious communities have freedom within society, then, to educate their adherents (including children) accordingly, with no danger of infringement by the state, except in cases where the public order is violated (§4-7). The goal of such a defense of religious freedom as a right is the protection of the "common welfare" and "genuine public peace" (§7).

The second half of the declaration is clearly more theological and notes the ways in which religious freedom aligns with the Christian tradition broadly and orthodox doctrine in particular. As the document states, "religious freedom in society is entirely consonant with the freedom of the act of Christian faith" (§9). This act of faith, though, is situated within the context of the believing church, countering any move to privatize free exercise of faith (§10). More importantly, the second half of the document proclaims that religious freedom is grounded in the life and witness of Jesus and the apostles, making discipleship the primary way to embody this liberty (§9, 11). Indeed, "the Church is following the way of Christ and the apostles when she recognizes and gives support to the principle of religious freedom as befitting the dignity of man and as being in accord with divine revelation" (§12). Finally, religious freedom underscores the fact that the church has freedom to work for the "fulfillment of her divine mission" in the world (§13-14), which may result in martyrdom when the powers of the world do not receive the church's witness favorably (§11).

While *Dignitatis Humanae* stands as a single declaration, it clearly has two arguments for religious liberty, both of which are evident in the history of its composition.[41] The first is represented by American Jesuit John Courtney Murray and other Catholics from the United States. This group put forth an account of a religious liberty that was juridical, constitutional, and linked to American-styled arguments for negative freedom. After the Declaration was promulgated, Murray further worked to ensure that the juridical

---

[38] Several articles written by POAU leaders were printed in the *Baptist Standard*, a newspaper for Texas Baptists.

[39] American Jesuit John Courtney Murray seemed to know this experience well: "It is customary to put to Catholics what is supposed to be an embarrassing question: Do you really believe in the first two provisions of the First Amendment?" [John Courtney Murray, S.J., *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* (Lanham, Md.: Sheed & Ward, 1960; reprint, Lanham, Md.: Sheed & Ward, 2005), 62].

[40] Joseph Martin Dawson, "Temptations of the Churches," *Baptist Standard* (July 25, 1955): 6.

[41] For more about this process, see Agnes de Dreuzy, "*Dignitatis Humanae* as an Encounter Between Two 'Towering Theologians': John Courtney Murray, S.J., and Yves Congar, O.P.," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 24 (Winter 2006): 33-44. Stanley Hauerwas has described the declaration as having a distinctly divided mind [Stanley Hauerwas, "Not Late Enough: The Divided Mind of *Dignitatis Humanae Personae*," in *A Better Hope: Resources for a Church Confronting Capitalism, Democracy, and Postmodernity* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2000), 110].

perspective was given primacy in reading the document. In 1966, Murray participated in an interfaith conference at Notre Dame regarding the developments of the Second Vatican Council. Murray's task was to discuss *Dignitatis Humanae*:

> [T]he Declaration presents the content or object of the right to religious freedom as simply negative, namely immunity from coercion in religious matters. Thus the Declaration moves onto the solid ground of the constitutional tradition of the West, whose development, in what concerns religious freedom, was first effected by the Constitution of the United States in 1789 and by the First Amendment in 1791.[42]

This was consistent with Murray's other remarks about the Declaration after the Council. Commenting on the text of the document elsewhere, Murray wrote, "[I]n assigning a negative content to the right to religious freedom (that is, in making it formally a 'freedom from' and not a 'freedom for'), the Declaration is in harmony with the sense of the First Amendment to the American Constitution."[43]

Likely due to his vociferous support for the juridical emphasis within the first half of the declaration, many commentators have viewed *Dignitatis Humanae* as a vindication of Murray's work. Murray attempted to shift Catholic conversations about the relationship between church and state. Previously, Catholic teaching had preferred an established union between church and state formalized through concordats. These agreements, along with territories acrtually governed and controlled by the Vatican, granted to the church substantial temporal power. When this arrangement was challenged, the Catholic Church persisted in holding on to it. Most prominently, in the *Syllabus of Errors* (1864), Pope Pius IX condemned the proposition that church and state should be separate from one another.[44] While there were principled reasons for this response, the situation in Europe in the nineteenth century also contributed to such a stance by the Catholic Church. Disestablishment of church and state in France resulted in radical anti-clerical sentiment that challenged any sizeable presence of the church in the region. Meanwhile in Germany, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* brought restrictions on Catholic activities in that country.

In light of these changing circumstances, what developed among Catholic scholars was an understanding of church/state relations where the ideal construal, or the "thesis," was a church/state harmony, but certain, limited historical circumstances could produce an acceptable, though restricted, alternative, or "hypothesis."[45] A prolific writer, Murray argued that the United States' nonestablishmentarian

---

[42] John Courtney Murray, "The Declaration on Religious Freedom," in *Vatican II: An Interfaith Appraisal*, ed. John M. Miller (Notre Dame: Associated Press, 1966), 568.

[43] John Courtney Murray, "Religious Freedom," in *The Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Walter M. Abbott (New York: Herder & Herder, 1966), 678n5.

[44] *Syllabus of Errors*, §55.

[45] In the late nineteenth century, several American Catholic prelates (e.g., James Cardinal Gibbons, John Ireland, John Keane), influenced by Isaac Hecker and Orestes Brownson, sought to deploy the "hypothesis" notion in the United States in order to make the embrace of American-style democracy (including separation of church and state) more possible. The efforts of these "Americanists" were effectively ended with the promulgation of Leo XIII's 1899 encyclical *Testem Benevolentiae*. Interestingly, William Portier notes that this "thesis/hypothesis" distinction originated with Félix Dupanloup (1802-1878), a French bishop, in response to the *Syllabus of Errors*, an interpretation that was commended by Pius IX [William L. Portier, "Theology of Manners as Theology of Containment: John Courtney Murray and *Dignitatis Humanae* Forty Years After," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 24 (Winter 2006): 85].

situation—i.e., never having an officially established church—set it apart from disestablishment (also called laicist) contexts such as France. His positions regarding church and state, however, caused suspicion in the U.S. and in Rome, prompting his Jesuit superiors to ask him to cease writing on the topic in 1955.[46] His invitation as a *peritus* at the Second Vatican Council signaled to many a rehabilitation of Murray and his ideas.

However, as has been noted, the juridical/constitutional argument for religious freedom is not the only one found in *Dignitatis Humanae*. The theological argument of the second half of the document was represented by Dominican Yves Congar and other French participants, who emphasized that religious freedom was grounded in revelation (and teleology). This approach employed Scripture much more (fourteen total references) than its constitutional counterpart (only one reference). Specifically, "Congar suggested that after a short introduction there should be a section on the biblical concept of freedom, starting with the idea of the original freedom given by God to humanity and of the development of the history of salvation."[47]

French-speaking theologians, such as René Coste, continued their work following the Council, attempting to either invert the arguments within the declaration or move beyond the document altogether.[48] These theologians, while sharing Americans' displeasure with church/state union, had a much different experience within France than Murray in the United States. Joseph Komonchak has described theology in France during the early twentieth-century as a discourse in exile.[49] Thus, theologians who emerged from this context (including Congar, Coste, and Jesuit Henri de Lubac) had to navigate the church/state union proposed by the pro-fascist French nationalist movement *Action Française* and the radical division between church and state advocated by the anti-clerical Third Republic. Murray, having only experienced the favorable conditions for religion in the United States (under church/state nonestablishment), was not able to conceive of the dangers of certain forms of church/state division in the same way as his French coreligionists. In a similar manner, Truett, whose advocacy for religious liberty in the United States goes so far as to situate both church and state along parallel tracks of freedom, does not acknowledge the potential pitfalls to his account of church/state separation.

Thus, rather than the negative freedom of the first half of *Dignitatis Humanae*, a more theological account of freedom must be embraced. The foundation of this account can be founded upon section 11 of the Declaration, which grounds non-coercion in discipleship to the life of Jesus. This, as intended by the French-speaking theologians at the Council, initiates the discussion of religious liberty within Christocentric biblical revelation. In many ways, this resonates with the affirmation of the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*) §22: "Christ, the final Adam,

---

[46] McGreevy, *Catholicism and American Freedom*, 208.

[47] Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph A. Komonchak, eds., *History of Vatican II* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2003), 4:535.

[48] Cf. René Coste, *Théologie de la liberté religeuse: Liberté de conscience, liberté de religion* (Gembloux: J. Duculot, 1969). For more on some of the efforts of these French-speaking theologians, see Hermínio Rico, S.J., *John Paul II and the Legacy of* Dignitatis Humanae (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2002), 41-51.

