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EDITORIAL

STEVEN R. HARMON

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The essays that follow were originally presented in the context of a panel discussion of Curtis W. Freeman's book *Contesting Catholicity: Theology for Other Baptists*¹ in a plenary session of the annual meeting of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion in Raleigh, North Carolina, USA, May 18–20, 2015. The first two responses to the book are from specialists in Baptist history: Bill J. Leonard, James and Marilyn Dunn Professor of Baptist Studies and Professor of Church History at Wake Forest University School of Divinity, where he was the founding dean, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, USA, and C. Douglas Weaver, Professor of Religion and Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Department of Religion at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, USA. The second pair of responses is offered by Baptist theologians: Adam C. English, Associate Professor of Theology and Philosophy at Campbell University in Buies Creek, North Carolina, USA, and Fisher Humphreys, Professor of Divinity (retired) at Beeson Divinity School, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama, USA. Finally, Curtis W. Freeman, Research Professor of Theology and Director of the Baptist House of Studies at Duke University Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina, USA, responds to these engagements of his work.

¹ Curtis W. Freeman, *Contesting Catholicity: Theology for Other Baptists* (Waco, TX.: Baylor University Press, 2014).

AN APPRECIATIVE AND CRITICAL REVIEW OF CONTESTING CATHOLICITY: THEOLOGY FOR OTHER BAPTISTS (1)

BILL J. LEONARD

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Curtis Freeman's *Contesting Catholicity: Theology for Other Baptists* is an amazing *magnum opus* with special emphasis on the *magnum*. It is a large work in many senses of the term and clearly represents significant time, energy, and passion that culminated in a major monograph for our consideration. Frankly, the book compels us—at least it compelled me—to confront issues of theology, history, tradition, language, and footnotes—massive, head spinning footnotes—that few studies directed primarily toward the Baptists do. It is a decisive research tool now and into the future, not only related to Freeman's well-articulated thesis. I really mean this: the documentation alone is worth the price of the book, because it takes us into sources from the Patristic/Matristic period to the present. In fact, there are times when I think Freeman has left almost no bibliographic stone unturned. Whatever the response to "Other Baptists" from readers, all will benefit from this one volume bibliographic resource on theologies Christian, Catholic, Protestant, Free Church, Baptist, ancient and modern, postmodern, post liberal, post fundamentalist, pre Christian, post Christian and mid-Christian.

I found a response difficult to develop since the breadth of the text sent me thinking in so many directions, pulling together, or pushing apart ideas that I have confronted or that have confronted me for a long time. I had difficulty putting it down, it made me think in so many ways and directions, but I would have to let it go and return back again because my head just could not keep up with the ideas across the pages. Curtis: It is an amazing accomplishment and I celebrate the publication of a work that obviously took years of research and writing before you ever pushed "print." I also commend Baylor University Press for publishing a book this size in these days of increasing word limits for publications. Frustrated as to where to focus when you make me think in so many directions, I would briefly raise the following issues, some in basic statements, some in simple interrogatives.

First, reading the text, particularly as you describe what it means to claim the nomenclature "Other Baptist," I recalled the first edition of Robert Torbet's, *A History of the Baptists*, in which he set forth three prominent theories of Baptist origins: the Jerusalem-Jordan-John approach of Baptist Restorationism and Landmarkism (what I have called "history in the neighborhood of make-believe" when our daughter grew up on Mr. Rogers); the Anabaptist Spiritual Kinship Theory that drew something of a dotted line to connection with the Mennonites (a line my great teacher/mentor W. R. Estep and my late beloved former colleague Glen Stassen sought to make less dotted); and the English Separatist Theory (advocated by other

of my teachers, Robert Baker and Leon McBeth, and my early colleagues E. Glenn Hinson and Morgan Patterson). To those I would add the “Other-Baptist-explicit-catholicity-implicit-Reformed” theory that you set forth. That is not a way of pigeon-holing it, I hope, but acknowledging its significance among multiple approaches to being, believing, and acting in a Christian way that informs and is informed by what I have called elsewhere “Baptist *ways*.”

Another way of saying all this, Curtis, is that if we had a while longer—and I hope we will—and perhaps had a bit of “light libation” as the great Contesting Catholicity Heretic James Dunn would say, I might suggest that from the beginning most Baptist groups and movements began as, or conceived themselves to be “other Baptists” too—movements that moved beyond the status quo to new ways of thinking about God, the gospel, and the world outside the norms of their day.

Second, that sense of the general otherness of Baptists leads me to suggest that the more I think about your thesis and your superb documentation, it seems to me you are promoting something of a Baptist Restorationism of Catholicity. As theories go I still need to be convinced, or at least keep perusing your massive materials before I draw too specific conclusions.

Third, you reinforce for all of us the affirmation that most theology is reactive. Let me quickly add that there is nothing wrong with reactive theology—we sometimes call that the prophetic—Amos saw the poor being sold for a pair of shoes and could not stay silent. You see what you believe to be theological/creedal “bastardization” aplenty—here I am combining Freeman and Marney language and you offer a historical-theological-prophetic response. But your viewpoints, like Amos et. al. are clearly, at least to me, grounded in historical context—writ large in the Southern Baptist Convention. The denomination and its bastardized fundamentalism and liberalism camps are the focal points of your most prophetic declarations. That approach is not good/bad, pro/con, but is certainly both/and. You rightly tag many of the theological foibles of the denominational establishmentarianism, conversionism, staticism (I made that word up), and culture captivity represented in the SBC, but you do not really get too far beyond that idiom of Baptist identity when you discuss Baptists in American in the post-colonial period. At points when I read you I cannot tell if you are heading us to the future or warning us of dangers we have either gotten past or developed immunity to, or just left behind, old battles and old remedies among predominately Caucasian, Baptists in the American South.

As far as I can tell, you give little or no attention to the way African American Baptists would have or did respond to the issues you raise. I would be delighted to know why, particularly since I have a few suspicions of my own—none of them sinister, just historical question marks.

Fourth, and I think this is my strongest concern, at least right now—as I have said, your book deserves/demands multiple readings—my strongest current concern is that I wish you had paid more attention to the nature of early Baptist religious experience, conversion yes, but religious experience too, before you got to making it so decisively individualistic. You do this a bit in the early section, but you move away from that and I wished you would have carried it through the way you did other ideas. I found that particularly evident in the later section when you spend a page or two on the Daniel Featley-Dipper debate of 1660, published 1664/5. I confess it is easy to overlook the depth of the treatise in terms of its insights

into early Baptist identity, belief, and religious experience. I did that for years until a lecture at Baylor this March forced me to read the whole treatise, and I was and remain undone. Here is what I found that I had never seen before.

As the debate intensified Featley said the Baptists had no business discussing theology and putting forth their heretical views because they were ignorant of the original languages of Holy Writ and thus had to use translations that were in no way guaranteed to be inspired. At that, Baptists moved the discussion from the external to the internal knowledge of Holy Writ, noting: “though we cannot prove the letter to be well translated, that matters not much, for the letter of the Scripture is not Scripture. . . . The letter of the word of God is not Scripture, without the revelation of the Spirit of God; the Word revealed by the spirit is Scripture.” Featley then asked: “How prove you the Bible to be God’s Word?” The Baptists answered: “By experience. For, whatsoever is written in the Word of God cometh to pass, concerning Christ and Antichrist; experience is the best Doctor that teacheth us.” Featley then charged the Baptists with blasphemy. Nevertheless, the Baptists had made clear the experiential nature of their faith as it impacted biblical interpretation. Here is where Featley labeled Baptists “an illiterate and sottish sect,” whose members had stepped well beyond their stations in church and society. Perhaps you would too, Curtis, since they claim an inner authority that neither you nor Featley might want to give them. But here is my point: Baptists do not start with individualism, they start with salvation; they start with a church where, as you note, faith has not been coerced by government or religious establishment. They associated Rome and Papism with establishmentarianism, and the creeds were part and parcel of the enforcement package. Since they rejected real presence in communion they, and the Puritans who birthed them, had no way to know how the objective truth that God loved the world in Christ, could become subjective in individual sinners—they no longer ate his flesh and drank his blood. So conversion became experiential transubstantiation.

The book you have written is the book you have written, and I do not like it when people ask authors to write another kind of book than the one they wrote—but, if you want to know where I think your argument lags, as tight as it is already, it is with the absence of a serious look at the transformative nature of religious experience that the Baptists sought as a way of offering salvation.

Fifth, I have to ask for Christians in general and Baptists in particular, how would you propose to inculcate the intricacies of your Trinitarianism in church folk? My sense from the sources is that as the question of salvation swept across Reformation Protestantism, amid plagues, infant mortality, and short life spans, often the best regular sinners could do was simply find their way to Jesus. They just did not have time to get to the Trinity in the fullness you prefer. In a real sense I wish they had, but they could not/cannot. And I would welcome insights into how to get faith communities where you want them to be in Trinitarian theology, piety and orthodoxy. Perhaps at the very least, people like John Killinger will open doors for that kind of dialogue and exploration. *Ad Majorem Dei Gloria.*

Sixth, now some concluding “popcorn” points:

- Perhaps you should consider whether you might have confused elements of what you label individualism, with varying right/left of centre expressions of Baptist dissent.

- If you want to challenge conversionistic individualism do not blame E. Y. Mullins as harshly as you blame D. L. Moody. What if Mullins was offering an experiential corrective to revivalistic transactionalism?
- Your survey of Carlyle Marney's ornery theology is an outstanding content of the text. I would simply add that Marney had more Baptist otherness than any of us can appropriately systematize. I have little doubt he would take your assessment of his beliefs apart, not necessarily because they were incorrect, but because he had already become another kind of other Baptist, small o, right before your eyes.
- On page 138, you say prosaically that "other Baptists have been more open to the use of creeds when not employed to bind the conscience." Yet when I read you elsewhere in the text, that is exactly what it sounds like you want them to do for us. Which is it?
- By chance I have read Roland Bainton's *Yesterday, Today and What Next?* (1978) and Harvey Cox's *The Future of Faith* (2009) and both remind us that the Nicene Creed makes no reference to the kingdom of God, the cut-to-the-chase gospel Jesus sent out the twelve and then the 70/72 to proclaim. You do not reference God's New Day either, at least it is not indexed. Why not?
- Nonetheless, I find your book haunting and controversialist in the best sense, save at least one personal caveat. Blessings and congratulations.
- Finally, a point of personal privilege. Over forty years of teaching introduction to Christian history I have always wondered: what if the Arians had won? They almost did, you know. Their great leader, Eusebius of Nicomedia, even baptized Constantine on his death bed. So the Emperor had to face the judgement with a Unitarian baptism. What if they and/or the Nestorians had won the day? That is why I am wary of creeds, I guess. And because I have listened to the Separate Baptists for too long.
- Nonetheless, this is an important work and Curtis is to be commended for such thorough research.

