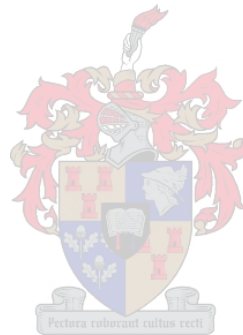


SPIRITUALITY UNDER GENTILE CAPTIVITY

David J. Bosch's Missionary Ecclesiology
as a Guide for Spirituality

Dylon Nofziger



**Assignment presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Divinity at the University of Stellenbosch.**

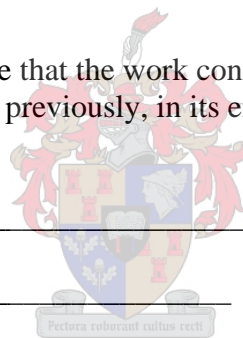
**Supervisor: Dr. Robert Vosloo
December 2006**

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment is my own original work and that I have not previously, in its entirety or in part, submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature; _____

Date; _____



ABSTRACT

English

Spirituality has become a shibboleth in today's society, both within and outside of Christianity. In uncovering an ecclesiological grounding for spirituality, we can come to a better understanding of it, gaining helpful insight into the vast field of spirituality. I attempt to do so by using David J. Bosch's missionary ecclesiology as a point of departure for spirituality on a conceptual level, as well as considering some of the implications of spirituality in our current Western culture.

Afrikaans

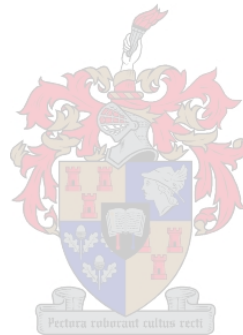
In hierdie mini-tesis word daar gepoog om gebruik te maak van David J. Bosch se missionêre ekklesiologie, as orientasie en 'n begin punt vir spritualiteit. Die implikasies, ten opsigte van ons huidige situasie in die Westerse kultuur, word vervolgens ook ondersoek.



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Preface

This work is instigated by two primary and closely related impetuses. The first is aptly conveyed by Thomas Keating, one of the great Christian spiritual writers of recent history. He speaks to a young man who is on his way to a Buddhist monastery. Keating stops the man and asks what he is doing and why he is not pursuing a path of spirituality within his own Christian tradition, to which the young man replies: “You mean Christianity has a *path*?!”¹ Keating is only one of several influential figures who fervently believe that Christianity is not diametrically opposed to (although perhaps mislabelled, and variously misunderstood) ‘meditation’.²

The second profound influence has been the recent monastic movement in North America. The phenomenon of young Protestants of various denominations who are embracing some form of monastic/communal life is unprecedented in North America. I consider myself also influenced by this movement, and yet hold a profound affinity to my Mennonite and Reformed heritage. And so it is primarily for the sake of these fellow pilgrims that I write; people who have become discontent with Christianity as a “religious thing” that one does on Sunday, for people who are joining and beginning new movements with the fervent conviction that Jesus is Lord in the face of the Western Empire, for people who believe that to love one’s enemies is indeed a better alternative than hate, for those who are convinced that spirituality is indeed something that is at home in our lives as we follow behind our Rabbi, a people who have come to see that following Christ is indeed a call to *life* in all its fullness.³

I have had a strong interest in both missional ecclesiology and spirituality for some time. It seems only fitting for me to consider the missional work of David Bosch as an entry point into a discussion on spirituality. First, I am attracted to Bosch’s writings on ecclesiology (he was a Reformed thinker who was also significantly influenced by the Anabaptist tradition); including his striking insight into the church and his rich understanding of mission. Secondly, studying in South Africa has provided the ideal

¹ Cynthia Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*. (Cambridge: Cowley, 2004), 56.

² It is not my point to critique concepts such as contemplation or meditation. For a good introduction to these concepts in a Christian perspective see Bourgeault, *Centering Prayer*.

³ Three brilliant examples of this (all which look very different) that I have encountered are the lives of Jean Vanier and L’arche (also Henri J.M Nouwen), Shane Claiborne and The Simple Way and Mother Teresa and the Sisters of Charity. Shane Claiborne, *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), Kathryn Spink, *The Miracle, The Message, The Story: Jean Vanier and l’Arche*. (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2006) and Malcom Muggeridge, *Something Beautiful for God: The Classic Account of Mother Teresa’s Journey into Compassion*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971).

context for me in which to write and reflect on Bosch. And this brings me to my third point, which is closely related to the first two: Bosch lived in the era of apartheid, a time in South Africa's history where racial, religious, economic and cultural differences caused so much hatred and distrust. It is in this context that Bosch's thought on the radical nature of the church was formed and nurtured; his critique of apartheid emphasized the centrality of ecclesiology.⁴ These three points encourage me to ask, with potentially exemplary implications, what the connections are between the church and spirituality.

Bosch himself gave a series of lectures for the Mennonite Missionary Study Fellowship in 1978 on the theme "A Spirituality of the Road", which was published as a book the following year.⁵ This book will serve as an important resource for this work. However, whereas Bosch focuses primarily on the life of Paul especially in 2 Corinthians, I will seek a broader basis for spirituality which I will draw from Bosch's understanding of the church. As an all-pervasive theme in his work, Bosch seemed to understand the integral connection between ecclesiology and spirituality which are directly related to experiencing and participation in God's kingdom.



⁴ J. Kevin Livingston, *A Missiology of the Road: The Theology of Missions and Evangelism in the writings of David J. Bosch*. (Boston Spa, West Yorkshire: British Library Document Supply Centre, 1989),14.

⁵ David J. Bosch, *A Spirituality of the Road*. (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1979).

Introduction

The Church's own spiritual inadequacy and accompanying uncertainty about the foundation, aim and method of her calling in the world [has] had a paralysing effect on her involvement.⁶

The connection between ecclesiology and spirituality may not be self-evident. My argument is that ecclesiology which does not give attention spirituality is misdirected, just as spirituality disconnected from ecclesiology becomes esoteric. In this work I seek to extrapolate the implications of spirituality for the Protestant church and vice versa. I have decided to take David Bosch, a late South African missiologist, as my entry point into this discussion.

The first chapter will provide an orientation with key concepts and terms, providing a framework from which I can move towards a better understanding of the relationship between spirituality and ecclesiology. The second chapter will survey David Bosch's missionary ecclesiology which will become our point of departure for the rest of the work. In the third chapter I will consider spirituality in the light of this ecclesiology. The fourth chapter will deal more explicitly with the condition and reality of the Protestant church as it exists in Western culture. The fifth chapter will draw together implications for spirituality as we move forward into a new paradigm.

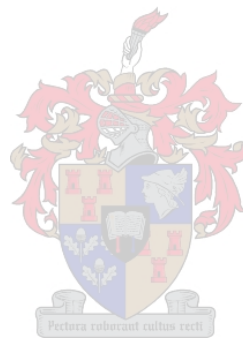
Because of the divisive potential when dealing with topics such as ecclesiology and spirituality, it should be highlighted that Bosch was deeply ecumenical in his thought and practice. In much of his life, he found himself within the Western Protestant church which inevitably shaped his emphasis and interest.⁷ With this involvement he upheld a deep concern to engage and critique theological reflection and practise which has been primarily a Western affair in lieu of his missional work. Himself a cross-cultural missionary for several years, Bosch recognized the danger of excluding "the voiceless"—those who have not been equipped with the tools deemed necessary to enter into meaningful dialogue and reflection. Ecclesiology and spirituality must take into account various experiences and particular situations.

However, it requires further clarification as to my purposes as well as biases. My research is not primarily to analyze spirituality for the purpose of increasing knowledge to the field of spirituality, nor is it primarily for personal spiritual growth. While I

⁶ David J. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 90.

⁷ Livingston, J. Kevin. *A Missiology of the Road: The Theology of Missions and Evangelism in the Writings of David J. Bosch*. (Boston Spa, West Yorkshire: British Library Document Supply Centre, 1989), 55-77.

acknowledge that such factors do have a bearing on this work, my primary purpose is to critically look at the project of spirituality. In doing so I will approach the field of spirituality from a particular ecclesiology in order to determine what spirituality has, and does not have, to offer to congregations and to members who share a common (yet broad) ecclesiology, namely current Western Protestant churches. It is of importance that the non-Western church is experiencing growth in unprecedented ways.⁸ And we see that the church in the West is, in many ways, struggling to even maintain itself. So it is to this aspect of the church that my work is directed: in a concrete way, it is a reflection on mission *within* the West.



⁸ For an excellent primer in this development, see Phillip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. (Oxford: Oxford University, 2002).

Chapter 1

Ecclesiology and Spirituality: Finding Some Bearings

An Orientation to Ecclesiology

The basic question which gets to the heart of ecclesiology is ‘what is the church?’ Throughout history, different conceptions of what the church is have appeared. Differing conceptions of the church do not necessarily negate others, nor are they necessarily mutually exclusive. Instead, it is often the case that the pronunciation, articulation and the use of metaphors to demarcate the church effectually highlight one dimension—or emphasize one ‘syllable’—of ecclesiology, which increase the divisions within the church.

Depicted slightly different, ecclesiology refers to the study of the church—it seeks to delineate that which constitutes the church. However, it is not the case of simply stating all the different aspects of the church. In fact, explicit reflection upon the church has been necessitated by conflict. This is because the church has always been confronted with division: in the early church, there were heretics who were denounced as making false claims about God and thus threatening to divide the church.⁹ In the same way, today, churches everywhere are struggling to remain faithful to the gospel and sometimes, in the process, denounce the views of other Christians.¹⁰

With regards to this divisive tendency, individualism has surfaced as an important influence on ecclesiology plaguing the Western world and permeating through the entirety of society. Insofar as the church recognizes the individualistic approach toward reality which Christians have adopted, the importance of ecumenism¹¹ is heightened. However, that the residue of individualism lingers at large means we can no longer conceive of the church without addressing the individual. In doing so, it becomes evident

⁹ See, for example, the controversy between Arius and Athanasius as they struggled to understand if God existed without a Son. Arius could not conceive of God having any need; thus Jesus must have been *created* at some point. Athanasius, who suffered much under this heresy, began with God’s revelation in Jesus and essentially said that God *needs* a son because God *has* a son. Thus Athanasius did not start with an abstract understanding of God (as Arius had done) and attempt to make sense of Jesus in that framework, but rather he took as his point of departure Jesus as the fullest revelation of God—upholding the claim that Jesus *is* God. C.f. Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy & Tradition*. Revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 95-116.

