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Edited by
Calvin L. Smith
Stephen M. Vantassel

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The *Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics* subscribes to the historic decisions of the early church councils. We hold dearly to the deity of Christ, the virgin conception, salvation through Jesus Christ, and the Trinity. We also believe in the unity of Scripture and consider the Bible as the final authority on all issues of faith and practice. This high view of Scripture requires submissions to be underpinned by a thoughtful biblical and theological analysis. The Editors also welcome non-Evangelical contributors to submit critiques of Evangelical political and social thought, providing they are suitably respectful of our values and beliefs, and that submissions are of interest and relevance to the aims and readership of the journal. Articles appearing in the journal do not necessarily reflect the views of the Editors.

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Introduction

Calvin L. Smith

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About...

The Evangelical Review of Society and Politics and *The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics*, are international peer-reviewed journals exploring Evangelical issues from an interdisciplinary perspective. The purpose of the journal is to bring an international and scholarly Evangelical analysis to bear upon various social and political issues of national and international interest. The Editors are committed to presenting the full spectrum of Evangelical thought to provide readers (whether Evangelical or those analysing Evangelical phenomena) with thoughtful, scholarly debate and original research that is biblically based and theologically sound.

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Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics
Articles





Living With Tension: Towards A Practical Charismatic- Evangelical Urban Social Ethic

Andy Wier

KEYWORDS:

Christian Social Ethics	Urban Theology
Charismatic-Evangelical Churches	Practical Theology
Faith-Based Social Action	Creative Tension

ABSTRACT:

This article attempts to articulate a theological response to some of the tensions that UK charismatic-evangelical churches experience when engaging with socially and economically disadvantaged urban areas. The working title of this model is a *practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic*. Developed by a practical theologian in response to the findings of a recent qualitative study, this model tries to root charismatic-evangelical urban practice in a wider social ethic which is both consistent with evangelical convictions and open to insights from other Christian traditions.

The proposed practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic consists of six conceptual components. Each of these responds to a tension that has been encountered and observed within contemporary charismatic-evangelical urban practice. The article outlines each conceptual component in turn and then goes on to assess the evangelical credentials of this model. It is acknowledged that the practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic presented here does not provide a finalised or definitive model. Instead, it is shared as an outline sketch intended to provoke further evangelical reflection on the subject of living with tension.

INTRODUCTION

Historically, UK charismatic-evangelical churches have worshipped mainly in suburban areas and been predominantly middle class.¹ The past two decades, however, have witnessed a growing charismatic-evangelical engagement with socially and economically deprived urban neighbourhoods. One manifestation of this is the growing number of charismatic-evangelical Christians relocating to inner city areas as part of a movement “[o]ut of the ghetto and into the city” (Dixon 1995).² Another is the increasing number of charismatic-evangelical congregations running social action projects such as food banks and debt advice centres.

Within a wider historical and international context, such developments can be understood as one example of the significant shifts in evangelical attitudes to social action that have occurred over the past hundred years. These shifts are associated with the twentieth century “loss and recovery of the evangelical social conscience” (Smith 2009, 263) and evangelical attempts to overcome the “perennial dichotomy” (Bosch 1991, 407) between evangelism and social involvement. Evangelical social engagement is therefore not restricted or confined to churches of a charismatic-evangelical tradition.³ In a UK context, however, it appears that charismatic-evangelical Christians have often been at the forefront of the emergence of new forms of evangelical social action over the past two decades (Kuhrt 2010, 14). Furthermore, international research has highlighted the significance of charismatic and Pentecostal forms of social action as part of “the new face of Christian social engagement” (Miller and Yamamori 2007).⁴

1 In conceiving charismatic-evangelicalism as a subset of Evangelicalism, this article draws on the work of Rob Warner who identifies “Charismatic experientialism” as one of seven sectors or micro-paradigms within contemporary English evangelicalism (Warner 2007, 247).

2 See, for example, the work of the Eden Network - <http://eden-network.org/>.

3 For descriptions of social involvement among UK Reformed evangelicals (as oppose to charismatic-evangelicals), see the work of Tim Chester and Steve Timmis (Chester and Timmis 2007, 67-82).

4 Miller and Yamamori include ‘charismatic’ churches within their umbrella term

These developments have received relatively little academic attention, either within empirical studies of faith-based social action or more explicitly theological work. While historical evangelical debates about the relative priority of evangelism and social action are relatively well-documented (Chester 1993, Smith 1998), much less is understood about their relationship within contemporary ecclesial practice.⁵ There have also been relatively few theological resources to enable evangelical practitioners to reflect on their experiences of urban ministry. In response to these gaps, this article describes one attempt to sketch out a theological model that directly responds to issues encountered and observed within contemporary evangelical urban practice. Targeted primarily at a charismatic-evangelical constituency, but with a wider evangelical audience also in mind, the working title of this model is *a practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic*. This attempts to root charismatic-evangelical urban practice in a wider social ethic which is simultaneously consistent with evangelical convictions and open to insights from other Christian traditions (Wier 2013a, 100).

The practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic presented in this article makes no claim to provide a finalised or definitive model. Rather, it is an outline sketch developed by a practical theologian as a conceptual response to issues that arise from contemporary ecclesial practice. In this sense, it may be seen as an attempt to explore the implications of the “ethnographic turn” (Phillips 2012, 95) for evangelical social ethics. As such, the model still stands in need of further conceptual refinement and is shared here with the intention of provoking further

⁵ ‘Pentecostalism’ (Miller and Yamamori 2007, 2). In this article, however, charismatic-evangelical churches are conceived as distinct from (although nevertheless related to) Pentecostalism. This is informed by Cartledge’s distinction between the classical Pentecostalism of the early twentieth century and the subsequent charismatic movement (Cartledge 2003, 6). In this context, charismatic-evangelical churches are to be found in both independent / New Church networks and in mainstream denominations.

⁵ Internationally, there appears to be growing empirical research interest on charismatic and Pentecostal social involvement (Miller and Yamamori 2007) and Pentecostal experiences and expressions of ‘Godly love’ (Lee and Poloma 2009). Within a UK context, however, there has been relatively little previous research on the way that charismatic-evangelical churches engage in urban mission.

reflection and discussion. With this in mind, the article proceeds in three sections. The first section briefly describes the origins of the proposed theological model. The second section introduces and describes six constituent elements of a practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic. The third section then begins to assess this model and consider priorities for its further development.

ORIGINS

The theological ethic presented in this article has been developed in response to the outcomes of a recently completed qualitative study of UK charismatic-evangelical urban churches (Wier 2013a). This study used two main research methods to explore the motivation and practice of charismatic-evangelical urban churches within one particular English city. Firstly, an in-depth ethnographic study was conducted within an independent charismatic-evangelical urban church. This revolved around a nine-month period of participant-observation. Secondly, seven focus groups were conducted with leaders and members of a further three charismatic-evangelical congregations.⁶ The main findings of this study revolved around a series of six tensions that charismatic-evangelical urban churches experience (Wier 2013a, 65). These tensions, which we consider more fully in the next section, are as follows:

1. Collaborative versus Counter-cultural tendencies
2. Spiritual-evangelistic versus Socio-economic intentions
3. Reflexive versus Applied theology
4. Heroic versus Mundane self-perception
5. Service providers versus Intentional communities
6. Locally indigenous versus Expansive horizons

⁶ The three charismatic-evangelical churches studied through focus groups were a large 'magnet church', an Anglican parish church, and an Anglican 'fresh expression'.

It was in an attempt to provide a creative conceptual response to these tensions that the practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic presented in this article was developed. As documented elsewhere (Wier 2013b), the methodology for arriving at this model involved considering the study's qualitative findings through a range of theological lenses as well as extended reflection on the author's own experience of living with the six tensions. This process then culminated in the formulation of a six-part theological response.

CONCEPTUAL COMPONENTS

In this section, we introduce the six conceptual components of the proposed practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic. With each component, we begin by briefly describing a tension from charismatic-evangelical urban practice to which the component seeks to respond, before then going on to outline the proposed conceptual response.

i. Mission as God's Turning to the World

The first tension identified by the qualitative study of charismatic-evangelical churches was a tension between *collaborative and counter-cultural tendencies*. The study uncovered various examples of charismatic-evangelical churches collaborating with secular organisations such as the Police, local authority, and other community groups. However, it also found evidence of strong counter-cultural tendencies that placed limits on the churches' willingness to collaborate with other organisations beyond the church (Wier 2013a, 66-67).

At the heart of this tension, there lie complex theological questions about the nature of the Church's relationship with the World. To explore these fully would be beyond the scope of this article. However, one potentially significant line of enquiry in constructing a charismatic-evangelical response that is open to insights from other traditions may be found in

attempting to facilitate a mutually critical yet constructive conversation between charismatic-evangelical churches and public-reformist urban theology. Here, the work of John Atherton will be used as an example of a public-reformist approach. One of the central themes throughout Atherton's work is the importance of the Church partnering with others in pursuit of the common good (Atherton 2000, Atherton, Baker and Reader 2011). The case for such partnership, Atherton argues, can be located in a trinitarian understanding of a dialogic God (Atherton 2000, 7). Atherton's work would appear to challenge charismatic-evangelical churches to move beyond partnering with secular organisations only when there appears to be something in it for them (for example the possibility of external funding) and towards a more deeply collaborative pursuit of the common good. As such, it may provide a helpful counter-balance to charismatic-evangelical churches' at-times excessive 'go it alone' tendencies.

For an evangelical social ethic, however, the case for partnership needs to be articulated in a way that is consistent with wider evangelical convictions. Or as Malcolm Brown puts it, the case for dialogue beyond a tradition must be made from within that tradition itself (Brown 2010, 130). In this regard, Atherton's methodological leap from the doctrine of the trinity to a prescriptive model of partnership may fail to convince many evangelicals. Alternative, and potentially more compelling, grounds for evangelical collaboration with organisations beyond the Church may be found in ideas of *missio Dei* (the mission of God) and "God's turning to the world" (Bosch, 1991, p. 376). As Bosch observes, many evangelicals in the twentieth century came to embrace an understanding of mission as *missio Dei* and, in some accounts, this has also been used to describe the activities of God's Spirit beyond the Church (Bosch 1991, 390-391). Furthermore, some of the members of the charismatic-evangelical churches studied frequently used phrases such as "joining in with what God is already doing" and one theologically informed participant explicitly expressed this through the vocabulary of "*missio dei*". Such statements appear to reflect a belief that God is already at work in situations and

contexts beyond the Church. This, it would seem, provides some basis for charismatic-evangelical collaboration and partnership with non-Christian others in a way that is consistent with charismatic-evangelical convictions (Wier 2013a, 105).⁷

As a counter-balance to this suggestion, it needs to be acknowledged that *missio Dei* is a contested concept that encompasses a variety of diverging theological positions. As such, it has been met with suspicion in some evangelical quarters (Tinker, 2009, p. 149; Rowe, 2012, p. 17). Further work is therefore still needed to clarify the theological basis, scope and boundaries for its use within a practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic. In order to be authentically evangelical, a charismatic-evangelical social ethic will need to be counter-cultural as well as collaborative, retaining an appropriate sense of antithesis between Church and World. Within this, however, charismatic-evangelical churches need to be careful not to confuse being 'counter-cultural' with being 'anti-cultural' (Smith J. K., 2009, p. 35).

ii. A holistic vision of God's Kingdom

A second tension observed within the charismatic-evangelical churches studied concerned the relationship between *spiritual-evangelistic and socio-economic intentions*. Within all four churches, there were numerous references to wanting people in the community to become Christians alongside various articulations of wider socio-economic aims. Some participants used 'holistic' vocabulary to describe the integration of these two elements. However, closer analysis of the data gathered revealed that the relationship between the spiritual-evangelistic and the socio-economic

⁷ On the grounds for evangelical collaboration with non-Christian others, see also Bretherton (2010). Although wary of an uncritical emphasis on partnership between Church and State, Bretherton argues that the case study of community organizing highlights the possibility of a more constructive form of collaboration. Community organizing, Bretherton argues, simultaneously allows the church to "be the church, cooperate with religious others in pursuit of earthly goods in common, and contradict the totalizing tendencies of the market and the state" (Bretherton 2010, 106).

could also be a source of tension, with notable differences of opinion and emphasis between participants (Wier 2013a, 67-68).

In responding to this tension, we need to acknowledge that the relative importance of the evangelistic and the socio-economic has been debated extensively in evangelical circles over many years. Although it is sometimes claimed that the 1974 Lausanne Congress helped to decisively resolve the issue for evangelicals, the relationship between evangelism and social action remains contested territory (D. W. Smith 2009, 265). Joel Edwards' review of popular evangelical approaches, for example, highlights enduring tensions between the approach of evangelicals 'to the left' and evangelicals 'to the right' (Edwards 2008). While the former are deeply committed to social engagement and political activism on poverty issues (Edwards 2008, 71), the latter are highly critical of a 'social gospel' that "substitutes social action for gospel proclamation" (Edwards 2008, 77). Against this backdrop, any attempt to articulate an 'evangelical' response to the spiritual-evangelistic versus socio-economic tension is a perilous undertaking. Rather than attempting to provide a definitive Evangelical model, the social ethic outlined in this article is offered as a potential charismatic-evangelical response to issues that arise from a UK urban context.

For a charismatic-evangelical constituency, it would seem that it is within a holistic understanding of the Kingdom of God that the tension between the spiritual-evangelistic and the socio-economic can be most creative. In this regard, concepts of the reign of God from urban liberation theology have particular potential to challenge, widen, and enrich charismatic-evangelical understandings of the Kingdom which are at times overly-individualistic (Wier 2013a, 105). In highlighting the social, economic and political nature of oppression, they also draw attention to the importance of addressing structural, as well as individual, sin. Liberationist perspectives may therefore provide a vital corrective to the tendency of many charismatic-evangelicals to privilege the spiritual-evangelistic or provide overly-simplistic 'sticking plaster' responses to

complex socio-economic problems (thereby ignoring systemic issues of social injustice). This, however, is not to say that the spiritual-evangelistic is now unimportant. While incorporating insights from liberation theology, a practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic will also retain a distinctively evangelical emphasis on evangelism and conversion. In this sense, it may be helpful to regard evangelicalism and liberation theology as helpful correctives to each other.⁸ Together, they provide our practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic with a richer, multi-faceted and (I contend) more biblical vision of God's Kingdom.

iii. Faithful improvisation

Thirdly, the study of charismatic-evangelical urban churches uncovered a tension between *applied and reflexive theology*. This was evident in the ways that different focus group participants responded to the question "do you think your faith and beliefs have been affected or changed by your experiences of engaging with this community?" Here, there was a striking difference between participants who felt that urban involvement had "increased" their faith and those who said it had caused them to "rethink" aspects of their faith. The first type of response seems to reflect an essentially applied theological model while the second may be indicative of a more reflexive approach that is open to new theological insights emerging from practice (Wier 2013a, 69).

In response to this tension, the concept of faithful improvisation is proposed (Wier 2013a, 106). On the one hand, this insists that charismatic-evangelical churches need to become better at reflecting on practice and may have something to learn from more contextual approaches to practical theology. This may require a willingness to rethink aspect of faith and belief in the light of contemporary experience. On the other hand, however, an evangelical social ethic will require that the Bible

⁸ On the considerable scope for evangelical engagement with liberation theology, see the previous writings of David Sheppard (1983), René Padilla (1985), Greg Smith (1991), and (from a Pentecostal perspective) Eldin Villafañe (1993).

is used more extensively and rigorously than is often the case within Practical Theology. This requires a “rather different version of the hermeneutical cycle” that begins not with a critical reflection on praxis but a “transformational indwelling of Scripture’s Story” (Colwell 2005, 222).

Our conception of faithful improvisation draws on each of these contrasting convictions and holds them together in creative tension. At first impressions, this might seem counter-intuitive. Given that, within popular discourse, improvisation is sometimes taken to mean ‘making things up as we go along’, it might initially be presumed that the concept implies the devaluing of Scripture and Christian tradition. However, drawing on Sam Wells’ work around the practice of theatrical improvisation (Wells 2004), we can see that effective improvisation requires schooling, practice and immersion in a narrative. Various other theologians like Wright (Wright 2005, 89-92) and Vanhoozer (Vanhoozer 2005) have also employed ‘dramatic’ analogies which lend support to our argument for a faithful improvisation that combines critical reflection on practice with a faithful indwelling of the biblical narrative. Although this may require a degree of ‘rethinking’, it also necessitates deep continuity with what has gone before. As Wright explains, Christians live in the fifth act of a five-act drama (creation, fall, Israel, Jesus, church) and have an ambiguous relationship with the previous four acts “not because they are being disloyal to them but precisely because they are being loyal to them” (Wright 2005, 90).

iv. A Spirit-infused virtue ethic

A fourth tension, *the heroic versus the mundane*, was particularly pronounced within charismatic-evangelical discourse about the impact of church activities on the local community. Charismatic-evangelical urban Christians, it seemed, sometimes had a tendency to see themselves as super-heroes on a mission to ‘turn communities around’. This was evident within the practice of repeatedly telling stories of dramatic transformation.

On the other hand, however, a more mundane outlook was evident at times in the more cautious vocabulary of “glimpses”, “moments”, and impact “beneath the surface” (Wier 2013a, 69).

In response to this tension, it may be particularly helpful to think of Christian discipleship as a Spirit-infused virtue ethic. This requires integrating perspectives from the ecclesial virtue ethics of theologians like Hauerwas and Wells (2006) with Spirit-infused charismatic insights. Once again, recent work by Wright (2010) may be instructive for evangelicals. While charismatic-evangelical Christians sometimes have a tendency to see the transformation of character as something that can only happen through the spontaneous work of the Spirit, Wright argues that virtue within the New Testament is infused and acquired. It is “both the gift of God and the result of the person of faith making conscious decisions” (Wright, 2010, p. 170). Wright also goes on to suggest that, unlike the classical virtues, the Christian virtues are not designed to produce “grand isolated heroes... but integrated communities, modelling a life of self-giving love” (Wright 2010, 188). Similarly, Wells (2010) contrasts Aristotle’s concept of the hero, who is always at the centre of the story, with the New Testament description of Christians as saints. The saint, Wells suggests, may be almost invisible, easily missed, quickly forgotten, and must expect to fail (Wells 2010, 34-37).

Such perspectives provide a much-needed corrective to the at times excessive heroism of charismatic-evangelical urban practice. Nevertheless, a practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic will also seek to retain some of the energy and enthusiasm that arises from charismatic-evangelicalism’s heroic tendencies. It will also continue to be open to ‘the supernatural’, while resisting the temptation to pursue the spectacular independently of the transformation of character (Wier 2013a, 108).

v. Church as oikos-polis

Fifthly, the qualitative study uncovered a tension between two contrasting modes of operation – *church as service provider and church as intentional community*. On the one hand, the charismatic-evangelical churches studied all functioned to some degree as service providers. In areas such as youth work, debt advice and social care, they provided a variety of formally organised services, some of which were funded or commissioned by public sector bodies. On the other hand, however, charismatic-evangelical churches also functioned as geographically focused intentional communities – small, and less formally organised, groups of Christians committed to ‘being church’ and ‘doing community’ together within a particular locality (Wier 2013a, 66).

In response to this tension, we propose the hybrid concept of *oikos-polis*. This is informed by the work of Bretherton (Bretherton 2011) and Wannewetsch (Wannewetsch 1996). Drawing on Ephesians 2:19-22, Bretherton (2011, 329-330) observes that the New Testament vision of church includes aspects of both the household (οἶκος) and the political realm (πόλις). That the first urban Christians described their common life in both family and political language has radical conceptual significance for Christian political ethics (Wannewetsch, 1996, p. 279). This would appear to affirm the legitimacy of both the modes of operation we have identified (service provider and intentional community) and enable us to see them as mutually complementary.⁹

Although our study found some evidence of charismatic-evangelical churches playing the role of service provider and engaging with the political realm, it would appear that many most naturally gravitate towards an intentional community mode of operation. An explicitly *oikos*-centred vision of church is also influential within wider charismatic-evangelical networks. Charismatic-evangelical churches are less likely,

⁹ Although a description of church as *polis* may not necessitate churches becoming service providers, it should cause them to reflect on how they engage with the political realm.

it seems, to acknowledge the inherently political character of church.¹⁰ This may therefore need to receive particular attention within a practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic (Wier 2013a, 108-109).

vi. A comprehensive Christological framework

The sixth and final tension identified by the qualitative study was between *locally indigenous and expansive horizons*. The four charismatic-evangelical churches studied were all based in, and committed to engaging with, urban neighbourhoods with high levels of social and economic deprivation. A significant proportion of their members also lived in those neighbourhoods. Despite this strong focus on the neighbourhood, however, the study also found evidence of more expansive horizons that extended far beyond the immediate locality. One of the ways in which this manifested itself was a strong emphasis on the role of the church at citywide, regional, national and international (as well as local) levels. Another was the coexistence within charismatic-evangelical urban congregations of middle class incomers and people who were indigenous to the local area. In both these respects, the study found the relationship between locally indigenous and expansive horizons to be one that was sometimes characterised by tension (Wier 2013a, 68).