AN APPRECIATIVE AND CRITICAL REVIEW OF CONTESTING CATHOLICITY: THEOLOGY FOR OTHER BAPTISTS (2)

C. DOUGLAS WEAVER

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I suppose Glenn Jonas asked me to be on this panel because I am a Baptist historian who claims to have read a good bit of Baptist-Catholic material. I have probably only read enough to be dangerous. I suppose also that Glenn put me here because he knows that I am not a participant in the Other Baptist movement. Curtis and I read some of the same material but come to pretty different conclusions. Actually what I hope to do is make comments which Curtis thinks are fair, at least coming from me, then agree to continue good conversation after Baylor defeats Duke in some game, and then, fly home tonight, having practised contested but radical democracy—that is for you Curtis, I did read the book closely—because I leave for a ten day trip to Germany and Switzerland tomorrow. Perhaps it is fitting that I am going on a Protestant Reformation tour.

First, this is a great read. Curtis has done excellent research, and since it is inevitable that I offend some theologian today, I will just declare that Curtis simply writes in a very accessible manner, more accessible than I am used to seeing from theologians in their radically orthodox tomes. Second, this is a superb exposition of a perspective associated with the Baptist Manifesto, or with writings sometimes classified as Baptist Catholic or bapto-catholic. That Curtis intentionally avoids those self-identifiers for Other Baptists is intriguing since he does not mention, or I did not see, the phrase bapto-catholicism popularized by Other Baptists. Curtis's use of the Other is fascinating, and supports his purposes of offering an alternative vision to the sicknesses he sees in Baptist life.

Curtis's favourite contemporary theological sources are McClendon, Hauerwas, and Yoder. My view of Baptist identity is more compatible with the Leonards, Shurdens, and Dunns of recent years, or in short, the liberal or freedom-based Baptist identity that Curtis does not favour. I am barely literate when it comes to post-liberal perspectives that Curtis cites, but it is clear that McClendon's legacy lives on in distinguished fashion in Curtis. Mentioning these theologians reveals the obvious—this is a book of theology that offers engaging, sometimes provocative, analysis but also describes what Baptist life should be. Often the dominant practices in historic Baptist life have run amok in this narrative.

I like it that Curtis actually has read Baptist primary sources. I think it a tendency, once it is said that Baptists have not produced much theology, to just abandon Baptist sources. We often draw different conclusions, but he has studied the story. Bravo.

Let me offer one example of where we read an element of the Baptist story with different emphases. Curtis cites the Orthodox Creed of the late seventeenth century, which includes ancient creeds like the Apostles Creed and the Nicene Creed, as a key example of how early Baptists used ancient creeds to assert catholicity and guard orthodoxy. The Orthodox Creed is cited often, even though Curtis acknowledges that it was not influential in its day. Because I am reading like a historian, I keep saying to myself, this is an over-emphasis of the confession. The fact that the Orthodox Creed is the only Baptist confession to include ancient creeds is best used in the opposite way—it is strong evidence that Baptists, as they confessed their faith, did so by relying on the Bible rather than post-biblical creeds.

Curtis's call for an ecumenism that both "gives and receives" is excellent. It has been my view, prior to reading this book, that ecumenical dialogue has been more about receiving than receiving and giving. Perhaps some will say our story is so deficient we just need to receive. I think we have much to give when it comes to freedom and individual conscience, and so on. We differ some, but in most places I thought he found ways to balance giving and receiving, particularly on the issue of contesting and on the significance of believer's baptism for the larger church. Kudos again.

The words ecumenism and catholicity do reveal another way we read sources differently. Cooperative relationship as part of the larger body of Christ is certainly a good thing, please do not hear me say otherwise. Early Baptists were, to use Curtis's phrase "naïve primitivists" but they were aware of their connection to the historic catholicity of the church. Curtis notes their ecumenicity stopped with infant baptism. My phrase—they were trying to restore the New Testament church and they thought other churches were false churches. It no doubt stopped at infant baptism, and it stopped hard. Often they took no prisoners; John Smyth said that infant baptism was the mark of the beast. Thomas Helwys, concerned about the true New Testament church, titled his book criticizing others *The Mystery of Iniquity*. I just need to qualify or nuance the use of ecumenical more, especially since believer's baptism was pivotal to Baptist identity and it often caused uncompromising conflict with other Christians. Catholicity for them, sure. But the goal was the New Testament church.

Speaking of baptism, I want to chase a quick rabbit. A recent story about a Baptist church in Dayton, Ohio involved a self-identified Catholic Baptist pastor who performed an infant baptism in his church. Will he be criticized? It seems this is an opportune time to have the Other Baptist movement decide about whether the Other Baptist focus on ecclesial Christianity can or should evolve toward this view. My reading of Curtis is that he would not approve of a Baptist church baptizing an infant. What I would like to hear is that Baptists, who want more meaning in the practice of baptism, to consider anew the rich symbolism, the reenacted participation of the new believer into the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in immersion of first time adult believers. And, moving away from believers baptism as the basis of a believers church makes me ask, why does the church remain Baptist?

Let me speak of two more issues about the church. First, Curtis does a good job of talking about the Baptist practice of interdependency. Vital material. Baptists forming an association of local churches in 1644 was the first of many. To push this point in a second edition, I hope that Curtis will be less wary of the concept of the independence of the local church. Curtis said, "The source of the Baptist vision is not

autonomy because “interdependence is the mark of the converted and “the search for independence was Adam’s sin.” This aligns with Curtis’s theological perspective on how the church must embody interrelationship as do the Father, Son, and Spirit. I do not believe the historical record supports the contention that the modern Baptist focus on local church independence was primarily a move to have self-reliance or some Enlightenment absolute autonomy. Have some local churches done that? Sure, but most? No. My historical response is that the insistence on independence in Baptist life was there at the beginning alongside interdependency. Thomas Helwys declared that no church should have any prerogative over another. He was not alone in making an independency statement. We might be cynics about whether people practice what they preach, but Baptist literature has consistently said that the goal of independence was to be free to answer to the Lordship of Christ, not be self-reliant Adam. Among early Baptists, it was a declaration to answer to King Jesus alone, rather than an external church hierarchy and the state. Independence and interdependence is a creative tension in Baptist DNA, born of our freedom. We need both.

I believe we can all agree with Curtis that Baptists need to recognize that they are part of the larger church. This is a chief contribution of the book. Curtis’s work in the BWA means he practises the catholicity he preaches. As a church historian, I do not simply appreciate the church’s heritage but teach that we have been formed by it. There is, of course, a difference for many of us in how we appropriate that heritage. Curtis’s overall argument is that the historic creeds should play a privileged regulative interpretive role in reading the Bible. The Bible alone is not enough to support the necessary Trinitarian centre of the faith. Curtis says canon and creed went together in the patristic era and we have separated the two. I would say the creed was in the canon, especially in the kerygma. And if creed and canon must go together, what is to stop some from insisting that Irenaeus’s third part of safeguarding orthodoxy is necessary—the clerical hierarchy. Thankfully Curtis does not grant clergy special status, though at least a few Baptists are considering a more sacramental view of ordination which will at least lead to discussions in that direction.

I am much more at home with the historic Baptist practice that privileges the authority of the Bible and affirms the content of creeds because they are consistent with biblical insights. The focus on creeds certainly has not produced unity in more creedal faiths. Henry Denne (1659) contended the Scriptures were not granted authority because the church had bestowed them authority but they were accepted experientially through the “inward assurance of the Spirit.” Historically, Baptists have claimed this experiential perspective like Denne rather than appealing to any external authorities.

Curtis also contends that without the creeds, I am at least vulnerable to a weak view of the Trinity or have a Biblicist functional Unitarianism that just has not got around to denying the Trinity yet. Our hymns are too Jesus oriented. I can say that I sang the doxology in every worship service from the day I could sing until the day I left home and am safely Trinitarian. However, I confess to being more historically Baptist “Jesus loves me” christocentric than Curtis prefers. My guess is that Old Testament scholars are in trouble too.

On the flip side on the role of creeds, while Curtis does not argue for a capital T authoritative tradition, I think the position that grants the Nicene Creed regulative privileged guidance is vulnerable to giving

patristic material too much authority especially by those less careful than he is. Does being a part of the one, holy, apostolic church necessitate patristic authority any more than it necessitates Reformation or Modern authority? Whereas I would reject Curtis's worry about the Trinity when the creeds are not privileged, I expect he would resist the vulnerability I suggest about Tradition. Fair enough. We have contesting in common!

There is so much rich material to comment on but I need to zoom in on one final topic. I think we would all agree that our biggest difference is not a focus on community—such is of course good—but on how the communal and the individual relate. One Achilles heel of the communal emphasis is bystander apathy where individuals follow and artificially conform when we highlight the group. Curtis distances himself from this pitfall of conformity with his efforts to highlight the priesthood of all believers and to include everyone in communal readings of Scripture. I have no problem with that practice and think it actually parallels E.Y. Mullins's consensus of the competent, his goal of congregationalism. However, communal reading is likewise often an elusive ideal—at the end of the discussion where everyone is invited to participate, people in power and privilege end up more often than not, deciding for the group. We in this room, educated as we are, might be most vulnerable to this. More importantly, the communal reading does not always allow for the mess of Baptist freedom—I know that is the point. But in the process, the role of individual conscience has just been scuttled too much. Baptist DNA is both communal and individual in creative tension.

If community is the most orthodox word today, then individualism is the most heretical. Curtis calls it a sin sickness individualism that is killing Baptists. One of his chief criticisms is that later Baptists make early Baptists sound like proto-liberals who espouse Enlightenment autonomous freedom as a natural right. But I find this picture to be a distortion. The Enlightenment was not monolithic. We can certainly agree that some Baptists were uncritical Jeffersonians but most Baptists were still supernaturalists while appropriating Enlightenment concepts and language. They did ride the saddle of the democratic focus on the individual but they were actually some of the pioneers that had bought the horses long beforehand. Baptists simply have not argued for autonomous agency in an anything goes fashion or in natural rights that are not rooted in being created by God in God's image.

Curtis creatively uses the writings of gadfly liberal, Carlyle Marney in many ways, but the dominant way is to highlight Marney's provocative denunciation of individualism. The view is summed up in the words of Shine who said that after conversion "you can live just like you want to the rest of the time." Curtis writes, "Shine is close to the creed of Christian self-sufficiency – Ain't nobody but Jesus gonna tell me what to believe." I don't think this reading of James Dunn is accurate. Dunn is not a parable of autonomous self-reliance void of God. It has always sounded to me that he is rooted in Baptist DNA—personal faith experience under the Lordship of Christ. And, the Jesus encounter is rooted in the standard of the Scriptures. Marney's most colourful line was that Baptists were infected by a bastard individualism. Curtis certainly did not call Baptists who like freedom bastards. But if Marney wants to call Dunn a bastard, I will take comfort in Will Campbell's reminder that we are all bastards but God loves us anyway.