¹⁰ See for example the Belgic confession (1561): articles 18, 34 36, which are still adhered to by many Reformed churches today.

¹¹ “Ecumenism” has become in itself an important topic in ecclesiology arising particularly out of the missionary movement. For further discussion see J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church*. (London: SCM Press, 1953), esp 18-23.

that in fact the biblical story presents that same imperative of viewing the individual within the greater narrative of scripture.¹² Furthermore, with the growing church outside of the West,¹³ we cannot but keep this tension of the individual and the community in constant reflection.

In light of such difficulties there are vital questions which quickly arise when probing the nature of the church concerning: holiness and the church, the ‘true’ church as visible or invisible and so forth as well as the place of various theological themes in ecclesiology (such as eschatology, Trinitarian theology, covenant, baptism, the Eucharist, etc.) These are important questions theologically because the logic which is employed on a theological level has direct implications on the practical level of the church’s existence.

As alluded to previously, the study of ecclesiology has been incited especially because of divisions within the church. Publishing an ecclesologically important book *Models of the Church* in 1974, Avery Dulles speaks of the church as understood in five different ways: as institution, as mystical communion, as sacrament, as herald, and as servant. In 1987, Dulles published a second edition of this book, in which he added a sixth and important model of the church, which he called the ‘community of disciples’.¹⁴

Dulles’s work is informative for me, and serves as a sort of backdrop of ecclesiology as an academic discipline. And with Dulles, I struggle with the idea of attempting a normative definition of the church which is impressed upon all Christians. It is my conviction that if we take seriously the mystery of Christ and the church (Eph 5:32), then we must approach ecclesiology with a stance of humility and patience. Part of the problem with putting a concrete definition to the church is because definitions seek distinctions. As Dulles notes, “The classical way to define a thing is to put it into a category of familiar objects and then list the distinguishing characteristics that differentiate it from other members of the same category.”¹⁵ This immediately poses threats to the unity of the church, whose nature is to be one, just as Christ and the Father are one (John 17:21). But secondly, as a definition of the church is sought, the danger

¹² Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004) esp. p. 35-45.

¹³ See David J. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 5.

¹⁴ Avery Dulles, S.J., *Models of the Church: A Critical Assessment of the Church in All Its Aspects*. 2nd ed. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 1987).

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 15.

exists that the church becomes constrained by the confines of the language and metaphors which we employ, and thereby estranged from the realities of life.¹⁶

Furthermore, the Bible never places orthodoxy (right belief) above orthopraxis (right practice). Put differently, our ecclesiological constructs cannot take priority over the actual life of the church. However, theological reflection *does* hold a place and I want to acknowledge that very concretely in this study. Bosch's warning is quite apt here: "It is... essential to emphasise that the Church cannot expect theology to produce results which, according to its very nature and being, it cannot produce."¹⁷ Within the dialogue between ecclesiology and spirituality, I strive to maintain a theological lushness which acknowledges the difficulty of these topics and does not 'flatten out' the issues in order to make a point.

At this point, it is necessary to pause momentarily in order to comment on the origin of church. What is the interplay between pneumatology and ecclesiology, the Spirit and the church? This question is not unimportant and, in fact, becomes very instructive throughout this particular work as I seek to look at spirituality via ecclesiology. From the Christian creeds throughout the ages (a topic to which I will return in chapter 3 of this study), one notes that the church is typically referred to in direct subsequence to reference of the Holy Spirit. Thus, "The Church cannot be grasped apart from the Holy Spirit, and can only be grasped as the work of the Holy Spirit.... Only after Pentecost... may we speak about a 'Church'."¹⁸ The point is not to unfold the origins of the church, but rather to emphasize that Christology cannot be viewed as separate from

¹⁶ One scenario which exemplifies this point, as various feminist theologians have pointed out, is that with the language and images we use in referring to and addressing God there is a real danger that these metaphors bring with them detrimental associations. Elizabeth Johnson notes: "To even the casual observer it is obvious that the Christian community ordinarily speaks about God on the model of the ruling male human being. Both the images that are used and the concepts accompanying them reflect the experience of men in charge within a patriarchal system. The difficulty does not lie in the fact that male metaphors are used, for men too are made in the image of God and may suitably serve as finite beginning points for reference to God. Rather, the problem consists in the fact that these male terms are used exclusively, literally, and patriarchally." Elizabeth A. Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 33. On this point, when referring to God in this work, I chose to hold to the biblical precedent in using 'masculine' personal pronouns--not implying that God is male (for God is neither male nor female) but rather using language metaphorically. With awareness of the recent movement to use gender neutral language for God, I choose to employ such terminology on the basis of: 1) the biblical precedent (especially in that Jesus prays to his "Father"), and 2) it is the language that Bosch employs. For further discussion here, see Shirley C. Guthrie, *Christian Doctrine*, rev. ed. (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 73-76 and also David J. Bosch, *The Lord's Prayer: Paradigm for a Christian lifestyle*. (Pretoria: Christian Medical Fellowship, 1985), 9-11.

¹⁷ Bosch, *Witness*. 23.

¹⁸ Miguel M. Garijo-Guembe, *Communion of the Saints: Foundation, Nature and Structure of the Church*. Translated by Patrick Madigan, S.J. (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 2. See further, Michael Welker, *God the Spirit*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 228-239.

pneumatology, nor can ecclesiology be understood as separate from Christology or pneumatology. On the issue of the source of the church, Kärkkäinen notes an early ecclesiological difference between Ignatius of Antioch and Irenaeus. Ignatius suggested that “Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the universal church.” Irenaeus, on the other hand, said that “Wherever the Spirit of God is, there is the church, and all grace.”¹⁹

The Orthodox Church understands this derivation not from only Christ or the Spirit, but rather in a tension which is depicted by Garijo-Guembe as an analogy of Christ’s incarnation as well as a continuation of Pentecost.²⁰ And since it is impossible to aptly speak about one person of the Trinity completely in isolation from the others, it would be fitting to consider not only the Son and the Spirit, but also the Creator. Suffice it to state here that the church is not founded upon itself—if it is to be viewed as an academic discipline, it can *only* be a sub-discipline since its existence is derived from God’s existence. On the flip side, the Triune God cannot be understood apart from the church which Christ has established. Thus ecclesiology is a *necessary* area of study and provides, in my estimation, the best point of entry into a biblical understanding of spirituality.

In lieu of this discussion is necessary to state that the sheer volume of images in the Bible which depict the church is evidence that effort must be given, albeit carefully, to seek an understanding the church. As I proceed, I will attempt to keep in mind Jesus’ words: “You are the light of the world.... let your light shine before others” (Mt 5:14ff.²¹); light which is not restrictive or limiting, but rather the light which exposes impurity and beckons us on into truth.

Finally, lest the difficulties of ecclesiology disinterest us, we do well to learn from the attitude of Mother Teresa toward the church which displays a humble stance, acknowledging God’s sovereignty:

...the Church [is] something she belongs to, serves and obeys as revealing and fulfilling God’s purposes on earth. The various controversies and conflicts now shaking the Church scarcely touch her; they will pass, she says, and the Church will remain to perform its divinely inspired and directed function.²²

The Spectrum of Ecclesiology

¹⁹ Quoted in Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Toward a Pneumatological Theology: Pentecostal and Ecumenical Perspectives on Ecclesiology, Soteriology and Theology of Mission*. Ed. by Amos Yong (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2002), 83.

²⁰ Garijo-Guembe, *Communion*. 4.

²¹ References throughout this translation will be taken from the NRSV.

²² Malcom Muggeridge, *Something Beautiful for God: The Classic Account of Mother Teresa’s Journey into Compassion*. (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971), 53.

It is necessary to briefly look at different views on ecclesiology in order to orient ourselves with this field that has attracted so much study and reflection in the past five centuries, noting different convictions and views. Dulles notes that not all models of ecclesiology are equally valid,²³ a statement which must be upheld in order to prevent the church from melting into a “tasteless slush, devoid of any power to salt the earth.”²⁴ In looking at these differences broadly, Schleiermacher states that “the antithesis between Protestantism and Catholicism may provisionally be conceived thus: the former makes the individual’s relation to the Church dependent on his relation to Christ, while the latter contrariwise makes the individual’s relation to Christ dependent on his relation to the Church.”²⁵ While this statement is provocative, it cannot be taken at face value. Major theological treatments of both Protestants and Roman Catholics consistently begin with doctrines of God, sin, and salvation before dealing with the church.

In fact, careful ecclesiological consideration of the Reformation discloses that the Reformation did not arise primarily from *ecclesiological* convictions. William R. Estep conveys this well: “the Reformation was a revolt against papal authority but not against the Roman concept of the church as an institution.”²⁶ The ecclesiastical embodiment of authoritative patterns was called into question but the emphasis did not appear for a restructured model of the church.

But as various “models” of the church have been considered, it has become commonplace for the church to develop a backward focus where the concern is on maintaining an operable institution rather than actively participating in God’s redemptive work. It is fitting to call this a desire to seek the comfort and security of being defined and sponsored by institutional hierarchy. Or to speak of this in the missional terms employed by Newbigin, the situation of the Christian church in the West is “an advanced case of syncretism. Instead of confronting our culture with the gospel, we are perpetually trying to fit the gospel into our culture.”²⁷ This theme will be explored in chapter four of this study.

²³ Dulles, *Models*. 28.

²⁴ J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Reunion of the Church: A Defense of the South India Scheme*. Revised ed. (London: SCM Press, 1960), 17.

²⁵ Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*. English Translation of the Second German Edition Edited by H.R. Mackintosh and J.S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1928), 103.

²⁶ William R. Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*. Revised ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 182. See also, David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 368.

²⁷ J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *A Word in Season: Perspectives on Christian World Missions*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 67.