[49] See Joseph A. Komonchak, "Theology and Culture at Mid-Century: The Example of Henri de Lubac," *Theological Studies* 51 (1990): 579-602.

by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear."[50] In other words, Christ displays what it means to be authentically human, providing a *telos* for human existence. As the Declaration states, "God has regard for the dignity of the human person who He himself created" (§11). Thus, efforts to ground religious freedom in anthropology and nature without a link to a Christologically-shaped doctrine of creation are deficient and disordered. Therefore, in terms of nature and grace, an extrinsic link between the two is rejected by underscoring the ways in which revelation speaks to the truth of nature and the relationships found therein. Put differently, religious freedom cannot be established on the merits and dignity of the human person or society alone. Rather, the content of revelation discloses the true reality of both nature and grace, with religious freedom's shape and significance illuminated by the intrinsic relationship between the natural and the supernatural.

RELIGIOUS LIBERTY, NATURE/GRACE, AND THE BAPTIST DILEMMA

Once this theological form of freedom, based on an intrinsic construal of nature and grace, is embraced, markedly different cultural results are produced without compromising Truett's initial goal of resisting formal union between church and state.[51] Of course, establishment of a state church is still rightly avoided, guaranteeing non-coercion in religious matters. Moreover, the church is still enabled to pursue its mission, but this will involve a more critical, though no less engaging, role within the world. That is, discourse concerning freedom will not be viewed as outside the church's competence (i.e., it is not simply a juridical, constitutional issue). With Truett, the church's freedom was restricted in the temporal realm by a dualistic relationship between nature and grace. The parallel trajectories of citizen and believer left the church as an apolitical entity, resting on statecraft as the only avenue for a viable political voice within society. By contrast, when nature and grace, while distinct, maintain an intrinsic relationship, the political is not disconnected from the theological. In other words, rather than simply establishing the church as free from state control, the church is free for embodying a way of life faithful to Christ. Along these lines, de Lubac writes,

> The authority of the Church is entirely spiritual and is exercised only on consciences. But it does not follow that there are areas of thought or human activity that ought to be, a priori, closed to it. Because there is no activity, however profane it may appear, where the Faith and morality guarded by the Church cannot in one way or another, one day or another, be involved. Christianity is universal not only in the sense that all men have their Savior in Jesus Christ but also in the sense that *all of man* has salvation in Jesus Christ. . . . And it is hard to see why "politics" should be an exception to this principle.[52]

---

[50] *Gaudium et Spes*, §22.

[51] Cf. David L. Schindler, *Heart of the World, Center of the Church:* Communio *Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 84.

[52] Henri de Lubac, "The Authority of the Church in Temporal Matters, Supplement: The Church's Invention in the Temporal Order," in *Theological Fragments*, trans. Rebecca Howell Balinski (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 230.

Therefore, theology can and should have purchase on contemporary sociopolitical concerns within the communal witness of the church. For example, the justification of a war (or the condemnation of a particular military action) would not be offered simply on the basis of national goals and interests. Instead, the means and ends of particular moments of military action should be examined and evaluated through a theological lens that, among other questions, asks whether violence is part of the church's discipleship to the crucified Lord.

Moreover, as evident from the quote by de Lubac, conscience retains an important role within theological anthropology, though it is not the virtually unfettered individual conscience found in Truett's thought. Instead, through the formative influence of the church, conscience is ordered toward the good and subject to supernatural direction.[53] Along with the corporate political witness of the church, individual Christians, fashioned in the church and inhabiting society, act as a leavening influence that shapes political structures and decisions, enacting social renewal more subtly. In this manner, de Lubac notes that the church has power "in temporal matters," without ascribing to it any form of power over the temporal. The church is not privatized, but formal church/state union is also avoided.

Further, closer contextual examination reveals de Lubac and his French co-religionists to be a timely resource for Baptists arguing for religious liberty. Truett's assessment of the United States' political landscape, even if it accurately reflected his own era, does not best fit the present circumstances of late modernity. In other words, the appeals to consensus and parallel trajectories of freedom found in Truett's thought no longer have the same relevance. Instead, fragmentation and hyperdiversity characterize American society, with clear problems even for constitutional interpretation. The French Catholic context that gave rise to the second half of *Dignitatis Humanae*, however, has much more resonance with ecclesial existence in late modernity. France, in the first half of the twentieth century, was hostile to Christianity through legal acts to separate church and state, even to the point of exiling the Jesuits' institutions of theological education from mainland France to England.[54] Moreover, Catholics' theological positions had significant bearing on his context during the Second World War. For instance, because of his theological convictions, de Lubac participated in what he called "spiritual resistance to nazism."[55] Through this and his previous work, de Lubac theologically criticized political options such as *Action Française* and Nazism itself, noting how the extrinsic relationship between nature and grace had made these political movements possible.[56] The emphasis, then, is not on whether theology and politics intertwine, but the precise nature of that entanglement and whether it coheres with the shape of Christocentric politics within the church.

---

[53] Cf. de Lubac, "The Authority of the Church in Temporal Matters," 213.

[54] The Act of Separation of Church and State, passed in December 1905, formally ended the Concordat between the Catholic Church and the French Third Republic, effectually establishing secularism (or *laïcité*) in France. Cf. Stephen Schloesser, *Jazz Age Catholicism: Mystic Modernism in Postwar Paris, 1919-1933* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 53.

[55] For more on this period in de Lubac's life and his contributions to *Cahiers du Témoignage catholique*, see Henri de Lubac, *At the Service of the Church: Henri de Lubac Reflects on the Circumstances that Occasioned His Writings*, trans. Anne Elizabeth Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 50-55, and Henri de Lubac, *Christian Resistance to Anti-Semitism, Memories from 1940-1944*. Trans. Elizabeth Englund, O.C.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), esp. 131-145.

[56] Cf. Schindler, 64n18.

Baptists today face a pluralistic context that, while different in key ways, more closely resembles the situation of the French Third Republic than that of Truett's United States. That is, contemporary Baptists are more likely to encounter indifference and hostility regarding the public significance of the Christian faith than consensus and acclaim. Accordingly, it is not uncommon to describe the church's position within late modern American society as one of exile. Likewise, Baptists would do well to temper the use of Truett's voice on matters of religious liberty and learn from twentieth-century Catholics (such as de Lubac and Congar) who have navigated the Scylla of overt and formal church/state union and the Charybdis of complete privatization of the Christian faith. Because they have inhabited and interacted with a context such as this, their experiences are instructive for Baptists as they present particular insights for living as what Pierre Colin has called "the presence and exercise of a spiritual power in a pluralist society."[57]

---

[57] Pierre Colin, *L'audace et le soupçon: la crise moderniste dans le catholicisme français (1893-1914)* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1997), 267; cited and translated in C.J.T. Talar, "Swearing Against Modernism: *Sacrorum Antistitum* (September 1, 1910)," *Theological Studies* 71.3 (September 2010): 547. While these words by Colin describe the Modernist crisis of the early twentieth-century, he also notes that this crisis is the matrix of modern Catholic theology, underscoring its staying power for describing the contemporary context.

CREATING PASTORAL CARE STRATEGIES FOR CHURCHES IN THE 21ST CENTURY: THE ORGANIC PROCESS OF DEVELOPING THE PASTORAL CARE PLAN FOR ST PAUL'S SYMONDS STREET, AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND

PHILIP JOHN HALSTEAD

Carey Baptist College

Auckland, New Zealand

.

St Paul's Symonds Street, Auckland was faced with a unique challenge in 2008. A number of church parishioners were complaining about the lack of pastoral care that they were receiving and as a result they were grumbling about the church leaders and/or leaving the church. While this criticism and its consequences may not be uncommon in many churches today, the reasons behind it in St Paul's case were. The church had mushroomed from a congregation of around 30 persons in 2004 to approximately 1200 parishioners in 2008. In the light of this exponential growth, the existing church staff—gifted as they were— had understandably struggled to keep up with the care expectations and requirements of the church parishioners.

One initiative that the church leadership implemented in response to this situation was the employment of a designated pastoral care worker. I was the fortunate person to secure this role. Part of my brief was to develop a pastoral care strategy and put it into practice. At the time of this commission, I thought that there would be numerous pastoral care models available for me to glean helpful ideas from, but I was wrong. I was unable to locate a single church pastoral care plan.