I hope Curtis's second edition will consider more focus on the communal and the individual, so perhaps we can drop the *ism* off the individual. Early Baptists, as Curtis notes, gave soul liberty a negative or delimiting function—coercion of religion was wrong. But my research highlights a focus on the individual conscience in a more profoundly pro-active way. Christian identity was ultimately eschatological. Faith was certainly in community but sometimes over against it because ultimately faith was personal. For early Baptists, each individual had to have a personal, freely-practised faith that was responsive to the Lordship of Christ and the Scriptures over any corporate body, church or state. Why? Because each believer would individually come face to face with King Jesus at the Last Judgement. Thus, these early Baptists practised an eschatologically-informed ecclesiology that said the church was the body of Christ but preserved and allowed conscience for authentic, voluntary Christian identity. A typical example. New Englander, William Turner, being hounded by Puritan clergy, asked, "Where is the rule of Christ that we must follow the churches here farther than they follow Christ?" When Turner was accused of being divisive for his separation, hear his eschatological appeal: "Is it not a reasonable thing that every man have his particular judgment in matters of faith seeing we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ?" I have found this focus on the Last Judgement throughout the four hundred years of Baptist history. It might not work as well for a heaven-less Christianity in the present day, but Baptist DNA has insisted on an ecclesiology that nurtured individual faith that was free because Baptists knew that were going to meet King Jesus "one day."

Curtis rightly sees worship as the body of Christ in relationship with God. Again, I think Baptist DNA has a creative interplay of both communal and individual worship. For example, believer's baptism was the visible entrance to the congregation of faith, a communal act of incorporation into the visible body of Christ. But it was also a radical act of individual conscience and faith. British Baptist theologian, Stephen Holmes, affirms that "in Baptist theology, God deals directly with each particular human being summoning him or her to response in repentance and faith ... Believer's baptism is an expression of this intensely individualist strain within Baptist theology."

Curtis's criticism of the focus on individual conversion without discipleship resonates with us all. Baptist theology can learn from its over-emphasis on transactional conversion but faith as a personal experience of the heart is deeply immersed in Baptist history. Readers of early Baptist pamphlets were exhorted to have an inner heart experience and enter into a "personal covenant with God." Thomas Collier (1648) said the law of the New Testament must be written in the heart. Samuel Richardson (1647) noted, "Because it is God's way, to have Religion free, and only to flow from an inward principle of faith and love."

At times this personal experience was described as the soul in direct communion with God. Long before E.Y. Mullins, focus on the soul fills all the pages of Baptist life to speak of the intimate personal experience of faith, not to the exclusion of corporate life. George Hammon (1661) wrote "that the soul of man should be free and acknowledge no master but Jesus Christ." With mystical flair, Thomas Collier (1647) proclaimed that, "the Lord Jesus with the free consent of the gracious soul, sets up his Kingdome in the heart so that when Christ sayth, My son, give me thy heart: Lord take my heart, sayth the soule, dwell there, rule there, set up thy Kingdom there: so that you see Christ doth not rule as tyrant in the soules of his

people, but with the free and full consent of the mind of the person in whom he reigns.” Soul competency is a disputed phrase. Did it lead to an anthropocentric turn in Baptist theology? Perhaps some, though Boyce’s Calvinism needed some turning. And even if Mullins’s word competent was vulnerable to misunderstanding, he never abandoned nor does the concept abandon God’s initiative or sovereignty. If he did, perhaps Hammon and Collier and other early Baptists had led the way.

And finally, the focus on individual faith was tied to being Spirit-led. As Geoffrey Nuttall has said about Baptists of the seventeenth century, spiritual authority came via personal experience. Samuel Richardson retorted to opponents, “why let us have Bibles if we cannot read them ourselves?” Citing Henry Denne (1659) again, the Scriptures were not granted authority because the church had bestowed them authority but they were accepted experientially through the “inward assurance of the Spirit.” Risky stuff, I suppose, though when you get cancer, you need the church, desperately you need it, but you also are keenly aware that it is you and God face to face in the darkness of the night. Experience matters.

To sum up, my plea is that we take the risk and the freedom to highlight both the communal and the personal. We are the body of Christ and heaven rejoices when one sinner repents. Baptist literature does not say “anything goes.” It says, Jesus Christ is Lord of the conscience, for the congregation and when necessary, to use Bill Leonard’s phrase, for the lonely prophet, and I will add the lonely fool who is convicted in the depths of his or her being, that ultimate accountability lies with God, not the church or the state. To tweak a line from Harry Emerson Fosdick, if that is heresy, then please call me a heretic.

A final word: this is a significant book we must all read. If you are not an Other Baptist, you must read this in order to learn and to dialogue ecumenically. And if you are an Other Baptist, then this is the book that now sets the standard for your discussion. Set this volume right next to your Bible! Kudos again to Curtis!

AN APPRECIATIVE AND CRITICAL REVIEW OF CONTESTING CATHOLICITY: THEOLOGY FOR OTHER BAPTISTS (3)

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There is a westward migration amongst Baptists and a slow bend of dusty wagons in search of a new and “better country.” What shape will this new territory take and will it welcome strange creatures like Dr. Curtis Freeman who identify as post-liberal, post-evangelical, post-individualistic, post-modern, post-denominational? Freeman envisions this country in terms of “a desire to confess the faith once delivered to the saints, not as a matter of coercion, but as a simple acknowledgment of where they stand and what they believe; a recognition of the Trinity as the center of the life to which they are drawn; a longing to be priests to others in a culture of self-reliance ... [and] ... a yearning for the fulfillment of the Lord’s Prayer that the church may be one” (26).

These passionate and convictional words from Freeman represent more than a heavenly vision of Baptist paradise, they express the heart cry of all Christians.

Freeman fears the good name of Baptist is “in danger of becoming, if it has not already become, [identical with] a set of principles maintained by an affinity group of mystic individuals, determined by personal choice” (9). Eroded by time and stripped by misfortune of its other distinctive virtues and convictions, the label “Baptist” might now be synonymous with “individualist,” by which is meant, as one character in a Carlyle Marney anecdote put it, “if you get right with the Lord, you can live just like you want to the rest of the time” (192). Freeman does not wallow in the ills of individualism any more than he pines nostalgically for some golden age of Baptist history long lost to time. He does not theorize who the “real Baptists are or were,” but instead attempts to “imagine how Baptists might understand themselves in continuity with historic Christianity” (18).

This seems to me a decisive statement and one that names the basic thrust of Freeman’s entire project—“how Baptists might understand themselves in continuity with historic Christianity.” A fitting subtitle to his book. Not that Freeman neglects the Baptist heritage. It looms like a large and colourful family portrait over his writing desk, leaning out from the wall on a bent nail. He attends to the Baptist portrait in order to bring some unfamiliar faces to the front, like Carlyle Marney (1916–1978), while allowing others to recede to the back (like Marney’s contemporary W. A. Criswell (1909–2002)). The purpose is not to narrate the grand lineage of the Baptists, but to find the “Other Baptists.” Freeman uses this term to describe himself and those who stand broadly within the historic Baptist river but often find themselves outside the main stream of that river. “Other Baptists” constitute minor tributaries, to be sure, but ones that

nevertheless issue from the most primitive Baptist font. These sources Freeman searches out and re-appropriates.

In Dr. Freeman's skilful hands, even familiar Baptist forebears suddenly appear in new light. Thomas Helwys's 1612 classic, *Mystery of Iniquity*, provides one example of Freeman's reassessment. Typically interpreted as "a plea for religious liberty for all" (*à la* Leon McBeth), Freeman shows it was in fact no such thing. Put briefly, the main question of Helwys's text was not liberty but: What must the church teach and practice in order to be faithful (68)? The church must answer this question before Christ the true Judge, and consequently, not before the authorities and magistrates of the state. For Helwys religious liberty constituted a theological doctrine about the nature of the church and Christ's lordship, not a legal mandate based on individual rights. "The freedom of the church is established only by the gospel of Jesus Christ, not by powers and authorities (including the state) from which believers are freed" (72).

Early Baptists like Helwys, Isaac Backus, and Roger Williams justified liberty of conscience on biblical and theological grounds. However, those justifications tended to stretch, morph and dissolve during the course of the nineteenth century as the democratic language of rights for all people (regardless of religion) permeated the discussions. John Leland (1754–1841) provides a snapshot of this change. Leland argued passionately for liberty and disestablishment, but unlike previous generations he appealed primarily to natural rights and the role of voluntary associations, not to the Bible and to the discipline of the church.

To give another example, as part of their zealous defence of religious liberty early Baptists opposed forced subscription to creeds with the battle cry, "No creed but the Bible." In the confused atmosphere of the nineteenth century, however, Baptists began to identify creeds, not coercion, as the object of protest. Freeman confronts this deeply ingrained but misplaced aversion to creeds and attempts to rehabilitate the use of historic creedal statements like the Apostle's Creed in worship and church practice. For "Other Baptists," creeds can and should serve as "centred sets" that draw us toward the centre of our faith and help us name the terms of the gospel. "Without the arc of the Christian story outlined in the creeds, it is questionable whether readers will see Scripture as the unfolding narrative of the triune God. Yet to read the whole of Scripture as something other than the gospel story is to misread it. Canon and creed are mutually reciprocal. Both canon and creed are needed to protect the church from distortions of the gospel" (135). Creeds possess no authority independent of Scripture and any authority they claim comes from the biblical story witnessed in their words.

Throughout *Contesting Catholicity*, Freeman visits various sites of contestation—such as the Trinity, the priesthood of the believers, Scripture, baptism, and Lord's Supper. When handling these topics, Freeman does not retreat into parochial isolationism or self-righteous individualism but looks for ways that Other Baptists might share in and contribute to the broader Christian communion. "Other Baptists see the gathered community of believers not simply as a congregation with a connection to the larger denomination of Baptists, but as the local manifestation of the one church of God" (246). Freeman insists that "where two or three are gathered in my name" (Matt. 18:20), there is *the* church, not simply *a* church.

Of all the topics Freeman addresses, "catholicity," the catchword in the title of the book, is likely to draw the most attention. By "catholicity" Freeman means something other than or more than "Roman

Catholic.” Indeed, at certain points he is sharply critical of Roman practice (see pages 228 and 248, for example). With the help of McClendon and Yoder’s typology, Freeman identifies three uses of the term “catholic” (255). First, catholic can refer to the quality of being whole, typical, or ordinary. Catholic is equivalent to orthodox belief and practice. Secondly, it can serve as a synonym for ecumenical, naming what is shared by all Christians. Thirdly, it can refer to the ecclesial organization of the Roman Catholic Church. Baptists are not, of course, catholic in the third sense, but Freeman nevertheless claims catholicity for Baptists in the first sense—that of whole, typical, and ordinary—and argues for the second sense—that of fully ecumenical and universal—at least as a goal toward which we are striving.

Admittedly, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox critics have grounds to challenge Freeman’s claim that Baptists are catholic in any sense whatsoever. Since Baptists are out of communion with both the Roman bishopric and the Byzantine, Orthodox communions, *can* they (or should I say “we”) legitimately call ourselves “catholic” in any of the three senses, even the first? Are our congregations whole, typical, or ordinary? Can we claim to represent the whole, typical, or ordinary tradition of the Christian church in the areas of liturgy, ecclesiology, or doctrine? In terms of liturgy, Baptists do not adhere to the Eucharistic rites and formulas of the Roman or Orthodox traditions. In terms of ecclesiology, Baptists follow congregational, not episcopal polity. In terms of doctrine, Baptists differ sharply with the historic Roman and Byzantine teachings on baptism, the Mother Mary, the process of salvation, and so on.