Conversely, Leonardo Boff has articulated an ecclesiology that does not begin with nor tries to necessarily uphold the institutional norms. Instead, he begins with the community of the church at its most basic level:

Slowly, but with ever-increasing intensity, we have witnessed the creation of communities in which persons actually know and recognize one another, where they can be themselves in their individuality, where they can “have their say,” where they can be welcomed by name. And so, we see, groups and little communities have sprung up everywhere. This phenomenon exists in the church, as well: grassroots Christian communities, as they are known, or basic church communities.²⁸

Boff’s work represents an entirely different way of thinking about the church, the world, and God. However, this approach also carries with it the danger of syncretism: the tendency in beginning with the grassroots is to ignore, or even be oblivious to, those things in a culture which need to be challenged by the gospel. The good news is always, in all cultures both an affirmation as well as a rejection of specific human experiences. The gospel offends “because there is always something in a communication of the gospel that calls a particular human experience, a particular culture, a particular social location and historical situation to judgment.”²⁹ Our most basic point of reference cannot be a culture because the biblical story tells us that all of humanity is under sin.

Another point on the spectrum of ecclesiology which I will note is the monastic tradition, having its roots in the Desert Fathers. Something of this can be captured via an oft-quoted phrase: “Society... was regarded [by the Desert Fathers] as a shipwreck from which each single individual man had to swim for his life.... These were men who believed that to let oneself drift along, passively accepting the tenets and values of what they knew as society, was purely and simply a disaster.”³⁰ Thus a rich monastic tradition has developed; under its banner are varied but similar ecclesiological convictions and a spate of spiritual reflections and writings. Although this understanding of ecclesiology could be seen as anti-ecclesial, the desert fathers carried with them much of the hierarchical conceptions of church authority.

So far I have briefly touched on several streams within Christian ecclesiology. The Protestant and Roman Catholic divide, having its roots in the Reformation; Boff, as an example of an entirely different way of conceiving of the church; and the early monks who secluded themselves from the sinful world. With this splintering effect wreaking havoc on the church, humble reflection and action are imperative, because, as Shane

²⁸ Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1986), 1.

²⁹ Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*. Revised and Expanded ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 117.

³⁰ Thomas Merton, *The Wisdom of the Desert*. (New York: New Directions Publishing Corp., 1960), 3.

Claiborne notes, the biblical metaphors for the church are always singular. Put in the words of a preacher: “We’ve got to unite ourselves as one body. Because Jesus is coming back, and he’s coming back for a bride, not a harem.”³¹

An Orientation to Spirituality

So far, I have expounded upon the nature of the church and provided a brief orientation of ecclesiology which is necessary for this work. But the question still lingers regarding the thrust of this work. That is, how can we speak of and uncover something of ‘spirituality’ in a way that is faithful to Scripture, tradition and doctrine, while being relevant to society today?

The term ‘spirituality’ has become increasingly difficult to deal with, yet it is being dealt with increasingly. Many people today have their own definition of what this slippery shibboleth of a word means. Bosch confesses that the term “has always caused [him] a degree of uneasiness.”³² I’ve found that several authors work with an interim definition which inevitably gains potency and clarity throughout the work. But Eugene Peterson explains that “‘Spirituality’ is a net, that thrown into the sea of contemporary culture, pulls in a vast quantity of spiritual fish, rivalling the resurrection catch of 153 that St. John reports (John 21:11).”³³ ‘Spirituality’ has become more than a vogue term; it has become a source of income and even a means of proselytism for various religions. “But”, Peterson continues, “attempts to define ‘spirituality’, and they are many, are futile. The term has escaped the disciplines of the dictionary.”³⁴

I agree with Peterson here. ‘Spirituality’ is incapable of definition according to the confines of what we know for something to be defined. Yet the word is still useful today, which permits much of this work to proceed, not because it is precisely definable, but because it is the best term we have at present for something that is real, tangible and recognizable.

In light of this, a few remarks are in order in terms of raw orientation with the word ‘spirituality’. When I use the term ‘spirituality’, I am first referring to Christian spirituality; that is, as it is in accordance with the biblical articulation of the God of Scripture along with the continued witness that has accumulated human understanding

³¹ Quoted in Shane Claiborne, *The Irresistible Revolution: Living as an Ordinary Radical*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 145.

³² David J. Bosch, *A Spirituality of the Road*. (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1979), 9.

³³ Eugene H. Peterson, “Evangelical Spirituality” in *The Futures of Evangelicalism*. Ed by Craig Bartholomew, Robin Parry and Andrew West. (Leicester: Intervarsity, 2003), 221.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 221.

and practise throughout the history of the people who have professed this God of Scripture as Lord. Further, the word “spirituality” will be used to denote the relationship and interplay between the Spirit of God and our spirit (*c.f.* Rom 8:14-16). The term “spiritual” (*pneumatikos*) is not to be understood as contrasting “body” (*soma*) but rather “flesh” (that which opposes the Spirit: *sarx*).³⁵ *Pneumatikos* is employed by Paul with reference to the attitudes and actions which evidence the workings of the Spirit within the lives of Christians.³⁶ In emphasizing that spirituality cannot simply be described, I affirm, with David Bosch, that object-subject and fact-value dichotomies are kept from perverting spirituality, deceiving us that it refers to something which can be handcuffed by ink onto pages of paper. Spirituality, while ultimately undefinable, has to do with life that is *lived* (rather than reflected upon) *coram Deo* (before the face of God).³⁷

An important question which arises is whether or not it is possible to come to some understanding of ‘spirituality’ via ecclesiology. It seems imperative to emphasize, especially in our day when ‘spirituality’ can be aptly described as a ‘net’, that the only legitimate home or environment for spirituality is the church. This of course begs further ecclesiological questions, which is the subject of the following section. But this work starts with a presupposition that spirituality has a place as an academic discipline in and of itself. This is not to say that spirituality is a compartment of life and disconnected from other dimensions. Rather, in affirming that spirituality is a discipline on its own implies that it can be studied from many angles: it is not limited to ‘theology’ proper, but can be studied historically, anthropologically, psychologically, etc. However, I chose to approach spirituality through the discipline of systematic theology, using Bosch’s ecclesiology as my ‘home base’ from which I will then venture into the sea of spirituality. It is possible, and helpful, to view Christian spirituality “not in distinction from [other] disciplinary identities, but as an enhancement or focusing of those identities.”³⁸

Spirituality throughout History

While spirituality, eluding definition, is very difficult to speak about, it will prove quite beneficial to give a brief orientation of spirituality from a historical perspective. Since the word ‘spirituality’ is around one hundred years old, tracing such a notion further back into history becomes very tricky, for we are required to do a sort of translation. As

³⁵ Arthur Holder, “Introduction” in *Blackwell’s Companion to Christian Spirituality*. Edited by Arthur Holder (Oxford: Blackwell Publications, 2005), 2.

³⁶ Gordon D. Fee, *God’s Empowering Presence*. (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 28ff.

³⁷ This discussion of the limits and definition of ‘spirituality’ is very important and I will therefore return to it in the fifth chapter of this study.

³⁸ Holder, “Introduction”, 2.

we attempt to look back into history, the questions become: from what historical era or perspective is spirituality best viewed? To which embodiment of spirituality can we aptly turn? Barbra Green suggests that “Christian spirituality begins as Jesus, steeped in the rich Jewish tradition of divine self-disclosure, interacts with those who respond to him; and that experience is converted into language and shared with others.”³⁹

In the person of Christ, spirituality took a decisive turn (or had its inception), creating a reality within which Christians have lived, grown and failed ever since. It is in this rich, and also scarred, tradition which spirituality stands today. This reality of Christian spirituality has been determined and shaped by certain notable aspects which Phillip Sheldrake documents in four categories: institution and authority structures (this he states as the “overall priority” which encapsulates the others); orthodoxy; conformity to the centre (catholicity); and the clerical-monastic tone (operating with a dualistic view of reality).⁴⁰

To provide some context for the primary dimension of Christian spirituality in history, I will briefly look at an expression of spirituality from the Middle Ages, which is an example of the ‘clerical-monastic’ understanding.

The anonymous fourteenth-century work *The Cloud of Unknowing* takes a point of departure which assumes that a ‘contemplative’⁴¹ life is much better an option than an ‘active’ life: “the deeper meaning of the Gospel story from St. Luke... [*i.e.* Lk 10:38-42] is that Martha represents the active life and Mary the contemplative life, the first of which is absolutely necessary for salvation.”⁴² In this vein, for one to flourish spiritually would entail moving beyond an active life of work to the ideal of a darkness within (the ‘cloud of unknowing’) which one becomes ‘at home’ in, and it is there that one has the deepest experience of God.⁴³

³⁹ Barbara Green, “The Old Testament in Christian Spirituality” in *Blackwell’s Companion*, 37.

⁴⁰ Phillip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History*. New ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 67. I explore some of these themes as they have worked themselves out in history later in this work.

⁴¹ ‘Contemplative’ is a word which is commonly used with reference to abstraction and the emptying of the mind whereas ‘meditation’ is typically used to denote concentration. M. Basil Pennington points out that such an understanding is incorrect and that the definitions are actually reversed: “contemplation is a discursive exercise, and meditation usually means a nonconceptual approach [to prayer]” M. Basil Pennington, O.C.S.O., *Centering Prayer: Renewing an Ancient Christian Prayer Form*. (Garden City, New York: Image Books, 1982), 29. It is this latter definition which *The Cloud of Unknowing* employs. See, *The Cloud of Unknowing*. Ed by William Johnston. (New York: Doubleday, 1973), 48.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 76.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 49.