Our response to this tension is informed by the observation that within urban theology literature there has often been a tendency to regard Christ's incarnation as the most appropriate theological principle.¹¹ This has sometimes led to a privileging of the locally indigenous 'view from below' and a repudiation of more expansive 'views from above'. At times, 'incarnation' has also been abstracted, theorised and translated into a general principle that requires little connection to the person of Christ. For many evangelicals, such ad hoc deployment of incarnational language will be deeply problematic. As a corrective to this, it is proposed that our

10 On the wider depoliticization of church, see Bretherton (Bretherton 2010, 47).

11 Andrew Davey provides a brief but helpful overview of some of the ways in which urban theology has deployed incarnational language (Davey 2010, 90-92).

practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic needs to be informed by a more comprehensive Christological framework (Bosch, 1991, p. 399). This will insist that every part of the Christological narrative (Christ's incarnation, earthly life, death, resurrection, ascension, sending of the Spirit and expected return) is indispensable for the Church's mission and that one element cannot be treated in isolation from the others. A focus on Christ's incarnation quite rightly affirms the importance of the locally indigenous in urban mission, as Anna Thompson's reflections on Philippians 2: 5-11 vividly demonstrate (Thompson 2010). Such insights, however, need to be held in tension with other aspects of the Christological narrative (particularly Christ's death, resurrection and sending of the Spirit) that appear to open up, and indeed necessitate, more expansive horizons. In this regard, an appreciation of the horizon-expanding character of the Spirit's work (see Acts 1:8) may be particularly significant within a practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic (Wier 2013a, 109-110).

ASSESSMENT

In summary then, the practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic presented in this article consists of six conceptual components that have been formulated in response to six tensions uncovered through qualitative research with UK charismatic-evangelical urban churches. These six components are represented diagrammatically on figure 1.

As stated in the introduction to this article, this social ethic is presented as an outline sketch, not a finalised model. As such, it may be difficult to provide a detailed assessment of the practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic presented here. An interim assessment, however, is essential in order to inform this model's further development, as well as wider evangelical debate. In the brief discussion that follows, we concentrate on assessing the evangelical credentials of the proposed

theological model.¹² This will be structured around the four historic characteristics of UK evangelicalism identified by David Bebbington (Bebbington 1989).¹³

i. Conversionism

Bebbington defines conversionism as “the belief that lives need to be changed” (Bebbington 1989, 3) and describes this with reference to evangelical understandings of justification by faith. Within the practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic sketched out above, conversionist or spiritual-evangelistic aims are affirmed within ‘a holistic vision of God’s Kingdom’. However, here they are also accompanied by socio-economic motifs. Some ‘evangelicals to the right’ may see this as a dilution of conversionism and a departure from traditional evangelical concerns. Others ‘to the centre’ and ‘to the left’, however, will see this as entirely consistent with evangelical convictions, pointing to emerging evangelical understandings of “mission in all its dimensions” (Lausanne Movement 2011).

ii. Activism

Activism, for Bebbington, is associated with “the expression of the gospel in effort” (Bebbington 1989, 3). Although much evangelical effort has historically been linked to a desire for the conversion of others, Bebbington also provides various historical examples of evangelical activism in social reform. Once again, therefore, our practical charismatic-evangelical

12 Further work is also needed to assess and develop the *charismatic* credentials of the proposed charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic. With this in mind, this article’s concluding section briefly highlights various potential conversation partners from Pentecostal political theology and social ethics.

13 Bebbington’s four-fold model is used here because it provides one of the most widely accepted starting points for defining and conceptualising UK Evangelicalism (Larsen 2007, 1). We need to acknowledge, however, that an over reliance on this model may be seen to neglect the various internal tensions at work within contemporary Evangelicalism. For a more recent and complex model, with a specifically English focus, see Rob Warner’s reworking of the Bebbington quadrilateral (Warner 2007).

urban social ethic's affirmation of both the spiritual-evangelistic and the socio-economic may be seen as consistent with traditional evangelical concerns. There are also clear parallels between our Spirit-infused virtue ethic (in which virtue is simultaneously infused and acquired) and evangelicalism's historic combination of an appeal to activism with an emphasis on justification by grace.

iii. Biblicism

The component of our social ethic in which biblicism, evangelicalism's "particular regard for the Bible" (Bebbington 1989, 3), is most evident is the proposed 'faithful improvisation'. Here, however, a faithful indwelling of the biblical narrative is combined with acknowledgement of the need for improvisation and critical reflection on practice. Although we have been at pains to point out that this does not mean that 'anything goes', this proposal might be met with suspicion in some evangelical circles. This may be seen to expose significant internal tensions within contemporary evangelicalism concerning the way that the Bible is handled. For charismatic-evangelical Christians, who give great credence to the role of the Holy Spirit as interpreter, reading the Bible is a particularly dynamic experience that involves the emotions as well as the mind (Tidball 2005, 260-261). A charismatic-evangelical outlook, it would seem, may therefore allow more scope for the kind of improvisation proposed in this article than more conservative or rationalist approaches do. The social ethic presented here may therefore receive more support in charismatic-evangelical and open-evangelical circles than in conservative and reformed ones.

iv. Crucicentrism

Finally, Bebbington defines crucicentrism as "a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross" (Bebbington 1989, 3). Of the four historic characteristics of UK evangelicalism, it is with crucicentrism that the

proposed practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic engages the least. The cross is certainly implicit at various stages, most notably as one element of 'a comprehensive Christological framework'. However, for some evangelicals the very fact that the cross is included only as one of a number of elements will be problematic. This is something that a more fully developed practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic will need to further reflect on. While continuing to affirm the need for a comprehensive framework, the centrality of the cross for Christian life and witness does need to be made more explicit. There are various potential lines of enquiry for refining and developing our theological model in this regard. Chief among these is the need to articulate a more integrated understanding of the relationship between 'Kingdom' and 'Cross' (Wright 2012).¹⁴

CONCLUSION

In summary then, the practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic presented in this article has been developed in an attempt to articulate a theological response to some of the tensions identified through a recent qualitative study. This seeks to root charismatic-evangelical urban practice in a wider social ethic which is simultaneously consistent with evangelical convictions and open to insights from other Christian traditions.

In response to this model, it might be suggested that the proposed practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic contains relatively little new theological material. Although this may be true in the sense that the preceding discussion draws heavily on the work of other theologians like Bosch, Wright and Wells, such a challenge may be countered by appealing to an understanding of "theology in four voices" (Cameron,

14 While "kingdom Christians" and "cross Christians" often place themselves in opposing camps (Wright 2012, 159), Wright highlights the centrality of both 'Kingdom' and 'Cross' in the gospels.

et al. 2010, 54).¹⁵ In articulating a social ethic that emerges out of issues identified in contemporary ecclesial practice, this article has been bringing churches' 'espoused' and 'operant' theologies into dialogue with 'normative' and 'formal' theologies in a way that most existing models do not (Wier 2013a, 113).

As we have seen, the theological model constructed here has been sketched out only in outline and requires further conceptual refinement. In this regard, an engagement with recent developments in Pentecostal political theology (Yong 2010) and social ethics (Castelo 2012, Augustine 2012, Wariboko 2012) may be particularly helpful.¹⁶ In its current form, however, our practical charismatic-evangelical urban social ethic nevertheless still illustrates the possibility of an evangelical response to tension that is both faithful and creative. No doubt, some evangelicals may take issue with aspects of the model constructed and propose alternative theological responses. Such alternative suggestions are to be welcomed. The intention of this article has been to provoke further evangelical reflection, discussion and action on the subject of living with tension. If it encourages other evangelical theologians to take seriously some of the ambiguities and tensions that arise in contemporary mission contexts, and stirs them to articulate a theological response, this article will have achieved its main purpose.

15 Cameron et al distinguish between normative theology (scriptures, creeds, official church teaching, and liturgies), formal theology (the theology of professional theologians), espoused theology, and operant theology. Espoused theology is the theology "embedded within a group's articulation of its beliefs", while operant theology is the theology "embedded within the actual practices of a group" (Cameron, et al. 2010, 54).

16 Further empirical research is also needed to explore how UK charismatic-evangelical urban practice relates to more explicitly Pentecostal forms of social involvement, both in the UK and overseas. A promising development in this regard is the University of Birmingham's recent commencement of a major research project on Megachurches and Social Engagement in London.

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Capitalism and Its Discontents: A Response to the Voices of Theological and Moral *Animus*

David Cowan

KEYWORDS:

| Capitalism | Market Economy | Consumerism |
| Consumption | Poverty |

ABSTRACT:

In this essay, I will critique the animus of theologians towards Capitalism and the market economy, in which much of the theological literature on the market economy and consumerism link profit, greed and excess to poverty, using poverty as a moral “gotcha” to kill off any debate as to whether the market economy is morally defensible. I offer this essay as a call to engage realistically.

INTRODUCTION

Even in a recession, Capitalism and its consumerism still screams out at us in magazine articles and on television. In these recessionary times, there may be less focus on “retail therapy” and no new West End plays like “Shopping and F**king,” but Capitalism still seemingly promises

to buy you all the happiness you need. It is this promise of happiness, sold to us by the Madmen of advertising, that leads critics of the modern market economy and its consumerism to conclude that the new post-modern Cartesian formula is “I consume, therefore I am,” and the search for profits and the prevalence of greed are ultimately making us as individuals and as a society unhappy. Interestingly, critics tend to refer to “consumerism” rather than consumption, and at the outset we ought to draw some distinctions. While the rise of consumerism is spiritually concerning, consumption is an essential component of the market economy mechanism. After all, we are all consumers of some stripe, and it may be on the one side we nod our heads wisely at the wrong of it all, but on the other as learned persons we consume books or as churchgoers we go on ‘Holy Land Tours’. Does the object of our spending make us better or superior consumers?

In this essay, I offer a viewpoint, a tempered apologia for Capitalism as what it is and not as we might like, in other words from a realist perspective rather than wishful thinking. I realize many will be offended by such an approach at the outset, so let me offend further. I suggest there is a fundamental *animus* towards this economic arrangement, which may tell us more about middle class guilt than it does moral theology.

I: CAPITALISM AND THE MORAL MIDWIFE

The “Rich/Poor” divide is inevitably used as the trump card in many a heated discussion about the Capitalist economy today. The concern is where and how we draw the line in our rich society between being economic consumers, in the sense in which we talk about consumption in the economy, and being caught up in a selfish and individualistic consumer frenzy that is detrimental to the well-being of all. It is here we find the source of middle-class guilt, because in approaching the problem we have the issue of defining what we mean by the consumer and our relationship

with wealth. To put the situation in context we can observe how few people actually admit that they are rich; certainly few theologians! The rich always seem to be other people, but the majority of people in Western societies are very wealthy when compared with certain sections of the populations in developing countries, or even wealthy economies. There is also a great deal of wealth in developing nations. Africa is so often portrayed as the poster child for inequality, yet has tremendous wealth and resources, lacking more in technical capabilities and suffering from political corruption than simply systemic poverty caused by Capitalism.

The material question becomes one of relative wealth, and how need is satisfied in the economy. In approaching the question theologically we need to bear in mind our own status as consumers. In poignant advice directed at pastors, but applies to us all, Thomas Oden warns:

In seeking to understand pastoral responsibility to the poor, pastors do well to begin with serious self-examination of their own attitudes, class interests, biases, potentially idolatrous relation to personal wealth, and temptations to exaggerate the importance of possessions for genuine happiness.¹

Given this discomfort, and the fact that we are largely born into a certain status and an attendant lifestyle, we have to assess how we live with our wealth. We are rich if we can buy our own books for a private library, rather than going to the public or university library. We are rich if we drive our own car, rather than using public transport. We are rich if we can take holidays abroad, rather than taking our holidays in our own backyard, if indeed we are rich enough to have a garden. We are rich if we can pay the premium on Fairtrade food, rather than Sainsbury's "basic" brand. We are also rich if we are suffering in this economy having spent beyond our means, trading our own personal futures market in much the same way as the investment bankers who have been largely blamed for sparking the 2008 recession in the first place.

1 T. C. Oden, *Pastoral Theology: Essentials of Ministry* (New York: HarperCollins, 1983), p. 271.

In this rich middle class economy, we all have certain expectations of what the economy should give us, which is not often reflected in what the economy is in fact. We all want a standard of living, and believe that economic equality is laudable, though naturally it should be a rise to our standard for the poor and a fall for the rich to our level. This is not surprising, because the economic debate is essentially a middle class one and the 2008 recession is notable for its impact on the middle class, with its exposure of the middle class elbows in the economic pursuit. In their expectations of what the economy should do, theologians side with the poor, the marginalized and unhappy in society not the middle classes. However, the outcome of their theologizing of economics is all too often wishful thinking rather than economic realism. Perhaps this is what theologians are supposed to be, but I'm not convinced that futility trumps results in the economy. No doubt my approach will be unpalatable for many, and perhaps I am guilty of moral failure.

The point is that there is a sense of discontent with wealth and consumption, which is nothing new. Humanity has struggled with wealth and inequality since the dawn of the ages, but interestingly what Capitalism does is put a number, a measurement, on this struggle. If we are willing to pay £50 or \$100 for a concert ticket or a few hundreds or thousands on a holiday, but only put £10 or \$20 in the collection plate of our church, then I suggest this puts a number on our interest; or, to put it crassly, we are putting our money where our mouth is.

Since the beginning, wealth and commerce have been very much scorned by the custodians of morals; the church, theologians and their secular counterparts. On the eve of Capitalism and the Industrial revolution, in common with the modern moralists set against the economic world, Capitalism stood condemned by church and secular moralists at birth, like an unwanted child. Up to the fall of Communism, and recognition that there was not a competing system, theologians to a man (most were men) who wrote on faith and economics had an inbuilt *animus* towards Capitalism. Curiously, the first economist of Capitalism Adam Smith

held the Chair of Moral Philosophy at Glasgow University. Even at the birth, the midwife was a moralist, and Capitalism and morality have been at loggerheads ever since. Many a midwife has delivered a resentful child, who says “I didn’t ask to be born!” In this essay, I will critique moral resentment towards Capitalism (I didn’t ask to be a Capitalist!), specifically the *animus* of theologians towards Capitalism and the market economy.

II: THEOLOGIANS AND THE ECONOMIC ANIMUS

The late Harvard philosopher Robert Nozick² said intellectuals (both on the Left and Right) morally oppose Capitalism out of a fundamental *animus* because they are not rewarded in the market economy, having grown up in a middle class intellectual economy of reward at school and university (progressively earning Mars bars, A grades and finally doctorates). They have won the intellectual competition as they grew up, but once in the economy they find they are not so competitive, so their sense of entitlement to the share of success is frustrated by business people and other successes in the market economy who seem to be over-compensated, especially since they are not “as clever” as intellectuals. Nozick suggests this *animus*, which we can detect in the theological intellectuals discussed below, leads them to oppose the market even when arguments are raised that demonstrate the validity of the market (they simply move the goalposts and argue a new point, he observes).

Theologians tend to approach the market economy seeking not to ask what really happens in the economy but to ask how matters can be better arranged. In this quest economic realism is passed over in favour of a prevalent suspicion towards commerce and the economy with an implicit moral objection, which I will like Nozick call *animus*, drawn

2 Robert Nozick in ‘Why Do Intellectuals Oppose Capitalism?’ in *Socratic Puzzles* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

by theological and ethical critics of the market economy. One typical example is a condemnation by Duncan Forrester:

If we hearken not to the politicians, the intellectuals and the wealthy but to the hungry and the weak and the poor, the homeless and the wretched we hear a cry of protest against the injustice of the outcomes of the market.³

The difficulty here is surely that such a “cry” can be heard against a command (planned), as much as a market (unplanned) economy. In this case, Forrester assumes that the market economy can only produce certain outcomes and these are necessarily wrong. There is also an inherent sense that to help the poor and create a just society requires a restriction on economic liberty, with an assumption that such an outcome is best generated by a non-market and governmental or state organisation of the economy. However, what is at issue here is what positive and negative links may exist between the market economy and its outcomes. This flies in the face of many church pronouncements that merely assume a negative link in their argument, to the extent that theologians become advocates of particular prevailing secular policy ideas rather than the proclaimer of the Gospel. Again, Forrester articulates a view commonly held in theological circles:

What is happening widely today is that market criteria which have their place in economic activity are invading other spheres of life, often destroying values and structures which are necessary for the long-term health of the economy and the market, to say nothing of the flourishing of society as a whole.⁴

In this view, our market consciousness is dictating our values and being used to form the basis of all our major decisions. In other words, everything we survey has its price and we ignore the true value. However,

3 Robert Benne, *The Two Cities of God* (eds. Carl E. Braaten & Robert W. Jenson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), p. 157.

4 *Ibid.*, p.160.

it seems that Forrester, like many theologians, is being fussy about which economic criteria he wants to invade other spheres of life. We know that we need to make economic decisions about education, health care and other issues of this ilk, and supporters of the market economy would want to say that this is necessary but also involves taking unpopular economic decisions because we are working under conditions ultimately of scarce and conflicting resources. Thus, at issue are the criteria by which we make such economic decisions. We may decide using differing criteria of justice, love, power or some 'pure' economic science to achieve a shared goal, such as poverty reduction.

A strong theological critic of the market economy in all its forms is Timothy Gorringer, who in his study "Capital and the Kingdom" illustrates well that he is another theologian of suspicion when it comes to economic matters, seeing economics as an issue of wealth, power and domination. In this respect, he ought to be referred back to a comment made by Max Weber that the economy may be a place to exhibit such behaviour but it has to be disputed that it causes people to dominate and exercise power over others. However, any notion that the market is a neutral mechanism is one quickly attacked by Gorringer when he argues:

The market leaves us free to choose, but at the same time market forces are irresistible and those responsible for externalities take refuge behind the impersonality of the market. Masked behind this impersonality and supposed inevitability is the domination which Dussel defines as the essence of sin. It is the destruction of face-to-face relationship, which is infinite respect for another's otherness and thus the destruction of morality.⁵

One could question as to whether "face-to-face relationship" is inherently moral and that only such relating should form meaningful economic intercourse. Indeed it seems that beyond a simple self-sufficient village economic community there necessarily has to be a fair amount of indirect

⁵ Timothy J. Gorringer, *Capital and the Kingdom* (New York: Orbis/SPCK, 1994), p. 41.

relationships and impersonality, the effect of which cannot always be controlled or planned for. In arguing for the ethical connection between economics and justice, Gorringer suggests we need “...to reintegrate ethics and economics, to recover the notion of distributive justice, and beyond that of the justice which is grace, which opposes every form of meritocracy.”⁶ To which one can retort, how do we define what is justice and what is simply the exercise of power in another guise?

A greater sense of economic realism has been demonstrated recently in the work of John Atherton and Ronald Preston, with both supporting a fuller engagement with economic life. They both seek a way between radical liberation theology and a conservative defence of Capitalism, and both are critical of much theological reflection on economic issues believing that they have successfully struck a necessary balance. Both Atherton in “Christianity and the Market” and Preston in “Religion and the Ambiguities of Capitalism” signalled this change when their books were published in the same period of 1991-2, after the fall of the iron curtain. This sobering event seemed to shock both into a new sense of economic realism, or perhaps it was really a new twist in the tale of making theology relevant to a changing situation; suffice to say it was a secular economic sea change they were reacting to not a theological one.

Atherton explains his economic realism:

Given the need for modern economies and economics, the choice is not between interest or a usury-free society. It is about coming to terms with the economic realities of life and seeking to modify them in the light of human purposes; it is not about seeking utopian alternatives.⁷

Instead, Atherton hopes to establish a position whereby:

. . . the Church as institution has an essential role to play in nourishing those values that both resource and restrain the performance of market economies. It confirms the identifying

6 Ibid, pp. 41-42.

7 John Atherton, *Christianity and the Market* (London: SPCK, 1992) p. 61.

of the cultural–moral realm as an order of creation, and as an indispensable institution, an intimate correlate of the market economy.”⁸

Preston distinguishes his method with reference to the “ambiguities” of Capitalism in the light of the downfall of the Soviet Union. He argues that the market cannot cope by itself, nor is the primary role of individualism acceptable, for we then make idols of both. In the epilogue to his book, he candidly admits that he is writing for the “First World”, since the “Third World” is in such disarray that he does not know where to start. Preston does spell out what economists can do, namely:

1. Demonstrate the secondary consequences of economic policies, particularly the opportunity cost of one policy over another;
2. Combat mercantilist fallacies which provide escape routes for governments to blame other countries for domestic economic ills;
3. Show which policies are compatible and incompatible.⁹

What economists cannot do, suggests Preston, is:

1. Provide a specific and assured policy, nor overcome the complexity of human behaviour in all this;
2. Predict future behaviour or its economic outcome.¹⁰

In terms of what faith demands in the context of economic life, Preston argues that the churches and Christians:

... have a duty to search for as much common ground as possible with adherents of other faiths. God has put us in his creation cheek by jowl in a world of structures of work, politics and culture, not by virtue of our Christian faith but as human beings. We are bound up with others in the bundle of humanity not by our choice but by

8 Ibid, p. 69.

9 Ronald H. Preston, *Religion and the Ambiguities of Capitalism* (London: SCM Press, 1991), pp. 30-31.

10 Ibid, pp. 32-33.

God's creative purpose. His will is for human flourishing for others in these structures as much as for us. We must seek out and work with whoever will work to further that flourishing, wherever they are to be found. It is dangerous always to be wanting to say or stand for something that is so distinctively Christian that no one else is likely to see the force of it.¹¹

It seems an unintended consequence of the Capitalist economy is an ecumenical call to arms.