Accordingly, I was faced with the challenge of having to create a unique, pertinent, and robust pastoral care strategy that remained true to the Christian origins of pastoral care and yet simultaneously accommodated the needs of the current St Paul's parishioners. This was the genesis of this study out of which the following research question emerged: 'What constitutes an effective church-based pastoral care plan for St Paul's inner-city context?'

In order to craft a helpful response to this question I employed James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead's model and method for theological reflection.[1] This *model* draws relevant information from three important, overlapping sources that inform pastoral decisions—specifically, those of Christian tradition, the community of faith's experience, and the resources of the culture. The *method* describes *how* to gather and then apply relevant information to the given pastoral situation. This entails *attending* to the available data drawn from the sources identified above; generating *assertions* from this information to clarify

---

[1] James D. Whitehead and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead, *Method in Ministry: Theological Reflection and Christian Ministry* (New York: The Seabury Press). Other helpful pastoral methodologies such as Lartey's five-phase *Pastoral Cycle* were considered for this study; however, the Whiteheads' schema provided the most propitious framework for this project. See Emmanuel Y. Lartey, "Practical Theology as a Theological Form," in *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, eds. James Woodward and Stephen Pattison (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 128-34.

and expand one's insight; and then *deciding* upon and implementing the appropriate, practical pastoral strategy.[2]

The Whiteheads' paradigm for theological reflection offers many benefits and encourages researchers to consider relevant insights from a variety of academic disciplines. It helps persons to connect theory with practice. It also enables the good news of the Gospel to be proclaimed effectually in the here and now.[3] And more specifically, it can facilitate positive systemic changes in church cultures such as helping them to become more welcoming and caring communities.

ATTENDING TO THE AVAILABLE DATA

It is no easy task to attend judiciously to the data that can be mined from Christian tradition, the community of faith's experience, and the resources of one's own culture. One reason for this is that researchers need to recognize the importance and depth of each unique source, yet at the same time comprehend how the sources overlap and inform each other. Complicating matters further is the fact that Christian tradition needs to be the paramount source in authentic pastoral care. (For this reason, Christian tradition is afforded the most space below.) Peterson puts it this way: Pastoral caregivers must distinguish between the biblical foundations of pastoral work, which are non-negotiable, and pastoral superstructure, which is ever-changing.[4] Pastoral superstructure equates to the programs and/or actions that caregivers implement in their own contexts.

Christian Tradition and Pastoral Care

Pastoral care can be defined in many ways. Mills argues that every genuine definition of pastoral care has at its core "a way of understanding our relatedness to God and the ingredients or acts which may serve to enhance or detract from that relatedness."[5] At the centre of this claim is the belief that Christian life is grounded in an inner transformation that arises out of faith "in Christ as God and as the inaugurator of a new age."[6] Consequently, pastoral care links directly with pivotal Christian doctrines such as Christology, Soteriology, and Eschatology. It also involves helping persons to lead fruitful lives and to prepare them for their meetings with God post-death.[7]

Viewed in this light, pastoral care is rightly seen as an extension of God's love. Caregivers ought to keep this truth in mind as they think about and offer care. For Peterson, this entails paying "more attention

---

[2] Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry,* 22.
[3] Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry,* 11.
[4] Eugene H. Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992), 11.
[5] Liston O. Mills, "Pastoral Care: History, Traditions, and Definitions," in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling,* ed. Rodney J. Hunter et al (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 836-44, 837.
[6] Mills, *Pastoral Care,* 837.
[7] Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor* (London, The Banner of Truth Trust, 2011), 46.

to what God does than what I do, and then to find, and guide others to find, the daily, weekly, yearly rhythms that would get this awareness in our bones."[8]

Meiburg reveals that the traditional term for pastoral care is the Latin phrase *cura animarum,* which means the care of souls,[9] or Christian soul care.[10] Moon and Benner explain that while "*cura* is most commonly translated "care," it actually contains the idea of both care and cure." Thus, *care* points "to actions designed to support the well-being of something or someone" and *cure* relates "to actions designed to restore well-being that has been lost."[11] *Anima* is "the most common Latin translation of the Hebrew *nephesh* ("breath") and the Greek *psyche* ("soul")."[12] Traditionally, the Christian church has embraced both meanings of *cura*,[13] but this is not always the case today.

In their seminal study of the history of pastoral care, Clebsch and Jaekle argue that pastoral care "consists of helping acts, done by representative Christian persons, directed toward the healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of troubled persons, whose troubles arise in the context of ultimate meanings and concerns."[14]

There are several notable components in this definition. First, pastoral care involves helping acts and accordingly has a pragmatic focus. It grounds religion in present-day realities and specializes in the ordinary. Pastoral care is ministry-in-mufti, which involves a sleeves-rolled-up, hands-on mentality.[15]

Second, pastoral care is carried out by representative Christian persons. These people are recognized as trusted caregivers by their churches; they may or may not be ordained clergy. What matters is that caregivers bring the thinking and wisdom of Christian tradition to the situations they encounter.[16] Interestingly, Stone expands the group of representative Christian persons to the "total Christian community."[17] Given the breadth of people's needs, one can readily understand Stone's stance.

Third, pastoral care is "directed toward the healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling of troubled persons."[18] Accordingly, care is focused on troubled persons and their perennial problems such as grief, loneliness, and depression. Care for these people might involve (a) healing that restores them to greater wholeness; (b) sustaining whereby struggling persons are equipped to endure or transcend their circumstances; (c) guiding where the hurting are assisted to make prudent choices; and (d) reconciling wherein fractured interpersonal and transcendent relationships are re-established.[19] Implicitly, these tasks

---

[8] Eugene H. Peterson, *The Pastor: A Memoir* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 45.

[9] Albert L. Meiburg, "Care of Souls", in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling* (ed. Rodney J. Hunter et al; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 122.

[10] Gary W. Moon and David G. Benner, "Spiritual Direction and Christian Soul Care," in *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls: A Guide to Christian Approaches and Practices*, eds. Gary W. Moon and David G. Benner (Downers Grove, Il: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 11-28, 11.

[11] Moon and Benner, *Spiritual Direction and Christian Soul Care*, 11.

[12] Meiburg, *Care of Souls*, 122.

[13] Moon and Benner, *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls*, 11.

[14] William Clebsch and Charles Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1964), 4.

[15] Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work,* 1.

[16] Clebsch and Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective*, 4.

[17] Howard W. Stone, *The Caring Church: A Guide for Lay Pastoral Care* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 14.

[18] Clebsch and Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective*, 1.

[19] Ibid., 8-9.

accentuate the importance of problem-solving in pastoral care.[20] While few would disagree with this emphasis, it is noteworthy that it can prove to be problematic for caregivers and the recipients of care, because many situations cannot ostensibly be solved.

A fourth point that can be drawn from Clebsch and Jaekle's definition of pastoral care is that people's troubles need to be *meaningful*. For Clebsch and Jaekle, this means that authentic pastoral care only takes place when individuals' existential concerns are being addressed and when the recipients of care acknowledge that the care is being given by representative Christian persons. The extension of this logic means, for example, that a Christian lawyer who offers helpful legal guidance is not offering genuine pastoral care. This distinction, of course, does not render the lawyer's assistance as being unhelpful or uncaring.[21] Similarly, secular organizations that claim they offer pastoral care cannot by definition be doing so, because their care does not have overt Christian connections. What these organizations offer is care. It also needs to be acknowledged that caregivers oriented towards practical works may feel constrained by the specificity of Clebsch and Jaekle's condition.

Clinebell provides a more expansive definition of pastoral care. He defines it as "the broad, inclusive ministry of healing and growth within a congregation and its community, through the life cycle."[22] Inherent in this definition and the liberation-growth model that it represents are a number of important themes.[23] For instance, Clinebell argues that the "overarching goal of all pastoral care and counseling (and of all ministry) is to liberate, empower, and nurture wholeness centered in Spirit."[24] Thus, while spiritual and ethical guidance lies at the core of pastoral care,[25] caregivers ought to keep in focus a holistic view of pastoral care that facilitates growth in every area of life.

This comprehensive view of pastoral care provides space for everyone to receive care, not just the alleged needy. And surely *everyone* needs to be cared for. Clinebell's definition also compels researchers who wish to effect lasting, holistic change in people's lives to take into account the contexts, families, discourses, and/or systems that persons are immersed in. Reasons that explain this dynamic are compelling. For example, Culbertson argues that systems typically exert immense pressure on individuals to act in accordance with the system's prescribed patterns; systems usually resist change; and individuals in unhealthy systems will normally replicate the systems' destructive actions unless the systems change and/or the individuals leave the systems.[26] Since this latter option can be harmful and hurtful for those who leave the systems, as well as those who remain in them, pastoral caregivers need to be both thoughtful and prayerful as they consider how best to provide care.