It goes without saying, but goes even better with saying, that this conception of the ‘spiritual’⁴⁴ life is elitist and even *professional*. Medieval Catholicism distinguished between the “spiritual estate” (clergy, monks, nuns, etc.) and the “temporal estate” (everyone else). Some people would thus be called to a life of ‘spirituality’ while others must settle for a life which does not entail, to any significant extent, ‘spiritual’ things. This conception became blatantly challenged within Catholicism when, in seventeenth century France, Catholic laity began operating as though ordinary church-goers had an equal (if not more legitimate) claim on living the Christian life as did monks and nuns. Peterson describes that:

The religious establishment, with its nose in the air, used the term *la spiritualité* as a term of derogation for laypeople who practiced their devotion too intensely, a snobbish dismissal of upstart Christians who didn’t know what they were doing.... But the official church’s attempt to silence them was too late; the cat was out of the bag.⁴⁵

The ‘institution and structures of authority’ essentially refers to a tendency that Christianity has often succumbed to. It involves a hierarchical view of the church and has the tendency to make normative certain human interpretations and beliefs, even to the expense of the dignity or very lives of other people. Add to this the institutional connotations which have been associated with God’s character (arbitrary and unchanging) and it is not difficult to see why varying understandings of spirituality which conflict with the reigning structures have been quickly condemned and snuffed out. The Anabaptist tradition provides a good example here.⁴⁶ The early witness of the Anabaptists, especially with their beliefs of shared goods and commitment to enemy-love and pacifism, were viewed not only as heretical, but also as a threat to Christianity. In the persecution of these radical Reformers, many people were martyred.

Such consideration makes our questioning even more problematic: from whose perspective can we legitimately critique such understandings of spirituality? And what are the criteria or moorings upon which we do so? These are important questions and in chapter three of this study I will discuss some ‘marks’ of spirituality. In order to proceed in discussing ‘spirituality’ in history, I will turn to consider the Reformation.

Several distinctive changes occurred in the Reformation. During and since the Reformation a great ambivalence has developed toward such a clerical-monastic

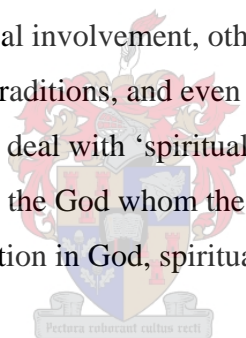
⁴⁴ I employ parenthesis here to emphasize a certain understanding of spirituality with which I differ.

⁴⁵ Eugene H. Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: a Conversation in Spiritual Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 28.

⁴⁶ For a good overview of early Anabaptist thought see *Anabaptism and Mission*. Ed. by Wilbert R. Shenk, (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald, 1984). For a more comprehensive, recent and systematic work, see Thomas N. Finger, *A Contemporary Anabaptist Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2004).

understanding of spirituality. Alister McGrath puts forth the key components of the spirituality which developed as the lived expression of, and therefore “organically related” to theology in these years of re-formation.⁴⁷ One of the biggest contentions in the Reformation with ‘spirituality’ was with the status and the function of the spiritual director. Because it was tied with clerical authority, the monastic conception of the Christian life, and the practice of indulgences, Protestants denied the validity of such a concept.⁴⁸ The extent of the Reformational shift in terms of spirituality was much broader than this one area. McGrath attempts to summarize into four “features”, Reformation spirituality: It is grounded and nourished in the study of Scripture; it insists that the quest for human identity, authenticity, and fulfillment cannot be undertaken in isolation from God; it explicitly recognizes the priesthood and vocation of all Christian believers; and it is grounded in and oriented toward life in the everyday world.⁴⁹

Since the Reformation the word “spirituality” could illuminate one of many meanings and connotations. Some have seen it as referring to things such as personal piety, perfection, mysticism, social involvement, otherworldliness; it has been taken up by a plethora of different Christian traditions, and even shunned by some. I am convinced that if it is possible to adequately deal with ‘spirituality’ as an academic discipline, it must be founded on an adequate basis: the God whom the Scriptures testify to and the life of His followers. Without a foundation in God, spirituality is as useless as a book without pages.



Defining A Way Forward

Before going any further, I will flag a few concepts and definitions which are integral to this work. The first of which (as alluded to earlier in this chapter) is that the notion of ‘spiritual’ and ‘secular’ modes of existence or parts of life is a construction which is not derived from Scripture. Bosch ardently claims that God is profoundly concerned with historical, contextual reality. “To see an antithesis between the glorification of God and the search for a truly human life on earth is, however, contrary to the gospel”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Alister McGrath, *Spirituality in an Age of Change: Rediscovering the Spirit of the Reformers*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 32.

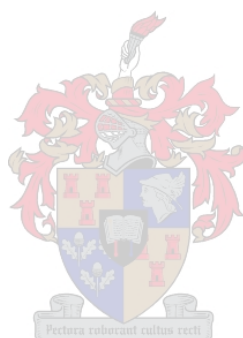
⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 42-57.

⁵⁰ Bosch, *Transforming*, 426.

‘Mission’, in this work will refer primarily to *God’s* mission—also stated as the *missio Dei* (as will become clearer in chapter 2) which includes human participation in God’s cosmic mission. ‘Missionary’ is both a noun (one who engages in God’s mission) as well as an adjective (qualifying the nature of something or someone). ‘Missional’ is another helpful adjective which depicts something which is characterized by, or in relationship with, mission.

Ecclesialogically, Bosch picks up on Newbigin’s distinction between the missionary *intention* and the missionary *dimension* of the church. The missionary dimension refers to the general response which the church ought to have with regards to God’s mission. The missionary intention, then, refers to specific “points of concentration” (Newbigin) and specific acts in which the missionary dimension finds expression.⁵¹ Finally, ‘missiology’ denotes the study of mission; that is, reflection on what it means that God is continuing his work in the world.⁵²



⁵¹ Ibid., 373. C.f. J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World*. (London and New York: International Missionary Council, 1958), 43.

⁵² C.f. Christopher J.H. Wright, “Mission as a Matrix for Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology.” In *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*. Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, vol 5. Edited by Craig Bartholomew, Mary Healy, Karl Möller and Robin Parry. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 104-106.

Chapter 2

Ecclesiology in the Thought of David Bosch

Introduction: Ecclesiology and Mission

In this chapter our attention will be given to developing the ecclesiology of David Bosch. Kärkkäinen, in a study of ecclesiology, classifies David Bosch and Lesslie Newbigin under the term “missionary ecclesiology”⁵³, which I find helpful, and will interact with here. A helpful entry point is the analogy of ecclesiology is as being a facet of a precious diamond: within ecclesiology exist several different aspects and dimensions, and yet there is much more to this diamond than only this one facet of ecclesiology. The landscape for ecclesiology is embedded within the movement of God to the world and the world’s response to God. But, like a dazzling diamond, we cannot adequately address all the issues involved and must limit our attention so that we can both appreciate its beauty while also maintaining a theological sensitivity.

From the outset, it is necessary to dispel the widely held myth which insists ‘mission’ is a discipline to be studied under the broader banner of ‘theology’ and as something separable from the church. If theology is done in line with Scripture, it is necessarily missional; in fact it is the deepest source and even the root of all theology, flowing from the effervescent fountain of God’s sending love.⁵⁴ Thus we will occupy our discussion of ecclesiology in light of mission, insofar as the Church finds its existence within God’s metanarrative of his salvation. “Authentic theology... only develops where the Church moves in a dialectical relationship to the world, in other words, where the Church is engaged in mission, in the widest sense of the word.”⁵⁵ So we can speak equally of the missional basis of the Bible as we can the biblical basis for mission.⁵⁶

‘Mission’ in the New and Old Testaments

⁵³ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002) 151-159.

⁵⁴ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 390.

⁵⁵ David J. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 25.

⁵⁶ Christopher J.H. Wright, “Mission as a Matrix for Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology,” in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*. Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, vol 5. Edited by Craig Bartholomew, Mary Healy, Karl Möller and Robin Parry. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 106.

If this is the case, as many missiologists uphold, that theology does not precede missiology, then we can legitimately turn to missiologically survey the situation of first-century Jewish culture into which Jesus came. And so our entry point into Bosch's ecclesiology will be framed by his understanding of the situation first century church—something which simply cannot be understood apart from mission. It is significant to uphold, with Bosch, that Jesus was endowed with God's mission; in Christ, God's mission reaches its climax and indeed its fulfillment. But it is not clear, from the biblical accounts which we have received, what the precise nature and scope of 'mission' actually is, and this "seems to have also been the case virtually from the beginning."⁵⁷ Therefore first century ecclesiology and missiology necessarily upholds an enigmatic dimension.⁵⁸

But Jesus did not enter into an a-cultural world. Rather, the New Testament is inseparably set in the context of the Old. It is from the tradition and history of God's self revelation to his people which Jesus upholds as the context for his own existence. While the Old Testament is not a 'missionary' document in a narrow definition of the word, there are several points which Bosch notes which require us to view it as 'missionary'.⁵⁹ The first is that the faith of Israel differed from other faiths in the conviction that history had a beginning, God had acted in history, God would act again in history, and that history was going somewhere. Secondly, the Israelites believed that God was a God of promise, and that his promise of salvation would one day become a tangible reality. A third dimension is that Israel has been elected by God, and thus God has established a covenant with her. The existence of a covenant indicates a relationship with God and his elected people coupled with a relationship with all people. "The entire history of Israel unveils the continuation of God's involvement with the nations."⁶⁰

Much of the reality of the atmosphere in first-century Palestine was religious reality. Different religious groups had various interpretations of the Torah. As such it forms an important backdrop for looking at ecclesiology and spirituality as evident in the life of Jesus and his followers. Furthermore, the New Testament reinterprets the Torah in such a way that is abrasive to this religious environment; especially as the tension of the

⁵⁷ Bosch, *Transforming*, 54.

⁵⁸ This ambiguity does not relegate mission as unimportant in the early times of Christianity. Rather, it was the case that the New Testament writers operated within an "emergency situation" and thus, "the gospels, in particular, are to be viewed not as writings produced by an historical impulse but as expressions of an ardent faith, written with the purpose of commending Jesus Christ to the Mediterranean world." (Bosch, *Transforming*, 16.) Mission was intrinsic to Christian existence; ecclesiology was wed with spirituality.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 16-20.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

mercy and judgment of God is acknowledged. It will become evident as we follow Bosch through the New Testament landscape of the various Jewish appropriations how this tension between the loving yet holy God was understood. But also worth mentioning, since the point of the New Testament is not so much to convey the illegitimacy of these various other appropriations of the Torah, our focus is ultimately on that which God was doing in and through the person of Jesus.