III: CHRISTIAN ECONOMISTS' DEFENCE OF THE MARKET

One way to approach this search for common ground is for Christians who are economists to aid us, and two notable examples are Donald Hay, an Oxford economist, and Brian Griffiths, a chief advisor to then Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. Hay explores the area as an economist and as a Christian, specifically working out the themes of creation, fall and judgement, and the people of God. Hay works out his themes using biblical evidence, but notes:

The exposition of these biblical theological themes leaves unresolved how we are to make the move to universal principles which may be applied generally to economic life...the exercise is possible, but needs considerable care, and [that] the results can at best be provisional judgements.¹²

The focus of Hay's analysis is the idea of stewardship, entailing care of the resources God has given to humanity as vice-regent in the creative order. The significance of the fall and God's judgement, Hay contends, is:

11 Ibid, p. 108.

12 Donald Hay, *Economics Today: A Christian Critique* (Leicester: Apollos, 1989), p. 16.

It is a warning to us to be suspicious of political and economic programmes that claim they can bring solutions to problems of human need. It is also a warning concerning the dangers of concentrations of political and economic power.¹³

Hay explains that most of the teachings of Jesus on wealth and possessions are found in the Gospel of Luke, and covers the spiritual danger of wealth, the freedom found in giving, the obligation of the rich to help the poor, and the pursuit of wealth as idolatrous. The poor are blessed, Hay argues, because they do not have the stumbling block of mammon to hazard their response to the kingdom. These themes are found in the Old Testament, but Jesus has radically reinvested their meaning and authority.

Hay, however, does seem eventually to fall towards a view that is closest to the 'Third Way' economic argument, dismissing libertarian and communist thinking. He takes the view that libertarian thinking:

... whatever its merits as a secular analysis of the emergence of the market economy, its prescriptive claims have no basis in Christian ethics and are indeed incompatible with them in substantive respects.¹⁴

Instead, he concludes:

It is not easy to draw general conclusions, not least because of the diversity within socialism. This diversity is most significant in respect in respect of the role of the political authorities. In the communist system, the state is seen as the instrument for achieving ideals of social justice in the future, exercising its power through the planning mechanism. In social democratic systems on the other hand, the authorities see their role as creating a framework within which independent firms and other economic institutions can act responsibly, as providing a focus for communal endeavour which would otherwise fail for lack of organisation or participation, and as reacting to perceived injustices that the system may throw up. We may conclude that a communist system is definitely incompatible

13 Ibid, p. 25.

14 Ibid, p. 166.

with biblical criteria, but that a social democratic need not be.¹⁵

Hay argues that we can examine economics from a biblical base and offers eight principles to that effect:

1. Man must use the resources of creation to provide for his existence, but most not waste or destroy the created order;
2. Every person has a calling to exercise stewardship of resources and talents;
3. Stewardship implies responsibility to determine the disposition of resources. Each person is accountable to God for his stewardship;
4. Man has a right and obligation to work;
5. Work is the means of exercising stewardship. In his work man should have access to resources and control over them;
6. Work is a social activity in which men co-operate as stewards of their individual talents, and as joint stewards of resources;
7. Every person has a right to share in God's provision for mankind for their basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. These needs are to be met primarily by productive work;
8. Personal stewardship of resources does not imply the right to consume the entire product of those resources. The rich have an obligation to help the poor who cannot provide for themselves by work.¹⁶

Hay has provided us with guiding principles, referred to above, which go a long way towards offering a Christian critique of economic action without dictating policies that will fulfil these principles or being a party political manifesto for change. As Hay points out:

A full implementation of the principles is out of the question. There can be no hope of a fully Christian economy, or of a kingdom of heaven on earth. Rather, a Christian's concern for justice in

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 218.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 72-6.

the economic sphere will be a persistent identification of areas of disorder or disproportion in the economy, whether capitalist, socialist or 'mixed', and then the attempt to get things right in so far as the hardness of men's hearts will allow.¹⁷

It does seem, however, that Hay has still predicated his theological economics on a particular reading of justice and what this implies for the economy, which sends him automatically down the social democratic road to economic salvation, and the view that the

"Third Way"¹⁸ economic view creates conditions more conducive to a Christian ethic and for a fairer economy.

In his defence of Capitalism against much of the theological grain, Griffiths argues against the idea that self-interest equates with selfishness. He suggests that since self-interest is a characteristic of the highest as well as the lowest kind of human behaviour, it in fact implies having a proper regard for our own welfare. He cites the four points made by Bernard of Clairvaux:

- love of self for self's sake
- love of God for self's sake
- love of God for God's sake
- love of self for God's sake¹⁹

From this, Griffiths writes:

From a Christian point of view therefore self-interest is a characteristic of man created in the image of God, possessed of a will and a mind, able to make decisions and accountable for them.

17 Ibid, p. 79.

18 The "Third Way" view was advanced primarily by British sociologist Anthony Giddens, and embraced in the 1990s by Tony Blair in Britain and Bill Clinton in America, though there are earlier iterations, including British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan's "Middle Way."

19 Brian Griffiths, *The Creation of Wealth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984), p. 68.

It is not a consequence of the fall. Selfishness is the consequence of the fall and it is a distortion of self-interest when the chief end of our lives is not the service of God but the fulfilment of our own ego.²⁰

Thus, to have self-love is not the problem; rather it becomes problematic for us when it becomes self-seeking and detrimental to others.

The thrust of Griffiths' argument lies in the notion that the market is morally neutral, since it provides a free mechanism by which economic interests can be adjudicated, and at heart preserves our dignity and freedom. It is individuals and organisations that do wrong and deny others, not the market or its mechanism. Socialism, on the other hand, attempts to enforce a certain secular moral agenda on society through economic control, which can never work because it is not morally neutral in the way it attempts to dictate outcomes. Griffiths concludes:

The basic argument for a market economy in moral terms is that with all its weaknesses it is a system which pays respect to human dignity because it allows human freedom. It permits individuals the freedom to buy and sell, save and invest, choose their preferred form of employment, and develop the skills which they feel appropriate. It allows minorities exactly these same rights too. Socialism does not. It pays scant respect to human dignity because it denies human freedom. It for ever restricts economic freedoms. Both systems have been put to the test and we can examine the record.²¹

IV: THE THEOLOGICAL *ANIMUS MANENDI*

It may be argued that freedom of choice is not a central Christian value, but it is certainly one that appeals to a pluralist society where one might support choice to live as one sees fit. The economic problem of the

²⁰ Ibid, p. 69.

²¹ Ibid, p. 89.

Capitalist economy is essentially one of inequality, this is the resentment which appears to lie at the base of the theological objections stated above. People may be free to exchange, as Adam Smith argued, but one could counter this by saying that some are freer than others. Economic policy is loaded in favour of the wealthy in society, is the charge we hear. As Gorringe puts it: “Defenders of the market system, like Friedman²² and Griffiths, trade in abstractions about human nature, as if the starting position of people in the race were equal.”²³ In particular, Gorringe condemns Griffiths’ argument, which he states as:

The idea that the value and merit of individuals should be related to their income or wealth is wholly repugnant to a Christian view of the world. As a result, it is impossible to derive egalitarianism in the Marxist sense from a Biblical foundation. Equality before the law it is certainly possible to deduce: equality of opportunity it may be possible to deduce; but an egalitarianism implying equality of material reward is both logically and exegetically impossible to deduce.²⁴

It is interesting to note that this criticism is in a chapter on ‘human equality’ where the defence mounted is largely on the basis of Marx and Weber, with little theological input. This leads one to ponder on what basis the argument is formed, faith or politics? The concern lies in defining the point at which we can draw the line. The theologians and faithful who make such attacks live well enough, yet they do not give up all they have. This is the conundrum. We are all consumers, so we may question on what basis we may say that one form of consumption is more moral than that of another. Gorringe is arguing that meritocracy is wrong because income and wealth are being related to the value of an individual, but is he not wanting the same except to say that we should all merit the same income and wealth? It seems that both meritocracy and Gorringe’s equitableness are taken as defining the value of a life.

22 Milton Friedman, Chicago economist and advocate of Monetarism in the 1980s.

23 Ibid, p. 39.

24 Ibid, p. 53.

Those defending the Capitalist economy will answer that the market leaves one free to choose within a certain range and the market provides a neutral mechanism for one to exercise one's choice, however limited that might be for some. There may be little comeback on this point by the theologians quoted above, given that attempts to plan the economy have proven more difficult than the free economy. Friedrich von Hayek uses the image of a moving column of people, whereby some are at the front and others at the rear, but at least they are all moving. It seems hard to deny that many more have access to material well-being and opportunity than has historically the case, and this has been generated under Capitalism. The point being that we must continually strive to widen access.

However for critics, even if it is true that we all move on, this leaves us with the spiritual problem that the market and consumerism alienate us from relationship with others in society in general, and in particular we are alienated from relationship with God. Oden suggests that wealth and money are temptations capable of leading us in the wrong direction, and they are singled out as problematic in Scripture for good reason:

Because of these temptations and dangers into which wealth so often falls, the rich are more frequently denounced as a class in scripture than the poor, who have often been seen as the object of special mercy and promised blessing of God. Poverty is much more likely to form the seedbed of strong faith, whereas riches may be more likely to deaden faith.²⁵

For Oden, this threat of “deadening” of faith results in persons looking at their situation as malcontents in a consumer world where people are invited to live their life through consuming, which is unattainable if one cannot afford the price of admission. However, this is not just a poverty issue, it is also a problem when the person in pursuit of the next level of attainment falters and then fails to reach the next level; they too can feel excluded. The outcome of this ennui and sheer boredom, which can be experienced by both the rich and the poor, is to live life as “having” or

25 Ibid, p. 289.

“not having” rather than “being”, so much so that we become deadened and alienated as persons.

This postmodern ennui is developed further in a “Christ and consumerism” essay by Thorsten Moritz, who suggests we are living symbols of ourselves and “...our accumulation and use of possessions and commodities effectively become symbols of our worldview”.²⁶ In the same book, Craig Bartholomew notes that “It is worth noting why at the end of the twentieth century it is so easy to make consumerism - ‘the narrative of the free market economy’ - our story”. It is the lack of an alternative. Despite this lack of an alternative economic model for organizing society, Bartholomew goes on to warn us that “...the demise of communism should not obscure from us the crisis that capitalist modernity has got us into.” He stakes out three major outcomes of consumer culture:

1. The core values of the consumer culture derive from consumption rather than the other way round;
2. In consumerism, freedom is equated with individual life and private life; and,
3. Needs are unlimited and insatiable.²⁷

This all makes for a consumer perspective on life, rather than a kingdom perspective. From this perspective, the risk of consumerism is that our wealth, our consumer power, can so easily tempt us to block out both the poor and God. Care of the poor and dispossessed has always been a part of the mission of Christianity, and much is written in the Bible about money and possessions: has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith, and to inherit the kingdom he has promised to those who love him? [Jas. 2:5] Likewise, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through

26 T. Moritz, *Christ and Consumerism*, (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2000), p. 66.

27 C. Bartholomew, *Christ and Consumerism*, p. 3ff.

the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” (Mark. 10:24-25; Matt. 19:24, 25:31-40, 6:19-21; and, Luke. 18:25). The biblical texts taken literally can make all of us feel a little uncomfortable as consumers in wealthy societies, and it becomes a problem of resolving the dissonance between the comfort of faith and the discomfort of wealth. John K Cavanaugh argues how critical our allegiance to wealth can be:

Worship of wealth ensnares its followers with a dread of losing what has become most real and dear, so real and dear that it seems one might lose one’s very life to let go. Such is the nature of all idols.”²⁸

In the same vein, M. Douglas Meeks poses the question as to whether we control our needs or our needs control us. His conclusion being that:

. . . the language of needs serves many functions in the modern market society, but it seldom serves the just distribution of access to life and life abundant in the public household. The language of needs in the market society is distorted, and, as a result, so is the language of rights... We do not know how to produce or distribute or consume if we do not know the shared meanings of social goods.²⁹

The comments by Meeks seem to be a series of stepping stones that he leaps from to clear the economic waters, where he cannot tread so firmly. Like much of the critique outlined in this essay, there is a leap from consumer excess to a charge of systemic failure in the market economy. Much of the theological literature on consumerism links this excess to poverty and uses it as a moral “gotcha” argument to kill off any debate as to whether the market economy is morally defensible. However, some economists would suggest that the link is perhaps more tenuous than theologians might at first think.

28 J. Kavanaugh, ‘The World of Wealth and the Gods of Wealth’ in *Concilium 187 Option for the Poor: Challenge to the rich Countries* (eds. L Boff & V Elizondo; London: SCM Press, 2010), p. 23.

29 M.D. Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and the Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989) p. 177.

V: BATTLING FOR MARKET SHARE IN THE MORALITY MARKETPLACE

Whether Nozick has accurately located the issue or not, defenders of the Capitalist economy would contend the “bottom line” is that the market has lifted millions out of poverty in Europe and elsewhere, and provided greater access to the middle class and democracy through economic growth; they would not say this is comprehensive, but a better result than other economies can achieve. Many of the middle class rich in Britain today are the heirs of the poor and working class of 100 years ago. Major economies are further ahead of the curve than developing nations, but there is also increasing wealth in most developing nations. Economic advances extend the success of the market to others, creating conditions for the poor to help themselves, rather than being playthings for the comfortable middle classes of the developed economies.

The evidence may turn on whether one believes the Capitalist economy and consumerism are the cause or the symptom of the spiritual problems we face. In an age when religion itself seems to be a marketable item, as the postmodern believer “mix’n’matches” religious traditions in the shape of their own wants and needs, we should tread carefully. The assumption in much theological reading posits a negative view of the Capitalist economy, and that consumerism is a cause rather than a symptom. However, we can see how the economy plays a more positive role by mediating the often conflicting wants and needs of many groups and individuals in society. The excesses of consumerism and the market can be challenged certainly, but complete opposition leads us all into contradictions, and also into failure to use well what we have to hand, i.e. the market.

It is not just theologians, but the popular culture and “Occupy Wall Street” crowd that flee to what they perceive as the moral high ground, which is prime real estate in the argument over morality and the market. The charge can be made that those who protest the market economy are

what they protest, as they use globalisation to reach a mass viewing or reading audience, or buy cheap airline tickets online to attack World Bank and G8 meetings far from where they live. Naomi Klein's anti-globalisation book "No Logo" has become a brand much like the brands she attacks, and no doubt wears herself. The anti-poverty marches organised by celebrities have turned poverty into a consumer event, as people buy a feel good factor, but achieve very little in reality. Celebrities themselves are idols, and many of them are the Chief Executive Officers of multibillion dollar businesses, like U2 or Madonna "Inc". Adoption of children from poor countries by wealthy celebrities may be good public relations, running the risk of such children becoming the latest "designer accessory", but certainly does not reach the causes of the poverty from which an individual child has been rescued. This suggests a horribly cynical interpretation of these events, but perhaps it reflects the modern idolatry of the "feel good factor", and the cynicism lies with the middle classes who would camouflage themselves by thinking they are actually doing something about the problem when arguably they are not.³⁰ The market allows us to express our wants, whether it is designer handbags or anti-globalisation books, often ironically tied together in commercial deals between fashion houses and protesters.

The market shows us as we really are, what we really want. As former World Bank economist, now at New York University, William Easterly frames our dilemma: How come we can get the latest Harry Potter novel to stores throughout the land in time for a midnight opening, to satiate the desires of the middle classes, but we cannot get cheap medicine to children dying in developing nations? The way forward he contends lies in using market economy solutions to answer the economic problems, and that this inevitably means piecemeal and evolving solutions to long-term problems; in the same way that it took 100 years to lift so many people out of poverty in his own country and ours. He refutes the beliefs of what

30 I explore this more fully in D. Cowan, *Economic Parables: The Monetary Teachings of Jesus Christ*, (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2007).

he identifies as “planners” that there is a systemic solution based on what planners think is the answer. After all, if it was so simple to solve, he ventures, why hasn’t it been solved before now? Easterly explains that he feels like a modern Scrooge by saying it, but wants to see real solutions rather than the real failures given birth by what he calls the modern “White Man’s Burden”.³¹

With the failure of Communism, the lack of an overarching economic alternative system may just perhaps suggest the lack of a viable alternative. While there was Communism we could imagine there was an alternative possible economic world, even though somewhat belatedly many realised this was not such a desirable alternative. The market economy is what we have, and like much else in our world falls short of the ideal, but it does mediate different belief systems and different expressions of needs. In short, if the problem is about the excesses of consumerism as spiritual ennui, then I would want to qualify this heavily, both in terms of what we set up as our personal idols, and in terms of the implications for the market economy. If greed and selfishness is the basis of our behaviour, and this occurs in all economic varieties, or what we have as consumers is set before relationship with God, then we have created our own rival to God. For different people this will entail different idols: designer brands, celebrity status, protest, “street cred”, academic recognition et al. To project that onto the market economy is, for me, looking down the wrong end of the telescope and more questionable.

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall theologians have become a little more engaging in their approach to the market economy, but arguably only in the sense of the middle class looking down their noses at the hired chauffeur driving them to a wedding. Perhaps I am being a little unfair, but the point stands that the theological engagement with economic matters and the market remain lopsided, and we need a more realistic basis on which to conduct conversations or remain irrelevant to the discourse. The

31 An excellent study on development economics is offered in W. Easterly, *The White Man’s Burden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

economic woes of our time are many and complex, but wishful thinking does not help us to tackle the real problems of wealth and poverty in our modern world, and this essay is offered as a call to engage realistically.



C.S. Lewis, *praeparatio evangelica*: a Catholic Evangelical, Defined by Method, Technique, and Form

P.H. Brazier

KEYWORDS:

| Evangelical | Catholic | *regula fidei* | Theological Method |
| Mission | *analogia entis-analogia fidei* |

ABSTRACT:

C.S. Lewis was at one and the same time *intensely* Evangelical and *intensely* Catholic. The method, technique, and form of his work was likewise Catholic-Evangelical: his method was defined by the Christ event, derived from the Patristic theologian Vincentius of Lérins (the Scripture imbued authority of the Church, ‘what has been held always, everywhere, by everybody’) and the Puritan Richard Baxter (from whom he acknowledges the term ‘mere Christian’—a sheer core to the faith, *merus*). This paper demonstrates a thread of systematic ground and continuity to Lewis’s writings: a content-led bipartite method and bipartite technique, unified by a universal Platonic principle, realized through the form of the *analogia entis-analogia fidei*—derived from the Catholic and Puritan traditions, but Evangelical in mission. Lewis’s theological and philosophical writings frame a Christian *Weltanschauung*: ‘the Creation, the fall, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Second Coming, and the Four Last Things.’ Therefore he defines his work as *praeparatio evangelica*: preparation for the Holy Spirit. In this he is neither an Enlightenment-led modernist, nor a disparate and relativistic liberal Postmodernist, but an orthodox theologian-philosopher in the Patristic tradition, grounding his writings in Scripture. Lewis could therefore be described as a Catholic-Evangelical

1. INTRODUCTION

As an apologist and theologian C.S. Lewis is often considered something of a dilettante who dabbled in theology as a populariser, whose work demonstrates scant evidence of a system or of any philosophical ground? Was Lewis an occasional theologian who wrote idiosyncratic (and sometimes linguistically quirky) apologetics that certainly captivated his audience, brief theological excursions focused on a particular question, but not underpinned by an overarching system that ordered his theological *corpus* as a whole? The aim of this paper is to show that Lewis did exhibit a system. His method, technique, and form was consistently employed, and was characterized by a deep obligation to primary axioms and propositions, by a coherent thread of evangelical truth, defined by a seam of clarity discernible throughout his work.

Lewis was an Anglican, a communicant member of the Church of England. Evangelicals may not like the way Lewis subscribed to what can be considered a traditional Catholic position on the sacraments and on *post mortem* purgation. Likewise Roman Catholics would do well to see how Lewis could get beyond the external structure of religion to appreciate the immediacy of relationship any believer can have with the Lord Jesus, which in some ways by-passes the structures and authority of the church(es). Lewis was, therefore, a Catholic-Evangelical who went to great lengths to exclude the establishment middle ground along with the modernist liberal wings of the Church of England from his works—leaving the (Anglo) Catholic and Evangelical. Writing to *The Church Times* in 1952, Lewis commented that what unites the Evangelical and the Anglo-Catholic against the Liberal or Modernist is that both are thoroughgoing supernaturalists who believe in the Biblical witness to salvation history.¹

1 'Lewis to The Church Times, Feb. 8, 1952,' in, *Collected Letters Vol. III: Narnia, Cambridge and Joy 1950-1963* (edited by Walter Hooper. San Francisco: Harper, 2007), p. 164.