Freeman compares the Baptist church to the church of Antioch described in Acts 11. Although not founded by one of the apostles, it proved in word and deed to be empowered by the Holy Spirit, just like the apostolic churches (256). The term “catholic,” as Freeman uses it, reminds us that the church is gathered by God’s Spirit, not by human volition. It reminds us that no one chooses to be a member of the church in the way that one chooses to join a volunteer organization. God in Christ adopts us into the family of God and names us joint heirs with Christ. Members are made for the church—not just a particular Baptist church, but the whole church. “For either Baptist churches are expressions of the church catholic or they are not the church at all” (390).

In his reflections on catholicity, Freeman captures the spirit of many contemporary theologians who have been identified as “Bapto-Catholics,” a term which Freeman neither embraces nor rejects. He prefers his own term—“Other Baptists.” Lee Canipe at Chowan, Kimlyn Bender at Truett, Steve Harmon at Gardner-Webb, Philip Thompson at Sioux Falls, Beth Newman at Richmond, to name a few who have put their views in writing on the subject, all signal a shift in the *terra firma* of Baptist theology. It will not do to call them crypto-papists or Roman Catholics in disguise. These so-called Bapto-Catholics hold degrees from Baptist schools and teaching positions at premiere Baptist institutions. It will not do to say they represent a few outliers. These professors are shaping the next generation of pastors and ministers. And what they seek to recover is the ecumenical and liturgical body of Christ—its history, heritage, colour, and character, and not only for Baptists but for all Christians. These Bapto-Catholics or Other Baptists demonstrate a twin readiness: a readiness to leave behind the modernist disputations over foundationalism and individualism and a readiness to move ahead theologically and explore other vineyards of the Lord.

Perhaps one reason Freeman does not make habitual use of the term “Bapto-Catholic” is that it suggests that his concern is limited to dialogue between Baptists and Roman Catholics. Freeman’s interest extends to the whole body of Christ. As he has said in a recent interview in *Faith and Leadership*, “What’s at stake is the future of the mission of the church of Jesus Christ. Not the future for Baptists. Presbyterians and Methodists need the Baptists, but the Baptists also need them. . . . It’s about seeing yourself as a whole church.”¹

Permit me some questions for immediate reflection and future research: one on missions and the other on worship. Historically, missions have played a major role in the collective identity of Baptists. Missions have functioned as the *raison d’être* for Baptist association, the principle reason to form conventions and associations and for individual congregations to contribute money to those conventions. We can join hands and cooperate on international mission efforts even if we cannot reach consensus over divisive theological topics. The old slogan, “Doctrine divides, missions unite” comes to mind. And so, perhaps one way to get at post-denominational catholicity is to de-emphasize points of doctrinal distinctiveness and give more emphasis to concrete actions and efforts—the work of social justice, of international evangelism, of charity and humanitarian relief.

Is this as a viable way of expressing catholicity? Or, do you see dangers in this kind of approach?

I am wondering about another slogan, “Politics divide, worship unites.” A few years ago our church took a mission trip to the Dominican Republic. The day after our arrival, we met the pastor as well as members of the church in the town of San Francisco. We were there to partner with the church in a joint Vacation Bible School program. I have to say, for about five minutes, there was some real cultural awkwardness. Our Spanish skills proved to be as poor as their English. But, as soon as we began singing and worshipping together, all those differences faded away. A warm feeling of brotherhood and sisterhood spread across the room. Although we came from different places, we were one family in Christ. We sang with one voice as one people. Our unity in worship transcended all other differences, . . . at least for a moment.

Within two days of conversation some deep theological, social, and political differences emerged. The Dominican church held sharp gender distinctions and the pastor espoused literalist and foundationalist readings of Scripture that created theological quandaries for me and our church members. More concerning still: the pastor and the church expressed an undisguised distaste for Haitians. A longstanding tension exists between Haitians and Dominicans that is rooted in historic, cultural, and ethnic prejudices. How should we, the American guests, have responded? For the sake of the trip and out of a common courtesy, should we keep silence for a week?

So permit me to ask the pessimist’s question: is the “common faith enacted by Word and sacrament” (as Freeman says on page 392) enough to create and maintain real unity in the global Baptist community?

¹ Interview with Curtis Freeman, *Faith and Leadership*, [accessed 24 February 2015]. Online: <http://www.faithandleadership.com/curtis-freeman-other-baptists-and-contesting-catholicity>.

I submit these two questions, about missions and worship, as food for thought. But let my last word be one of commendation. Not to sound overly dramatic, but *Contesting Catholicity* is the most significant development in Baptist theology since Jim McClendon's *Systematic Theology*. This work stands for me as a milestone in the road, marking the journey thus traveled and prospecting the one yet to be. And so, the westward procession of Baptists moves on. I, for one, have my bags packed and the wagon loaded and am ready to follow Freeman forward into the wilderness.

AN APPRECIATIVE AND CRITICAL REVIEW OF CONTESTING CATHOLICITY: THEOLOGY FOR OTHER BAPTISTS (4)

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It has been a pleasure to read Curtis Freeman's *Contesting Catholicity*. I think it is a wonderful book. It is filled with important information and some great stories. Baptist leaders, even if they do not share Freeman's theological vision, should give attention to his diagnosis of problems in contemporary Baptist life and be aware of the therapy he is prescribing.

CONTESTING CATHOLICITY

So far as I am aware, the phrase *contesting catholicity* is original with Freeman. Instead of defining it, he provides an impressionistic sketch of it. My sense is that it is similar to what Paul Tillich called Catholic substance and Protestant principle. Freeman is not issuing a call to contest catholicity. He is issuing a call to embrace a catholicity that contests.

He uses the word *contesting* to refer to the project of dissenting from practices and beliefs found inside and outside the churches. He uses the word *catholicity* to refer not only to the universality of the church but to practices and beliefs that were operative in the life of the church in the patristic era and that remain operative in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox and other churches today. He does not express as much interest in the medieval church.

He argues that contesting catholicity is found also in some early and modern Baptists. Many early Baptists were sectarians, but enough of them were not that Freeman finds it plausible to describe their movement as one of "radical renewal within the church catholic rather than . . . a faction of dissent and separation" (241). This group includes Roger Williams, John Bunyan, Thomas Grantham, Daniel Turner, Robert Hall, Jr., and Andrew Fuller.

Many Baptists in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been sectarians, but others have embraced at least some aspects of catholicity. In this group Freeman includes more than a dozen persons, of whom the three most important for this book are Carlyle Marney, Warren Carr, and James Wm. McClendon.

Freeman wants to retrieve the catholicity of these Baptists. He says that Baptists need catholicity if they are going to cope with a radically new situation in which the church is disestablished culturally as well as politically.

CONTESTING CATHOLICITY AS A PROJECT FOR RENEWAL

The book is a call to renewal by means of retrieval. Its message therefore has a place alongside other recent movements to renew Baptist life: the Pentecostal and charismatic movements, the resurgence of Calvinist and Reformed theology and life, the prominence of mega-churches and contemporary styles of worship, and the campaign for biblical inerrancy.

Freeman incorporates into contesting catholicity some theological themes from two mid-twentieth-century renewal movements, the biblical theology movement and the movement among English and other Baptists toward a sacramental theology.

OTHER BAPTISTS

Freeman's name for those who share his vision is "Other Baptists." They are *other* in that they are neither Fundamentalists nor liberals.

Freeman identifies several disenchanted liberals who have made the pilgrimage to contesting catholicity, especially Carlyle Marney, Warren Carr, and James Wm. McClendon. I do not think Freeman identifies any Fundamentalists who have moved toward contesting catholicity, but he does name some evangelicals who have done so, including W. T. Conner, Stanley Grenz, and Roger Olson.

PRACTICES AND BELIEFS OF CONTESTING CATHOLICITY

I want now to identify some of the catholic practices and beliefs that Freeman commends. He has chosen these carefully. We know this because there are conspicuous factors in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches that Freeman does not commend. Among these are devotion to Mary and the saints, the effort by churches to gain preferential treatment and even legal establishment in societies, sacraments such as Confession, Penance, and Last Rites, an all-male clergy, episcopal church order, and the Pope.

Here are seven of the catholic practices and beliefs which Freeman does commend:

First, a non-coercive apprehension of the ecumenical creeds that understands them as centred sets rather than bounded sets and that maintains the traditional Baptist emphasis on personal faith. He writes: "The historic Baptist insistence on a personal faith may not be as far as some may think from the ancient ecumenical creeds" (99).

Second, ecumenism. Freeman forcefully opposes separationism and sectarianism. He writes: "The ecumenical movement is arguably the single most significant development for the church in the twentieth century" (128). He believes that every gathered congregation is an outcropping of the whole church. He commends a "receptive ecumenism" which includes an exchange of gifts as well as of ideas (270–1). Baptists, for example, can bring to the other churches the gift of knowing how to flourish without constitutional

establishment. Catholic theologians should read Baptist theology in order to dispel their Constantinian presumptions.

Third, an understanding of the priesthood of all believers that subverts the individualism that Freeman calls “the sickness of Baptist life” (321). Freeman draws heavily on the liberal Baptist Carlyle Marney in support of this project.

Fourth, the practice of congregational reading of the Bible in gathered churches as a way of discerning the mind of Christ. Freeman cites Sunday school as a good example of congregational reading. But his best example—and it is a great one—is the story of how, fifty-one years ago, the Watts Street Baptist Church in Durham, North Carolina, came to discern together that it was the mind of Christ for the church to ordain Addie Davis to the gospel ministry. Watts Street was the first Southern Baptist congregation to ordain a woman to ministry. Freeman is now a member of that congregation.

Fifth, the Trinitarian understanding of God.

Sixth, a richer theology of the church.

Seventh, a sacramental understanding of baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

In a moment I want to challenge parts of these last three, but before I do that I want to ask four clusters of questions about Freeman’s project.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF CONTESTING CATHOLICITY

First, as Baptists retrieve their birthright of catholicity, will their moral life become more mature? Will they become less violent and more peaceable? Will they be happier? Will they be better positioned to engage in service “to the least of these”?

Second, how will renewed Baptists stand in relationship to that factory for the manufacture of unbelief, modern science? Will they be equipped to minister in a world where more and more people assume that science is the most reliable source for understanding reality?

Third, will the embrace of a contesting catholicity have any effect on Baptists’ public and political life? Will they engage in politics more, or less? Will they be only an invisible leaven working secretly in society, or will they be salt and light?

Fourth, it is clear that embracing contesting catholicity will put Baptists in touch with the life of the great church across the centuries. Will it also put them in touch with reality beyond ecclesial life? In other words, does contesting catholicity help the church to know about God, or only to know about the church’s understanding of God? It has always seemed to me that this question was left unanswered by George Lindbeck in his great book *The Nature of Doctrine*, and it seems to me to still need answering.

CONTESTING FREEMAN'S CONTESTING CATHOLICITY

I am convinced that Freeman really means it when he says that he wants a catholicity that is contesting. In that spirit I want now to contest three of the things he has said in his book. They concern the Trinity, the church as a voluntary organization, and baptism and the Lord's Supper.