First Century Appropriations of Faith

Bosch outlines the four ‘options’ which exist at the time: four appropriations of what life under the God of Abraham and Sarah, of Isaac and Rebekah, of Joseph and Rachel, *actually* implied. If we have an orientation with this framework, then the mission of Jesus and the early Christian community comes into clearer focus. And in this discussion of these various groups I will classify each group according to Manuel Castells’ categories: resistance identity, legitimizing identity and project identity.⁶¹

Prior to introducing these groups, it must be mentioned that the Roman rule in the first century was strict and brutal. “It was a world pregnant with revolution and violence and it was impossible for any public figure not to take a stand on the issues of the day.”⁶² And so each of the various religious leaders—and their communities with them—were forced to respond, in some way, to the social and political issues. These four groups, as Bosch explains, are the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Zealots and the Essenes.⁶³

These divergent groups within the Jewish faith each held that *they* were the legitimate remnant, through which God would act. Because prior to 70 C.E. a normative Jewish orthodoxy did not exist from which groups deviated, meant that each group claimed to hold to the ‘correct’ interpretation of the Old Testament. And so, while it is misguided to see these groups as ‘sects’ which deviate from a certain tradition, as we will see, during these years the Pharisees and Sadducees did hold the prominent place of religious influence with regards to the political systems.

⁶¹ A legitimizing identity is that which is “introduced by the dominant institutions of society to extend and rationalize their domination *vis à vis* social actors.” The resistance identity is embodied by actors who have been estranged in some way “by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society.” A project identity demarcates “social actors, on the basis of whatever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and , by so doing, seek the transformation of overall social structure.” Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity*. 2nd ed. Vol II: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 8.

⁶² David J. Bosch, *The Church as Alternative Community*. (Potchefstroom: Instituut vir Reformatoriese Studie, 1982), 4.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 5-8.

The Sadducees

The Sadducees were a conservative group who “observed nothing apart from the Law [*i.e.* Torah].”⁶⁴ Most of the priests fit into this group. In practice, they sought a political sponsorship with the Roman rule, thus responding favourably to those who had granted them their place of power and influence. Working from within the system rather than explicitly confronting it outright, their view was to have an influence from the inside.⁶⁵ This can be considered a “legitimizing identity” as the dominant institutions in a society seek to maintain and uphold the prevailing system.⁶⁶ To this group, Jesus was far too radical to endorse.

The Pharisees

A second group, similar in many ways to the Sadducees, is the Pharisees. To this group belonged most of the Scribes. Underlying this group are two main convictions: that of revolutionary change within Israel including a complete political separation from the pagans, and “radical obedience to the Torah.”⁶⁷ A main difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees is that, according to the formers’ interpretation of the Old Testament, emphasis was given to the concept and understanding of ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’. To the Pharisees, politics were ‘unclean’. They lived within the society, but went to great lengths to ensure they remained ‘clean’ and pure. Their faith was one of both pretence and piety.

But Bosch points out the inconsistency in Pharisees’ viewpoint, since they were in effect required to abide by the political status quo and thus endorse it. “To avoid politics means to take the side of the establishment.”⁶⁸ Thus we can also understand the Pharisees in terms of a “legitimizing identity.” And Jesus was far too ‘contaminated’ to even be considered by this group.

The Zealots

The third group of Jews was the Zealots. This group is difficult to define, for it was comprised by “a cross section of people with differing interests and including many among the Pharisees who were zealous for Israel and willing to take up arms in violent

⁶⁴ *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* vol. 5 Edited by David N. Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 892.

⁶⁵ Bosch, *The Church*, 5.

⁶⁶ Castells, *Power*, 8.

⁶⁷ Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 125.

⁶⁸ Bosch, *The Church*, 6.

revolution.”⁶⁹ To enhance our understanding of this group it is necessary to look at their core beliefs. The word ‘zeal’ is a technical term which upholds that God is ‘jealous’ and burns against unrighteousness. In the Torah we learn of extensive rituals which the Hebrew people required to undergo in order that God might “dwell [lit. *tabernacle*] among them” (Exodus 25:8f.) for holiness cannot exist even in the proximity of unholiness.⁷⁰

Phinehas, a descendant of Aaron, can be seen as a prototype for the Zealots. In Numbers 25:1-15 God’s anger burns against the immorality of Israel. Phinehas takes a spear and kills two people caught in adultery; an act which ends the plague which had already taken the lives of 24,000 Israelites. The LORD’S response is favorable toward Phinehas: “[He] has turned my anger away from the Israelites; for he was as zealous as I am for my honor among them, so that in my zeal I did not put an end to them.” (v.11) And so the Zealots understood their responsibility as embodying God’s zeal to bring about change.

The Zealots had significant contrasts with both the Pharisees and Sadducees, for theirs was a “theology of revolution” and were likely still an underground movement during the time of Jesus.⁷¹ Working with the premise that the institutions of the day were profoundly wrong, they understood the reign of God as being synonymous with institutional reform through acts of righteous jealousy and vengeance. We could classify the Zealots as having a “project identity” which classifies those who use the available “cultural materials... [to] build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, by so doing, seek the transformation of overall social structure.”⁷² And while Jesus was probably nearer to this group than any of the others—many of Jesus’ disciples probably came from this group—significant differences still existed.

The Essenes

The final group was perhaps the most extreme, combining dimensions of both the Pharisees’ and the Zealot’s convictions; these were the Essenes. With the Pharisees the Essenes fanatically distinguished between ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ and saw the only way of living a faithful life as avoiding culture. According to the historical account of Philo, the

⁶⁹ Bartholomew and Goheen, *Drama*, 126.

⁷⁰ See T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Main Themes of the Pentateuch*. (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), 204-215.

⁷¹ Bosch, *The Church*, 7.

⁷² Castells, *Power*, 8.

Essenes lived in caves and formed a sort of communes along the Dead Sea where they waited for God to do something transformative and bring his wrath on the ungodly world all around. Whereas the Zealots sought to bring about God's kingdom through revolution, the Essenes held that the kingdom of God was not for humans to inaugurate, but that upon their strict adherence to the Torah that God would be pleased to send his messiah who would lead them into war against the Gentiles and the Jews who had conceded to unholiness (*i.e.* "sons of darkness"). Unlike the other 'options' we have surveyed, this group could more appropriately be termed a 'sect', for they observed extensive rites and rituals for entrance to their community and they differed greatly from the temple practices of the other Jews.⁷³

The Essenes can therefore be labelled under a "resistance identity" which classifies a group who dug "trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society."⁷⁴ This group undoubtedly would have repudiated Jesus' involvement in 'worldly' things.

Jesus' 'Option'

But what is Jesus' 'preference' as it were, since he doesn't try to fit into any of these groups? This is the question that will occupy the remainder of our discussion here. It is evident that his option was not popular among these groups; he is eventually despised by all these various groups and, in fact, it was people from three of these four groups who worked to get rid of Jesus. Judas, who participated in the Zealot revolution, betrayed him while the Sadducees and Pharisees combined efforts to have Jesus crucified. The Essenes did not partake in the opposition of Jesus most likely because they were far removed from societal involvement.⁷⁵

The shared conviction of the four groups "was the belief in the permanent validity of the institutions and privileges of Israel. They all wanted, along different ways, to restore the old order."⁷⁶ Their convictions were all based, in some way, on the Old Testament. And Jesus' message is also one of continuity with the Old Testament; in fact, he came as the Anointed One who would redeem the entire cosmos from the plague of sin. Jesus differed in from these other groups in that he "rejected the unquestioned permanence of these [Israelitic] institutions: the temple, the Davidic monarchy, the

⁷³ *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Vol 2., 621, 624.

⁷⁴ Castells, *Power*, 8.

⁷⁵ Bosch, *The Church*, 9.

⁷⁶ Bosch, *The Church*, 10.

priesthood.”⁷⁷ He continued God’s plan of salvation in its *forward* stance, rather than the backward stance which the Jews were ardent to maintain. Jesus came as both the message and the messenger. Since this message was *a person*, it is faulty to reduce him to only a set of doctrines.⁷⁸ We will consider several dimensions of the implications of this new thing that Jesus is doing.

Jesus’ Interpretation of the Old Testament

The Church of the Gentiles and Jews

Against this backdrop of Jewish belief we can look into the missional nature of Bosch’s ecclesiology through the biblical account of the first century. None of these four groups had a noteworthy outward missional stance. And while ‘proselytes’ sometimes converted to the Jewish appropriations of faith (this was primarily upon the instigation of the Gentile convert); “frequently their concern was not even with all members of their own race.”⁷⁹

Thus John the Baptizer’s message was strange; not only did he call the Sadducees and Pharisees a “brood of vipers” (Mt 3:7)⁸⁰ but he proclaimed repentance as well as the same rite of admission (baptism) that Gentiles who converted to Judaism underwent. Thus John points out that the Jews are not even included in the covenant with God which they have taken for granted!⁸¹

Jesus’ mission is embodied within this historical context:

As... Jew he understands himself as being sent to his own people. His call for repentance concerns this people.... His life’s work is limited to them. That he is sent only to Israel is already evident in Matthew 1:21 and Luke 1:54. According to the reports of all the gospels he finds himself virtually always on the soil of the Holy Land. He appears to enter Gentile and Samaritan territories only with some reluctance. He restlessly moves around in the land of the Jews, back and forth.... Precisely as Son of Man he has to fulfill the calling of the son of David: to liberate his people... He devotes himself to Israel with unconditional devotion while declining every other solicitation.⁸²

It must be emphasized here that Jesus’ ministry did not exclude Gentiles, but it accentuates that Jesus was *first* sent to the Jews. And, in stark contrast to the outlook of the other religious groups, Jesus intentionally and repeatedly goes to those *within Israel* which are excluded by the other groups. His attention is on the periphery, as it were, not

⁷⁷ David J. Bosch, “The Church and the Liberation of Peoples?” *Missionalia* 5:2 (Aug 1977), 11.

⁷⁸ Bosch, *Transforming*, 47.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁸⁰ In this context it is understandable why many concluded that John the Baptizer, a desert dweller, belonged to the Essenes.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*, 26; c.f. David J. Bosch, *Die Heidenmission in der Zukunftsschau Jesu: Eine Untersuchung zur Eschatologie der Synoptischen Evangelien*. (Zürich: Zwingli Verlag, 1959), 77.

to negate that his message was for the religious leaders as well, but rather to exemplify the nature of his mission.