2. BIBLE, TRADITION AND CREED: HOW SYSTEMATIC WAS LEWIS

But what do we make of Lewis as a theologian? Was Lewis a systematic theologian? Essentially founded by Louis Berkhof in the 1930s² and championed (in a Barthian context) by late twentieth-century neo-orthodox theologians such as Colin E. Gunton and Robert Jenson as a relatively unique form of doctrine and teaching, practitioners of systematic theology both within the Church and the academy endeavour to formulate an orderly, rational, and coherent account of the Christian faith, often as a *Weltanschauung*, often drawing on philosophical techniques within an evidential framework. As such systematic theology is essentially rooted in the Bible and the creeds (and therefore should be by default Evangelical). Such ancient texts form a type of foundation, along with the declared philosophical techniques.³

Nicholas M. Healey distinguishes three types of systematic theology: first, official, generated by the churches, second ordinary theological reflection produced by virtually all believers, and third, what can be described as professional-academic systematic theology.⁴ It is the latter that essentially claims a developed method, systematically applied to the individual's work: coherence and constancy are defining principles. Can this be said of Lewis's apologetics and seemingly disparate philosophical theological essays? Is Lewis's *corpus* essentially in the first two categories—the churches and ordinary believers who attempt to

2 See, Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing), 1938. Also, Karl Barth, *The Church Dogmatics* (14 Vols., translated and edited G.W. Bromiley and T.F. Torrance. Edinburgh: T&T Clark), 1936–77. Post-WW2 we find Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology* (3 volumes; Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1951–63).

3 Attempts at defining systematic theology have been inconclusive. See, for example, Colin E. Gunton, 'A Rose by any Other Name? From Christian Doctrine to Systematic Theology', in *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 1.1, March 1999, pp. 4–23; also, Nicholas M. Healey, 'What is Systematic Theology?', in *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 11.1, January 2009, pp. 24–39, and, Robert Jenson, *Systematic Theology* (Oxford: OUP, 1997).

4 Healey, 'What is Systematic Theology?', pp. 24–33.

order their doctrine and ethics? Although attempts at defining systematic theology have been disparate and therefore inconclusive, as a working definition we can reiterate Colin E. Gunton’s comment that, ‘systematic theology is what happens when theology engages with philosophy: therefore reason should be discussed theologically.’⁵ Should Evangelicals engage with philosophy? Have many failed to in the past, to the detriment of their witness, when philosophy is the λόγος, the reason of God? What, briefly, was Lewis’s background? A trained philosopher, a *literatus*, and Professor of Medieval and Renaissance Literature, C.S. Lewis was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree by the University of St. Andrews in 1946 in recognition of his work in theology and apologetics. Although he had no formal training in theology, his intellect was confirmed in that he received, within four years of study, two B.A. Hons degrees from the University of Oxford (having passed all three required public examinations with first class honours) in Greats (Greek and Roman Literature and Classical Philosophy) and in English. Lewis’s training in Classical Philosophy was similar to, and as an apologist places him with, Justin Martyr, and many others in the early Church. Lewis was technically an amateur (not a salaried religious professional), yet he had, in effect, erected an elaborate smoke screen to separate himself from a clerical elite in the Church of England and in the academy of his day because he categorized this elite as self-proclaimed modern and/or theologically liberal. Unlike many intellectuals he made no secret of his conversion and his faith, indeed Lewis was at one and the same time *intensely* Evangelical and *intensely* Catholic. In considering Lewis as a theologian we shall first establish the ground and influence on Lewis as a philosophical theologian and apologist, then extrapolate—essentially from his own words—what the method, technique, and form, in his *corpus* was.

5 Colin E. Gunton, *Revelation and Reason: Prolegomena to Systematic Theology* (London: Continuum, 2009), 13.

3. THEOLOGICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL GROUND

i. The Post-War Zeitgeist

The depth, sharpness and piercing perception of Lewis's intellect was primarily the result of 'The Great Knock', William T. Kirkpatrick, who tutored Lewis for Oxford. Kirkpatrick though an atheist had a passionate love of truth, and veracity was not defined by, or curtailed according to, social etiquette: if your opponent was wrong you had a duty before truth to say so. Writing to his father on hearing of Kirkpatrick's death in 1921 Lewis wrote: 'It is however no sentiment, but the plainest fact to say that I at least owe to him in the intellectual sphere as much as one human being can owe another ... It was an atmosphere of unrelenting clearness and rigid honesty ... and this I shall be the better for as long as I live.'⁶ Lewis's philosophical education had begun in earnest when he was invalided out of the First World War. Wounded in the Battle of Arras, Lewis developed a serious interest in philosophy whilst recovering in Étapes hospital: he read and studied John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*.⁷ Amongst many young students who returned from the trenches, Lewis, in the early 1920s, was part of the parochial Oxford post-war spirit of the age, who modelled themselves on an earlier mid-European pre-WWI Viennese generation defined by logical positivism. After the First World War the philosophical establishment at Oxford was still characterized by continental Idealism and the English Idealist philosopher, advocate of temperance and political radical T.H. Green, but positivism was taking hold. This affects Lewis and accounts for his realist period characterized by his atheism. Thus far Lewis was in many ways a product of the post-war spirit of the age: a brutal positivistic logic based on

6 'Lewis writing to his father, 28 March 1921', in, C.S. Lewis, *Collected Letters, Vol. I: Family Letters 1905-1931* (San Francisco, CA: Harper San Francisco, 2004), pp. 534-536, quotation, pp. 534-535.

7 John Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (ed. R. S. Woolhouse; Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Penguin Classics, 1997).

what was immediately perceivable to the senses derived from the concept of a closed universe, which was seen as the product of an accident of evolution, not of a creator God. But Lewis started to become religious: first a theist, then a Christian. Lewis identified the rejection of the ancient religions generally, Christianity specifically, by an intellectual elite at Oxford in the 1920s as a chronological-intellectual position. That is, a proposition characterized by, ‘the uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate of our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that count discredited.’⁸ Seen as an unswerving faith in the modern and contemporary this chronological-intellectual proposition was expressed thus: if one argues that A implies B, and if A implying B is an old argument from the times when people also believed C, then A implying B is false, because C was found to be untrue; furthermore, Lewis asserted that this argument implied that such propositions are to be mistrusted if they are religious or relate to a religious mind-set, because, mistakenly, the modernist position believes that humanity progresses from crude ignorance, year by year. Identifying the arrogance of this flawed modernist argument helped Lewis extricate himself from a plethora of philosophies and belief systems at Oxford in the 1920s. It was, moreover, the inverse of this chronological-intellectual argument that characterized his Christian apologetic: anything modern should be mistrusted because it is contemporary, and must first to be measured against the former, the old. Lewis mistrusted modern philosophy and theology, and through his training in Classical Philosophy he drew upon Plato, avoiding the continental Cartesian and Kantian schools and their derivative thought

8 See, C.S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1955), Chp. 13, specifically pp. 206-208, quotation, p. 207. Along with Owen Barfield and J.R.R Tolkien, Lewis would then raise the question of why did a particular thought system cease to be fashionable, and whether it was ever refuted, and if so, how. See also, C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1952), Chp. 7. See also, the first volume of the space trilogy, C.S. Lewis, *Out of the Silent Planet* (London: Bodley Head, 1938), where the anti-heroes, Devine and Weston, assume all ideas that have gone before are inferior and flawed, even in relation to alien species on another planet. See also, C.S. Lewis, *The Pilgrim’s Regress: An Allegorical Apology for Christianity, Reason and Romanticism* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1933).

systems. Parallel to his development towards becoming a Christian was his development in pre-modern Idealism as a philosophical foundation, together with his understanding of and respect for reason. Idealism was for Lewis contrary to the closed universe of positivistic realism.

ii. Idealism and Platonism

Much of the philosophical ground of Lewis's work was formulated in the 1920s, during his period as an apostate atheist as part of his early employment at Oxford teaching philosophy. Lewis's doctoral research at Oxford was on the seventeenth century Cambridge Platonist Philosopher Henry More, who contrasted with the continental school of philosophy: 'What Lewis found in More was an anti-Cartesian rationalist, someone who understood reason not as an abstract, analytic faculty presiding over an indeterminate field of extension, but as the consubstantial light joining the intellect to reality.'⁹ In contrast to the continental school Lewis simply went back to Henry More, and to Plato; when he became a Christian this extended to Patristic theologians, Medieval Scholasticism and seventeenth century Protestants: 'More's thought ... pointed beyond the merely rational and merely material, and in him Lewis found an idealist who believed in God, in reason as a living principle, in nature as alive with λόγος.'¹⁰ Lewis the philosopher was therefore brought to a degree of intellectual maturity by his study of the seventeenth-century Platonists; this gave him a ground, a philosophical framework, which remained constant for the rest of his life.

Lewis's studies exposed him to many thought systems. As a naive philosophy teacher at Oxford in his mid-twenties he owns to subscribing to what he terms Philosophical Idealism. In addition to the fundamental

9 James Patrick, 'C.S. Lewis and Idealism', in *Rumours of Heaven: Essays in Celebration of C.S. Lewis* (Guildford: Eagle Press, 1998), pp. 156-173, quotation, p. 160. See also, on the relationship between More's philosophy and the continental school, Andrew Walker, 'Scripture, Revelation and Platonism in C.S. Lewis', in *Scottish Journal of Theology*, Vol 55.1 (February 2002), pp. 19-35.

10 Patrick, 'C.S. Lewis and Idealism' (1998), p. 161.

grounding he drew from Henry More, this intellectual development is influenced by Plato, the Irish philosopher George Berkeley Bishop of Cloyne, and indirectly, and to a lesser extent, by Georg Hegel, though it is questionable as to how much Lewis really did draw on the continental school, noted for Absolute Idealism and Dialectic. In his assertion of the forms Lewis is an orthodox Platonist (with Tolkien, he used the term ‘shadowlands’ for this world, this reality, to contrast with the real, when the real is intuited, but beyond our immediate sense perception). From his conversion on Lewis is a Christian Platonist in a manner similar to Patristic theologians. After Henry More, it is George Berkeley’s (Bishop of Cloyne) writings on perception and epistemology that Lewis draws on, specifically Berkeley’s theory of immaterialism—Subjective Idealism—encapsulated in the dictum, *esse est percipi* (to be is to be perceived), which had a profound effect on the young Lewis because of the argument from Berkeley that we can only know sensations and ideas of objects, we cannot know abstractions.

iii. Theological Influences

Though trained in philosophy (Classical Philosophy—as were most of the patristic theologians, in particular Justin Martyr, Athanasius and Augustine, who had been trained in the secular academy of their day) Lewis’s primary aim was to glorify God, and inform people about the salvific actions of God in the Christ event. Therefore he is a theologian-philosopher, not a philosophical theologian: the emphasis on the primacy of theology is important. Whereas, for example, Athanasius (following his philosophical training) was prepared by the Catechetical School in Alexandria in the early fourth century as a theologian, Lewis was essentially self-taught theologically: he read widely and deeply from patristic to medieval theologians. Lewis laid out his theological influences, and the education he received from them, in a letter in response to an enquiry from a reader, in 1958; when the correspondent questions the

complexity of the debts Lewis owes to modern theologians, he comments that his debt to the moderns is hardly anything at all, that he knows not the moderns and what they stand for, that Christianity reached him initially through the literature he taught in the 1920s: Dante, Spenser, Milton, George Herbert, and so forth.¹¹ After his conversion he drank in Augustine of Hippo, Richard Hooker, Traherne and the work of many Medieval mystics, also the Church Fathers, the Patristic theologians. He admits his ignorance of many modern theological works, with the exception of Anders Nygren's *Agape and Eros*, and Gustaf Aulén's seminal work on Christ's sacrifice, *Christus Victor* (both works drew heavily on the Patristic tradition, but also on the Reformation tradition from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries). A key to Lewis's beliefs and therefore his theology is an orthodox doctrine of original sin. Much of Lewis's doctrine of the fall is derived specifically from Augustine's *de civitate Dei*. Lewis studied Augustine's *confessiones* in 1936, and *de civitate Dei* in 1937, both in the original Latin, returning to them regularly over the next decade, as well as translating the massive *de civitate Dei* for his own use.¹² In addition, Lewis read and studied Aquinas's great *summa theologiae* on a daily basis in the 1940s, in its original Latin, which gave his apologetics and philosophical theology a distinctively sharp logical edge.

4. SYSTEMATIC METHOD, TECHNIQUE, AND FORM

If apologetics are broadly to be considered as arguments in justification of a theory or doctrine, and if Christian apologetics are to be qualified as reasoned arguments to explicate orthodox Christian faith, and if an

11 'Lewis writing to Corbin Scott Carnell, Oct. 13, 1958,' in, *C.S. Lewis, Collected Letters, Vol. III*, 978–98.

12 See, 'Lewis writing to Dom Bede Griffiths, April 24, 1936,' and, 'Lewis writing to Dom Bede Griffiths, May 23 1936,' in, *C.S. Lewis, Collected Letters, Vol. II: Books, Broadcasts and War 1931-1949* (edited by Walter Hooper. San Francisco: Harper, 2004), pp. 187–90 and pp. 191-95.

apologist confronts the disagreements between differing theistic and non-theistic belief systems, then defence is at the heart of apologetics. Given the origins of the term in the Greek ἀπολογία, Lewis as a Christian apologist wrote and spoke in defence of the truth of the Gospel, justifying it in the face of self-confessed atheists, scientists and philosophers, but also in relation to other religions and belief systems. Because he was, so to speak, preparing the way—*praeparatio evangelica*—he also confronted the inertia and apathy of many ordinary people who considered themselves neither Christian, nor anti-Christian. Lewis commented that ‘Mine are *praeparatio evangelica* rather than *evangelium*, an attempt to convince people that there is a moral law, that we disobey it, and that the existence of a Lawgiver is at least very probable and also (unless you add the Christian doctrine of the atonement) that this imparts despair rather than comfort.’¹³ Therefore Lewis saw himself as preparing his readers for the Gospel, not necessarily converting them. Lewis saw his role, public and private, in bearing witness to Christ: he was in effect a pre-evangelist.¹⁴ Lewis wrote and broadcast popular apologetics, but he also wrote serious philosophical theology. It would give a false picture to consider one without the other. If apologetics are considered different to academic theology, and in particular from philosophical theology, because Christian doctrine may inadvertently be diluted or compromised or changed in rejoinder to a perceived threat, in addition if the content of apologetics may indeed be unintentionally defined by the perceived threat, then we need to consider what techniques Lewis used to assert orthodox

13 ‘Lewis writing to Sister Penelope CSMV, May 15, 1941,’ in, *Collected Letters, Vol. II*, pp. 484-485. See also, C.S. Lewis, ‘Preface to the Third Edition,’ in *The Pilgrim’s Regress*, xvii. See also, Joel Heck, ‘Praeparatio Evangelica,’ in, *C. S. Lewis Light Bearer in the Shadowlands* (ed. by Angus J. L. Menuge; Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1997), pp. 235-257.

14 Lewis probably discovered the phrase from Eusebius of Caesare’s, Προπαρασκευη Ευαγγελικη (*Preparation for the Gospel*, written sometime between 313 and 324 AD), usually known by its Latin title, *Praeparatio Evangelica* was written to demonstrate the veracity of the Gospel over and against Pagan religion through clear and sustained argument, as such it complements Lewis’s apologetic defence of Christianity. See: Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in Eusebius’ Praeparatio Evangelica* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

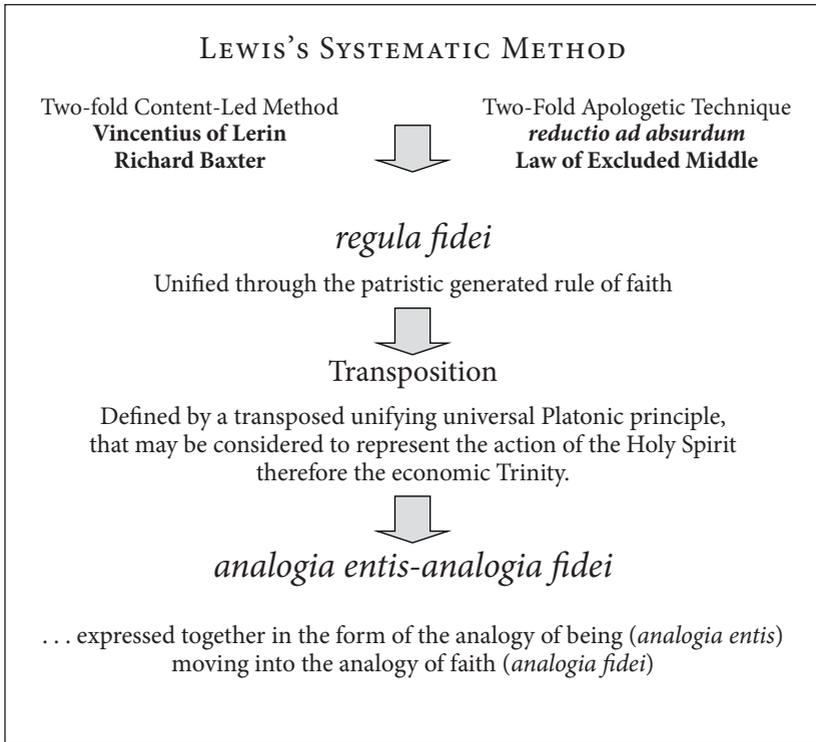


Figure 1 C.S. Lewis: Systematic Method

Christian doctrine—whether philosophical theology or apologetics—whilst attempting to be true to the core of established faith.

Lewis’s method was defined by content: the nature of the content was derived from the fifth century Patristic theologian Vincentius of Lérins and the seventeenth-century Puritan Richard Baxter. Lewis’s content-led method in his theology is two-fold: one element is broadly *Catholic* (pertinently, Patristic), the other broadly *Evangelical* (pertinently, Puritan). In terms of how he presented this content in his apologetics

Lewis relied on two identifiable philosophical techniques: first, *reductio ad absurdum*, and, second, the law of excluded middle. (See figure 1.)

***i. Content Defined Method I:
What has been Held Always, by All***

First, was an appeal to the basic core of the faith established in the centuries after Christ's resurrection, a basic core that was essentially complete by the mid-fifth century, but with much of the detail worked out by the mid-eighth century, this common core to the faith was endorsed by Scripture and by the developing Church tradition. Writing to *The Church Times* in 1952, Lewis commented that,

To a layman, it seems obvious that what unites the Evangelical and the Anglo-Catholic against the Liberal or Modernist is something very clear and momentous, namely, the fact that both are thoroughgoing supernaturalists, who believe in the Creation, the fall, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Second Coming, and the Four Last Things. This unites them not only with one another, but with the Christian religion as understood *ubique et ab omnibus*.¹⁵

The phrase *ubique et ab omnibus*, is important. It is from Vincentius of Lérins who was asserting that we should hold on to that which has been believed by all. Lewis is referring to Vincentius' key work, *The Commonitory* (written in 434 AD), which was written to establish a general or common rule to identify truth from falsity. Vincentius's rule is in essence succinct and simple: it is the authority of the Bible. All questions of doctrine and ethics must be measured against the Canon of Scripture, answered from the Bible. But this, Vincentius acknowledges, is problematic because there are so many interpretations of scripture. The rule of scripture is then qualified by an appeal to that which has been endorsed universally since the earliest days of the Church. The clergy and offices of the Church imbue the Bible with this authority, thus:

15 'Lewis to The Church Times, Feb. 8, 1952,' in, *Collected Letters* Vol. III, p. 164.

'*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus*' ('what has been held always, everywhere, by everybody').¹⁶ In other words there is a body of doctrine/belief, particularly about Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, which is non-negotiable, authenticated by Scripture, held in faith by all, always, everywhere (hence, universally consented to from antiquity), which was established in the centuries after Christ, in the Patristic era, that emerged from the apostles as the authority of the Church.

ii. Content Defined Method II: A Mere Core

The second element to Lewis's method was, like Vincentius of Lérins, to identify a common ground or core, but in this instance to name it and in so doing identify some of its characteristics: 'Mere Christianity'. This common core, this 'Mere Christianity', is then to be used as a measure of doctrine and ethics. Lewis continued in the letter sent to *The Church Times* from 1952, quoted above, 'Perhaps the trouble is that as supernaturalists, whether "Low" or "High" Church, thus taken together, they lack a name. May I suggest 'Deep Church'; or, if that fails, in humility, Baxter's 'mere Christians'?'¹⁷ Lewis is deliberately invoking the work of the seventeenth century English Puritan Richard Baxter:

You know not of what Party I am of; nor what to call me; I am sorrier for you in this than for myself; if you know not, I will tell you, I am a CHRISTIAN, a MEER* CHRISTIAN, of no other Religion; and the Church that I am of is the Christian Church, and hath been visible where ever the Christian Religion and Church hath been visible:

16 Vincent of Lérins, *The Commonitory of Vincent of Lérins, for the Antiquity and Universality of the Catholic Faith against the Profane Novelities of all Heresies* (translated by C. A. Heurtley, edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace), pp. 207–60, in *The Nicene & Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Vol. 11*, Sulpitius Severus, Vincent of Lerins, John Cassian (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002). For the statement, '*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus*', quoted by Lewis, see, Ch. 2, §. 6 'A General Rule for Distinguishing the Truth of the Catholic Faith from the Falsehood of Heretical Pravity', pp. 214, also, 219 and, 223. An online text can be consulted at the *Christian Classics Ethereal Library*: www.ccel.org.

17 'Lewis to *The Church Times*, Feb. 8, 1952,' in, *Collected Letters Vol. III*, p. 164.