THE TRINITY

Freeman's chapter on the Trinity is a masterpiece. I suspect that Freeman has a more comprehensive knowledge of the history of the Baptist apprehension of Trinitarianism than anyone else in the world. His analysis of the various apprehensions—as problem, as proven, as inscrutable, and as living conviction—is brilliant. I am sympathetic to the positive things he writes about the Trinity, and I share his opposition to the perennial problems of tritheism, modalism, and subordinationism. I appreciate his scorching criticism of the claim made by conservative evangelical theologians such as Wayne Grudem and Bruce Ware that the Son is eternally submissive to the Father. Freeman is, I believe, the first Baptist in our part of the world to say what needs to be said about this bizarre proposal: “This is not the Trinity. This is tritheism” (189).

Happily, Freeman supports the project of avoiding needless gender-specific language for God. However, he vigorously resists one recent instance of that project, and that is what I want to challenge.

One of the doxologies that is sung to the hymn tune Old One Hundredth concludes with the words “Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.” In several hymnals this has been revised to read “Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost.” Freeman argues forcefully that this is “modalistic at best” (185).

I think he is mistaken about this, and for two reasons, one related to the Bible and the other to the Nicene Creed.

I can identify 115 passages in the New Testament in which the three persons² are mentioned together. The word most frequently used for the first person is *God*, and the word used most frequently for the second person is *Jesus*. Of the 115 passages, the word *Father* appears in only 22 and the word *Son* in only 15. The Bible offers no support for the claim that gender-specific language is the only proper language for the Trinity.

As for the creed, why should it be modalistic for the revised Doxology to identify the first person as Creator when the Nicene Creed identifies the first person as “maker of heaven and earth”?

A VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATION

Second, Freeman points out that describing the church as a voluntary organization does not do justice to biblical ecclesiology. The biblical teaching is that God creates the church. It is not enough to say that the church exists because people have voluntarily joined it.

² “Three Persons” is a phrase that probably is familiar to all readers, but it is not biblical. Neither the word “three” nor the word “persons” appears in the New Testament in connection with the Trinity. The phrase is familiar to us because of its use in catholic Christianity.

So far, so good. As Claude Welch once put it, in ecclesiology we must speak of God's *convocatio* before we speak of human beings' *congregatio*.

But Freeman does not stop with saying that God's action is prior to our voluntary response in the creation of the church. He denies our voluntary response altogether. Individuals not only do not create the church; they do not choose to join it. The trouble with Baptists, he writes, is that "they understand their assembly as just another voluntary association" (244). And he adds: "The church-as-voluntary-association model . . . conceives of the church as merely a human social group" (245).

I just do not agree. I think this is a matter of both/and rather than of either/or. We are members of the church both because God has called us and because we have voluntarily accepted God's call. In this sense the church is, I believe, a voluntary organization.

BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

Third, the sacraments. I welcome Freeman's affirmation of the real presence and activity of Christ in baptism and the Lord's Supper. I agree with him that it is lovely that many non-Baptists are waking up to the fact that the Baptists had a point when they called for believers baptism. I concur with him that it is regrettable that many Baptists lack any "sense that anything might be stirring in the [baptismal] water other than their own feet" (380). Like him, I am scandalized that some Baptists can affirm the Lord's presence throughout the world and then deny it in the bread and wine. I fully agree with Freeman—and with Warren Carr—that infant baptism plus confirmation is equivalent to believers baptism and that it results in a believers church as successfully as believers baptism does.

But then Freeman limits his sacramental theology. He briefly accedes to what Paul Fiddes has called the "historic Baptist rejection" of the doctrine of *ex opere operato* and contrasts his sacramental doctrine with it (371). I think we should rather embrace it. It is an important catholic principle.

And it is true. Baptismal candidates are not truly baptized because they or the officiants are holy; they are truly baptized by the performance of the act of immersion in water in the threefold name, as Christ commanded. Jesus is present in the Lord's Supper, not because the people are gathered or faithful or obedient, but because of the performance of the act of eating the bread and drinking the wine in remembrance of the crucified and risen Jesus.

I think *ex opere operato* is right to emphasize the real presence of Christ whenever these things are done, independently of who does them or how they are done. Jesus is present because he promised he would be present.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I agree with Freeman that Baptists need better theology. Many among us dislike and mistrust theology because we lived through a mean-spirited, destructive theological conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention. The feelings are understandable, but the dislike and mistrust are unnecessary, and unwise.

Theology is not unspiritual or irrelevant to life, and it is not intrinsically divisive. It is therapy for the mind of the church. We are unitary beings. What is in our minds matters, just as do what is in our hearts and what is in our hands. An anemic theology promotes anemic spirituality and anemic service.

In the past Baptists have produced many great Bible scholars and many great church historians, but not so many great theologians. I hope that Other Baptists will remedy that failing. I hope they will learn to treasure theology and to esteem their theologians. If they do, Curtis Freeman should be at the top of their list.

A RESPONSE TO REVIEWERS OF *CONTESTING CATHOLICITY*

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I want to thank Bill Leonard, Doug Weaver, Adam English, Fisher Humphreys, and the readers of these reviews, for taking time to engage my book with critical honesty and scholarly charity. But before addressing the specific questions and issues they raise, I would like to tell a short story. Once upon a time there was a family—a mom, a dad, and two children. Theirs was a happy home, and the children grew up knowing what it meant to love and be loved. The older child graduated from high school and went to a prestigious university out of state, where she earned a bachelor's degree and eventually an M.B.A. She met and married a young man, and they moved back to her hometown where they bought a house in the same neighbourhood as her parents. She and her husband worked in the family business, raised children of their own, and lived happily ever after.

The younger child had a very different story. He too left home and went away to college where he majored in philosophy and came under the influence of some radical ideas. He grew increasingly uncomfortable with his family of origin. Eventually, he became so alienated from them that he went to court and legally severed his relationship with his family. All of this made his parents very sad. They still loved their son, and so, they decided to give him his share of the inheritance as a sign that their love for him had not changed. The young man quickly lost his fortune in several risky business ventures. And no matter how hard he tried, he could find no work. One day he saw a job opening with a multinational agribusiness firm. He quickly snapped it up, and moved far away from his former family and friends. There he met a young woman, who he married. They had several children but their marriage grew increasingly unhappy. It eventually ended in a messy divorce. He soon remarried a woman with two children of her own, but this new relationship did not last either. This large and unhappy blended family did not get along. They never got together, not even for birthdays or holidays. They seldom talked, and they never attempted to make contact with their great grandparents, cousins, aunts, or uncles in the old country. And they all lived unhappily ever after.

This is no imaginary fairy tale. It is, of course, a thinly veiled retelling of Jesus' story of a father and two sons (Luke 15:11-32), and yet with a very different outcome. But it is also the all too real divide-and-multiply story of sectarianism, and the characters, as is easy to see, are figures of the unhappy history of the church oppressed "by schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed." It is a sad account of discontinuity and brokenness, oddly often celebrated by Free Churches, and Baptists in particular. But it is not a new one, for it can be traced back to the primal human story in which the sons and daughters of earth chose to live "free" (as they understood it) in the land east of Eden (Genesis 3). In my book I tell a different story for Baptists

and other Free Churches, not rooted in the search for independence that was Adam's sin, but in a vision of interdependence that is the mark of the new humanity and of the new creation on its way (Eph 2:15; 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15).

I am especially grateful that two of the best Baptist historians, who have argued for what Doug Weaver calls "the liberal or freedom-based" approach to Baptist identity, are represented on this panel. This is not the first time that we have talked about how to understand the present circumstance in Baptist life in light of the past, but it is surely one of the best. One misconception that has confused previous conversations is the notion that our divergent interpretations of the past can be explained as simply a difference between historians, who appeal to historical facts and sources, and theologians who look to ideas and arguments to support their views. This simple explanation has resulted in talking past one another. Out of respect for my historically minded colleagues I committed myself to pay careful attention to primary sources from the origins of the Baptist movement in hopes that it might enable us to hear and understand one another better.

It was this close reading of early materials that led me to believe that part of the problem between the "historians" and "theologians" was that the secondary sources had over-reported "the liberal or freedom-based" account and underreported the "Other Baptists" who understood themselves as communities of contested convictions within the church catholic. In describing what I found, I made no claim that the Other Baptists were the majority influence or that they are the expression of true Baptist identity. Instead I offered a theologically constructive account of a contesting catholicity based on a retrieval of sources from the Baptist heritage and in conversation with the wider church. Weaver and Leonard disagree with my theological proposal, but it is gratifying to know that they recognize the validity of the historical evidence. That is a step forward.

Leonard rightly points out that there is a decidedly Anglo, American, Southern emphasis to my book, with too little attention to how African Americans might fit into the Other Baptist story. It is surely correct that the future must be one that moves beyond the racial divisions that have defined Baptist life in the U.S. In the interest of full disclosure, my original proposal included a chapter on race, which I eventually omitted.¹ However, African American voices are not entirely absent from my account. In chapter two I tracked a liberal to postliberal trajectory in Black Baptist theology, exemplified in Benjamin Elijah Mays, Howard Thurman, and Martin Luther King Jr. (83–84). Mays, who studied theology at the University of Chicago, was rightly puzzled how the social gospel of his White teachers had nothing to say about race. It set him on a path that led him to write *The Negro's God*. Although I did not trace it out, there is also a fundamentalism that became entrenched among Black Baptists, so that African American Baptists are

¹ For some of that research see Freeman, "Never Had I Been So Blind: W. A. Criswell's 'Change' on Racial Segregation," *The Journal of Southern Religion* 10 (2007): 1-12; Freeman, "All the Sons of Earth: Carlyle Marney and the Fight Against Prejudice," *Baptist History and Heritage* 44, no. 2 (2009): 71–84; and Freeman "Let the Doors of the Church Be Open: Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Baptists in Chapel Hill, North Carolina," *American Baptist Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2013): 171–89.

caught in the same intractable liberal-fundamentalist polarity that I describe in the book.² I remain particularly intrigued with Thurman's christological starting point of Jesus as a poor Jew as a gesturing to a way beyond liberalism and fundamentalism (118–19), not only among Black Baptists, but all Baptists—Black and White.