---

[20] Emmanuel Y. Lartey, *In Living Colour: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counseling.* 2nd ed. (London: Jessica Kingsley, 2003), 21-22.

[21] Clebsch and Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective*, 6.

[22] Howard Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling: Resources for the Ministry of Healing and Growth.* Rev. and enl. ed. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 26.

[23] For a summary of the themes see Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 26-28.

[24] Ibid., 26.

[25] Ibid.

[26] Philip L. Culbertson, *Caring for God's People: Counseling and Christian Wholeness* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 125.

Maslow makes a related argument. He contends that people cannot achieve satisfactory levels of self-actualization and wholeness if their physiological (e.g., food and shelter), safety (e.g., security and stability), and relational (e.g., love and friendship) needs are not met.[27] Following Maslow's logic, the reach of effective pastoral care must first address people's basic physiological, safety, and relational needs.

An alternative way of describing the scope of pastoral care is to assert that it involves both fence-like and ambulance-like roles. Fence-like actions and/or empowering ministries can be viewed as strategies that prevent people from getting hurt. They range from educating persons against the perils of substance abuse through to participating in liturgical practices.[28] Ambulance-like and/or reparative actions can be understood as ministries that offer care to people who have fallen off a cliff and in the process become hurt. These actions vary from helping people in crises through to visiting individuals in hospital.

Clinebell's definition of pastoral care is also noteworthy for accentuating the life cycle. Clearly, there are many significant events in people's lives that can be prepared for, talked about, celebrated, and/or mourned. These include landmarks such as facing predictable psychological life crises,[29] preparing for parenthood, and making the most of one's so-called retirement. While there will always be cultural and contextual components to milestones of this nature that need to be considered, it is certain that an awareness of them will enhance the quality of care offered.

The Community of Faith's Perspective on Pastoral Care

The Whiteheads argue that the second source that researchers should consult to find suitable data to enhance their theological reflections is that of the researchers' own faith communities. Culbertson concurs and advises that before the church can respond to people's needs effectively, it must first hear and understand their stories.[30]

This motivated me to spend considerable time listening to two groups of people from within the St Paul's community in my first months on staff. The first group comprised the individuals and couples who came to me for pastoral counseling. These people's comments helped me to comprehend the community's most pressing needs. One of these was the common desire to be heard, known, and connected. Another was the prevalence of interpersonal struggles. And a third spotlighted the despondency many people experience concerning (their perceptions of) the Bible's promises not being realized in their own lives.

The second group consisted of around 15 persons who were identified by the priests as people who contributed actively to the church and whose insights were significant. The feedback of these individuals was extremely helpful. For instance, one couple suggested that the church should start regular pre-marriage

---

[27] Abraham H. Maslow, *A Theory of Human Motivation* (Mansfield, CT: Martino Publishing, 2013), 2-9.
[28] Mills, *Pastoral Care*, 836.
[29] Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth & Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968), 92.
[30] Philip L. Culbertson, "The Things We do!" Nurturing the Authority of Men in Ministry," in *The Spirituality of Men: Sixteen Christians Write about their Faith* ed. Philip L. Culbertson (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 221-43.

courses. Several persons expressed their concern about the pressures placed on the priests and their families. And others emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for every parishioner to receive prayer.

I also chose to consult two groups of people outside of the direct St Paul's community. The first comprised a few pastoral caregivers from other church communities. Their chief piece of advice was that I must not attempt to do all the pastoral care-giving myself, because (a) it is impossible for one person to provide all the care; (b) the model is unsustainable; and (c) it prevents other people from using their gifts. They also encouraged me to organize specific care for the church staff, because they deemed that church employees face unique spiritual, relational, and financial pressures. The second group consisted of a number of people who had recently left St Paul's. Sophie, for example, informed me that "no one visited me when I was in hospital for two weeks and someone should have!"[31] And Richard seemed to sum up the feelings of the people from this group when he stated, "I attended the church for years and no one ever talked to me!" Comments like these helped to identify areas that needed to be attended to in the pastoral care plan.

The Resources of Culture and Pastoral Care

The third source that the Whiteheads encourage researchers to mine for data is that of their own cultures. This is no small task given that culture encompasses "every aspect of life, including the delicate fabric of habits, artistic representations, tools, rules of behaviour, moral values, and institutions through which the human community orders its relationships to nature, to other communities and to reality as a whole."[32] In the light of this breadth, the Whiteheads identify "three postures from which the conversation between the religious Tradition and cultural information might begin."[33]

The first posture requires that Christian tradition challenges culture. For the Whiteheads, this entails adopting a prophetic stance whereby sin is identified, repentance and conversion is called for, and oppressive societal voices and structures are challenged. Thus, researchers might pray for prophetic insights, so that they may fathom more accurately what God is saying and doing, and in order to bring God's love and care more effectively to those in need. Stated differently, the creativity, wisdom, and imaginations of theological investigators are often birthed in God's heart and/or people's grief.[34] By keeping such factors in focus, caregivers will be better able to implement the pastoral superstructures and social practices that are required to influence the church and society positively—hence, pastoral counseling comprises part of the pastoral care plan described below.

The second stance spotlights the need for religious communities to examine themselves in the light of the developments within culture.[35] For example, if the international students who study at Auckland's largest two Universities that literally neighbor St Paul's feel regularly excluded from relationships and

---

[31] Pseudonyms are used for the four people cited in this article. Their consent was obtained to use their stories in this context. Quotation marks are utilized to delineate their direct quotes.

[32] Konrad Raiser, "Gospel and Cultures", *International Review of Mission(s)* 83, (1994): 623-29, 623.

[33] Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry,* 70.

[34] Adapted from Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination.* 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 115-19.

[35] Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry,* 70.

opportunities due to their ethnicity, St Paul's parishioners need to examine their own hearts to see if they harbor any prejudicial and/or exclusionary attitudes.[36] Similarly, when the media deifies individualism St Paul's attendees need to examine if they kowtow to the mantra of independence instead of following the biblical model of interdependency.

The third posture accentuates that the church should use the "resources of the culture in pursuit of its own religious mission."[37] For instance, if the church were to ignore the salient insights that the social sciences offer to deepen people's understanding of others, it would be tantamount in some instances to caregivers deliberately choosing to harm and not help the persons entrusted to their care.

It is not difficult to fathom how a working knowledge of the factors discussed above can assist persons to construct pertinent pastoral care plans.

GENERATING ASSERTIONS FROM THE DATA TO CLARIFY AND EXPAND ONE'S INSIGHT

Having listened to the voices of Christian tradition, the community of faith's experience, and the resources of the culture in accordance with the Whiteheads' paradigm, the next stage of the development of the St Paul's pastoral care plan was to conflate the themes and insights into a draft pastoral care plan. What emerged was the 21 point plan described below, which was presented to the church's priests and a few other individuals for feedback and critique. The Whiteheads name this kind of sharing *assertion*. It involves sharing one's "insights and beliefs forcefully, without forcing them on others."[38] The pastoral care plan's points submitted for feedback were:

1. Caring for the priests and their families: While the 21 points are not supposed to portray a level of importance or priority, this first point does acknowledge that church leaders experience unique pressures and that the health of a church depends significantly on the health of its leaders. Caring for the priests and their families is therefore vital to the wellbeing of church attendees. Invariably, such care will need to be shaped in an idiosyncratic fashion for each leader. Still, common features at St Paul's include contacting the priests and their spouses on a regular basis in order to see if they have any specific practical needs or prayer requests in the given season. Care for leaders should also involve encouraging them to attend regular supervision sessions. The importance of supervision cannot be overemphasized. Supervision helps to instill accountability, protect the leaders and their flocks, and prevent burnout. It also provides a forum where ministers can be encouraged, receive input, further their development, and be reminded of the requirements and practices of their governing bodies.[39] The priests' spouses are encouraged to attend regular spiritual direction and/or counseling sessions, as they too are highly valued members of the community, and their welfare affects their partner's ministry.

---

[36] Angelika Halstead and Philip Halstead, "Welcome Home: The Plight of International Students Studying in Auckland," in *But is it Fair? Faith Communities and Social Justice*, ed. Neil Darragh (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2014), 97-105.

[37] Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry,* 71.

[38] Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry,* 90.

[39] Adapted from David Riddell, *The Manual: Living Wisdom Life and Counselling Skills* (Nelson: David Riddell, 2010), 2.12.