That Jesus was primarily concerned with the people of Israel has caused many theologians to question the missionary dimension of his ministry, emphasizing that the concept of Gentile mission arose only among the early church. Bosch believes it accurate to “credit Jesus himself with laying the foundations for the Gentile mission.”⁸³ Further, Bosch states that Jesus’ “very concentration on Israel—or to express it differently: precisely the historical specificity of his ministry—has cosmic-missionary significance.”⁸⁴ It also speaks loudly in terms of the spirituality which is evidenced in that Jesus does not simply denounce these various groups, but rather is concerned with alerting them to the reality of the presence of the kingdom.

Transcending Divisions without Compromise

Examination of ecclesiology without consideration of the circumstances of Jesus’ time inhibits our ability to grasp the implications of this alternative community. Jesus freely associated with tax-collectors and sinners, something that the Pharisees and Essenes would have abhorred. “The poor” is used often in the New Testament as a lump term; it includes those who have been treated unfairly based upon their circumstances. Jesus says that the poor are “blessed” (Mt 5:3, Lk 6:20), and accepts the stigmatized. Yet the religious leaders are not renounced by Jesus because they are religious leaders, but they are renounced by Jesus because of their maltreatment of the poor and for their condemnation of Jesus (*c.f. e.g.*, Mk 12:38-40, Mt 12:1-13). Jesus’ mission is so inclusive that it offends. “It embraces both the poor and the rich, both the oppressed and the oppressor, both the sinners and the devout.”⁸⁵ And in all this the mission of Christ knows no coercion but is always an *invitation*.

We also see, in striking tension, that Jesus’ mission is so *exclusive* that it is denounced by the religious leaders. He denounces the heresies of various Jews who interpret the Torah upon their own authority (*e.g.* Jn 8:39-41). Jesus doesn’t tell people to continue their wrong interpretations but calls them to make *radical* changes in their lives.

One such change is that human encounter with God is no longer limited to the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus effectually takes the place of the temple. “As the ‘New

⁸³ Bosch, *Transforming*, 30.

⁸⁴ Bosch, *Witness*, 63.

⁸⁵ Bosch, *Transforming*, 28.

Jerusalem' he himself becomes the place of encounter with the nations."⁸⁶ The Gospel accounts agree that some people recognize the new thing that God has done, and that others do not recognize it (e.g. Lk 19:44: "because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."). It is the church's attentiveness to God's action that funds their missionary involvement in the world.⁸⁷

That God had done something decisively different in the person of Jesus Christ was undeniable. From the reaction of the various groups and from Jesus' own words, we see that indeed a new age has arrived. "If that is so, only one of two reactions was possible: either one accepted Jesus and the dawning of an entirely new age, or one became so annoyed by Him that it became a battle unto death. But nobody could remain neutral. This was the parting of the ways."⁸⁸ The community which took Christ's teaching were subsequently referred to as a "new creation" (c.f. 2 Cor 5:17, Gal 6:15).

'Fulfilled' Time: the Church as an Eschatological Community

An important hermeneutical key to this burgeoning group is their understanding of current existence.

If the present is empty [*i.e.* if God has not decisively acted in history], as the Pharisees, Essenes and Zealots believed, then you can only flee into the memory of a glorious past recorded in codes (Pharisees), or you can, with folded arms, sit and wait for God's vengeance on your enemies (Essenes), or you can play God yourself by violently liquidating the empty present thus trying to make the utopian future a present reality (Zealots), or you can enter into an uncomfortable compromise with the status quo (Sadducees). But if the present is filled;... if it is no more necessary to call out that God's Kingdom is 'here' or 'there', because in the person of Jesus it is already 'among you' (Luke 17:21);... if even 'the least' in the newly inaugurated Kingdom is greater than John (Matt. 11:11)...., then those who partake of this 'new history', cannot possibly go the way of their contemporary Jewish religious groups. They can only let themselves be taken along by Christ into the future, not as soldiers fighting in the vanguard, but as 'captives in Christ's triumphal procession' (2 Cor. 2:14)⁸⁹

Jesus announces that "the kingdom of God is near" (Mk 1:5). He, a 'mere man' proclaims forgiveness of sins (something that was not for any human to do) and he does it without even the mention of the name of God.⁹⁰ While eschatological expectation of the early Jewish people is anything but uniform, there was consensus that God would send his Messiah. 'Christians' were those people who took the radical shift in their lives, as they now understood *themselves* to be experiencing the firstfruits of the long anticipated salvation.⁹¹

⁸⁶ Bosch, *Witness*, 63.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁸⁸ Bosch, *The Church*, 17.

⁸⁹ Bosch, *Witness*, 64-65.

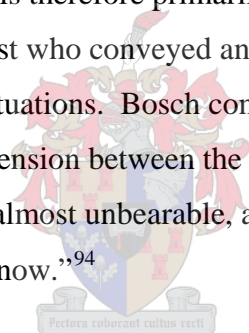
⁹⁰ Bosch, *The Church*, 16.

⁹¹ Bosch, *Transforming*, 15-16.

The understanding of eschatology among this new group is that God, in Christ, has accomplished salvation; the kingdom of God is *already* here, satiated in the person of Christ. But they also realized that it was *not yet* established in its fullness; its completeness remained at large. Unlike the Essene view, the Christians could not simply stand by and wait for God to act—he *has* acted. And, unlike the Zealots, the Christians knew that they depended on the power of the Holy Spirit and still anticipated Christ’s return. “[Jesus] and his followers were the eschatological people of the one true god, and as such would be, in a way yet to be explicated, the people through whom this god would make his ways known to the rest of the earth.”⁹² Christian existence was lived in the tension between ‘already’ and ‘not yet’, between *God* acting, and *humans* acting.

In his earthy ministry, death, and resurrection, and in the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the forces of the future world began to stream in. But the counter-forces also rushed in—the destructive forces of alienation and of human rebellion—in an attempt to thwart the irruption of God’s new world. God’s reign did not come in all its fullness. Jesus’ ministry of erecting signs of God’s incipient reign was emulated by the early church. Christians were not called to do more than erect signs; neither were they called to do less.⁹³

The history of early Christianity is therefore primarily *mission* history. That is, it depicts the lives of the followers of Christ who conveyed an urgent and important message of God’s action amidst desperate situations. Bosch conveys the urgency demanded by this ‘fulfilled’ time: “We live in the tension between the “already” and the “not yet”, a tension that, by its very nature, remains almost unbearable, as we seek to allow something of the “not yet” to take shape here and now.”⁹⁴



Bosch’s Sketch of Jesus’ Option: Ecclesiological Clues

Earlier we noted three identity *types* which are helpfully explained by Castells. But what was Jesus’ identity and the identity of his followers? We cannot term it a ‘legitimizing’ identity, for Jesus was far too critical of the reigning structures. It is not a ‘resistance’ identity, because Jesus and his followers were far too favorable towards the world. But we cannot see it as a ‘project’ identity either, for this identity comes out of two desires: “that of individuals against communities, and that of individuals against the market.”⁹⁵

⁹² N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Vol 2. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 445.

⁹³ Bosch, *Transforming*, 49.

⁹⁴ David J. Bosch, “How My Mind has Changed: Mission and the Alternative Community,” *JTSA* 41 (Dec. 1982), 9.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Castells, *Power*, 10.

Indeed Jesus' identity is different than the three identities, constructed on different grounds. It both embraced the world *and* judged it. The early church

was a community that caused people to stare in amazement because these people behaved contrary to all human conventions. In this community there was room for simple fisherman from Galilee, for erstwhile Zealots such as Simon and one-time tax-collectors such as Matthew, for erudite Pharisees such as Paul, for members of the nobility such as Manaen who had been brought up with Herod, for Jews and Greeks, for Blacks from Africa such as Simon called Niger, who served with Paul as an elder in the church at Antioch, for the slave Onesimus but also for his owner Philemon, for prisoners but also for members of the imperial guard and for a captain in the Roman army.⁹⁶

The early church held that interpreting the entirety of their existence through the lens of Christ was not just a deviation from or alternative to the reigning structure, it was the *reality*.⁹⁷ And while the new community sees the world in a new way, it is wrong to limit Christianity to only a method of perception. It is much more than a vision, it is a *Way*; but a *way* indeed involves a vision.⁹⁸

Central to Jesus' message, and also informing for Jesus' 'identity', is the radical call to love one's enemies. Enemy love means not triumphing with might or power—Jesus' ministry is one of weakness. This weakness was such that Jesus was willing to die for the sake of the ones who could not bear his message.⁹⁹ This is expressed through a way of life that has *broken down* the barriers and dividing walls, introducing a new creation where all are equal in Christ.

If we reject the Biblical imperative to follow Jesus at precisely this point [*i.e.* radical enemy love], then we in effect express disbelief in the validity or effectiveness of God's way of reconciling enemies. But to do that is to express disbelief about reconciliation itself.¹⁰⁰

As it participates in enemy-love and the breaking down of barriers, the church manifests the reality of what that kingdom looks like. This participation in the kingdom is not different than witnessing to it; Bosch says that "the church is that community of people who are involved in creating new relationships among themselves and in society at large and, in doing this, bearing witness to the lordship of Christ."¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Bosch, *The Church*, 30.

⁹⁷ *C.f.* Bosch, *Transforming*, 59.

⁹⁸ There is a movement among some biblical scholars today which holds that the Bible can only be properly understood in terms of a grand story; a worldview which takes seriously that which God has done and continues to do upholding the continuity of the unchanging God and the perpetual relevance of the radical gospel which Jesus proclaimed and lived. For an excellent introduction to the biblical worldview, see Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), and Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985); for a more academic treatise, see Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, "Story and Biblical Theology" in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*. Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, vol 5. Edited by Craig Bartholomew, Mary Healy, Karl Möller and Robin Parry. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), pp. 144-171.

⁹⁹ Bosch, *Transforming*, 49-50.

¹⁰⁰ Bosch, *The Church*, 34.