But must you know of what Sect or Party I am of? I am against all Sects and dividing Parties: But if any will call *Mere Christians* by the name of a Party, because they take up with *mere Christianity*, *Creed*, and *Scripture*, and will not be of any dividing or contentious Sect, I am of that Party which is so against Parties: If the name CHRISTIAN be not enough, call me a CATHOLIC CHRISTIAN; not as that word signifieth an hereticating majority of Bishops, but as it signifieth one that hath no Religion, but that which by Christ and the Apostles was left to the Catholic Church, or the body of Jesus Christ on Earth.

I am sorry that you are not content with meer Christianity ... I would say also that (nor as Protestants) did I not take the religion called Protestant (a name which I am not fond of) to be nothing but *simple Christian*.¹⁸

[Baxter's emphasis and capitalization.
*: early modern English spelling.]

Therefore a 'mere'¹⁹ core of orthodoxy informed Lewis's method, that which had been held by all during the Patristic era, a 'mere' core that developed in the early centuries of the Church, and could be identified as a true seam of orthodoxy through church history. Content was doctrinal; content defined method—and method was therefore by definition orthodox.

iii. Apologetic Technique I: reductio ad absurdum

In formal disputation and logic—and especially beloved by barristers in court—*reductio ad absurdum* (*reduction to the absurd*) is a type of argument that refutes an opponent's proposal by demonstrating that it is either rooted in, or leads inevitably to, an absurd or self-contradictory

18 Richard Baxter, 'What History is Credible, and What Not,' Introductory essay in, *Church History of the Government of Bishops and their Councils* (London: Simmons, 1680), p. xvii. (Edition consulted in the British Library.)

19 'Mere', from, the Medieval Middle English 'pure', 'sheer', or 'downright', 'meer', from the Latin, *merus*, undiluted.

conclusion. If such a proposition is shown to be absurd and untenable then Lewis has, so to speak, won the day, or so he believed. Lewis excelled at reducing the opposition's arguments to nothing, demolishing their case and showing what they believed to be absurd: *reductio ad absurdum*. Such a technique is valued by Lewis in an apologetic discussion. Such a technique is grounded in logic. Lewis was no fideist who shied away from logic and reason. Logic is inherent to the natural sciences, but also in finding out about the truth of God: 'One of the objections to studying logic most often cited is that logic does not apply to God or to any of the mysteries of the Christian faith, such as the Trinity or the Incarnation . . . [but] even those who claim, "Logic does not apply to God," use logic in that very statement. Logic is unavoidable . . . Theology is a rational discourse about God.'²⁰ Geisler and Brookes continue by reiterating, derived from Aristotle, the four basic laws, self-evident and self-explanatory: the law of non-contradiction (A is not non-A, no two contradictory statements can be simultaneously true in the same sense); the law of identity (God is God); the law of excluded middle (A is either A or non-A, there is no compromise); the law of rational inference (inferences can be deduced what what is known *about* what is not known).²¹ Therefore, 'Theological method builds on these elementary laws of logic. If logic is a necessary precondition of all thought, then it must also be necessary for all thought about God.'²² This does not deny that in many instances our human fallibility and fallenness may lead to an apparent paradox, which we cannot resolve through logic: logic is not God.

20 Norman Geisler and Ronald Brookes, *Come Let Us Reason. An Introduction to Logical Thinking* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1990), Ch. 1 "The Whats and Whys of Logic," 11-20, specifically, 15-17, referring to John 1, the Lo'goj.

21 Geisler and Brookes, *Come Let Us Reason*, 16-17. The law of rational inference is at the heart of Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia*, what Lewis called a "supposal", a "what if", in this case, what if Christ was incarnate in a totally alien reality, another world outside of our universe, and died to save creatures there? What would happen: analogy by inference.

22 *Ibid*, 16-17.

iv. Apologetic Technique II: Law of Excluded Middle

Reductio ad absurdum relates, in terms of philosophy and logic, to the *law of excluded middle* (C.S. Lewis is mortal, or he is immortal, there is no third option, logic excludes that Lewis is neither mortal nor immortal). Again rooted in philosophical logic the law of excluded middle is the technique used to show that an argument or proposition is either true or not true. In its purest form, because truth can appear ambiguous, this is expressed as ‘either-or’. Ambiguity is then dismissed by fact. Lewis almost certainly derived this technique from his reading of Aristotle. Lewis excelled at excluding the grey, nuanced, middle ground where ambiguity thrived; he excluded this in favour of the ‘either-or’. He did not necessarily insist on one option being acknowledged as truth, but left the defeated opponent to see that if absurdity was to be avoided they had to make a decision. This comes into its own with Christian apologetics because whatever beliefs we hold Jesus confronts us with the need to make a decision. This ‘either-or’ is at the heart of Lewis’s most popular and in some ways controversial apologetic: that Jesus was ‘Mad, Bad or God’ (that is, *aut Deus aut malus homo*—Jesus was God, or he cannot be considered a good man).²³ The picture given to us by Scripture, the witness and testimony of the evangelists, is of a man who audaciously forgave people their sins, when such was God’s prerogative, a man who claimed pre-existence to Abraham, who *acted as if* he was God. Scripture also shows how those who encountered Jesus, or those who exercised power and control over him (the Scribes and Pharisees, the Chief Priests, the Romans), were forced to make a decision about him: either Jesus is

23 See, P.H. Brazier, *C.S. Lewis—The Work of Christ Revealed. C.S. Lewis: Revelation and the Christ (Book 2)* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2012), Pt. 2, ‘Part Two The Revelation of Christ—God, or a Bad Man,’ Chps. 4-8, pp. 89-188, also, P.H. Brazier, ‘“God ... or a Bad, or Mad, Man”: C.S. Lewis’s Argument for Christ – A Systematic Theological, Historical and Philosophical Analysis of *aut Deus aut malus homo*’, accepted, September 2010 for publication in, *The Heythrop Journal*; published ‘online early’, Wiley-Blackwell Online Library website 29 November 2010.

a 'liar', he is 'unbalanced', he cannot be considered sane, *or*, he has a 'demon', he is 'possessed', he does these things by Beelzebub, *or*, he is the God of Israel, the Lord, walking among them, he is truly the divine 'light of the world.'²⁴

Lewis's two-fold method and two-fold technique was not forcing the hearer to the point of conversion, it was merely setting out the options, clearly, without a nuanced, grey, middle-ground-confusion. Therefore Lewis's method and technique simply prepared the hearer to make a decision, Lewis's apologetics and theology were evangelical but, as he asserted, they were *praeparatio evangelica*.

5. REGULA FIDEI

Lewis's writings were content-driven: as the Christ event is an occurrence, an incident, in history, the method is primarily defined by this event. This event leads into Church history, the content issuing—in part—from Jesus' request to his followers to remember him.²⁵ Therefore Lewis's method is to identify a body of knowledge and understanding that exists outside of human consciousness. This had led to the formulation of the creeds. To go beyond this, to expand and expound on the creeds, is then to codify this understanding into a body of knowledge and understanding, propositions and doctrine. Primarily this body of knowledge and understanding is attested to by scripture, it is endorsed by scripture, and it is about God's dealings with humanity culminating in the Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection. Secondly, when there are questions which cannot be directly answered by appeal to scripture, this developing body of doctrine is secondarily endorsed by appeal to the developed Patristic tradition—the early Church. Therefore there is identified a '*meer*'/'*merus*', a sheer, pure, simple undiluted core, a basic core of 'Mere Christianity', that is at the heart of the Christian faith and provides the foundation, the ground,

24 John 8:49 and 10:21, also, Matt 11:18 and Luke 7:33, and, Mark 3:20-22.

25 Matt 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-19; See also 1 Cor. 11:24.

for theological apologetics: scripture, backed-up by the Patristic tradition, identifies a mere core. This underpins all of Lewis's work as a theologian.

This relates closely to the *regula fidei* (rule of faith), which was established in Lewis's work from early on, though it becomes more and more important in his mature work: that which evaluates theological opinion and the life of the church by measuring against what has been firmly established and believed—that is, Lewis's content driven method derived from the Patristic theologian Vincentius of Lérins and the seventeenth century Puritan Richard Baxter, his 'mere' core of orthodoxy. This rule of faith was rooted in Scripture: in Paul's comments in Romans, where all is to be seen in proportion to faith: in the Greek New Testament, ἀναλογία τῆς πίστεως—literally, the '*analogy of faith*' (Romans 12:6).

Lewis saw Christianity as the *Weltanschauung*. This 'mere' core was the meta-narrative, above all competing meta-narratives. Richard Baxter's work, from which Lewis derived the concept of 'Mere Christianity', was a work of Church history and he, like Lewis, realized the importance of identifying what was and what was not part of this salvation history. Baxter wrote:

But it is not all history that is needful or useful to us: there are many things done which we are not concerned to be acquainted with. But the history of the Church, of the propagation of the Christian faith, and what the doctrine was that was then received, and how it was practised, promoted and defended, and how it was corrupted, invaded and persecuted, is of so great use to posterity, that next to the scripture and the illuminations of God's Spirit, I remember nothing more needful to be known.²⁶

This is remarkably similar to Vincentius of Lérins balance between scripture and the developing Patristic Church tradition. Baxter saw this as important because, he argues, that mere Christians should know about the past, about Church history, as they need to be 'truly acquainted how

26 Baxter, 'Preface,' in, *Church History*, p. iv.

things have gone in the Church from the beginning,²⁷ thus the records and documents from the Patristic period are of immense importance. This was also so for Lewis: history was not relative, our perception may, to a degree, be relative to our personal interests, but there was a thread—as Vincentius of Lérins had identified—of truth, of the emergence of sound beliefs about Christ, which was of importance.

6. TRANSPOSITION: A UNIFYING UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLE

Lewis is identifying the universal testimony of the Church as the ground and as an indicator of doctrine where theology is a word of the Church, issuing from the Word: the λόγος. The Word is defined by what flows from the revelation of the Christ event, through the authority of the Church, bound by the Holy Spirit. There is therefore a unifying universal principle against which all modern or contemporary forms of theology are measured. This unifying universal principle is at its strongest in the early and Patristic churches where scripture is developed as a validating mechanism (Vincentius) and is at its purest and simplest, later, in a mere core (Baxter). This issues from a doctrine of revelation. Lewis's understanding of revelation, where revelation is at the heart of doctrine, is governed—pneumatologically—by transposition.²⁸

If idealism is incarnational (the ideal, the eternal, descended to earth, to live amongst us and die for our sins, to raise us up again and draw us up out of the mire heavenward²⁹), it is important to remember that for Lewis, any revelation is transposed. Described by Lewis as his contribution to the philosophy of the incarnation, a doctrine of transposition relates closely

27 Ibid, p. vi vii.

28 C.S. Lewis, "Transposition," a sermon given in Mansfield College, Oxford on Whit Sunday, 28 May 1944; published in *Transposition and Other Addresses* (1st ed., , 1949). A reworked and extended edition of the sermon as an academic paper ("Transposition," 2nd ed., 1962) was published in *They Asked for a Paper*. All references are to this 2nd edition.

29 Lewis draws heavily on Athanasius (c.297–373) in this proposition.

to a kenotic Christology (Phil 2:6–11), to the *communicatio idiomatum* (the communication of attributes), the knowability of God (which is both a veiling and an unveiling), and how human fallibility can lead us to misread what is communicated to us.³⁰ In a doctrine of transposition the hard-and-firm division and separation posited by Platonic Idealism between eternity and our reality, between the forms and the physical world, is blurred, it is seen as a gradation; therefore transposition explains, to a degree, what is happening in revelation: transposition makes gradual, it theologizes this hard and fast Platonic dualism. Lewis sets out a doctrine of transposition in detail.³¹ The knowledge and understanding, God’s revelation, that is imparted, revealed, is transposed: it is changed, diminished, diluted, *through our reception* of revelation, like a symphony for full orchestra transposed for solo piano, or a drawing (sometimes pencil, other times pen-and-ink, then charcoal or pastel—each different) as compared to the landscape depicted or the person portrayed. However, something of the essence, the essential spirit, is communicated, relayed, *revealed*. The fine drawings by Leonardo da Vinci are an example of how despite the limitations of the medium, the drawing still *conveys* something of the essential *beauty* and *spirit* in a person, in the face and not just the physical form but the *essence*. This is “how” revelation is imparted. As a key to all of Lewis’s work, a doctrine of transposition is itself transposed, reduced, lessened and changed, but essentially still true to the original. This is broadly Platonic in the manner in which the transposed is defined by the truly real in eternity. Lewis’s doctrine is designed to explain how revelation works, how it is communicated, and, paradoxically, why revelation can never be fully imparted. Jesus is therefore a transposition of the eternal Christ, the second person of the Trinity, the λόγος, into the human. Moses knew that no human could look God in the face and live. Therefore such an incarnational transposition is by necessity veiled—

30 Lewis, “Transposition,” (2nd ed.), 166. For a detailed exposition of this see, See, P.H. Brazier, ‘C.S. Lewis: A Doctrine of Transposition’, in *The Heythrop Journal*, Vol. 50 No. 4, (July 2009), pp. 669-688.

31 *Ibid*, (2nd ed.).

simply so we can begin to discern, to know, and understand something of the revelation of the Christ. If God had descended, un-transposed, two thousand years ago, then it would have been the end of the world (as it will be in the *eschaton*, with the second coming).

Lewis set out the principle underlying his bipartite method and bipartite technique in a letter to an American Episcopalian, Hart Lyman Stebbins, who had written to him asking what would be 'the arguments which throw the decision to the Anglican and against the Roman Catholic Church'³² Lewis's reply uses an image, a metaphor, almost a parable, inevitably Platonic. He writes that if he sought the fullest and truest interpretation of what Plato taught then he would be confident in accepting the interpretation which is common to all those who either claim to be Platonists or subscribe to his teaching, those who agree on what he took to be true Platonism: 'Any purely modern views which claim to have discovered for the first time what Plato meant, and say that everyone from Aristotle down has misunderstood him, I reject out of hand.'³³ Lewis then tackles the balance between the churches of his day, of the denominations in the twentieth century.

I should approach them with great respect. But if I found that their teaching in many ways was curiously unlike his actual text and unlike what ancient interpreters said, and in some cases could not be traced back to within 1000 years of his time, I should reject these exclusive claims: while still ready, of course, to take any particular thing they taught on its merits.

I do the same with Christianity. What is most certain is the vast mass of doctrine which I find agreed on by scripture, the Fathers, the Middle Ages, modern RCs, modern Protestants. That is true 'catholic' doctrine. Mere 'modernism' I reject at once.³⁴

32 'Lewis writing to H. Lyman Stebbins, May 8, 1945,' in, C.S. Lewis, *Collected Letters Vol. II*, pp. 645-647. The essential substance of Stebbins letter is presented on p. 645 at the beginning of the reply Lewis sent to him.

33 Ibid, pp. 645-46.

34 Ibid, p. 646.

Therefore we have Lewis's content-driven method succinctly stated in one principle: continuity and agreement of a core of belief, agreed on by scripture, the Fathers, the Middle Ages, contemporary Roman Catholics and Protestants and tracing its heritage back to the apostles: this is true 'catholic' for him. This is a universal principle, where universalism lies beyond any particularly denomination.³⁵ Because Lewis's reply was in the context of Stebbins enquiry of the relationship between the Anglican and the Roman Catholic churches he did continue to explain how he rejected Roman Catholicism where it differed and dissented from this universal tradition and in particularly from apostolic Christianity, citing examples relating to Mary and Mariology, the Papal principle, and the doctrine of transubstantiation, in relation to—importantly—the New Testament. It is important to remember that Lewis is writing in the context of pre-Vatican II Rome. "In a word, the whole set-up of modern Romanism seems to me to be as much a provincial or local variation from the central, ancient tradition as any particular Protestant sect is. I must therefore reject their claim: though this does not mean rejecting particular things they say."³⁶ This is not simply an anti-Roman polemic; Lewis equally applied this universal principle to Protestantism. For example, writing to his life-long friend Arthur Greeves there are detailed criticisms of the Puritan and more extreme Protestantism evident in their Ulster heritage, where such Puritanism departs from this universal principle and becomes provincial, parochial and local, a variation from this central and mere, simple and sheer, core.³⁷ We may ask, importantly, what is the source of this unifying universal principle? For Lewis this is Christ: the universal Christ from all eternity to all eternity, the second person of the Trinity, co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, who through and in the Spirit will lead us into all truth, that governs all truth, who for Lewis is

35 It is in this context that Lewis uses the hall metaphor in the preface to *Mere Christianity*: the individual denominations and churches are like rooms leading off from a hall or lobby, where the hall represents this mere core of orthodoxy (pp. viii-ix).

36 'Lewis writing to H. Lyman Stebbins, May 8, 1945,' pp. 646-647.

37 See, 'Lewis writing to Arthur Greeves Dec. 6, 1931,' in, Lewis, *Collected Letters, Vol. II*, pp. 22-25.

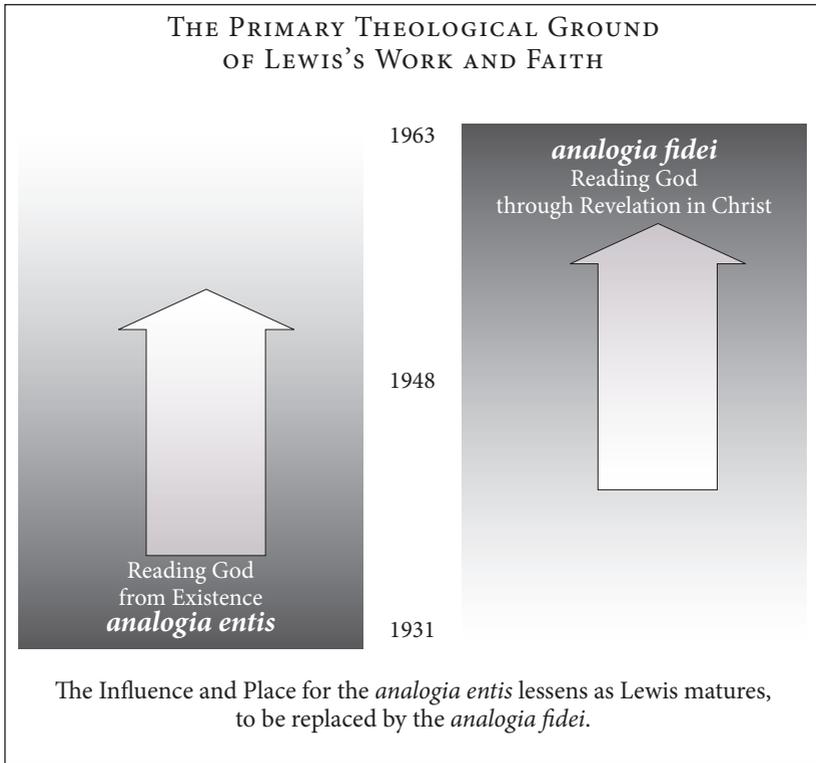


Figure 2 The *analogia entis*–*analogia fidei*—
 The Primary Theological Ground of Lewis’s Work

biblically endorsed as the way, the truth, and the life (John 16:13; cf. John 8:32; 14:16.)

7. ANALOGIA ENTIS–ANALOGIA FIDEI

Lewis’s work develops from the assertive, even aggressive, apologetic of the 1940s into something characteristically and methodologically

dissimilar (though not poles apart, or diametrically different), and the progress of that change can be attributed to a greater or lesser degree to the Anscombe-Lewis debate (1948), though proving such an assertion is riddled with the problems of causation that the debate was about.³⁸ The form of Lewis's work is defined within this bipartite method and technique by *analogy*. In the 1930s and 1940s his apologetics and philosophical theology are defined by grounding propositions in creation, and therefore in reason—the *analogia entis*; by the 1950s Lewis sees the primary link between God and humanity for our theologizing as in and through the Christ: the *analogia fidei*.

In the 1930s and 1940s (the early and middle period works) Lewis's championing of apologetics is through the *analogia entis*: for example, *The Problem of Pain* (1940), and especially in the BBC radio programmes, *The Broadcast Talks* (1941-44), it is in these works that he applies *reductio ad absurdum* to its fullest, forcing the reader and listener to reject the irrationality and illogicality of the alternative position, and excluding any grey middle-ground compromise. There is some evidence of the *analogia fidei* in this early and middle period—analogue narratives, theologically charged parable and story—characterized by the form of the *analogia fidei*, for example, *The Space Trilogy* (1938-45), *The Screwtape Letters* (1942) and *The Great Divorce* (1945). (See figure 2.)

In the mature period works, late 1940s and the 1950s, after the Anscombe-Lewis debate (1948), which did not refute his argument from reason, but exposed a badly worked-out premise in his understanding of causation, he takes a more cautious and reflective approach, wisdom becomes the touchstone, complemented by the *analogia fidei*.³⁹ It is faith now that leads to understanding, but faith is the ground from which reason can work, where reason predates creation, where the reason of

38 See, P.H. Brazier, 'C.S. Lewis and the Anscombe Debate: from analogia entis to analogia fidei', in, *The Journal of Inklings Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (October 2011), pp. 69-123.