2. Caring for the church staff: The wellbeing of the church staff is also essential and clearly has a bearing on the church and its culture. As with the priests, church staff can be the unwitting recipients of transference from church parishioners. Transference involves the involuntary and usually unconscious displacement of people's objects, reactions, and needs that relate to significant individuals from their pasts onto persons (or God) in the present.[40] In other words, transference involves persons redirecting their past feelings for one individual onto another person in the present; thus, in effect, transference is "an error in time".[41] A classic example of transference is where a new church attendee, who has had a poor experience with a children's worker in an earlier church, starts to criticize publically the children's worker of the new church before she or he has had any opportunity to get to know the children's worker and/or observe what the person actually does. For reasons such as this, church staff members need to be supported and cared for. Methods for accomplishing this are similar to the strategies described above for the priests.

3. Pastoral care training for all the staff: Gill-Austern contends that people learn best in community. She is not saying with this that there is no place for solitude, but she is arguing against isolation.[42] Collaborative learning in the inner-city context of St Paul's has ranged from inviting experts from the *Auckland City Mission* to teach staff members how to relate with some of the homeless people who attend church events through to prioritizing the importance of saying thank you to people. This latter point is critical, for not to express gratitude when it is warranted is to offend.[43] Topics covered via pastoral care training build a mutually agreed on foundation and assist in the shaping of a church community.

4. Staff building lay-teams and caring for the team members: Given the size of St Paul's and the giftedness of so many of its members, numerous teams have been developed across the church. One example is the church *Pastoral Care Team,* which is made up of nearly 50 trusted individuals who delight to care for others. The team is regularly sent group e-mails from the church's paid pastoral care staff[44] in which specific opportunities of service are outlined briefly (e.g., "Mr. Smith has been admitted to hospital. Would one of you be able to visit him within the next 24 hours?"). Consistently, one of the team will respond. This person is then given additional information as required and then she or he will respond to the need. Successful as this strategy is in the St Paul's context, it is noteworthy that it would not work in cultures where people expect and want only their ministers to visit them.

5. Empowering a coordinator of pastoral care: It is important to keep key church tasks in focus. As the coordinator of pastoral care at St Paul's, I am expected to ensure that the pastoral care life of the church runs as effectively as possible. This involves responsibilities such as building relationships with professionals that we can refer people onto when our resources and/or skill-sets are exhausted; responding to e-mails and

---

[40] Jan Grant and Jim Crawley, *Transference and Projection: Mirrors to the Self* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2002), 3-4.

[41] John Patton, *Pastoral Counseling: A Ministry of the Church* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983), 171.

[42] Brita L. Gill-Austern, "Pedagogy Under the Influence of Feminism and Womanism," in *Feminist and Womanist Pastoral Theology*, eds., Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore and Brita L. Gill-Austern (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 149-68, 164.

[43] Karl Menninger, *Whatever became of Sin?* (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1973), 143-45.

[44] The St Paul's paid pastoral care team presently consists of three part-time employees.

phone calls; and seeking legal advice if and as needed. It also entails regularly reviewing the church's pastoral care strategies and offerings. This is important, because different needs regularly arise.

6. Developing a Geographical Care Network: St Paul's parishioners are scattered across the city. The role of the Geographical Care leaders, who are known and trusted caregivers in the congregation, is to touch base with and offer care to the church attendees who live in their geographical areas and who want to be part of the system. By this means, people experience palpable care regardless of their so-called neediness, relationships are forged and strengthened, and goodwill is built. The Geographical Care leaders are encouraged to contact the church's pastoral care staff team for assistance whenever they wish to do so. In turn, the pastoral care staff attempt to respond to the needs and at all times extend care to the Geographical Care leaders.

7. Caring for the 99: The man who sought after the lost sheep in Matthew 18: 12-14 was also clearly interested and invested in the other 99 sheep. Too often, the silent majority in churches are overlooked and inadequately cared for. Effectual pastoral care strategies therefore need to involve mechanisms that ensure that care is extended to everyone who attends the church. To do this, it was mooted that the church's pastoral care staff ought to contact everyone on the church database at least a few times per year to enquire after their welfare and their particular needs. A benefit of this scheme is that prayer needs are unearthed and responded to. Contacting church members also gives people a sense of importance, communicates to persons that they are valued by the church, combats isolation, and creates new connections.

8. Developing a welcoming and caring church ethos: First impressions count. St Paul's staff members have frequently been told that the church has failed to welcome and connect meaningfully with visitors (and regular attendees). As a result, welcoming teams have been created and an espresso machine has been installed in the church to provide persons with opportunities to relate with others over a coffee. Similarly, information tables that highlight church activities and existing groups have been established; the importance of welcoming people and caring for them is regularly stated; and the priority of learning people's names is emphasized. While steps of this nature do not ensure success, they demonstrate care. One time-proven means of staying connected with parishioners that St Paul's does not practice, perhaps to our detriment, is to have literal physical pigeonholes for each church member in the church building and to put regular paper notices into them. The idea was brought to my attention by a pastoral care leader of a similar sized church. She informed me that when she sees the cubicles filling up with paper, she takes note, and contacts the individuals to enquire after their welfare.

9. Developing a safe church environment: Caring churches and preachers need to be cognizant of people's emotional, psychological, relational, and physical requirements for safety. While few would disagree with this sentiment, fewer it seems can appropriately create safe spaces for church visitors and regular attendees. This dearth is not surprising. On the one side, Jesus welcomed all and as followers of Jesus we are called to do likewise. Yet on the other side Jesus "was no prophet of "inclusion", for whom the chief virtue was acceptance and the cardinal vice intolerance". Rather, "he was the bringer of "grace", who not only scandously included "anyone" in the fellowship of "open commensality", but made the "intolerable"

demand of repentance and the "condescending" offer of forgiveness."[45] Thus, it is also a gesture of love to share biblical truth with people.[46] Keeping a healthy balance between these important points is no easy task, but by talking about these concepts safer environments that facilitate personal growth can be built.

10. Prioritizing prayer: We believe that a key component of the renaissance that St Paul's has experienced in recent years can be attributed to the church's burgeoning prayer life.[47] At my last count, there were more than 20 distinct prayer ministries in the church. For instance, parishioners can contact the church pastoral care department to place their own prayer requests on the church prayer-line that is sent out by e-mail each week to over 100 church members who have committed to pray for the persons on the prayer-line. The recipients of prayer are also followed up personally by someone within the church's pastoral care department. Many testify to being comforted by these expressions of care. On occasions, people are also cured. Individuals also testify to experiencing physical healing at *The Well*, which is a monthly mid-week prayer meeting at St Paul's designed to create space for people to receive prayer for physical healings.

11. Overt offers of care: To build the ethos of pastoral care across the church it was determined to offer care overtly to church attendees on a regular basis. One means of doing this is that the preachers frequently encourage people to make contact with the pastoral care department to arrange one-to-one pastoral counseling sessions and/or to take part in the church's pastoral care courses (see below).

12. Pastoral counseling: St Paul's offers free pastoral counseling to its parishioners. Many individuals, couples, and families take hold of this opportunity. Pastoral counseling can be viewed as a sub-set of pastoral care. It focuses on issues such as emotional distress and seeks to alleviate these crises while simultaneously maintaining an overt spiritual orientation.[48]

13. Needs assessments: At a basic level, needs assessments are used to find out what people know and are able to do, and what they need to know and do. The knowledge derived from such appraisals assist researchers and pastoral caregivers to respond in ways that help people to bridge these gaps.[49] Parishioners' needs are typically identified via pastoral counseling, conversations, observation, responses to sermons, requests, and intuition. Given that persons' circumstances regularly change, needs assessments are continually required. The information gleaned from them may cause caregivers to respond in a variety of ways such as by referring parishioners onto specialists, up-skilling, offering pastoral counseling, praying, and/or hosting an event or course in response to the identified need.

14. Teaching pastoral care: Teaching pastoral care related topics is important. At present, St Paul's has two main modes of doing this. One is via the *St Paul's Theological Centre*, which runs in five week terms, four times per year. One of the courses we run annually in this forum is the *Contemporary Care* course. Here, we address five pertinent topics that have emerged from the most recent needs assessments. Latest examples

---

[45] Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 72-73.

[46] Mick Duncan, *Alongsiders: Sitting with Those Who Sit Alone* (Dandenong: UNOH Publishing, 2013), 31.

[47] Angelika Halstead and Philip Halstead, "Prayer at St. Paul's: Symphonising Many Voices," in *Journeying into Prayer: People and their Pathways*, ed. Neil Darragh (Auckland: Accent Publications, 2012), 169-75, 170.