¹⁰¹ Bosch, *Transforming*, 169. See also, p. 48.

This community, empowered by the Holy Spirit, was politically involved. Its identity was that it was subversive: exposing idolatry and participating in life as they understood God to have created it. Not only did they challenge the structures and people of the day, but they *offered the option which they had embodied*. Thus it is incredibly difficult to demarcate Jesus' identity along the same lines which the Jewish groups can be identified.

Avoiding “The Early Church Model”

I have intentionally painted a very positive picture of the early church. This is not to deny that there were not problems, for many did exist. My purposes here, however, are not to exhaust the field of ecclesiology, and so I will only briefly mention some of the failures and shortcomings of the early church. These include a tendency of the early church to point out that which distinguished them from others, rather than existing for the sake of others. Bosch notes that the early church also “ceased to be a movement and turned into an institution.”¹⁰² The dynamic nature of the community of the Spirit to which the New Testament bears witness cannot be understood apart from the Old Testament Hebrew people who were given extensive laws and regulations to which they were required to adhere. Some Christians argue that the institutionalization of the church is its downfall; when the church becomes institutionalized it turns into a museum or asylum.¹⁰³ Others argue that the church as a ‘movement’ denies the unchanging nature of God and thus becomes subject to the whimsical impulses of humans. However, these do not need to be understood as polar opposites, but rather both movement and institution must be held together in a ‘creative tension’, which is, admittedly, not a simple task.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, we must be as careful to condemn the early church as we are to idealize it for ourselves. Rather, the early church can offer us striking insight into ecclesiology which is imperative for us today. In all this we should be cautious of holding any understanding of the church as an ideal;

When the church, in its mission, risks referring to itself as sacrament, sign or instrument of salvation, it is therefore not holding up itself as model to be emulated. Its members are not proclaiming, “Come to us!” but “Let us follow him!”¹⁰⁵

A Summary of Bosch’s Missionary Ecclesiology

¹⁰² Ibid., 50.

¹⁰³ Bosch, *Witness*, 27.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 26f.

¹⁰⁵ Bosch, *Transforming*, 376.

How can we classify this ecclesiology? In chapter 4 of this study we will discuss at length the situation of current ecclesiology in Western Protestantism, noting some of the historical and contextual dimensions of ecclesiology. This chapter provides a necessary starting point and can also be viewed in some ways as a response to the latter. In an attempt to sum up Bosch's understanding of ecclesiology systematically, I will, in the remainder of this chapter weave together three prominent 'ecclesiological threads' in Bosch's work insofar as they are pertinent to our topic. While this is in no way an adequate treatise of Bosch's ecclesiology, it provides us a necessary basis from which we may proceed.

A Trinitarian People

Bosch ardently upholds that mission is not an appendage to the church, but is at the very heart of the church's existence. "Ecclesiology therefore does not precede missiology."¹⁰⁶ Mission is not so much what the church *does* as what the church *is*; it belongs to "the essential nature of the church."¹⁰⁷ It follows from this that 'mission' is never something that belongs to the church, but rather something that the church *participates in*. Mission belongs to God alone; it does not begin or end with the church, but it does encompass the church. Because in this understanding God is missionary, mission becomes viewed as God the Father sending the Son, sending the Spirit, sending the church into the world.¹⁰⁸

With this Trinitarian view, the *missio Dei* (God's mission) includes, but is not limited to, the church. The church's participation in this is aptly described as being in "service to the *missio Dei*, representing God in and over against the world, pointing to God, holding up the God-child before the eyes of the world in a ceaseless celebration of the Feast of the Epiphany."¹⁰⁹ Witness does not originate in and of the one witnessing, or even in a group of people, but it originates in God.¹¹⁰ The body of Christ is thus compelled to live true to God, which by implication means living true to the world, witnessing in both word and deed.¹¹¹

The Holy Spirit is integral to the mission of the church. It is only in and through the empowerment of the Spirit that the church may truly participate in the *missio Dei*. Mission is both instigated as well as guided by the Spirit; "through the Spirit, God is in

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 372.

¹⁰⁷ Kärkkäinen, *Introduction*, 151.

¹⁰⁸ Bosch, *Transforming*, 390.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 391.

¹¹⁰ Bosch, *Witness*, 75.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 77.

control of the mission.”¹¹² The church, both empowered and guided by the Spirit, is not to be understood in such a way that flattens out human participation in mission by viewing mission as something that God does regardless of human involvement.¹¹³

This trinitarian emphasis necessarily points to the communal and ecumenical dimension of Christianity. God, the enigmatic three-in-One, invites the church into a dynamic relationship beyond the divisions imposed on the church: as only the place where the sacraments are rightly administered, as the place that is historically in continuity with the apostles or as the place where the Spirit is present and active.¹¹⁴ Insisting that these divisions are to be upheld is to refuse the trinitarian invitation and to perpetuate the fractures in the church.

Pilgrims along the Way

Another salient feature of this ecclesiology is that the church is envisioned as a *pilgrim* people, especially in light of the biblical precedent of the Israelites in the wilderness and in the New Testament, Christians who were journeying toward the fullness of the kingdom. The church is always “‘called out’, and sent back into the world.”¹¹⁵

The church, in Newbigin’s words “is on the move—hastening to the ends of the earth to beseech all men to be reconciled to God, and hastening to the end of time to meet its Lord who will gather all into one.”¹¹⁶

“The Way” is more common in the New Testament than is the term “Christian” when referring to that which is distinctive about Christ’s followers. What is distinctive about the concept of the *Way* is that following Christ is not so much a set of doctrines and deeds which are to be assimilated as much as it is a way of life that is to be learned and lived.¹¹⁷ To follow this *Way* is to be inextricably connected to a community of formation and of pilgrimage.

Yet pilgrims are not characterized by being extraordinary. They are, instead, devoted people. Most basically, the concept of pilgrimage is any form of travel to a particular place. Pilgrims have a destination toward which they are journeying and set

¹¹² Bosch, *Transforming*, 114, see Kärkkäinen, *Introduction*, 156.

¹¹³ Bosch, *Transforming*, 392.

¹¹⁴ Kärkkäinen, *Introduction*, 154-157.

¹¹⁵ Bosch, *Transforming*, 374.

¹¹⁶ J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church*. (London: SCM, 1953), 25.

¹¹⁷ Larry L. Rasmussen, *Moral Fragments & Moral Community: A Proposal for Church in Society*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 139.

themselves toward that goal. A pilgrimage is different than a parade in that the pilgrims know that the destination defines the present; in a parade the focus is on commemorating and reliving something which is only in the past. Thus the mode of travel is integrally linked to the nature of the destination toward which the travel is pointed.

A Hopeful People

With this forward stance, the church is the eschatological community. It journeys and even presses towards the hope which it now experiences only in part, the future reality is so good that its pull is as that of a magnet. In and through the person of Jesus Christ God has already established the outcome and defeated evil.¹¹⁸ Hope, in its Christian employment, is a potent concept. It points towards a reality which far exceeds metaphorical comparison with the present. Eschatology is not only that which will happen upon Christ's return, nor is it only the present reality.

We need an eschatology for mission which is both future-directed and oriented to the here and now.... [holding] in creative and redemptive tension the already and the not yet; the world of sin and rebellion, and the world God loves; the new age that has already begun and the old that has not yet ended.¹¹⁹

Without its future hope, the church becomes a social activist group, and without the current reality of God's reign, then the church is devoid of the Spirit, awaiting the Messiah in the same capacity as the Israelites prior to Jesus. That the coming kingdom is already a reality expresses the potent potential of the church. It is caught up in the tension of God's mission; "Christians are called to practice a messianic lifestyle within the church but also to exercise a revolutionary impact on the values of the world."¹²⁰

Therefore it must be emphasized that true hope does not flee from the world, yet is unsatisfied with the present state of the world. The temporal aspect of the already and not yet kingdom coincides with the historical and tangible reality of the world in which we live. And this hope takes seriously the work of God in Christ: "The ultimate triumph remains uniquely God's gift. It is *God* who makes all things new (Rev 21:5). If we turn off the lighthouse of eschatology we can only grope around in darkness and despair."¹²¹

Conclusion

Under the broad topic of ecclesiology, I have sought some of Bosch's key points in terms of articulating the nature of the church in a way that is attentive to spirituality.

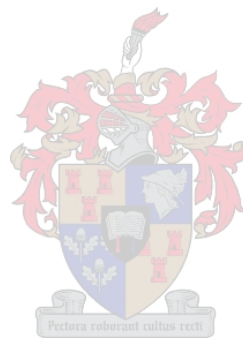
¹¹⁸ Bosch, *Transforming*, 393.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 508; see also Avery Dulles, S.J., *Models of the Church: A Critical Assessment of the Church in All Its Aspects*. 2nd ed. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 1987), 103.

¹²⁰ Bosch, *Transforming*, 168-69.

¹²¹ Ibid., 509.

This chapter has not been exhaustive in that I have covered all the topics of ecclesiology which Bosch points out, but rather it is from this basis of both Jesus (in the context of the Jewish groups) and a sketch of Bosch's ecclesiology that I can proceed to the area of spirituality. The church as 'Trinitarian', 'pilgrim', and 'hopeful' highlights contours which are necessary for spirituality.



Chapter 3

Spirituality and David Bosch's Ecclesiology

Ecclesiologicaly Informed Spirituality

Introduction

Two difficulties arise when looking into spirituality in light of David Bosch. The first is that Bosch tends to do theology 'from above', that is, he follows a more traditional method of speaking about theology in an abstract and systematic way. Many of his conclusions effectually point to the need of doing theology 'from below' (starting with people in concrete situations), and so we must view these two approaches as inseparable. But Schneiders points out that studying spirituality is essentially done 'from below': "spirituality studies not simply Christian faith but the lived experience of Christian faith."¹²² A difficulty is that, with our ecclesiological approach, we are necessarily inhibited from dealing with the lived spirituality ('from below') of Bosch as we are able to work with the implications of this espoused ecclesiology ('from above').