39 See, Brazier, 'C.S. Lewis and the Anscombe Debate', specifically, pp. 83-83, also, pp. 96-104.

God is infused into the human. To reject the Christ is *absurdum*, Christ is the universal *Weltanschauung*; to try to pursue a middle ground is flawed. The *analogia fidei* is demonstrated in his use of analogical narrative. For example, *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-56), *Till We Have Faces* (1956), *Reflections on the Psalms* (1958) and *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (1964, posthumously published). Lewis continues to value the *analogia entis* throughout his mature work, for example the many carefully structured essays of philosophical theology, *Mere Christianity* (1952) and the second edition of *Miracles* (1960); however, it is fair to say that the form of the *analogia fidei* occupies a much greater role in his work in the 1950s. This development probably owes some of its impetus to the Anscombe-Lewis debate, but the evidence is there for a more gradual change, initiated from before his encounter with the young linguistic philosopher Elizabeth Anscombe. In addition, the move from an emphasis on the *analogia entis* to the *analogia fidei* may have been, to a degree, the result of maturity as Lewis grew older; and there is also the effect his love for Joy Davidman had on him, and her subsequent death from cancer.

8. CONCLUSION

Lewis gets close to producing a *summa* (if a *summa* can be considered part of the aim and objective of a systematic theology) in *Mere Christianity*,⁴⁰ which was based on the wartime BBC radio broadcasts (1941-44), which dealt with the Christian *Weltanschauung*: the creation and the fall into original sin, salvation history, God's revelation and economy with humanity and the world, the Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and second coming of God in Christ, the Church, all leading teleologically to usher in the *eschaton*: death, judgement, heaven and hell. *Mere Christianity* was a relatively short work compared to the lengths Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth went to, yet it is, perhaps, more complete than

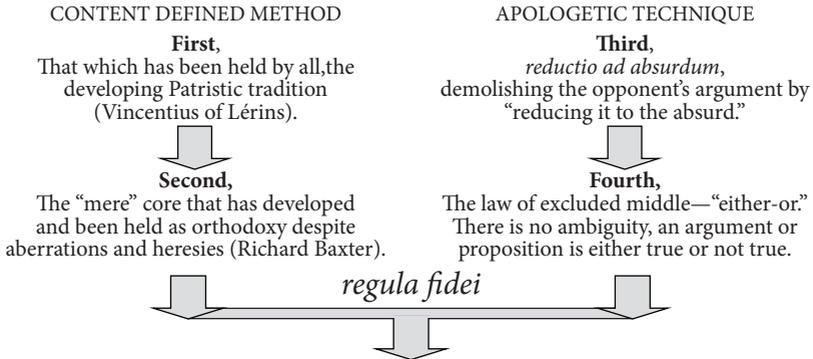
40 C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (1952).

many systematic theologies (though it does have its detractors who will point to a personal bias in Lewis, a criticism that can be levelled at any theologian, systematic or otherwise).

Lewis was an intensely private and reticent man, who disliked his fame, but nonetheless he produced a considerable *corpus* of work that still today communicates orthodox, creedal, traditional, Christian doctrine to many millions of people. Disparate though his work may appear to some, taken as a whole there is a thread of continuity throughout that indicates a systematic basis to his theological and philosophical writings, there is even the framework of a systematic theology (however, it is incomplete, as can be said with Aquinas, Barth, Gunton, and many others). It can be argued that Lewis lacks the pretence that many official theologians use to give their work credibility before an often overtly atheistic and seemingly disinterested academy. Then there are those who are quite justifiably sceptical of the concept of systematic theology, that it is just an academic pretence grafted onto basic Christian doctrine, especially when it is difficult to get systematic theologians to agree on a single unifying definition of systematic theology. This notwithstanding Lewis did exhibit something of a system, consistently applied, with a steady and predictable logical ordered and reasoned thread of method, technique, and form, across his work. Lewis did exhibit, often veiled, this content-led bipartite method and bipartite technique that worked together in the form of the *analogia entis-analogia fidei*, unified by a universal Platonic principle, that may be considered to represent the pneumatological action of the economic Trinity: Lewis's Platonic commerce can, in effect, be seen as a somewhat mechanistic description of the action of the Holy Spirit within salvation history. Lewis was intensely serious and reserved, whose work was deeply considered and thought-out. What is important is not whether Lewis can be classified as a systematic theologian but that he had a carefully

Figure 3 C. S. Lewis—Method, Technique, and Form

C. S. LEWIS’S APOLOGETICS AND PHILOSOPHICAL THEOLOGY:
 METHOD—A TWO-FOLD METHODOLOGICAL CONTENT,
 AND A TWO-FOLD APOLOGETIC TECHNIQUE



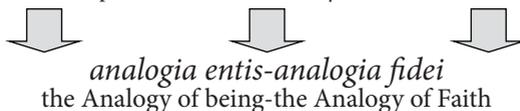
The *regula fidei* (the rule of faith) is that which evaluates theological opinion and the life of the church by measuring against what has been firmly established and believed: Vincentius of Lérins (“*quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus*”: “what has been held always, everywhere, by everybody”) and Richard Baxter’s “mere” core of orthodoxy (“I am a Christian, a Meer Christian, of no other Religion; and the Church that I am of is the Christian Church”).

The *regula fidei* as the rule of faith was rooted in Scripture, in Paul’s comments in Romans, where all is to be seen in proportion to faith: in the Greek New Testament, ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως: literally, the “analogy of faith” Rom. 12:6).

Transposition: A Unifying Universal Platonic Principle

Lewis identifies the universal testimony of the Church as the ground of theology: the Word of the Church—the Λόγος—is defined by what flows from the revelation of the Christ event, through the authority of the Church. There is therefore a **unifying universal platonic principle** (at its strongest in the early and patristic churches where scripture is developed as a validating mechanism) against which all modern or contemporary forms of theology are measured: hence Lewis’s apologetic techniques used to criticize the modern and liberal.

The relationship between God and humanity in revelation is defined, for Lewis, by transposition. The knowledge and understanding imparted, revealed, is transposed: it is changed, diminished, diluted, through our reception of revelation, like a symphony for full orchestra transposed for solo piano, or a drawing as compared to the landscape depicted—however, the essence, the essential spirit, is communicated, relayed, revealed.



In the 1930s and 1940s this method, technique and principle is expressed through the theological form of the *analogia entis* (the analogy of being). In the 1950s, through to his death this moves over into the *analogia fidei* (the analogy of faith).

thought-out method and technique, consistently applied to his popular apologetics, his philosophical theology, and his confessional writings. We must not be beguiled by the popular conception of, the image produced by, the sometimes flamboyant and idiosyncratic language, or the seeming dilettante who dabbled in theology as a populariser; underlying Lewis's *corpus* is a depth and consistency, a coherence, that is often normally associated with high-ranking professional academic theologians.

Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics
Forum





The Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics

ERTP Forum E RTP

The Civil War in Syria

David Cowan

Eric Patterson

Tony Richie

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with material from

Jerusalem Center for Genocide Prevention

and observers based in the Middle East

INTRODUCTION

Recent months witnessed a considerable exacerbation of the situation in Syria that threatened to spill over globally. The horrific chemical attack upon Syrian civilians, killing several hundred (including many children) served as a catalyst for those seeking military intervention in Syria's bloody civil war which, to date, has resulted in possibly 110,000 deaths. British Prime Minister David Cameron sought (and failed) to involve Britain militarily, followed by US President Obama's decision, first, to

strike Syrian government targets, and then, to seem to change his mind and ask US lawmakers to make the final decision. This gave way to Russian political intervention, followed by a UN-organised process of destroying Syria's stockpiles of chemical weapons (which has now begun). For now, at least, everything seems to have changed from what seemed a sure path to war just a few weeks ago.

Whatever the outcome, one thing is clear: the decision whether or not to intervene in Syria's civil war captured considerable world attention. One the one side, there were demands for swift and harsh action against a brutal regime responsible for many thousands of Syrian deaths. On the other were those who maintained that to become involved in a conflict such as in Syria, together with all the regional ramifications that would ensue, would be utter madness. Others highlighted the Islamist nature of much of the rebel Syrian opposition, or focused instead on domestic political issues and motives driving Cameron, Obama, France's President Hollande, and others.

In the lead-up to what appeared to be a military strike on Syria, Evangelical Christians globally also expressed strong views on the issue, whether in Christian publications and media, from pulpits and through social media.

In this edition of the *Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics* Forum we brought together viewpoints from different scholars and observers to comment on the situation in Syria, the aim being to provide Evangelical readers with comment and opinion pieces from different perspectives. Each contributor provided their piece independently of each other, without having seen other contributions beforehand.

Syria and American Evangelicals

by David Cowan

The primary reason Syria has come to dominate the political landscape for a while is that it did not follow in the hoped-for trajectory of the Arab Spring, and instead begat the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime on its own people, resulting in a tide of refugees into neighbouring countries with the increased risk of long-term instability in the region. These are the issues for Syria and the international community, but my interest here is to explore what specific challenges are set before America and assess the evangelical response.

In recent times, conservative evangelicals have tended to support assertive US foreign policy and military action, yet in the case of Syria many evangelicals have from the start come out against military action and questioned its legitimacy within the Just War framework. Cynics might suggest this is because it is an Obama war, but there is a little more to it than sheer opposition to the President and Democrats. Besides which, Obama himself prefers a negotiated settlement.

On September 3 the National Association of Evangelicals surveyed evangelical leaders to ask “Should Congress authorize direct U.S. military intervention in Syria?” 62.5% said “no” and 37.5% said “yes.” Leith Anderson, President of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), said “There is no way to know, but most of our leaders think military action against Syria is the wrong way to go.” This seems backed up by various official statements from the Southern Baptists, Family Research Council, and individual voices such as Rick Warren. They have been joined by their Roman Catholic allies, such as Michael Novak and George Weigel. These are many of the same voices that supported George W. Bush in the Iraq invasion as a pre-emptive war.

This evangelical response perhaps reflects a nation weary of war,

period. Yet, there are American national interests in play, which can be distilled into three foreign policy concerns:

1. The need for the US to regain their global leadership, which has been put in doubt by this episode and the role Russia has played in stepping up to the plate courtesy of a curveball from John Kerry. If America does not, then her future role is undermined.
2. The threat of chemical and biological weapons is a real threat to the US and the world.
3. What may be for many the core reason to act is in fact a debatable one in terms of how it plays out, and this is the argument that America has a responsibility to act and cannot stand by and watch another 100,000 die.

America's objectives are clear. There is the need to regain the lead role in advancing a negotiated settlement, build global and regional support, limit the role of Russia and Iran, and undermine the Assad regime. However, there are barriers to be overcome. With over 1200 opposition groups, there is no single obvious group to side with, added to which is a lack of coherence among international forces, the UN and Arab Council. At the time of writing there is a hiatus as Syria supplies details of its arsenal. The military option may remain, but the danger of concerted action is that if forced into a corner Assad may attack Israel, Saudi Arabia and others, not necessarily with direct military action but through terrorist groups.

We are at a stage where the best option is to let this play out a little more, remind Syria there is still a threat of use of force, build internal agreement among allies and the UN generally, regional support specifically, and learn more about opposition groups and what a post-Assad Syria would look like. Without deciding on this last question, we are left not knowing the end game, whatever the strategic option chosen, and finding we all quickly end up back at square one. Getting this balance right suggests agreement on a long-term goal that outweighs short-term thinking, as failing in the task will take us to the brink again very soon. Leaving Russia in the driving seat is not an option for America either.

America needs to support options to facilitate dialogue among the various opposition groups in Syria, while also finding those options which promote its primary role if it is to retain its superpower status.

The notion of a compromised superpower status has given rise to a whole debate about American exceptionalism. Conservative evangelicals have long cherished a belief in America as an exceptional nation, with its Manifest Destiny. Syria gave President Obama an opportunity to assert American exceptionalism, which he took when he said “The burdens of leadership are often heavy, but the world is a better place because we have borne them.” A retort quickly came back from sparring partner Vladimir Putin, who said America should refrain from striking Syria, concluding “it is extremely dangerous to encourage people to see themselves as exceptional, whatever the motivation. There are big countries and small countries, rich and poor, those with long democratic traditions and those still finding their way to democracy. Their policies differ, too. We are all different, but when we ask for the Lord’s blessings, we must not forget that God created us equal.”

Syria is a mess, it is a convoluted mess, and there are no quick and easy solutions. There are various national interests in the mix, and the role of international cooperation is once more under test. As the Broadway saying goes, this one will run and run. Yet in the midst of this mess, we would do well to recall Isaiah 17, where we read the prophecy against Damascus, when Jerusalem’s enemies are condemned during the time of the Assyrian invasion, as the Lord declares “See, Damascus will cease to be a city and will become a heap of ruins. Her towns will be deserted forever.” We are left to ponder, what dangers are there should the world desert Damascus and leave Syrian citizens to continue flooding into neighbouring countries leaving behind a nation in misery, silenced only by chemical weapons?

Syria is not Munich

by Eric Patterson

Secretary of State John Kerry told the American public that the civil war in Syria, heightened by the alleged use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime, is this generation's Munich crisis. Kerry, and President Obama, have their history wrong; this situation is simply not analogous to Munich. And now that Russia has made the U.S. back down, the Administration will try to use the Munich analogy as a whitewash for Washington's foreign policy embarrassment.

In a nutshell, the Munich reference is about appeasing a dictator bent on conquering his neighbors. Assad has meticulously avoided provoking his neighbors; his draconian actions are the response of a dictator to a rebellion, not a plan for regional conquest.

Recall that Adolf Hitler, languishing in prison following a failed 1923 putsch, used his jail time to write down his plan for German purification and European domination in *Mein Kampf*. He told his readers that Germany must be cleansed of its internal enemies (e.g. Jews and Communists) and that the German people needed to take over lands on their borders ("living space" or *lebensraum*). He forecast a war with Russia.

Christians in the West did nothing.

When Hitler came to power, he broke international treaties by rebuilding Germany's military, attacked Germany's internal enemies, and then remilitarized the Rhineland (1936). He strong-armed Austria into annexation (April 1938) and then, thanks to Western appeasement in the Munich Pact, appropriated the German-speaking Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia (1938). It would be a full year before World War II officially started, with Hitler's invasion of Poland. It was then that the Western Allies, sans the U.S., responded—because it was in their national

interest to finally do so. The U.S. did not get involved for another 51 months: when Germany's partner, Imperial Japan, infamously attacked Pearl Harbor.

During much of this time, Christians in the West did nothing to stop Hitler. Sadly, many were sympathetic to his revitalizing of Germany and many Christians were anti-Semitic. Most Western denominations crusaded against war in the 1920s and 1930s, rather than arguing for responsible deterrence of the Nazis.

The Syria situation is entirely different. It is a civil war, with atrocities committed by all three sides (the government, the jihadists, and the non-jihadist rebels). The Assad regime is repugnant to the West for many good reasons, but he has not explicitly threatened Lebanon, Turkey, Jordan, or Iraq in the context of this rebellion. Assad is an ally of the rogue regime in Tehran, but there is no evidence that an "arc of Shiism" is waging this war in order to destabilize governments in the region nor to grab the land of their neighbors. Indeed, the real threats to regional stability, at the moment, are two-fold. The first is the refugee crisis that has sent millions of destitute individuals streaming out of the country into camps along the borders. The second crisis is the introduction of radical Sunni Islamists of the al Qaeda variety, who vie with more traditional rebels for position and influence.

It is true that the Syria debacle is a nightmare and that the world community should be watching it carefully. It is also true that Damascus appears to have violated international law by introducing chemical weapons. But this is not a genocide: genocide is the systematic attempt to eliminate a racial or ethnic group. There is no evidence that the regime is trying to do so. In short, the Syrian civil war is ugly but it is not clear that international law compels the introduction of U.S. military power, nor is doing so necessarily in American interests.

This is the fundamental question that Kerry and Obama have not answered: how is it in the best interests of the citizens of this country to, at a minimum, spend millions of dollars of taxpayer money by launching

missiles (at very least) into Syria? Why should it be the U.S., rather than Saudi, Turkish, or Qatari military aircraft, doing the dirty work? If the Jordanians, Turks, and Iraqis will not intervene, why should the U.S.?

There is an answer to this question, and the American citizenry will not like it. For many Democrats, especially those like Obama, Kerry, and new U.S. Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power, the U.S. should only use military force *when it is not in our interest*. The U.S. should not fight to protect an ally like Israel, intervene to keep the oil lanes open, or punish our enemies (Afghanistan) because that is a callow expression of self-interest. Instead, according to them, we should only intervene in those spots where we have absolutely no interest, in order to demonstrate our altruism, such as in Kosovo, Rwanda, and now Syria.

Is there a Christian response to all of this? Is there an evangelical Christian response? Evangelicals, of any political stripe, can do some things such as pray for peace, pray for wisdom for all parties involved, pray for President Obama and his advisors, pray against those powers that revel in “killing, stealing, and destroying” human life. Evangelicals simply do not spend enough sustained time asking for divine direction and intervention in cases of calamity abroad. Evangelicals, who typically are politically conservative and emphasize the non-governmental sector, can provide money to those charities (e.g. Samaritan’s Purse, Operation Blessing, and many others) that are trying to meet the basic human survival needs of millions of refugees in the region.

But back to politics: is there a clearly Christian response at the U.S. government-policy level? The only unequivocal affirmative answer to this is that “yes” the U.S. must keep the promises that it has made in international law, such as NATO commitments and implementation of the Genocide Convention. We did not do this when Hitler aggrandized his neighbors in the 1930s nor when the Nazis implemented the Final Solution. But, Syria is not a genocide and none of the immediate neighbors are calling for aid; it seems clear that an attack would more likely be a U.S. violation of international law at this point.

What about interests vs. altruism: does the Syria imbroglio suggest some clearly Christian answer to this point? Is it “less Christian” to work for the commonweal of one’s own country, such as protecting the oil lanes of the Persian Gulf? Is it “more Christian” to send our young men and women in uniform to die in an overseas humanitarian intervention in a place where the U.S. has little experience and no interests? Alternately, should Christians make public pronouncements and parade against the notion of war...would that change anything? Would we answer these questions differently if we were thinking about military action by the Guatemalan or Senegalese military in Syria instead of that of the United States?

Although I think there are thoughtful, Christianity-rooted answers to these questions rooted in the thinking of individuals like Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Niebuhr, Lewis, Bonhoeffer, Ramsey, Elshtain, Tillich, and others, I hope that by asking the question I am provoking the reader to think critically on the issues. In the end, there is one virtue that all Christians embrace that is appropriate to this debate: the modesty to realize that in a fallen world we cannot fix everything.

Western Involvement in Syria: A Pentecostal Perspective

by **Tony Richie**

The topic of Western influence on the situation in Syria is admittedly complicated. Although there are different takes on details, there's little doubt that under President Bahsar al-Assad Syria's human rights violations have been blatantly atrocious. Syria has become increasingly unstable and volatile both in the immediate region, earning suspension from the Arab League and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation, and on the international scene, with severed relations with countries such as Britain, Canada, France, Italy, Germany, Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, the United States, Belgium, Spain, and the Gulf States. Since March 2011, Syria has been embroiled in civil war against Assad and the neo-Ba'athist government. An alternative government was formed by the opposition umbrella group, the Syrian National Coalition, in March 2012. However, opposition forces appear to be at best a mixed bag—good, bad, and plain unknown.

Reportedly, Assad has researched, manufactured, and used weapons of mass destruction. He used chemical weapons on his own citizens, including civilians and including women and children. The rest of the world cannot and must not tolerate such barbarity and cruelty! However, under threat of a US military strike Syria agreed to surrender its WMDs. On September 14, 2013, the United States and Russia announced an agreement allegedly leading to elimination of Syria's chemical weapon stockpiles by mid-2014. Hopefully, progress is being made. Yet Syria doesn't have a good track record on honoring agreements. Ambiguity and uncertainty are perhaps the best descriptive terms for the current situation.

What, then, should be the role of Western nations, for example, of the United States, in such situations? What should Christians, particularly

Pentecostal Christians, hope and pray for? What should we work for? One must beware of simplistic solutions. Nevertheless, consistent application of Pentecostal faith and values can prove helpful in charting a way forward consistent with Christian beliefs and democratic ideals.

Generally speaking, contemporary Pentecostal Christianity arises out of biblical and theological emphases on robust trinitarianism resisting pneumatological subordinationism. Therefore, Pentecostal movements reaffirm the ongoing agency of the Holy Spirit in the operation of charismata, or spiritual gifts of divine grace, rejecting cessationism because it restricts them to ancient history and thereby effectively annuls their continuing relevance. More specifically, Pentecostal affirmation of the life-giving and liberating identity and influence of the divinely sovereign Holy Spirit (Rom 8:2; 2 Co 3:17) invites involvement in Christian witness and activism for life and freedom in every arena of life. That biblical leaders were anointed with the Spirit of the Lord for service (1 Sam 16:13) and that administration or government (1 Co 12:28) is described as spiritual gift encourages applying pneumatological faith and values in civic and political matters. Thus Pentecostal spirituality and theology appropriately inspire attempts to influence civic and/or political decisions and actions toward implementation of foundational values of life and liberty. Pentecostals, with other Christians, have both a right and a responsibility to be salt and light in the world (Matt 5:13-14).

So then, now what? Basically, a military strike doesn't seem like a good idea. Admittedly, the threat of a strike achieved some positive preliminary results; but, there's a clear failure to meet required just war criteria. The moral waters are murky. A dubious strategy of declaring the strike not a war "in the classic sense" is unconvincing. It certainly would involve the use of military force with collateral loss of lives. Would these people be dead "in the classic sense"? Previously, US involvements, covert or overt, in similar situations have had disastrous consequences, especially in the long run. Remember Iran? Iraq? We're still paying for those moves and with more than just money—much more. History demonstrates that

resentment inevitably builds against nations with repeated tendencies to invade others. It is advisable to avoid short term solutions that don't deal with real causes and their contributory factors.