Both Weaver and Leonard also express a concern that I should have paid more attention to religious experience. They are surely right to point to the fact that faith for Baptists has always been deeply experiential whereby before becoming a candidate for baptism one makes a personal declaration of faith in Christ. Leonard points to the Daniel Featley's *The Dippers Dipp* debate of 1660 for an example of the Baptist account of experience. He is surely onto something important, but because Featley was prone to exaggeration and distortion of the Baptist position, I turned instead to Baptist voices like Jane Turner's *Choice Experiences of the Kind Dealings of God* (1653), who John Spilsbury, the early Baptist leader and signatory of the First London Confession of Faith (1644), commended in his preface to her book as “full of the life and delight to a gracious experienced heart.”³ Or Vavasor Powell, who in his popular collection entitled *Spirituell Experiences of Sundry Beleevers*, described Christian “experience” as “a Copy written by the Spirit of God upon the hearts of beleevers.”⁴ By “copy” he meant an authentic account written directly by the Spirit of God, so that each specimen is evidence of the same author and each copy represents the same experience. So Baptists like Vavasor Powell and Jane Turner invited other experienced Christians to “hear” the accounts of their experience of grace so they might be persuaded by recognizing in these stories the same experience of grace that they had come to know.⁵

Leonard asks for more clarification about how I might imagine Baptists becoming more intentionally Trinitarian. This is an important question, and I admittedly spent more time tracing out the anti-Trinitarian hererodoxies in the history of Baptist life than in showing a path to renewal. My modest proposal in chapters three and four is to embrace a generous liberal orthodoxy, borrowing a phrase from Robert Calhoun and Hans Frei, which has as its center the christological and Trinitarian account of the faith named by the ancient ecumenical creeds. I recommend that Baptist congregations voluntarily and without coercion affirm the faith by reciting the creeds. They are of course free churches and thus free not to affirm the faith in this way. But a generous liberal orthodoxy, as Mark Medley has suggested, could be strengthened by a complementary generative liberating orthopraxy.⁶ There are a whole range of ways in which Christian practice is infused with a Trinitarian grammar. For example, Baptists have the opportunity to performatively display the doctrine of the Trinity when they baptize and lay on hands, offer prayers and pronounce blessings

² Adam Bond shows these divergent theological traditions in his excellent article “Recasting a Black Baptist Narrative,” *American Baptist Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2013): 149–70. What has yet to be written is a theological account of Black and White Baptists in the way Paul Harvey has written a historical narrative in his *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities Among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

³ Jane Turner, *Choice Experiences of the Kind Dealings of God*, in Curtis W. Freeman, *A Company of Women Preachers* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011), 313.

⁴ Vavasor Powell, *Spirituell Experiences, of Sundry Beleevers* (London: Robert Ibbitson, 1653). See *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), s.v. “copy.”

⁵ Freeman, *A Company of Women Preachers*.

⁶ Mark Medley, Panel Review of *Contesting Catholicity*, College Theology Society (30 May 2015).

and benedictions, sing the *Gloria Patri* and the Doxology, confess sin and proclaim pardon, make the sign of the cross and exchange the right hand of fellowship in the name and the sign of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.⁷ Such Trinitarian practices are generative of precisely the sort of Trinitarian faith that the Creed names. For the Trinity is not merely a doctrine. It is the life in which we as Christians live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28).

I am surprised that neither Leonard nor Weaver raised an issue about what I take to be one of the most controversial claims in the entire book. Namely, that in his rejection of Landmarkism, William H. Whitsitt set historically conscious Baptists on an ahistorical course by arguing that Baptists have no stake in historical continuity with apostolic Christianity because (he believed) the authenticity of the Baptist view of the church was uncontested and obvious. Whitsitt based his claim on the unqualified and unexplained assertion that Baptist ecclesiology rested on “the Bible” and “the Bible alone.” But the claim that the truth of the Baptist position is self-evident on the basis of “the Bible” and “the Bible alone” is just another version of the restorationist argument which contends that the true church at some point in history ceased to be identified with the historic churches and had to be reconstituted according to the New Testament pattern (122-23). The obvious problem with this approach is that rather than moving toward a greater expression of the *consensus fidelium*, the result has been a proliferation of competing groups, each one claiming to be the true restoration of “apostolic Christianity” on the basis of “the Bible” and “the Bible alone.” I make it clear that I think Whitsitt was correct in his historical conclusion that Baptists did not begin to immerse until 1641, but mistaken in his ecclesiological assumption that a sectarian doctrine of the church is the perspicuous teaching of Scripture.

So I faced the restorationist myth head on, not only among Landmarkers but among historicists who followed Whitsitt. Against both I argued that Baptists and other Free Churches must understand and seek to manifest that their gathered communities are not participants in an isolated sect but churches in historic continuity with the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. I argue that Whitsitt, just as much as Landmarkers, invoked a biblicism in which each individual biblical interpreter sees what is right in her or his eyes. This sort of biblicism is a denial of catholicity, and as I show it is a continual source of doctrinal heterodoxy. The rightful reading of the biblical canon requires that the Scriptures be read along with the ancient ecumenical creeds. By holding canon and creed together, communities of readers participate with the *consensus fidelium* in continuity with the faith of the apostolic church and join their voices with the apostolic witness to the Bible as the unfolding story of the triune God. Thus I arrived at the inseparable connection between Jesus Christ as the object of faith and knowledge, the ancient ecumenical creeds as the rule of faith, and the catholicity of the church as objective and historical.

Weaver rightly asks why I stopped short of a similar endorsement for the role of bishops to ensure the rightful performance of the *consensus fidelium*. In fact I do argue that Baptists and other Free Churches, which rely on the Holy Spirit working providentially to keep the churches in the apostolic tradition, can

⁷ I outline such a strategy in my essay “Back to the Future of Trinitarianism?” in *Theology in the Service of the Church: Essays Presented to Fisher H. Humphreys*, ed. Timothy George and Eric F. Mason (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2008), 36–61. See the final section, “Toward a Trinitarian Ressourcement Among Baptists,” especially points 4-5.

welcome episcopal succession as a sign of apostolicity in the life of the whole church, though they do not need to regard it as a necessary condition for valid apostolic ministry and gifts (269). The reason why I argue for the successive office of bishop as a sign but not a condition of faithfulness to the apostolic tradition is that I do not think *episcopate* can be reduced to historical continuity. My reservation in part stems from the conviction that the priesthood of all believers enables every baptized believer to participate in the priesthood of Christ, and thus exercises a form of communal *episcopate* of “watching over one another in love” (218–23). But this conviction correlates with the larger belief that the “rule of Christ” may be employed in personal and collegial as well as communal ways, which together comprise the overall *episcopate* in the church.⁸

Weaver raises the interesting question about an infant baptism by a Baptist church in Dayton, Ohio and its relation to my view. He is correct that I recommend Baptists practice believers baptism by immersion as the rule while being open to accepting “confirmed” infant baptized believers into membership without asking for rebaptism as an exception to the rule. But I decline to criticize the Dayton church which takes a different view out of my respect for their congregational freedom to make such judgements, and in doing so I recognize precisely what Weaver asks about congregational independence. My own view of congregational polity can be summarized in the statement by Henry Cook that “No outside body, however influential or numerous, can impose on a Baptist church, even the smallest or humblest, a decision that it does not choose to accept.”⁹ But I also stand by the statement of Baptist historian B. R. White that “interdependence is the mark of the converted” and “the search for independence was Adam’s sin.”¹⁰ I respect the freedom of individual conscience and the judgement of independent congregations, but I recognize the need of wider interdependence in discerning the rule of Christ. I do not share the same confidence as Weaver about “the consensus of the competent” along the democratic lines recommended by E. Y. Mullins.¹¹ Nor do I think that Matthew Caffyn, James Foster, or George Burman Foster were odd exceptions that prove the rule of Baptist orthodoxy. Instead I think that contemporary Baptists, liberal and conservative, are vulnerable to the moralistic therapeutic deism that appeals to “the autonomy of the human soul” as the internal authority which trumps all confessions and traditions as irrelevant artifacts of the past.

I could not imagine two Baptist theologians in the US more qualified to evaluate my book than Adam English and Fisher Humphreys. They are correct that my basic argument is to show how Baptists might understand themselves in continuity with historic Christianity. They recognize that my book is an ecclesiology, but they also grasp why a theological argument showing historical continuity requires rigorous historiographical work. They rightly identify as one of my crucial questions how to know whether when two or three are gathered it is the church of Jesus Christ. They grasp without explanation the complementarity

⁸ “The Word of God in the Life of the Church,” §§173–75, A Report of International Conversations Between the Catholic Church and the Baptist World Alliance, *American Baptist Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2012): 94–96. See also http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/Bapstist%20alliance/rc_pc_chrstuni_doc_20101213_report-2006-2010_en.html.

⁹ Henry Cook, *What Baptists Stand For* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1958), 78.

¹⁰ B. R. White, “The Practice of Association,” in *A Perspective on Baptist Identity*, ed. David Slater (Kingsbridge, U.K.: Mainstream, 1987), 29.

¹¹ My concern about Mullins is on record: “E. Y. Mullins and the Siren Songs of Modernity,” in *Through a Glass Darkly: Contested Notions of Baptist Identity*, ed. Keith Harper (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2012), 84–111.

of canon and creed. They rightly recognize that I am issuing a call to embrace a catholicity that contests while at the same time contesting the nature of what catholicity is. They understand that I do not regard believer's baptism merely as a Baptist distinctive, but rather the most clearly warranted pattern of Christian initiation in the New Testament and thus a disciple-making practice waiting to be embraced by the whole church. They also grasp why I contend that faithfulness to the Baptist heritage means that whenever Christian baptism is practiced according to the apostolic pattern it demands to be recognized and received as valid without need of completion or confirmation. It is wonderful to be so clearly understood by readers who have read so closely and so well.

English tells a compelling story about a missional engagement between an American congregation and a church in the Dominican Republic. Though the theological differences between them were as deep as their cultural and language divide, when they joined in worship they discovered a unity that transcended their differences. It seems to me that what he correctly points to is the generative nature of worship in which not only does praying regulate and generate believing (*lex orandi est lex credenda*), but also singing (*lex cantandi est lex credenda*). English asks whether the common faith enacted in worship is sufficient to create and maintain real unity in the global Baptist community. There is not an easy answer to his question, but it is surely the case that a faith deficiently enacted in word and sacrament (and it sounds like the Dominican church was lacking in both respects) is not sufficient to create and maintain unity among Baptists or the wider church. It is an important reminder why liturgy as well as theology must be grounded in the tradition of the church. For offering the praise of God in the language of historic orthodoxy in continuity with the church catholic is a sufficient condition, though not guarantee, of the unity we seek.

Humphreys wonders how contesting catholicity might make a difference for the way Baptists would engage matters about God, ethics, politics, and science, which he wonderfully describes as "that factory for the manufacture of unbelief." In addition to the earlier mentioned chapter on race, I originally projected a chapter on how to practice the politics of Jesus that is neither Republican or Democrat or something in between, as well as a chapter on why Christians should be neither anti-science nor scientific positivists who look upon science as foundational for knowing about God and God's ways. I think Humphreys can imagine the basic features of my answer to these questions, as they would follow the argument of other chapters in providing an alternative beyond the liberal-conservative options. Here I am thinking about the way I described liberalism and fundamentalism as two opposite traditions in American Christianity that comprised a constellation of beliefs rather than a coherent theological consensus (1–5).

Humphreys's question about how contesting catholicity might shape our ways of knowing God strikes me as central to the overall theme of my book, especially chapters three and four. Knowing God for Baptists has always been deeply experiential, so that before becoming a candidate for baptism one is asked to make a personal declaration of faith in Christ. But knowing God through Jesus Christ as I understand it is not simply the response of a single individual, trusting in God's saving grace and pledging to follow Jesus. Such a transactional arrangement, though ever more pervasive through the influence of the culture of evangelicalism, simply exacerbates the sickness of individualism that must be overcome by the healing grace

of salvation in which believers participate in the communion between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit with fellow believers in the church.