[48] Moon and Benner, *Spiritual Direction and the Care of Souls*, 22.

[49] Kathleen Graves, "A Framework of Course Development Processes," in *Teachers as Course Developers*, ed. K. Graves (New York: Cambridge University Press. 1996), 12-38, 12-13.

include workshops on grief, depression, emotional literacy, sexuality, and cancer. The presentations take many shapes. For instance, the cancer session involved a medical expert speaking on cancer; a mother sharing her firsthand experience of having just completed chemotherapy; a third woman talking about her experience of losing a much-loved spouse to cancer; and me sharing a few words on how to respond pastorally to persons affected by cancer. The reason for coordinating the evening was clear: Eighteen people in our wider church community had been diagnosed with cancer in an eight month period. But these numbers don't reflect the mathematics of cancer. Hundreds of people—family members, friends, colleagues—were directly impacted by these diagnoses. The second mode of teaching pastoral care is running smaller process groups. By both means, we strive to offer meaningful care, educate people, and assist persons beyond the direct church community.

15. Developing emergency care strategies: Emergencies and crises are common in every group of people. Cancer is diagnosed; accidents occur; and other circumstances result in people's worlds changing. At such times, people need to experience care. If they do not, resentment towards the church and God can easily build. Accordingly, the church established a pastoral care emergency phone line that people can ring at any time and an emergency food bank. Similarly, the contact details of emergency providers such as *Community Mental Health* have been made readily available. Steps like these denote progress. Having said this, it needs to be acknowledged that individuals' perceptions of what constitutes an authentic emergency vary widely and persons under pressure frequently react in regretful ways. This is to say, emergency care is oftentimes difficult and needs to be handled with diplomacy and wisdom.

16. Developing a discipleship track: It is important that churchgoers take part in discipleship programs. While there is no one particular mode of discipleship, they all characteristically involve service, love, and becoming more like Jesus – the Good Shepherd. To mature in Christ means to care for others and ourselves consistently. A discipleship track for new Christians might entail them taking part in a series of courses. Examples include (a) gift identification courses, because people tend to blossom when they can serve others from their gifts and passions; (b) bible study programs, for new insights from the bible contribute to growth; (c) training in different modes of prayer and spiritual disciplines, as spiritual growth is inseparable from Christian discipleship; (d) a course in evangelism, to equip parishioners in sharing the Gospel; and (e) a pastoral care training program, for everyone needs to extend and receive care. Similarly, parents need to be equipped to disciple their children. Extensive benefits would stem from such paths.

17. Visitation: Peterson argues that pastors (and caregivers) have a particularly difficult task today. As they contend with "religious entrepreneurs with business plans", they consistently discover that they have lost continuity with historical pastoral care roles. Thus, pastoral workers nowadays "are a generation that feels as if it is having to start out from scratch to figure out a way to present and nurture this richly nuanced and all-involving life of Christ."[50] Visiting people in their homes, work places, and in hospital is a primary means of restoring this lost continuity and extending care. It shows interest in parishioners' lives and helps caregivers to get to know people in their own environments. Jackson adds that home visitation is

---

[50] Peterson, *The Pastor*, 4.

an ideal forum to educate, evangelize, and discipline people.[51] For reasons such as these, pastoral care strategies need to prioritize visiting church attendees.

18. Connecting parishioners to existing circles of care: We deem that a primary place for pastoral care to be practiced is within church small groups. It is amidst the regular encounters that take place in these settings that people are most likely to share their stories and experience healing, sustaining, guiding, and reconciling.[52] Friendships are also forged in these groups. Baab views friendships "as a spiritual practice, a place where we live out the things we believe in. Friendship is a space where our values and commitments take flesh."[53] Consequently, effort should always be made to connect willing people to meaningful groups.

19. Supporting church small group leaders: Given the priority of small groups and the breadth of people's needs that often only emerge when persons have become secure in safe and loving environments,[54] it is essential that small group leaders are adequately trained and supported by church pastoral care programs. In the St Paul's context, this involves building relationships with the leaders, as well as shaping the support in accordance with each leader's context and desires. For example, some individuals ask for resources, others appreciate regular two-way communication, and still others solicit prayer support. Extending gratitude towards the leaders is always appreciated, as is the invitation to contact the church small group coordinator for any reason should the need arise.

20. Building pastoral care resources: The effectiveness of pastoral care is heightened when helpful resources are readily available. These may range from stockpiling beneficial resources such as Westberg's masterful booklet on grief entitled *Good Grief,*[55] so that copies can be given to grieving people, through to establishing financial reserves to assist persons in their times of need. In my experience, many churchgoers are keen to contribute to these resources.

21. Developing a church debrief policy: People leave churches for a variety of reasons. A helpful pastoral response to this situation can be to touch base with the individuals, enquire if there is anything that the church needs to seek forgiveness for, and offer to bless them as they transition into the next season of their lives. This approach helps persons to attend to unfinished business and bring closure. It also demonstrates care.

---

[51] Edgar N. Jackson, "Calling and Visitation, Pastoral," in *Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, ed. Rodney J. Hunter (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 115-16.

[52] Clebsch and Jaekle, *Pastoral Care in Historical Perspective*, 4.

[53] Lynne M. Baab, *Friending: Real Relationships in a Virtual World* (Downers Grove, Il: IVP Books, 2011), 12.

[54] Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Inner Voice of Love: A Journey through Anguish to Freedom* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), xiii-xiv.

[55] Granger E. Westberg, *Good Grief: A Constructive Approach to the Problem of Loss*. Rev. ed. (Thornbury: Desbooks, 1992).

DECIDING UPON AND IMPLEMENTING APPROPRIATE AND PRACTICAL PASTORAL
STRATEGIES

The final stage of the Whiteheads' method of theological reflection in ministry is the decision making phase.
"It is in this crucial stage that" researchers "make a move … from insight into action."[56] Upon presenting
the 21 points to St Paul's priests, they thanked and encouraged me. They then raised concerns about the
plan's first point (i.e., caring for the priests and their families). It seemed that in their humility they saw
themselves as being no different from any other church attendees and therefore as unworthy recipients of
especial care. However, after I reiterated that the point was significantly about caring for them, so that they
could serve the parishioners more effectively, they acquiesced and asked me to implement the entire plan!

With the wonderful assistance of my colleagues and numerous caregivers from within the church
community, I have spent the ensuing years instigating the 21 points to varying degrees. To achieve this, we
attempted to follow Kotter's eight sequential steps for producing effective transformational changes in
organizations.[57] In the St Paul's context, the steps involved:

1. *Establishing a sense of urgency:* Kotter contends that half of all change efforts fail, because people do
   not see the need to change. To counter this we have repeatedly spoken to various church groups
   about the definitions, need for, and positive ramifications of authentic pastoral care.

2. *Forming a powerful guiding coalition:* This necessitated that the importance of pastoral care was shared
   by everyone in leadership, so that we were all committed to promoting a caring culture across the
   church.

3. *Creating a vision:* The pastoral care vision equated to defining what effective pastoral care looks like
   (e.g., every person who asks for help is responded to in a caring manner) and implementing the
   pastoral care plan.

4. *Communicating the vision:* Kotter maintains that persons should be able to communicate their visions
   in less than five minutes and that such communiqués ought to obtain reactions from the listeners
   that indicate comprehension and interest. As stated above, this entailed repeatedly talking about
   and emphasizing pastoral care.

5. *Empowering others to act on the vision:* To grow the ethos of care across the church increased numbers
   of St Paul's attendees needed to be chosen and authorized to activate different parts of the plan.

6. *Planning for and creating short-term wins:* Kotter explains that short-term wins need to be gained and
   articulated in order to silence doubters and motivate people to continue with the instigation of
   changes. At St Paul's, short-term pastoral care wins are regularly shared via the church's e-news.

7. *Consolidating improvements and producing more changes:* This point accentuates the importance of
   reflecting continually on people's needs and the ways they are met. Eliciting feedback from the
   receivers of pastoral care leads to changes and further improvement.

---

[56] Whitehead and Whitehead, *Method in Ministry,* 99.
[57] John P. Kotter, "Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail", *Harvard Business Review* March-April (1995):
57-68.

8. *Institutionalizing new approaches:* To embed the positive changes that have occurred in the pastoral care life of the church we strive to deliver effective pastoral care and continue to talk about pastoral care whenever opportunities arise.[58]

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS AND IMPLICATIONS

I set out to create an effective pastoral care plan for St Paul's Symonds Street by using the Whiteheads' model and method for theological reflection. This involved attending to the available data, generating assertions from the data, and deciding upon and implementing the appropriate pastoral care strategy. The results of this study suggest that the 21 point pastoral care has been effective. Via the people implementing the points numerous church attendees have received pastoral care. As a result, many of the recipients of care have experienced greater levels of connection with God, themselves, and others. In response to this, some of these people have gone on to extend care to others.