Some serious self-examination is also in order. And that is almost always painful. Human rights concerns behind Western objectives regarding Assad's Syria, primarily driven by the graphic media images of suffering children, taken along with longstanding legalized abortion policies in the US, seem disingenuous at best, hypocritical at worst. Does a country that kills its own unborn have moral authority to call another nation to account for killing its children that happen to be a little older? Neither action is ethically noble. Both are evil. All nations should *consistently* respect and protect the sacredness of all life!

Not surprisingly there has been rampant politicization. It is in the economic interests of the US and the rest of the West to maintain stability in this oil producing region. Syria itself isn't important as a major oil producer but its neighbors are and if the region is destabilized it affects them as well. The regional interests of no one nation, such as the US, should be, either in reality or in perception, the driving impetus for any action.

An ethically and politically applied pneumatology compels us to work for the life and liberty of others, including those suffering from the current Syrian regime and from the fallout of civil war waged by opposition forces. A diplomatic solution is preferable. Economic sanctions and international pressure can be brought to bear. Admittedly, this can be an imperfect and uneven process. However, if the situation in Syria escalates or deteriorates, an international coalition could still be constructed. Military force could be a last resort. If it comes to it, fighting for the life and liberty of fellow human beings is a worthy—and worthwhile—endeavor.

Bottom line: the United States and other Western nations should work, so far as possible, peaceably for the life and liberty of human beings everywhere, including in the East, not as the world's police but as its partners.

Syria, Israel and Scripture: A Messianic Perspective

by Mitch Glaser

My heart breaks for those killed during the Syrian civil war, especially for Syrian Christians who have suffered persecution by fellow Syrians and Muslim fundamentalist soldiers from other countries. Yet what concerns me the most is the possibility that chemical weapons will find their way to the borders of Israel. This is a threat that has caused even more concern than the previous fear that Syria would unleash missiles with chemical warheads upon Israeli cities.

Last May Israeli warplanes struck targets in Lebanon for the stated purpose of shutting down efforts by Syrian forces presumed to be transferring chemical weapons to Hezbollah forces. At the time, an Israeli embassy spokesman in Washington said, “Israel is determined to prevent the transfer of chemical weapons or other game-changing weaponry by the Syrian regime to terrorists, especially to Hezbollah in Lebanon.” Many believe the Assad regime has already moved a large number of their chemical weapons outside of Syria, especially to Hezbollah forces in Lebanon.

If a transfer of some of these weapons to Hezbollah has already taken place, it is possible that these chemical weapons are presently in the hands of Hamas and terrorist forces focused on the destruction of Israel. This is the position of the Israeli and United States governments, and so I believe that this is a real threat.

It is my hope that the resolution of the UN Security Council to restrain Syria will be upheld. I believe that the enforcement itself will be difficult, but if weapons are already in the hands of Israel’s enemies, then it might just be a matter of time before they are used. This concern will keep

Israelis on edge and only increases the hair-trigger threat of terrorism that Israelis live with on a daily basis. I find myself praying for the safety of Israelis who are collecting gas masks for their families and especially for our staff and those we are serving in Israel. I also pray for the elderly Holocaust survivors and Russian Jewish immigrants who cannot easily defend or take care of themselves.

As Bible believers, we cannot help but view current events in light of what we read in the Bible. So what does the Bible say about the future of Damascus? In Isaiah 17:1-3, the prophet writes,

Behold, Damascus will cease from being a city, and it will be a ruinous heap. The cities of Aroer are forsaken; They will be for flocks which lie down, and no one will make them afraid. The fortress also will cease from Ephraim, the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria; they will be as the glory of the children of Israel,” says the Lord of hosts.

The Bible is very clear on the ultimate fate of Damascus. The Hebrew words for *cease* and *ruinous heap* leave us with little doubt that one day Damascus will be destroyed and no longer occupied. Isaiah’s prophecy about the judgment of destruction of Damascus in chapter 17 is eschatological, and yet to be fulfilled. According to Old Testament scholar Walter Kaiser,

Isaiah 17 locates this prophecy “in that day” (17:4, 9), thus a city that has been occupied and served as a capital for all these years is threatened with “no longer being a city” (17:1b) and will be reduced to “a heap of ruins” (17:1c). It will then “be deserted” (17:2a) and a place that is no longer filled with buildings of the city, but a place to pasture flocks and herds! When did this ever happen in history? Even if it is hyperbolic, it surely must point to some major tragedy that is coming. So a major “fortified city will disappear and a royal power from Damascus” (17:3).
[personal correspondence to author]

Well-known author Joel Rosenberg adds,

Isaiah’s prophecy about the judgment of destruction of Damascus in chapter 17 is eschatological, and yet to be fulfilled. Damascus is never in

history utterly destroyed and made uninhabitable. To the contrary, it is one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world. What's more, the book of Isaiah indicates that he received the prophecies concerning the judgment of the Gentile nations, including the judgment of Damascus in chapter 17 after Tiglath-Pileser, (the Assyrian King) conquered Damascus. (2 Kings 16:7-18).¹

I must add that there are also many excellent Bible scholars who believe the prediction in Isaiah 17 refers in one way or another to the destruction of Damascus by the Assyrians in 734 BC. Yet while I believe that the destruction of Damascus by the Assyrians did fulfill previous prophecies, I nonetheless continue to believe it more plausible that the predictions in Isaiah chapter 17 will take place in the future.

All too often we miss the relationship between prayer and prophecy. Even though we know that one day Damascus will be destroyed, we are still called to pray for the salvation of Syrians and for peace in the Middle East. We must continue to pray for those on both sides of the civil war in Syria. We should pray for a cessation of hostilities and for the Gospel to go out among Syrians, including the hundreds of thousands of refugees entering Jordan and other countries. We should pray that the use of chemical weapons will end as we look forward to a day when weapons of war will be turned into instruments of peace and the wolf will lie down with the lamb. In that glorious day, our true King will reign from His rightful throne and His kingdom will be established. In that day we will understand the meaning of peace in a way that we have only understood "through a glass darkly."

The Scriptures tell us in Psalm 122:16 to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem." By praying for peace in the Middle East, we are praying for the salvation of Israelis and Syrians who are suffering as a result of the conflict and heightened tensions.

In Syria, there are now more than 100,000 reported dead resulting from the conflict between the rebels and the Assad regime. Hundreds

1 <http://www.joelrosenberg.com/files/2013/09/STUDY-Damascus-prophecies-R.pdf>

of thousands have been injured, and hundreds of thousands have been detained and disappeared. 4.5 million are internally displaced, and 1.7 million have fled the country as refugees. Even more tragically, UNICEF and Save the Children reported recently that over 2 million children have been brutalized and victimized while women have been the targets of sexual violence and related honor killings. The report stated:

“Crimes against humanity are being perpetrated by government forces and affiliated militias as they carry out widespread attacks against civilian populations through indiscriminate shelling, unlawful killing, torture, enforced disappearance, and sexual violence. They are systematically inflicting sieges against towns perceived as hostile, while populations have been forcibly displaced. Anti-government armed groups have also besieged towns, especially in Aleppo Governorate. They are committing war crimes on an increasing scale, including extra-judicial executions, torture, hostage-taking, and pillage. The violations and abuses committed by anti-government armed groups did not reach the intensity and scale of those committed by Government forces and affiliated militias.”

Responses to Butchery in Syria

A Regional Perspective

Local academic, church and human rights voices have expressed their views about the situation in Syria in a joint statement made available to this journal.

The statement is preceded by a timeline of events. Both are published with permission.

Here is a timeline of Responses to Butchery In Syria prepared by the Jerusalem Center for Genocide Prevention:

March 16, 2011: incoming Secretary of State John Kerry said Assad was a man of his word who had been “very generous with me.” Kerry had met with Assad 5 times between 2009-2011. He added that under Assad; Syria will change as it embraces a legitimate relationship with the United States.” There were no reported deaths at the time.

March 27, 2011: Hilary Clinton states that the US will not enter into conflict with Syria because member of the US Congress from both parties view Assad as a ‘reformer’. At that time there were first reports of deaths.

May 12, 2011: Hilary Clinton condemns Assad. By then the reported death toll was approaching a thousand.

August 18, 2011: Obama, 6 other world leaders call on Assad to resign. US freezes all Syrian assets. By then the death toll had exceeded 2,000.

November 27, 2011: the Arab League approves sanctions against Syria. By then the death toll had surpassed 4,500

January 14, 2012: Russia and China veto UN resolution calling for Assad’s resignation. By then the death toll had exceed 6,000.

February 23, 2012: Kofi Annan is appointed UN-Arab League envoy to Syria. By then the death toll had reached 8,000.

April 14, 2012: UN observer mission to Syria is approved. By then the death toll had reached 10,000.

May 29, 2012: US and eight other countries expel their ambassadors from

Syria. By then the death toll had exceeded 12,000.

July 20, 2012: UN extends the UN Supervision Mission in Syria for another 30 days. By then the death toll had reached 16,000.

August 17, 2012: Lakhdar Brahimi named Special Envoy to Syria after Kofi Annan steps down on August 2nd. By then the death toll had reached an estimated 25,000.

December 23, 2012: Syrian rebels claim that Syrian soldiers are using chemical weapons. By then the death toll had climbed to 50,000.

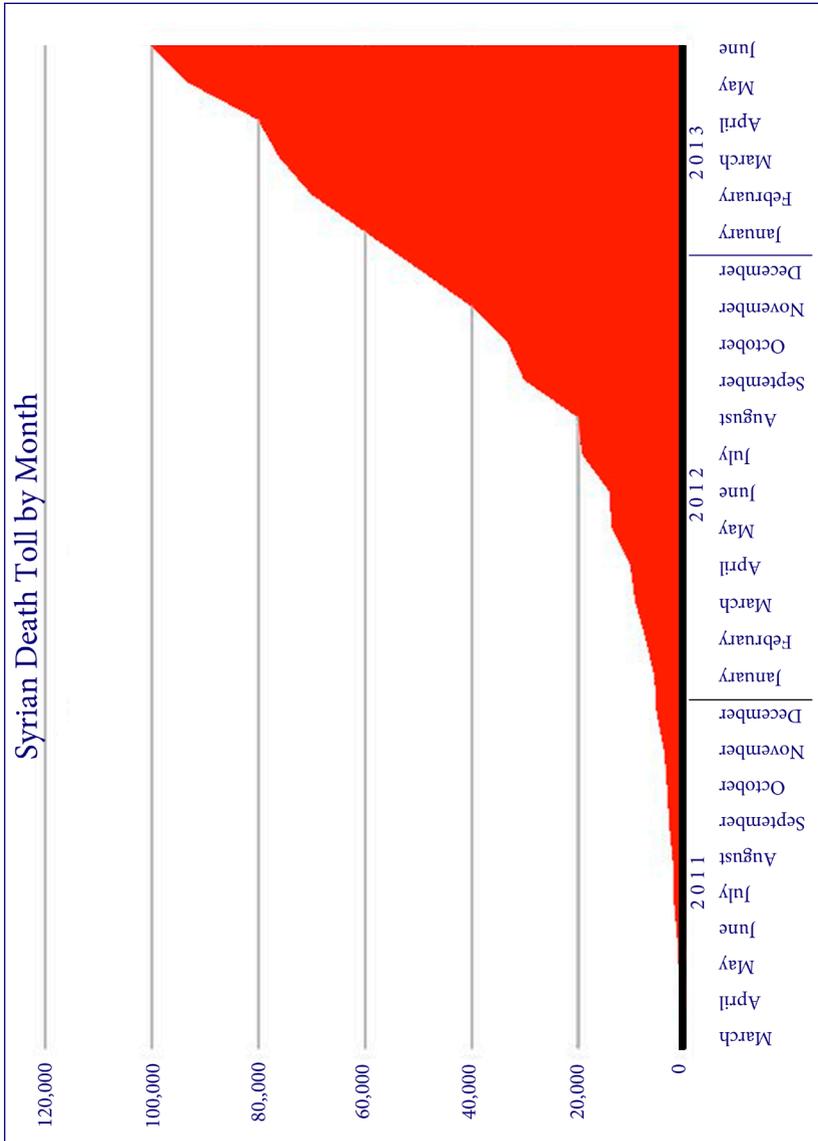
February 28, 2013: US sends roughly \$60 million in aid (food, medicine, water) to Syrian rebels. By then the death toll had reached 65,000.

April 30, 2013: US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel claims chemical weapons were used in Syria. He also states that it is believed that Assad's forces are behind the use of these weapons. By then the death toll had reached 80,000.

May 22, 2013: The US Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted 15-3 for legislation that would send arms to "vetted" moderate members of the Syrian opposition. By then the death toll had reached 90,000.

June 4, 2013: U.N. Panel Reports Increasing Brutality by Both Sides in Syria. By then the death toll had reached 100,000.

This timeline, prepared by the Jerusalem Center for Genocide Prevention, shows the dismal results to all the diplomatic shadowboxing. The timeline of the climbing death tolls provides damaging evidence that the responses, first to Assad's butchery in Syria, and then to both Assad's forces and the rebels, have been exercises in futility. A butcher and his enablers, suppliers and protectors have outsmarted the world.



Prepared by Noah Osher for Jerusalem Center of Genocide Prevention

Here is our response:

We condemn: the mass atrocities, including summary executions, the indiscriminate use of force, the use of chemical weapons, the rapes, kidnappings, beheadings and torture and forced expulsions directed against the Syrian people – all crimes against humanity.

We condemn: the Assad regime that bears the overwhelming responsibility for the death and suffering of so many Syrians and the suppression of their human rights.

We condemn: the continuing persecution, demonization, hostility, expulsions and brutality directed against religious and ethnic minorities – Christians, Druze, Kurds, Alawites, Palestinians, Circassians, Hazaras, Yazidis and Armenians perpetrated especially by jihadists among the rebels.

We condemn: the support that China, Russia, Iran and its proxy, Hezbollah are providing for the murderous activities of the Assad regime. They bear a special responsibility for enabling these crimes against humanity.

We condemn: the passivity of the Western powers, the United States in particular, who are once again acting as bystanders and allowing unspeakable atrocities to continue without a challenge. Their failure to stop the bloodbath in Syria undermines their credibility and authority as the world's powers and risks the danger of wider regional conflicts.

We call upon the international community: to stop the mass atrocities and crimes against humanity, in Syria against civilians, and the assault on human rights, the most basic of which is life itself.

We call upon the major powers: to take whatever actions are necessary to enforce an immediate and permanent cease-fire, (including the use and spread of chemical weapons) to protect vulnerable minorities in keeping with their international responsibilities to “prevent and protect” and the norms of morality and law. A political solution can wait, but the killing, butchery and atrocities must be stopped. So far, declarations and resolutions have accomplished nothing. The major powers must take

responsibility for providing safe havens for threatened minorities.

We call on the international community: to bring all those who have committed war crimes to justice, both from the regime and rebel groups.

We call upon all countries, especially those in the Middle East: to actively assist the Syrian people with humanitarian aid, and to protect vulnerable minorities from persecution and expulsion.

Evil results from human choice and bystander indifference. It is time to stop the drift towards ever more suffering and loss of life.

How many more Syrians will be sacrificed because of western indecisiveness, or for the interests of realpolitik? Hundreds? Thousands? A million?

We call upon all to join this call to action. The nations of the world have a responsibility to “prevent and protect”. The peoples of the world have to hold their governments accountable, now more than ever.

Signed:

*Bassem Eid
Palestine Human Rights Monitoring Group*

*Professor Mohammed S. Dajani-Daoudi
Al Quds University and Founder of Wasatia*

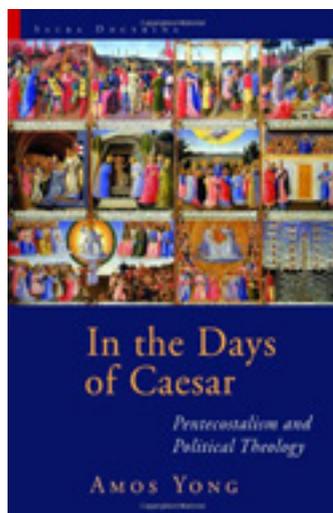
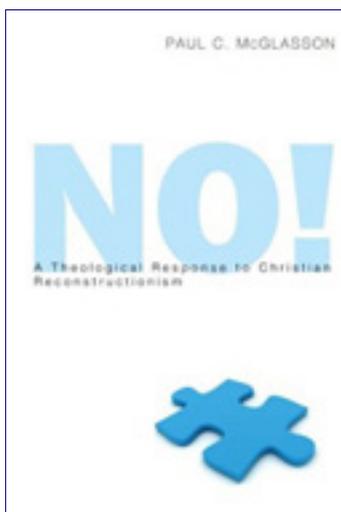
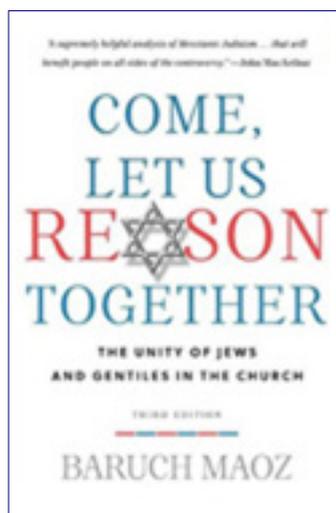
*Uriel Levy
Combat Genocide Association Tel Aviv*

*David Pileggi, Rector
Christ Church Jerusalem*

*Professor Elihu D. Richter MD MPH
Hebrew University-Hadassah and the Jerusalem Center for
Genocide Prevention*

Evangelical Review of Theology and Politics
Reviews





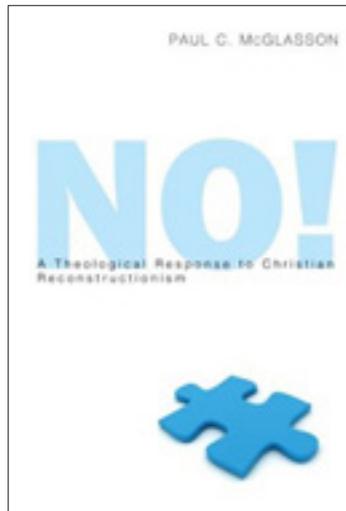
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Book Reviews

Paul C. McGlasson, *No! A Theological Response to Christian Reconstructionism*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012. ix + 134 pgs.

The strange case of Christian Reconstructionism (CR) has been examined in terms of its history and social contexts—especially political campaigns and home schooling. Paul McGlasson has chosen instead to approach the phenomenon as a set of ideas. For readers in search of a concise, objective, but critical account of CR as an ideology, this book fills the bill.

This type of account is needed because CR ideology has grown beyond the confines of its own community to infiltrate the discourse of even the most unsuspecting who, though not formal adherents, find pieces of it convincing. With this in mind, the author insists on his intention to be descriptive while



contending that CR stands far beyond orthodoxy's pale, as represented by the consensus on core issues shared across Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox lines.

The book examines four foundational features of CR, beginning with epistemological dualism. Reconstructionists separate their ideology from culture so as to create an unbridgeable gap. There is no conversation between Christians and "the world," figured in humanism. Drawing on Reformed theologian Cornelius Van Til's *A Christian Theory of Knowledge* as an example, McGlasson shows how Van Til's brand of apologetics allows no neutral ground or common language acting as a bridge between Christianity and humanism. To the contrary, non-Christian discourse is simply deemed "nonsense."

The second locus is the CR contention that Mosaic law is the only legitimate legal program for any nation in the world. All others are falsely predicated on humanism. Citing here R. J. Rushdoony's *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, McGlasson describes how Rushdoony believes that Mosaic law is divided into principles and cases that are to be taken directly from the pages of scripture to modern courts of law. For instance, adulterers, homosexuals, and rebellious children are all to be swiftly executed (preferably by stoning). McGlasson shows how Rushdoony must knock down the interpretive consensus shared across Christianity, figured in a whole series of formidable opponents to this view such as Thomas Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin, all of whom joined Paul in teaching that the law was fulfilled in Christ. Furthermore, these and other theologians have allowed that civil law developed differently from mosaic law and was worthy of Christian obedience. All of these Rushdoony dismisses as "antinomians," by which he means they make a distinction between ancient Israelite jurisprudence and the subsequent developments and legal traditions that naturally developed in their respective nation states. Never mind that "antinomian" was a term coined by Luther to combat those who would absent the law from Christian life!

For the third matter, that of Christian culture, McGlasson summarizes

Francis Schaffer's *A Christian Manifesto*. McGlasson notes that while Schaffer was not a self-avowed Christian Reconstructionist, he was a student of Van Til and promoted the "Christian worldview" notion so integral to CR. First propounded by Abraham Kuyper, Schaffer described "Christian worldview" as a totalizing discourse in which Christianity affords sole access to the truth about every area of human knowledge: art, literature, politics, science, etc. Again, the only other alternative is humanism, which is locked in deadly combat with the Christian "worldview." The cause of this culture war Schaffer lays at the feet of immigration, a diluting force for what he understands to be the salutary effects of "Christian democracy." To him immigrants are, by and large, "non-Christian or insufficiently Christian." The result, according to Schaffer, is government legislation that contradicts biblical law. At such point Christians, armed with Truth and having exhausted all measures of civil disobedience, should be prepared to take up arms against their government in a holy war. Such Christians should take courage from their colonial forebears who battled a secularizing British tyranny, says Schaffer, ignoring the fact that England had a state church from which colonists wished freedom. This and other inconvenient facts of history seldom stand in the way of the arguments made by CR advocates, as McGlasson makes clear in successive examples.