Humphreys raises three substantive criticisms that I want to address. The first concerns gender specific language and the Trinity.¹² The continued use of the traditional language of “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” has become a contested matter among theologians. Some revisionists have argued that it is patriarchal and should be replaced with more gender inclusive imagery, for example, “Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer” or “Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost.” But while substituting non-gender specific language for the Trinity without regard for doctrinal orthodoxy may satisfy concerns about patriarchy, it may also reintroduce ancient heresies in new iterations. Feminist theologian Sarah Coakley has wisely observed that merely changing established language by theological manipulation or political fiat, no matter how well intentioned, will not result in sustained renewal, for the aim of such language is not about satisfying social conventions, but participating in the divine life.¹³ This theological concern finds expression in an often repeated apocryphal story about a worried parent who reportedly told a theologian that at her child’s baptism the minister invoked the name of the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. She asked if her baby would go to hell, to which the theologian answered, “No, but that pastor will!”¹⁴

I worry that the substitute formulas “Creator, Redeemer/Christ, Sustainer/Spirit” lean in a modalistic direction because they might just as easily be understood as naming three modes of being in a uni-personed God with no differentiated personal relations as a three-personed God with a unitary being. I suspect that most of the people who intone one of the alternate non-gendered Doxologies actually intend to address the Trinity, and I hope that with infinite wisdom and mercy God hears and receives even garbled and confused praise. Of course, not even the best theological formulations comprehend the mystery of the Trinity. There is an old adage attributed to Augustine which warns that whoever tries to understand the Trinity would lose their mind, but whoever denies it would lose their soul.¹⁵ Humphreys, however, does not share my concern about the “Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer” formula, and he cites other variations of Trinitarian language in the New Testament, which I am much more inclined to receive. In fact, the *Chalice Hymnal* which contains the “modalistic” alternate Doxology also contains another version that uses the terms “God, Christ, Holy Spirit” along the lines Humphreys suggests. I agree that this is a more suitable alternative and approve its use (185, fn 175), which Humphreys curiously does not mention.

In seeking to justify his position, Humphreys points to the Nicene Creed which refers to the first person of the Trinity as the “Maker/Creator of heaven and earth.” Here I think Humphreys actually compounds the problem, for a deeper examination of Nicene theology shows that the Cappadocians explicitly rejected precisely the suggestion he offers. Gregory of Nazianzus, whom I cite on this matter,

¹² I have described my appreciation for Humphreys’s significant work on the Trinity in my essay “Back to the Future of Trinitarianism?” in *Theology in the Service of the Church: Essays Presented to Fisher H. Humphreys*, ed. Timothy George and Eric F. Mason (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2008), 36–61.

¹³ Sarah Coakley, *God, Sexuality and the Self: An Essay ‘On The Trinity’* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 290–91.

¹⁴ Ted Peters, *God as Trinity: Relationality and Temporality in Divine Life* (Louisville, KY.: Westminster/ John Knox, 1993).

¹⁵ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *Dear Mr. Brown: Letters to a Person Perplexed About Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), 120.

explains that the reference to God as “Father” “is not a name either of an essence or of an action,” but rather “is the name of the relation in which the Father stands to the Son, and the Son to the Father.” Gregory argues against substituting “Creator” for “Father” because it is not capable of expressing the relational dimension that carried in the personal language and thus leans toward monarchic modalism (185).¹⁶

The term “Creator” in the Nicene Creed does not ascribe a function or action as a substitute for the name of the first person of the Trinity identified in the First Article, but rather to show precisely that the “Maker of heaven and earth” is none other than the “Father” of the second person “Jesus Christ” the “Son” in the Second Article. The upshot is a decisive refutation of the Marcionite partition of creation and redemption. The creed thus stresses the differentiation and relation between the persons and the actions. The substitute formula of “Creator, Redeemer/Christ, Sustainer/Spirit” is not sufficiently perichoretic, but rather suggests that the Father alone creates and the Son alone redeems and the Spirit alone sustains. It does not make clear that although each of these dimensions of the divine work have distinctive focal points in the work of the three persons, all three persons participate together in all these works.

The Scriptures, for example, do not present the Father alone as the Creator. The Father creates through the Son with the Spirit. The biblical teaching consistently affirms that all three persons of the Trinity are Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer (Gen 1:1-5; Ps 33:6; John 1:1-5; Col 1:15-20; Heb 1:1-4; *passim*). Humphreys’s suggestion is actually closer to the disputed interpretation of Origen that the phrase the “only true God” (John 17:3) applies to the Father only who is “very God” (*autotheos*, God of himself), not the Son who is “the first-born of all creation.”¹⁷ Augustine argued to the contrary that the designation the “only true God” does not attain to the Father alone, but properly denotes the Father, Son, and Spirit in Trinitarian relation.¹⁸ Augustine here follows the theology of the historic baptismal formula in which the terms “Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” are not simply images, metaphors, actions, or descriptions, but *the name* of the one true God (Matt 28:19).

Humphreys’s second criticism relates to my view of the church as a voluntary association. He quotes the very helpful clarification by Claude Welch, which says that when thinking about the church “we must speak of God’s *convocatio* before we speak of human beings’ *congregatio*.” I agree, and this strikes me as

¹⁶ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Third Theological Oration XVI*, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series (Oxford: James Parker & Co., 1894), 7: 307.

¹⁷ Origen, *Commentarii in Evangelium Joannis*, 2.2, ANF 10:21. Origen’s interpretation reflects the Orthodox emphasis on the Father as the source of life and draws from the Orthodox theology of *theosis* in which through the incarnation divinity is united with humanity thus enabling humanity to participate in divinity. E.g., Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 8.54, NPNF2 4: 65; Irenaeus *Against Heresies*, 5.preface, ANF, 1:526. Citing Christ’s words in John 17:3 that the Father is “the only true God” Origen maintained that the Father alone is God in a strict sense (*autotheos*) as ingenerate (*agēnetos*). The deity of Christ as the Son of God was derivative. He is the “first-begotten of all creation” (Col 1:15), receiving his life and being from the Father, though he was begotten eternally and not created in time (Prov 8:22). Origen’s Trinitarian theology ironically became the source of both the Nicene doctrine of eternal generation and the Arian stress on the Father alone as very God resulting in the ontological subordination of the Son. See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper, 1978), 128–30.

¹⁸ Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 6.10, NPNF1 3:102. Augustine here is in agreement with Gregory of Nazianzus, who famously declaimed “when I say God, I mean Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. For Godhood is neither diffused beyond these . . . nor yet is it bounded by a smaller compass than these.” *Oration 38.8*, NPNF2 7:347.

precisely the emphasis I tried to make in the book, particularly because as I have shown *some Baptists* have ignored God's *convocatio* and speak only of the human *congregatio* as constitutive of the church. Here I actually think we may agree, and I would simply ask Humphreys to read the full sentence that he quotes: "The trouble is not that Baptists and other evangelical Christians forsake to assemble (Heb 10:25) but rather that *often* they understand their assembly as just another voluntary association." By omitting the word "often" Humphreys incorrectly infers that my argument is to be taken with an implied "always." Earlier in the book I argue along precisely the line that Humphreys makes,

The early Baptists understood the church as both the people gathered by Christ and the people who gathered in response to his call. In this explanation of the church, "believers gather because they are *gathered*." But, like the bells that ring on Sunday morning calling the church to the meeting, the initiative lies with God, not humanity. Thus the early Baptists conceived of their gathered communities as local and visible expressions of the church universal, not merely as independent congregations or voluntary associations (17).

To suggest that the early Baptists conceived of their gatherings *not merely* as voluntary associations is not to deny that there is a human response to the divine call. I agree with the balance of *convocatio* and *congregatio*, with the caveat that I think is implied in the Welch quote, namely that God's calling is prior to the human response. And thus the church is properly understood as constituted, not by a human action, but by an invitation to participate in the eternal and preexistent reality of the divine life.

In his final criticism, Humphreys states that my sacramentalism is still too weak, and that Baptists should embrace *ex opere operato* as an important catholic principle. Here he is correct that I stand with the historic Free Church suspicion of *ex opere operato*. As the report on the most recent international Baptist-Catholic dialogue states, Baptists are not comfortable with the inference of Catholic teaching that the sacraments themselves *confer* rather than *confirm* grace.¹⁹ I can affirm that God has freely chosen to be present in the sacraments and that Christians can expect God's presence based on God's promise, but I am not prepared to support that priestly utterances are the condition or cause of God's presence. Just as an understanding of the church requires both *convocatio* and *congregatio*, so I argue that a right theology of the sacraments requires both divine promise and human response. And just as it is God's Word, not the human response, that creates the church, it is God's Word, not the priestly words, that is the basis of the real presence in, with, and through the sacraments. Humphreys's suggestion that Baptists should receive *ex opera operato* as a catholic principle would have significant implications for baptismal practice, and thus would imply that any who are baptized in water in the triune name should be received irrespective of whether their faith has been confirmed and confessed. I argue at length in chapter nine why this baptismal practice has had serious negative results throughout the history of the church, which lies at the center of the Baptist contestation of catholicity from the beginning. Thus I argue for the sacraments as means of God's promised presence.

Once again I wish to express my gratitude to all four reviewers for their critical and constructive reflections. I apologize to all who have endured to the end for not having been more succinct and clear. I

¹⁹ "The Word of God in the Life of the Church," §§88–90.

hope they will take the length of my response as my respect for the seriousness of each reviewer's remarks, deserving an equally serious response. Finally, I urge readers to continue the process of contestation, which in the end is not ultimately about struggle, dissent, and contentiousness, but about fellow pilgrims bearing witness (*testari*) with (*con*) one another on a journey.

Reviews

WILLIAM B. WHITNEY, *PROBLEM AND PROMISE IN COLIN E. GUNTON'S DOCTRINE OF CREATION*. LEIDEN AND BOSTON: BRILL, 2013. VIII + 213 PP. [ISBN 978-900425-03-14].

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Colin Gunton was a very significant theologian in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Secondary literature on Gunton is still in its infancy, and William Whitney's book, adapted from his PhD, is a welcome contribution to the developing conversation on Gunton's work. Whitney engages with one of Gunton's major contributions to systematic theology, the doctrine of creation, and fills a genuine gap to this point. As the author rightly suggests, Gunton's trinitarian theology of creation is a central aspect of his constructive theology, around which many other important Guntonian themes cohere.

Whitney's book is divided into five chapters, beginning with Gunton's critical analysis of the influence of Western Hellenistic dualisms and the culture of modernity upon the development of the doctrine of creation. These gnostic cosmologies undermine material being for the sake of immateriality with the result that we seek salvation from the creation rather than the salvation of creation. Whitney acknowledges Gunton's propensity to employ sweeping historiographical tropes in his analysis of variegated history, especially his polemical work on Augustine, whilst helpfully suggesting that Gunton's perceived criticisms of Augustine are better understood as representative errors in the tradition from which his constructive work commences. Irenaeus serves as one of Gunton's major positive foils, who upholds the aseity of God and the freedom and integrity of creation by his emphasis upon *creatio ex nihilo*. This establishes the contingency and goodness of creation as created reality which God interacts with personally through his Son and in the Spirit to bring it towards an end which is greater than its beginning. Whitney captures the importance of Irenaeus' influence upon Gunton's view of the eschatological structuring of creation towards perfection through time.