Consider the following two accounts that have been drawn from the encouraging e-mails we regularly receive. Joseph and Leanne arrived in Auckland in 2012. They "randomly entered St Paul's one Sunday, because it was the closest church" to where they were staying. They reported that "the people on the door [who were part of the church Welcoming team] were very warm and friendly. They gave us a booklet outlining the church's various small groups. That evening we contacted a group that looked interesting and within a week we were enjoying a meal with a dozen or so people in someone's home. We are now firmly entrenched in the group and enjoying life-giving friendships, serving the community together, and caring for one another." Joseph and Leanne's experience appears to echo Baab's view of friendship where friendships serve as a space for values and commitments to take flesh (see Point 18 above).

Betty is one of the many parishioners who have taken hold of the St Paul's free pastoral counseling services. She reported: "I was so scared of telling another person what I harbored deep in my heart, but [the counselor] somehow managed to give me the confidence to share and as a result I told her everything." After many sessions and much work, she stated, "I am a totally different person now. I feel more whole. I take care of myself and my friends. I have also started to train to become a counselor myself!" Pastoral counselors intentionally seek to empower persons to experience wholeness. Clinebell reasons that wholeness extends to six interdependent components of people's lives; specifically, enlivening their minds; revitalizing persons' bodies; enriching intimate relationships; deepening people's connections with nature; helping individuals to connect with the key institutions in their lives; and deepening people's relationships with God.[59] Clearly, the pastoral counselor helped Betty to experience many of these aspects of wholeness.

The data we have recorded also point to the success of the pastoral strategy. For example, 16 geographical care pods presently exist across the city. Over 700 free pastoral counseling hours are provided

---

[58] Adapted from Kotter, "Leading Change", 57-68.
[59] Clinebell, *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 31.

annually. And in recent years, more than 200 individuals have attended the pastoral care courses offered at St Paul's annually.

Despite such success, it needs to be acknowledged that a number of problems have been encountered as we have tried to implement the plan. One highlights my grave underestimation of the time required to manage such an endeavor. Another is that many parishioners have chosen not to opt into the various opportunities that have been offered to them. For instance, when every person on the church database was invited by e-mail to join the Geographical Care scheme only 15 percent initially chose to opt in. I had not anticipated such a low response. Upon investigation, it was discovered that many people had little desire to receive care from unknown others and that our communication about the opportunity was ambiguous. Such learning has taught us to introduce caregivers to potential care-receivers, especially since relationships appear to trump virtually everything, and to employ more user-friendly language in our communication.

The implications of this study are far-reaching. Despite the fact that every context is different, this study demonstrates that caregivers can follow the Whiteheads' paradigm described above to craft effective pastoral care plans for their own contexts. Caregivers could also adapt the St Paul's Pastoral Care Strategy to their own contexts and/or conduct their own needs assessments and shape their offerings of care accordingly. It is hoped that many caregivers will take up this challenge.

A further implication spotlights the importance of education. Church leaders and caregivers need to educate people and renew everyone's passion for pastoral care and its diverse approaches. As they do, individuals, families, churches, and communities will flourish.

A third inference that can be drawn from this study highlights that caregivers need to give careful consideration concerning how they will implement change in their own contexts in order to ensure that the changes are successful and long-lasting. If they do not, if they fail to heed the advice of scholars like Kotter, their well-meaning efforts may well be frustrated.

SUMMARY

Olthius claims that people "cannot flourish long without the nourishment that comes from an affirming and loving connection with another person."[60] Pastoral caregivers agree and add that authentic human flourishing is also dependant on people being connected with God and having their basic needs met. The example of St Paul's Pastoral Care Strategy depicts many ways of helping persons to experience these bedrock principles firsthand.

Paul likens the church to the body of Christ and accentuates that each part of the body is essential to the life and vitality of the whole body (1 Cor. 7: 12-31). This emphasizes that we need to accept, care for, embrace, and love every individual in our churches. We also need to carry each other's burdens, work

---

[60] James H. Olthuis, *The Beautiful Risk: A New Psychology of Loving and Being Loved* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 105.

together, and create safe relational spaces. As we do this, we build caring church communities that persons long to be part of and we revolutionize people's views of pastoral care. We also assist people to encounter Jesus, the head of the body. This is vitally important, because like no other, Jesus can "reach to the depths of our being, gather together our dissipated and frayed faculties, energies, and desires, and draw us towards a life of adoration", service, wholeness, and holiness, as we grow in the knowledge of "who we were created to be".[61] And the better we know whose we are and who we are, the better we will be able to provide quality pastoral care to others.

---

[61] Christopher Brown, *Reflected Love: Companioning in the Way of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2012), 52.

REVIEWS

PHILIP J. HUGHES AND DARREN CRONSHAW, *BAPTISTS IN AUSTRALIA: A CHURCH WITH A HERITAGE AND A FUTURE.* NUNAWADING, VIC.: CHRISTIAN RESEARCH ASSOCIATION, 2013. (120 PP.) [ISBN: 978-1-875223-74-9].

John Tucker

Carey Baptist College, Auckland.

This is a revised and expanded version of a book first published in 1996 by Philip Hughes, senior research officer with the Christian Research Association and an honorary research fellow at the University of Divinity in Melbourne. Darren Cronshaw is a Baptist pastor and mission researcher for the Baptist Union of Victoria. He also serves as Head of Research and Professor of Missional Leadership with the Australian College of Ministries (Sydney College of Divinity). For this edition, Hughes and Cronshaw have drawn on the 2011 Australian Census, the 2011 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) and the 2009 Australian Survey of Social Attitudes. The subtitle, "A Church with a Heritage and a Future", captures something of the book's scope. It traces the story of Baptists in Australia, both in the past and in the present, in order to help Baptists navigate the challenges and opportunities of the future.

The book can be divided into two parts. The first part looks to the past. It begins with a general history of the Baptist movement. The authors trace its development from its origins in Amsterdam, through its growth in England in the 17th century, its subsequent decline and renewal in the 18th century, and its expansion and division within the 19th century. The focus is overwhelmingly on English and American Baptists, the two groups of Baptists that have had the greatest influence on Baptist churches in Australia. This is followed by a more extensive history of Baptists on that continent. The authors highlight a number of characteristics of early Australian Baptists that have featured prominently among Baptists in other settler societies, such as a strong preference for personal evangelism over social reform. The portrait of Australian Baptists in the second half of the twentieth century stresses several dominant influences: the Southern Baptist Convention in the USA, the experience of charismatic renewal, the ecumenical movement and post-war immigration.

The authors then outline the beliefs that have been part of the Baptist movement since its beginnings and demonstrate how these are expressed in the behaviour of Australian Baptist congregations (such as the historic reluctance to use creeds in public worship). The discussion is enriched by frequent reference to the Australian NCLS to illustrate or substantiate the authors' claims. The following section offers newcomers to the Baptist movement a helpful orientation to the organisation of Baptists at the local, state and national levels. This is followed by a short discussion of Baptist groups not associated with the state Baptist Unions: Independent Baptist churches (mainly small conservative congregations supported by American churches), Reformed Baptist churches, Strict and Particular Baptist churches, and Seventh Day Baptist churches.

The first part of the book concludes with a series of brief biographies of inspirational Baptist leaders. These include English Baptists who profoundly influenced Australian Baptists from afar (John Smyth, William Carey, and Charles Spurgeon), Baptist ministers who played a direct and significant role in the development of the Baptist movement in Australia (John Saunders, Silas Mead, Frederick John Wilkin, Joseph Hunter Goble, Samuel Pearce Carey, Frank Boreham, Tim Costello), and significant female Baptist leaders (Matilda Jane Evans, Cecilia Downing, Ellen Arnold). All of this makes for a brief, but effective, introduction to the history of the Baptist movement in Australia.

If the first part of the book looks primarily to the past, the second part focuses more on the present. It analyses census data and church surveys to offer a rich and nuanced picture of the social and religious life of contemporary Baptists. This section shows that, while there is much to celebrate in Australian Baptist life today, there are also some serious challenges. The authors note, for example, that in recent years the Baptist population has grown more than most other denominations, making it now the third largest group of church attenders in the country. Indeed, between 1991 and 2011 Baptists grew at a similar rate to the general population. However, much of this growth can be attributed to immigration, especially from Asia and Africa. During this period immigrants actually accounted for 98 per cent of the growth of Baptists. By contrast, they accounted for only 65 per cent of the growth of the Australian population. Baptists have not kept pace with the Australian-born population. These figures therefore "show the importance of giving fresh focus to reaching Australian-born people" (p. 79). They also stress the importance of welcoming and integrating migrants and their children.