The fourth and final hallmark of CR is the gift of Christian dominion, believed to have been given to Adam (Gen. 1:26), as though God had handed over creation to human beings. Humanity, not God, is given dominion over everything! Those among humanity who know the reconstructivist truth have a *carte blanche* to take over the governance of their nations—and the whole world, eventually—by virtue of this Adamic covenant which McGlasson shows to rest on dubious exegesis at best. This piece of the ideology requires a postmillennialism, in which CR folks take the lead in destroying humanism and constructing the kingdom of God on earth. McGlasson points out the irony that this postmillennialism derives its structure from its late nineteenth century Protestant liberal

predecessor, while reinvesting it with the agenda of “evangelism through law,” or the “plowing up” of current governments and their replacement with “biblical law.” Government in this new dominion will be very small. The poor will be left to fend for themselves or be cared for by families and churches. There will be no public schools. Government’s main job will be to carry out sentences assigned to crimes in the mosaic law.

Having laid out these four areas thoroughly, chapters 5-8 offer rebuttals based on sound scriptural exegesis, ecumenical consensus, the rule of faith referred to by church fathers, and, where necessary, plain logic. By such means McGlasson counters CR with the sturdy reasoning of, for instance, the Reformation’s distinction between law and gospel (trespassed by CR), whereby Christ, not the mosaic law, is at scripture’s heart. Jesus’ mandate was to spread the gospel, not the law. Where CR trades on an unbridgeable, Gnostic-like distinction between Christianity and humanism, McGlasson shows the New Testament’s proclamation of a dividing line not *among* people, but between sinful humanity and Christ on his cross, condemning all so that all might receive mercy. Furthermore, such a dividing line does not exist as an either/or between truth on the one hand and human culture on the other. McGlasson refers to Paul’s tensile, dialectical relationship between faith and culture, where culture does not offer a channel to God, but is not worthless, either (cf. Philippians 4:8). Moreover, the author challenges CR’s “worldview” ideology with a compelling argument using Job and his “comforters” as an illustration. Namely, Job’s friends relied on religious pretense in answering Job’s plight, while God’s whirlwind speech to Job destroyed such pretensions, and with them, all human presumptions to smugly hold the key to all truth. Faith is, finally, not a “worldview,” but a relationship with God in Jesus Christ. Where CR identifies its program with “building” the kingdom of God, McGlasson points out scripture’s insistence that the kingdom can only be received as a gift, never given to humanity as a set of blueprints over which they exercise control.

Readers in search of an even-handed treatment of CR must read

McGlasson. His rebuttals, which he is careful to reserve for the second half of the book, are compelling. These rebuttals also suggest that, while CR may continue to have appeal in some political circles, it has already collapsed under the unsustainable weight of its own claims and goals.

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Stephen R. Holmes (editor), *Public Theology in Cultural Engagement*. Thinking Faith Series. Colorado Springs, CO: Paternoster, 2008. ISBN 1842275429. 196 pp. USD 39.99.

In the extraordinary collection of previously published works, Stephen Holmes edits papers from symposia over the years hosted by The Bible Society to produce a working theology of culture: *Public Theology in Cultural Engagement*. This book provides unique and well crafted arguments that revive the importance of scripture as a public tool in a modern/postmodern environment as well as for engaging various cultural issues.

With a forward and an introduction into the nine chapters, the first chapter is brought by Stephen Holmes: “Can Theology Engage with Culture”? Holmes builds a clear foundation for the Bible as a cultural artifact that is inspired and relevant. In the second chapter, Colin J.D. Green’s



“Christology, Redemption and Culture” analyzes how Christ is unveiled in each of the gospels, given the audience and theological differences. He aims at providing a Christo-centric understanding of culture that “can once again glorify the triune God” (47). In the third chapter, Robert Jensen illustrates a clever approach to “Election and Culture: from Babylon to Jerusalem” by engaging with God’s election of the Jews that “opened” to the Gentiles with Christ’s crucifixion, death, and resurrection, and how the Spirit calls cultures to Him in order to make all things new. More importantly, Jensen reminds readers that structure and discipleship were integral aspects of the catechesis that assisted new converts with the development and survival of the church during patristic times; the contemporary church seems to have forgotten the importance of this. In the fourth chapter, Stephen Holmes returns to offer “Torah, Christ and Culture,” which argues for different “themes for a theological account that grow[s] out of this recognition that Torah is a cultural description” (78). In the fifth chapter, Colin Gunton brings “Reformation Accounts of the Church’s Response to Human Culture” by recalling the philosophical movements that sparked Reformers to reconsider the church’s stance on the natural sciences as well as the Enlightenment. Gunton suggests that an ecclesiology would do well to re-imagine a Christological Pneumatology that highlights cultural redemption instead of cultural restraint.

The next section of the book shifts to engage with cultural issues. In the sixth chapter, Luke Bretherton addresses “Consuming the Body: Contemporary Patterns of Drug Use and Theological Anthropology”; it elaborates on how drug use promotes a modern, consumer driven lifestyle that can do more harm than good. More importantly, there is recognition that an oppressed body can be redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. In the seventh chapter, Colin J.D. Greene shares “Culture and the End of Religion,” specifically that the scarcity of religion is due to the “ideological critique of religion” that has questioned the significance and reliability of religion altogether (132). In short, the Church’s lack of engagement with the

natural sciences during the Enlightenment has put the Church behind, intellectually. In the eighth chapter, Brian Horne offers “The Legacy of Romanticism: Not Confusing Art and Religion.” Horne suggests that art and religion have had such an intertwining, romantic, history that art can become a means of expressing faith, and thereby hints at the role aesthetics may have in drawing people to the faith. In the final chapter, Luke Bretherton returns to present “Valuing the Nation: Nationalism and Cosmopolitanism in Theological Perspective,” engaging with ‘nations’ as a biblical term versus an ideology that surpasses or becomes equal with God. Bretherton argues for a theological understanding of ‘nation’ in addition to a “theological affirmation of the socio-cultural and political reality that is ‘the nation’” (172).

One of the most beneficial aspects of this collection of essays is that it encourages people to become self-critical in a constructive way that challenges presuppositions of culture, scripture, and the proper application of both. Additionally, the first chapter of this collection really sets a positive tone for reimagining culture theologically; it highlights the reality that Christ’s work on the cross still redeems, offering hope to more than just lost souls; it offers hope of a better creation, world, country, state, and city. It acknowledges that God still calls out unto creation for its redemption so the Triune God can be glorified. A final benefit of this material is that it openly acknowledges the Church’s historical lack of intellectual engagement. It does recognize that historically the church has not responded at times the way she should, struggling to be taken seriously with the other sciences. However, acknowledging this is the first of many steps to change the intellectual perception of the Church so that she may mature in her public discourse.

I would add a critique to this already good collection: it could have used a stronger dose of interdisciplinary studies, especially in the areas of sociology and psychology. Yet, the editor did note that the material was deliberately theological in nature more than anything else, and thus the contributors in the volume had refrained from overstepping

discipline boundaries. While I recognize the editor's point of view, the advantages of interdisciplinary discourses outweighs a single disciplinary project. Whether a project is secular or sacred, single disciplinary or interdisciplinary, it will have theological implications, and the church will need to wrestle with these trajectories sooner or later. Nonetheless, the compilation still serves as a good apology for a theological understanding of culture.

Overall, *Public Theology in Cultural Engagement* would be a great contribution for seminaries, given its attention to re-imagining scripture in a postmodern society and its response as to how the bible remains culturally relevant in a growing and diverse world.

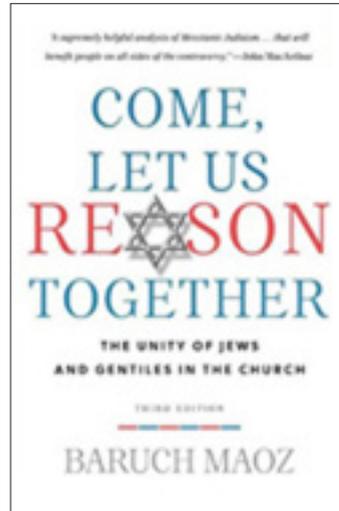
*Ashley Staggs-Kay, M.A. (Government)
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Baruch Maoz, *Come Let Us Reason: The Unity of Jews and Gentiles in the Church*. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012. 256 pp., paperback \$19.99 ISBN 978-1-59638-406-4

This is the third edition of *Judaism Is Not Jewish: A Friendly Critique of the Messianic Movement* (2003), yet retains the title from the second edition published in 2009. While each subsequent edition is essentially the same as the original work, this third edition contains new material in the Appendix that bolsters Maoz's argument. As a longtime Jewish believer in Jesus, the author is not opposing the retention of Jewish national and cultural identity. What he questions is the legitimacy of Jewish believers in Jesus who attempt to syncretise rabbinic tradition with Christianity for a purported goal of evangelising non-believing Jews. Thus, his current appraisal of the Messianic Movement (MM) is divided into two parts: Part One a theological assessment and Part Two a practical assessment.

For Maoz, any evaluation of the MM must be measured according

to the sole authority of Scripture—both the Old and New Testaments. Therefore, perceived human needs or social theories, though being admitted, must be subservient to Scripture (29). Chapter One opens the theological assessment asking: “Should We Preach the Gospel to the Jewish People?” Adoption of Jewish customs—particularly, rabbinic Judaism that utterly rejects Jesus as Messiah—commonly results in the Gospel being subsumed by Jewishness (42-44), therefore a brief exposition on the



book of Galatians is used to demonstrate that the Gospel is not a cultural issue (44-54). Consequently, this challenges all Christians (especially Messianics) that their goal should be to proclaim the Gospel to Jews and not be distracted by “busying ourselves with Jewishness” (55). Maoz acknowledges that there is no reason for Jewish believers in Jesus to reject their national identity (63). The issue raised is why and where Jewish customs are to be practiced, rather than adopted. The author is resolute that true religious identity for Messianics must be ‘Christian’ rather than present-day Judaism, which is defined by rabbinism that rejects Messiah Jesus. Thus, the caveat is issued that “national identity” must never be confused with “religious identity” (63).

Chapter Two addresses the Mosaic Covenant and surveys significant biblical texts in order to address perceived errors within the MM that often seem to place Jewishness at the centre rather than Jesus himself. Philippians reflects the surpassing value of knowing Christ (Phil 3:8) rather than being occupied with Jewishness (73). This leads to a discussion of Hebrews and its description of Christ’s superiority (75-83). The result is a sobering refutation of Messianic Jewish writers such as Mark Kinzer,

Dan Juster and David Stern who adhere to obligatory Torah observance (87-92). Consequently, Maoz reviews the book of Ephesians to enhance his argument against obligatory Torah observance. Thus the emphasis is made regarding how Jews and non-Jews become one new man—no longer separated by the Law, but are united by a common faith in Messiah Jesus (cf. Eph 2:11-22). The chapter culminates with an exposition of Colossians and Acts for the purpose of clarifying that spiritual perfection finds no advantage in keeping the Law, but in Christ alone. War is not being waged against Jewish traditions per se as long as those customs are not regarded in any manner as a pathway to spiritual advantage; for any form of “Law-keeping is not a means to spiritual progress; it is a retrograde” (110-11).

Rabbinic customs are the focus of Chapter Three. Maoz argues against the ability of the MM to co-exist with rabbinic Judaism as he questions an apparent pick-and-choose affectation with rabbinism among Messianic believers. Consequently, Maoz disputes practices such as Messianic Jews wearing kippas (head coverings), which he believes deviates from the biblical prohibition of 1 Corinthians 11:4 (123). In Chapter Four, Maoz returns to a discussion of the book of Ephesians in order to highlight that God has saved both Jews and non-Jews for the purpose of making them into one new man by one common work of grace through Messiah Jesus. Maoz believes this ‘new man’ requires a congregation not void of cultural nuance; nevertheless such a congregation should never impose cultural forms as being either spiritually binding or advantageous to worshipers (165). Chapter Five concludes Part One by addressing how to make Jewish Christians more comfortable within contemporary Christian churches that are increasingly characterised by pervasive ‘individual divisiveness’. Growing individualism commonly results in churches segmenting worshipers according to language, culture, or age groups, which comfortably avoids the challenges of multicultural, multi-layered church dynamic. Maoz’s solution: multicultural churches that incorporate “inner- and intra-congregational fellowships” (170).

Section Two (practical assessment) opens with and is singularly comprised of the final section, Chapter Six. The author proposes that the MM has not been effective in reaching non-believing Jews because of a misplaced emphasis on Jewishness (179). Citing data from other Messianic Jewish writers, the implication is that only a small, single-digit percentage of Jews has come to faith in Yeshua by Messianic congregational evangelistic efforts. In a stinging analysis, Maoz believes the MM will fail unless it quickly eradicates the tendency towards cultural pride that supplants Messiah Jesus (191-193). Following this final chapter are four appendices: Appendix A is an unedited, protagonist letter from a Gentile Christian involved in the MM. Appendix B is a brief, but helpful historical review of the MM's development—information that could be quite helpful at the beginning rather than at the end of the book. Appendix C offers new material not found in the original work. A reprinted article from the 1911 *Scattered Nation* by David Baron is a disparaging analysis of motivations, assumptions and arguments that found expression in a Movement that led to the formation of the contemporary MM. Needless to say, Baron's negative appraisal implicitly strengthens Maoz's critique of the MM. Lastly, Appendix D closes the book regarding those who attempt to justify Judaism, which Maoz contends is due to a lack of understanding regarding "the relationship between justification and sanctification" (227). This third edition closes with a sobering warning: "Brethren, do not buy into a romantic view of Judaism" (228) because contemporary Judaism is asserted to miss the mark of grace. Maoz's assessment is that the MM is misguided and doomed to ultimate failure for attempting to co-exist with rabbinism (i.e., Judaism).

There had been the anticipation of substantial, additional information in this third edition, but apart from the new material in Appendix C, the overall content essentially parallels the original work. This edition contains fewer chapter breaks; consequently, each chapter is notably longer and inclusive of numerous subtopic, which results in the index being somewhat lean and too general. For this reason, the first edition's

overall structure of shorter chapters (and more detailed index) is preferred, which makes it easier for the reader to stop and contemplate Maoz's systematic and theologically reflective style.

Maoz's perspective is an important contribution for anyone interested in the MM. Engaging not simply one or two opposing writers, sufficient evidence is provided that indicates tendencies by some in the MM who espouse various forms of legalism and replace grace with works. The overall message of the book is a purposeful effort to diminish any focus on 'Jewishness' having spiritual advantage for either Jews or non-Jews. For those who are looking for the author to demonstrate some type of organising principle, programme or structure, this is not Moaz's goal. His aim is to issue a caveat against anything that would surreptitiously replace the superiority of Christ Jesus. Whilst he provides a critical appraisal of Judaism, Maoz expresses a compassionate concern towards those within the MM although challenging key Messianic theologies and praxis. Maoz proffers a position that is diametrically opposed to those such as Mark S. Kinzer (*Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism, 2005*) and others who believe that Torah observance does provide some basis of spiritual advantage to believers in Messiah Jesus. Thus, this third edition should be included in the resources for anyone who desires a more balanced perspective regarding the complex issues facing the Messianic Movement.

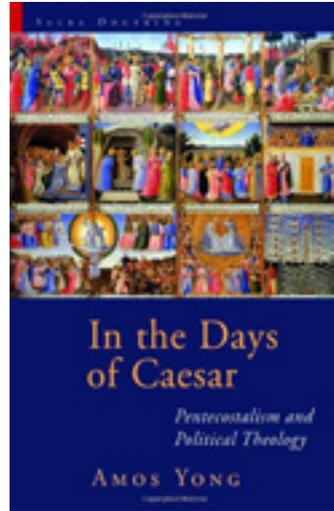
Brian N. Brewer

Amos Yong, *In The Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2010. pb. xx+377. ISBN 978-0-8028-6406-2. \$30

Every once in a while a book comes along which is truly pioneering and ground-breaking. Amos Yong's *In the Days of Caesar: Pentecostalism and Political Theology* is such a book, both in terms of its contribution to cementing the study of the movement within the theological academy, and providing the first systematic engagement with political theology emanating from within Pentecostalism itself.

Classical Pentecostalism is a popular religious movement that emerged during the early twentieth century and associated with the masses. Often embraced by the poor or those with a basic educational background, this popular movement has traditionally eschewed theological inquiry in favour of being led by the Spirit. For its part (and with important exceptions) until relatively recently the theological academy has tended to reciprocate, often dismissing Pentecostalism as shallow, lacking theological depth and sophistication, and generally rejecting it as a significant determinant of political behaviour.

In recent years, however, the academic study of the movement has emerged as an important and established sub-discipline of theology, known as Pentecostal Studies (also Renewalist Studies). In a short journal article Yong has traced the rise of Pentecostal Studies,¹ while elsewhere



1 Amos Yong, "Pentecostalism and the Theological Academy" in *Theology Today* (2007) 64, 244-50.

I discuss how Pentecostalism's social and political impacts attracted the attention of other disciplines, particularly sociologists and political scientists, contributing to the rise of Pentecostal Studies.² No longer is Pentecostalism regarded as an insignificant or unsophisticated expression of Christianity, with a burgeoning Pentecostal intelligentsia (as well as non-Pentecostal scholars) producing an explosion of academic studies exploring the global history, thought, and social and political impact of their movement.

Critics of Pentecostalism have tended to label the movement apolitical (sometimes code for not espousing the right kind of politics), reactionary or politically conservative (particularly on moral issues), or politically quiescent. Other stereotypes include bunching Pentecostals with Dispensationalists and their worldview, or that Pentecostal otherworldliness contributes to a disinterest in the here and now. Yet the explosion of Pentecostal Studies in the last two or three decades has challenged such stereotypes, demonstrating how Pentecostalism is far from homogenous, theologically or indeed politically.

Yong, a talented theologian and leading figure within this new Pentecostal academic elite, synthesises these various disparate pieces of research in *In the Days of Caesar* to explore and weave a sophisticated and nuanced Pentecostal political theology from the perspective of an insider-participant. Moreover, his position within the Pentecostal academy, together with his life-long focus on highlighting and exploring a global rather than Western-centric expression of Pentecostalism, allows him to bring considerable knowledge, understanding and authority to the task.

Originally delivered as the Cadbury Lectures, University of Birmingham (United Kingdom), the book is divided into two parts. The first sets the stage by offering readers context and insight into Pentecostalism and their engagement with politics, surveying the movement's disparate

2 "Latin American Pentecostalism and the Academy" in Calvin L. Smith, *Pentecostal Power: Expressions, Impact and Faith of Latin American Pentecostalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

experiences, shattering stereotypes and calling for a distinctively Pentecostal trajectory and methodology for engagement with the political sphere. Part 2 explores ways forward for a Pentecostal approach to politics specifically based on Pentecostal theology, rather than Pentecostals having to adopt a non-Pentecostal political theology framework. In short, Yong's aim is to encourage Pentecostal scholars to engage with the political world on their own terms, as equals, encouraging them to build a distinctively Pentecostal political manifesto of sorts, rather than engaging with political theology through a borrowed, non-Pentecostal political theological framework around which Pentecostals and their theology must adapt. In the process Yong covers issues such as political theory, political and economic structures, culture, civil society, prosperity, and so on, all within the context of Pentecostal theology. Importantly Yong's approach is global in nature, drawing on disparate Pentecostal experiences and situations to make his case.

This book is important not only because it helps cement Pentecostal Studies firmly within the discipline of theology as an academic subject in its own right, but also because it encourages a current generation of Pentecostal scholars to engage with the political sphere on their own terms. Arguably, however, there is also a sense in which Yong (and other Pentecostal scholars), in their pioneering Pentecostal academic research, are becoming increasingly distanced from the movement's grassroots. This is not a criticism of Yong as such (there are always tensions between grassroots and elites), yet the gulf between Pentecostal elites and grassroots is inexorably widening as a generation of Pentecostal Studies scholars, keen to be accepted by and engage with the wider academy as equals have, in some cases pushed the boundaries, leading to widely publicised tensions with grassroots Pentecostals of late over several issues. Inevitably, the more Pentecostal Studies aligns itself with the academy rather than a confessional anchor point, the more this will become a problem, particularly given the movement's theological and political heterogeneity.

Ironically, perhaps this is a way in which Yong's book can help

overcome such tensions. Rather than speaking of a distinctive Pentecostal political theology it might be more appropriate to speak of Pentecostal political theologies. In this regard Yong offers a useful framework, a manual, to encourage and equip Pentecostals from across the political spectrum to construct their own Pentecostal political theologies. That *In the Days of Caesar* has generated considerable discussion and debate within the Pentecostal Academy suggests it is well on the way to achieving that aim, while its reception across wider academic circles is evidence that Pentecostal Studies is being taken more seriously than ever. Yong's book is a must-read for anyone undertaking research into Pentecostalism, regardless of angle or discipline.

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