In chapter two, Whitney outlines Gunton's major analysis of modernity in *The One, the Three and the Many* and notes Gunton's extensive account of modernity's deleterious effects upon human being in the world. Gunton's criticisms of modernity extend to the historical-critical method and its quest for direct language in christology. Whitney helpfully shows that it is against this critique that Gunton develops his theory of metaphor as indirect, yet truthful, speech about God. Such a theory of metaphor and language's polyvalent meaning opens possibilities of indwelling the world. It is the need for indwelling the world which Whitney notes as central to Gunton's project because modernity's rugged individualism is a threat to personal and relational being. The displacement of the God by divinized human reason robs divine and human relationality of the necessary space for otherness-in-relation. Freedom, in Gunton's theology, is defined as being set free through the Son for relationship with God, others and the creation by the Spirit's personalizing, particularising and perfecting action.

Chapter three examines Gunton's constructive contributions to a trinitarian theology of creation and his stress upon the contingent nature of creation and its non-necessity for God's being. In freedom, God creates the world as other than himself and relates to it in its createdness by loving and personal relationship through the Son and in the Spirit—Irenaeus' 'two hands'. God relates personally to the creation, within its temporal structures, through the incarnate Son by whom, through whom, and to whom all things are created, upheld, and directed. The Spirit, Whitney points out, is crucial in Gunton's thought as God's eschatological perfecting cause who enables created beings to realise their particularity by drawing them into relationship with God (and all else) through the Son who is the mediator of creation. It is in relationship with the creator that created being is freed from the constraints of sin to have its being perfected in relationship. In its perfectability, the creation is directed towards an end which is greater than its beginning, and this gives rise to the possibilities of human action participating in God's perfecting of creation, through the Son and in the Spirit. As Whitney stresses, trinitarian mediation and creation's directedness to perfection are at the heart of Gunton's trinitarian doctrine of creation.

Chapter four shifts the focus from the God-world relation to Gunton's theological anthropology. Whitney correctly identifies that it is the triune God who is the basis of true human personhood in Gunton's work. This has a strong christological focus as it is Jesus Christ who truly bears the image of God by his faithful human response to the Spirit's empowerment to obey the Father's will. Thus, human personhood is found in the personalizing and particularizing action of the Spirit who draws us into relation with the Father, through the Son, to be who we are in mutually constitutive relationship with God, one another and the created order. Whitney notes Gunton's indebtedness to John Zizioulas for his relational trinitarian ontology in which persons have their being constituted in relationship to God, one another and all else. This stresses a relational understanding of personhood, rather than the Enlightenment's rationalistic understanding, and the unity of the human creature—soul and body, spiritual and material. Whitney engages Green's critique of an underdeveloped harmartiology in Gunton and helpfully maintains that Gunton's analysis of modernity is part of his harmartiology and a structural analysis of sin. However, his agreement that harmartiology is underdeveloped in Gunton's wider work does not take full account of its significance in Gunton's wider corpus.

Chapter five examines Gunton's constructive trinitarian account of culture in the context of creation by contrasting it with Barth's. Whitney contends that Gunton enlarges the significance of Barth's theological account of culture which upholds the goodness of creation but holds a strong distinction between God and creation. Gunton also upholds this distinction, but, through his theology of mediation, seeks a role for genuine human contributions to the perfecting of creation in not only science but also art, politics and ethics. Such culture making, under God's good hand, will result in the flourishing of many forms of truth, goodness, and beauty (Gunton's definition of culture) in which human action participates as sub-creators in God's perfection of the creation. These finite perfections bring praise to the Father for his wise purposes in creation whilst also raising ethical questions regarding which forms of various human action bring praise to God. This leads Whitney to offer some critical comments about American Christianity's engagement in culture and the anemic influence of fundamentalism which drives thought and vision away from culture and created realities.

Whitney's work is to be congratulated for orientating readers to understanding Gunton's theology of culture within the context of his doctrine of creation. Whitney also shows the theological integration of Gunton's work by examining his theology of creation in relation to other doctrinal foci such as christology, pneumatology, anthropology, trinitarian ontology, mediation and culture. As such, this book gives a good overview of the vast scope of Gunton's theological project which leads to some of its problems and much of its promise. At the same time, Whitney's work could have been further strengthened by a deeper engagement with the criticisms which have grown in regards to Gunton's account of relational trinitarian ontology and personhood. This is an important flashpoint in contemporary trinitarian theology in which many of the settled notions of trinitarian theology, from which Gunton operated, have been critiqued. The fifth chapter, which compared Barth's work on creation and culture with Gunton's work, would have benefitted from engagement with Gunton's transcribed lectures on Barth, *The Barth Lectures*. Nonetheless, this is an important contribution to Gunton studies that examines a central aspect of Gunton's theology and highlights the ongoing significance and fruitfulness of his work.

JONATHAN LAMB, *PREACHING MATTERS: ENCOUNTERING THE LIVING GOD*. NOTTINGHAM: INTER-VARSITY PRESS, 2014. 187 PP. [ISBN: 978-1-78359-149-7].

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Jonathan Lamb is CEO and minister-at-large for Keswick Ministries in the United Kingdom. He was the founding Director of Langham Preaching, a global partnership with a vision to establish indigenous preaching movements throughout the majority world. This book is dedicated to the thousands of preachers who have participated in Langham Preaching seminars. It is clearly intended to be a resource for people without much formal preaching training. As the preface says, it "is not intended to be a detailed homiletics book", but a "simple introduction to the dynamics of preaching" for anyone who is involved in teaching the Scriptures, whether that be in a pulpit, a home group, a youth event, or a one-to-one Bible study (p. 16). But do not be deceived by the author's claims. He has distilled a considerable amount of reading and experience into this brief and very simple little book. This combination of accessibility and profundity makes it an excellent introduction to the theology and practice of preaching.

Lamb structures the book around several themes that emerge from Nehemiah 8:1-12, where Ezra the preacher leads God's people into a transforming encounter with the living God through his word. For a book on preaching, it is refreshing to see each section start with a short exposition of this important biblical text. The first section focuses on Scripture and the heart of preaching. With John Stott, Langham's founder, Lamb argues that "the secret of preaching is not so much mastering certain techniques, as being mastered by certain convictions" (p. 36). For Lamb, the central conviction is that the Scriptures constitute God's inspired revelation to all people, cultures and generations. They must therefore set the agenda for each

sermon. For evangelicals, this might sound like a truism but, as Lamb notes, in many evangelical churches the Bible does not set the agenda; “it is simply the background music” (p. 22).

In chapter 2 Lamb argues that to centre their preaching and their lives on the Word of God preachers need to pray the Scriptures. This call to cultivate the kind of disciplines embedded in practices such as *Lectio Divina* and Ignatian Gospel Contemplation has become increasingly common among evangelical writers. We need to hear it. As Hans Urs von Balthasar once said, a strictly clinical historical-critical approach to exegesis too often reduces the living body of Scripture to a dead heap of flesh, blood and bones. Prayerful reflection must, though, be accompanied by diligent study. In chapter 3 Lamb provides some basic instructions for how to understand a passage. He also supplies two helpful tools to assist small groups engage in what he calls “manuscript study”.

The middle section of the book focuses particularly on the teacher and the work of preaching. It is infused with material used in Langham Preaching seminars through the majority world. Chapter 4 claims that the key to effective preaching is to discover the central truth contained in a Bible passage. It is arguable whether every passage could be said to contain just one central truth, but Lamb is surely right to teach that every sermon should be focused on one main idea. In a very helpful diagram (p. 91) he shows how the formulation of this idea is the pivotal step in the journey from text to sermon. Chapter 5 then discusses sermon structure and content. Lamb argues that preachers must honour the literary genre of their passage. Genre is not neutral. The form of a text influences its meaning and rhetorical impact. So if we want to preach a biblical text faithfully, we should allow both its content and its form to impact our sermon. We must let the passage determine both what is said and how it is said.

Borrowing an image from John Stott, Lamb insists in chapter 6 that preachers are to build bridges between the world of the Bible and the world of today. He calls for preachers to become amateur sociologists, to “assess the mood of our culture, to understand the big issues and the commonly expressed questions, the things that are finding their way into newspapers and magazines or TV chat shows, issues that are causing anxiety or shaping the popular consciousness” (p. 114). In chapter 7 Lamb argues that preaching must not just be focused, clear, and relevant. It must also be embodied. Preachers need to embody in their own lives the truths about which they speak. As John Owens used to say, “if the word does not dwell with power *in* us, it will not pass with power *from* us” (p. 131).

The third section of the book addresses the congregation and the purpose of preaching. For many congregations, the sermon is the moment in a worship service where they are most passive. Lamb observes, however, that preaching is a community event which requires the congregation’s active participation. In chapter 8 he suggests various ways by which congregations can play their part in preaching. In the next chapter he explores, briefly, the art of application. Lamb recognises that discussion about exegetical, hermeneutical and homiletical techniques can reduce preaching to a mere technical exercise. Chapter 10, therefore, emphasises the place of the Spirit in preaching.

The final chapter is an impassioned appeal to always proclaim God’s grace in Christ. Lamb argues that for us, standing on this side of the New Testament, preaching grace means preaching Christ. This is one of several discussions in the book where I would like to have seen the author go into greater detail. I

recognise Lamb's intention to keep the book short and relatively simple, but his discussions on relevance (pp. 109-21) and application (pp. 150-57) could also have been strengthened with more specific instruction. Lamb, like Stott, calls for preachers to listen to both the biblical text and their listeners' context in order to bring word and world together. But he gives much more specific instruction on how to exegete Scripture than on how to exegete culture. This is typical of most books and courses on preaching within the evangelical world. A recent exception is Timothy Keller's *Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism* (New York: Viking, 2015). But Keller is an exception. Evangelical teachers of preaching would do well to give much more thought to the principles of cultural exegesis. What are the tools, methods, techniques and steps for understanding culture? This book, with its sections on text, preacher and congregation, would have been greatly strengthened by a fourth section, one on the world.

It is by no means as detailed or comprehensive as Darrell Johnson's *The Glory of Preaching* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2009) or Thomas G. Long's *The Witness of Preaching* (2nd ed. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005). Nevertheless, this is an excellent introduction to the theology and practice of preaching. Lamb demonstrates the very qualities which, he argues, mark good preaching: faithfulness, relevance and clarity. He locates his claims in thoughtful exegesis of Nehemiah, Ezra and many other biblical texts. He deploys a range of engaging illustrations to introduce the main idea of each chapter. He communicates those ideas in clear, accessible prose, and he has compiled in the appendices some useful resources for preachers and teachers of preaching. Most of all, I appreciate the balance that Lamb strikes between conviction and technique, theology and methodology. He not only tells us, in very clear terms, how to preach. He also tells us, in no uncertain terms, why to preach. This simple introduction to the dynamics of preaching will, therefore, be a valuable training resource both within local churches and, as an introductory textbook, within theological colleges. It will also be of value to seasoned and weary preachers who want to audit their practices and refresh their convictions.

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

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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” (p. 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” (p. 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.