Besides numerical growth, the authors also examine the Australian Baptist population according to age, gender, marriage, education, occupation and participation. They highlight several encouraging features. For example, compared to the other mainline denominations, Baptists have a relatively young age profile. The age profile of those who identify themselves as Baptists is only marginally older than the general population. However, the picture is not all rosy. Migration has clearly contributed to the relatively young age profile of Baptists, since most immigrants to Australia are young adults or young families. And there is a skew in the age profile of those Baptists who attend a church monthly or more often: 32 per cent are aged 60 years or older, compared with 26 per cent of the population. In the coming years Baptist churches will likely face a stern challenge connecting with the younger generations.

The book concludes with a discussion of the NCLS and its indicators of church health. This shows several significant developments among Australian Baptists in recent years. Firstly, attitudes to worship appear to be evolving. In the 2001 NCLS 35% of attenders said they highly valued contemporary worship or music, but this fell to only 26% in the 2011 survey, suggesting that the preference for contemporary styles of worship has weakened considerably. Secondly, leadership within Baptist churches appears to be increasingly centralised. In 2001 27% of Baptist attenders said that their leaders encouraged them to use their gifts within the church. This declined to 20% in 2011. Of the 12 hoped-for emphases or priorities for the future, this was the most frequently selected. It seems to match a decline in leadership among lay people.

Thirdly, missional practices among Baptists are also changing. In 2011 just 11% of attenders said that wider community care or social justice emphases were aspects of church life they most valued. By 2011 this

had increased to 21%. Over the same period, there was a decrease in the willingness to invite unbelievers to church (down from 44% in 2001 to 36% in 2011). Fewer people were involved in communicating their faith verbally. This represents an important shift in emphasis from witness by word to witness by work. Finally, the authors note that the level of movement between churches is much higher among Baptists than in most other denominations, apart from the Pentecostals. These changing patterns raise a number of difficult and important questions for Australian Baptists in terms of ministry and mission in the future, questions on which church pastors and denominational leaders will certainly want to reflect.

There is much to commend about this short volume. It is carefully researched, clearly written and quite unusual for the amount of ground it covers. The authors show not just where Australian Baptists have come from, but where they are now, and where they might be going. However, there are one or two weaknesses. In the first place, the structure could be improved. There is some duplication between the historical and biographical sections. For example, the material on John Saunders and his role in the establishment of the Baptist movement in New South Wales (pp. 22-24) is largely repeated in the biography of Saunders (p. 61). Secondly, the section on distinctive Baptist beliefs could be strengthened. The authors, by their own admission, do not attempt to explain the theology which underlies these beliefs. The result is that the reader is left wondering how these beliefs are distinctive or why they are important. Even a minimal engagement with the writings of contemporary Baptist theologians would have significantly enriched this introduction to Australian Baptist life.

Thirdly, the section analysing the social and religious profile of Baptists in Australia contains a number of statements that really demand a fuller explanation. For example, the authors argue that Baptist churches have attracted people with a high level of education partly because of their commitment to congregational governance and the importance given to Bible study (p. 105). This kind of assertion really needs to be argued with evidence. However, it must be acknowledged that the authors have clearly not set out to write a comprehensive account of Baptist life in Australia. Readers who are interested in that should consult Ken Manley's magisterial two-volume work, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006). The present book, however, serves an altogether different purpose. For Baptists, for denominational leaders, and for students of religion, it is an excellent orientation and guide to the Baptist movement in Australia.

KEITH S. GRANT, *ANDREW FULLER AND THE EVANGELICAL RENEWAL OF PASTORAL THEOLOGY.* STUDIES IN BAPTIST HISTORY AND THOUGHT 36. MILTON KEYNES: PATERNOSTER, 2013. (xx. + 157) [ISBN: 978-1842277799].

David Mark Rathel

St. Mary's College, University of St. Andrews.

With this work Grant examines how the eighteenth century Evangelical Revival changed pastoral theology. He argues that the ministry of Andrew Fuller ably demonstrates this change, explaining that Fuller served

as an influential pastor-theologian during the time of the revival. Though many works pertaining to the Evangelical Revival focus on the changes brought to parachurch ministries, Grant writes:

> Andrew Fuller's pastoral theology, which was characterized by evangelicalism's emphasis on conversion and affectionate pastoral ministry *as well as* congregationalism's concern for orderly ministry and discipline, demonstrates that there was also an important evangelical renewal of pastoral theology and practice in the local church (Grant, 2).

He therefore concludes that the "evangelical renewal did not only take place *alongside* the local church, but especially in congregational ecclesiology, there was a transformation *within* the existing pastoral office" (3).

To support his thesis, Grant surveys three aspects of Fuller's pastoral ministry—how Fuller's conflict with high Calvinism formed his pastoral theology, how Fuller's congregational ecclesiology provided a suitable context for his evangelical convictions, and how Fuller's preaching ministry exhibited evangelistic zeal. In each of these areas, Grant demonstrates that Fuller's ministry displayed the typical evangelical desire for affectionate religion, that is, sincere religious belief that engages both heart and head.

In chapter one, Grant details Fuller's rejection of high Calvinism. Raised in a high Calvinist context, Fuller experienced great consternation on his journey to faith in Christ. Once he came to saving faith, Fuller attributed his pre-conversion anxiety to the high Calvinism he received during his youth. He rejected the central tenets of high Calvinism and eventually developed an evangelical form of Calvinism that he published in his *Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation.* Fuller's Calvinism was unambiguously evangelical; it emphasized conversion and the affectionate preaching of the Gospel to all people.

Grant argues that Fuller developed his evangelical Calvinism primarily due to pastoral concerns. He writes, "The roots and aims of *The Gospel Worthy of All Acceptation* are pastoral: its roots found in Andrew Fuller's pastoral experience of high Calvinism, its aim the renewal of the pastoral theology of his generation of Particular Baptists" (45). Fuller's evangelical Calvinism, therefore, directly shaped his pastoral theology and was itself shaped by pastoral concerns.

In chapter two, Grant examines how Fuller sought to develop an ecclesiology that was compatible with the Evangelical Revival. Evangelicalism's commitment to individual, emotional religion produced a new emphasis on voluntarism. As a convinced Baptist, Fuller believed that a congregational form of government could best accommodate voluntarism. By surveying Fuller's ordination sermons, Grant demonstrates that Fuller's ecclesiology was independent and congregational, thus preserving voluntarism, while at the same time orderly, thus preserving the evangelical desire for a religion that did not denigrate the intellect.

In chapter three, Grant surveys Fuller's many sermons to see how his evangelical commitments shaped his preaching ministry. He concludes that Fuller's sermons were simple, Christ-focused, and heartfelt. The simplicity of Fuller's sermons made them accessible to listeners from diverse backgrounds and education levels. Fuller's insistence on Christ-centered sermons, whether expository or topical, ensured that his messages proclaimed the central themes of evangelicalism—the cross of Christ and the sinner's

need for conversion. Fuller's emotional preaching style, perhaps best demonstrated by his extemporaneous delivery, displayed the evangelical conviction that religion should be heartfelt.

This work has two positive features. First, Grant adequately supports his thesis. Through his explanation of the background to Fuller's *Gospel Worthy,* his examination of Fuller's ordination sermons, and his survey of Fuller's sermons, he demonstrates that the broader Evangelical Revival indeed shaped Fuller's pastoral theology. Though he does not consider other evangelical pastors or theologians from this period, one can perhaps surmise that they too shaped their church ministries in light of the Evangelical Revival.

Second, this work fills a hole in contemporary studies of the Evangelical Revival. While many works focus on the broader effects of the Evangelical Revival—for example, international mission work or improvement in the morality of the populace—this work almost uniquely highlights the effect the Evangelical Revival had upon local church ministry.

Today, evangelicals retain many of the commitments that were present in the evangelicalism of Fuller's day. However, many evangelicals display a surprising lack of interest in the doctrine of the church, even though many of them would quickly assert the local church's importance. This book, focusing as it does on local church ministry, can aid evangelicals in developing a more robust understanding of how broader evangelical concerns relate to local church ministry. It can also (hopefully) create more interest in ecclesiological discussions.