Furthermore, it is dangerous to discuss the theological work of a person without taking serious note of their lives which are indeed the landscape of their work. This biographical approach has been done by several people with regards to Bosch, and so my aim is not to simply repeat a study of Bosch's life.¹²³ However, it will be important to lift out various dimensions of his life in order to aid in unfolding the contours of spirituality vis-à-vis Bosch's ecclesiology.

The second challenge that we face in this endeavour is that Bosch does not evidence extensive reflection on the Spirit; something that is imperative when considering *spirituality*. While it would be wrong of us to be too critical of Bosch because of this, it will become necessary to remain consistent with Bosch's desire for a full orb ed gospel and thus flesh out, as it were, pneumatological attentiveness from Bosch's ecclesiology, which I believe exists in somewhat embryonic form.

Spirituality and the First-Century

¹²² Sandra M. Schneiders, "Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality" in *Blackwell's Companion to Christian Spirituality*, edited by Arthur Holder. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 17.

¹²³ See Willem Saayman and Klippies Kritzinger, "David Bosch, the South African" in *Mission in Bold Humility: David Bosch's Work Reconsidered*, edited by W. Saayman and K Kritzinger. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1996), 1-7.; and J. Kevin Livingstone, *A Missiology of the Road: The Theology of Missions and Evangelism in the Writings of David J. Bosch*, (Boston Spa, West Yorkshire: British Library Document Supply Centre, 1989), 52-68.

At the outset of this chapter it is fitting to continue along the lines of investigation of the nature of Jesus' new community in the face of the Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots and Essenes, insofar as they pertain to spirituality. To do this we will briefly ask how the spirituality of these four groups can be characterized. Claiming to understand the spirituality of a first century Jewish group is audacious and even arrogant, yet there are important clues which are available from what we have discovered so far which can help us in moving toward Jesus' option.

The Sadducees held a close sponsorship with the Roman Empire. Doctrinally they did not believe in the resurrection, and Josephus notes that they also did not believe that the soul exists eternally or "that people suffered punishments or received rewards after they died."¹²⁴ Thus their spirituality would have been focused on the present reality. It was undoubtedly political and historical, antithetical toward other-worldly understandings of salvation. Commitment to social action and transformation was so strong among the Sadducees that it consumed the entirety of their attention, so that anything that was outside of the present reality was treated with suspicion.

Holding a strong distinction between 'clean' and 'unclean', the Pharisees were in many ways a 'very spiritual' people. That is, their devoutness to God consumed all that they did to an extent that they pursued rituals as a means of pleasing God as well as attempting to win favour in society. In contrast with the Sadducees, the Pharisees held an eschatological view which saw "God and humans as in close relationship both in this life and in the next."¹²⁵ In attempts to maintain strict devoutness, their spirituality took on elitist postures and pretentious attitudes.

For the Zealots, spirituality could be viewed as being in close relationship with zeal. The more passionate one is about God, the more God will be pleased with that person. Their social involvement was for the sake of transformation of society. And their eschatology was such that they fervently expected a Messiah; funded by the zeal of the faithful, God would be pleased to establish his kingdom once the land was rid of idolatry. The Zealots had a passionate and involved spirituality, which is closely tied to the concept of God's imprecation.

As the fourth group, the Essenes, fled from worldly involvement, their spirituality became one of escape. To contaminate oneself through contact and participation in

¹²⁴ *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* vol. 5 Edited by David N. Freedman et al. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 892.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 293.

unclean things is to displease God. “Josephus clearly asserts that the Essenes believed in the immortality of the soul and regarded the body as a prison house.” And although this is contrasted with other accounts which state that the Essenes did believe in *bodily* resurrection¹²⁶, it seems as though the Essenes did hold a dualistic view of reality. In this light they espoused a spirituality of escapism so to please God.

These are the four prominent understandings of reality in Israel, each with a marked perspective on the way things are, what the future will be like, and the implications of this for involvement (or lack thereof) in the world. Each of these groups passed judgment on others according to standards such as cleanliness, social involvement, piety, and so forth.

Jesus

In this atmosphere Jesus’ response to the world is baffling. He embraces the world by first becoming man, and more than that, a vulnerable child. Central to the belief of Jesus’ followers is in the veracity of the incarnation. This apparent paradox—the *Almighty* God becoming exposed before the harsh realities of the world—has proven time and again to confront human constructs of what a god is like. And yet the difficulty which this creates for the human intellect is also an important clue for spirituality: everything that God does in the person of Jesus is done within the limits, confines and constraints of human reality. In no way can we say that Jesus saw spirituality as *fleeing from* human reality.

Jesus embraces the outcasts, loves his enemies, reinterprets the Old Testament through a viewpoint that has superseded vengeance¹²⁷, and yet he teaches that his disciples do not belong to the human systems of the world. The world produces groups which distinguish in one way or another between who is included and who is excluded from the group. “Jesus of Nazareth, however, calls His disciples to a solidarity which transcends all these man-made differences.”¹²⁸ And while there were differences between the teachings of Jesus and various Jewish groups—for example Jesus’ option differed from the demands of the Torah and the Temple as understood by the Jews—“the real difference had to do with the question whether the messianic rule of God in the person of

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, vol 2, 622.

¹²⁷ David J. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective*. (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1980), 55-57.

¹²⁸ David J. Bosch, *The Church as Alternative Community*. (Potchefstroom: Instituut vir Reformatoriese Studie, 1982), 11.

Christ had really broken in, and what were the implications of this for the rest of the world, outside the covenant community.”¹²⁹

Given this reality, Jesus becomes a sort of anchor for spirituality. The biblical account of Jesus prevents us from getting caught up in a cerebral and idealistic view of what following God might entail. Throughout his life, Jesus is attentive to God in concrete situations: he attends to children, to widows, to the suffering.¹³⁰ He shows us what it means that ‘time is fulfilled’ in that God’s activity in human reality is not primarily something of the future; it is present.

Filled time actually implies a different orientation with the world: “From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way.” (2 Cor 5:16) It is directly in relation to this understanding of time that Paul speaks of those in Christ as “a new creation” (v. 17). This stark division between an ‘unfilled time’ and ‘filled time’ comes to bear in that spirituality is no longer enwrapped in anticipation of a future day when God will act in history (escaping or wreaking vengeance) because this has already happened in the person of Christ. Living in filled time is to exist with the kingdom among us. Participating in this new creation, the kingdom that is here *is* spirituality. In Bosch’s terms, the future

has invaded and permeated our earthly historical existence and is in the process of transforming it. Because the decisive moment has arrived, the apostolic ministry is “a fragrance of life unto life” (2 Cor 2:16), through which a great splendor manifests itself in the divine dispensation of the Spirit (3:8), a splendor that brings people justification (3:9) and reconciliation (5:20).¹³¹

Hope has taken on a new meaning. To hope in Christ is not disconnected from current existence. To hope is to be filled with expectancy, living the tension between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’; it is “hope-in-the-process-of-fulfillment.”¹³²

But is not Jesus’ message just another ‘first-century option’? The crucial distinction is that the message of Christ is not a religion or a culture or an ideology (as the Jewish groups sought).¹³³ Evangelism is clearly different than proselytism. For the various groups, the concern was that their way of life was preserved and propagated. As Newbigin points out, the distinction between evangelism and proselytism is evidenced “by the fact that when the authentic voice of the Good Shepherd is heard, those who hear

¹²⁹ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology: Ecumenical, Historical & Global Perspectives*. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 224.

¹³⁰ Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: a Conversation in Spiritual Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 33f.

¹³¹ David J. Bosch, *A Spirituality of the Road*. (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1979), 85.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 87.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 36.

it will seek to be one flock.”¹³⁴ The distinguishing feature is indeed in the unity; it exists in the coming together of this community under the God of Love.

Now that we have considered spirituality in light of Jesus’ life, spirituality has sufficient grounding from which we can turn to speak of spirituality and the Trinity. Previously I have uncovered as an integral dimension of the church as being its existence as encapsulated within the *missio Dei*, the mission of the triune God. Ecclesiology which has a Trinitarian awareness does much in the way of funding spirituality, as has been the case throughout history. Bosch speaks primarily of the Trinity in missional terms; the implications of the Trinity for mission, which is valid and helpful, but, as we will see, these Trinitarian implications cannot be limited to the missional nature of God; they must carry over into implications for spirituality.

Trinity and Spirituality

In order to unfold this point, I will consider two different ‘movements’ within Trinitarian thought. The one is an enigmatic movement (which is necessary because we cannot fully grasp God) and the other is an unmasking movement (to counter the dangerous tendency of believing that God does not work on our plane of reality as we experience it everyday).

At the outset of his ministry, Mark implicitly conveys a picture of the Trinitarian God as the Spirit descends on Jesus like a dove, along with the voice of God (Mk 1:9-12). Jesus’ baptism is significant not only in its Trinitarian implications, but also with regards to spirituality. “Baptism is a replay of Genesis. As Jesus is lifted out of the water, God breathes life into him. The breathing is given visibility this time by means of what looks like a dove descending out of heaven.”¹³⁵

While this event sounds quite spectacular, and is no doubt a momentous occasion—even a turning point in history, the tendency is to remove the event from what we consider to be ‘actual history’. This is perhaps due to the rather unfortunate misunderstanding of the word ‘spirit’, as it has come to connote something spectacular and, subsequently, anti-ordinary. Biblically, the word ‘spirit’ is synonymous with both ‘breath’ and ‘wind’; things that are everyday and even mundane. We see something similar in the creation account in Genesis where God begins by *speaking*; there is breath,

¹³⁴ J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, “The Legacy of W. A. Visser ’t Hooft” *IBMR* 16(2) April 1992, 79.

¹³⁵ Eugene H. Peterson, “Evangelical Spirituality” in *The Futures of Evangelicalism*. Ed by Craig Bartholomew, Robin Parry and Andrew West. (Leicester: Intervarsity, 2003), 232.

wind and spirit. It is not a supernatural event in that it is outside of history, but rather it is something that is both real and invisible. True spirituality exists only in the everyday, the mundane—the areas which, in a dualistic mindset, seems so ‘un-spiritual’.¹³⁶

Another significant event in for this unmasking movement is noteworthy and is accounted in Acts 2. We hear of fire coming, along with a *wind*, which gives the disciples ability to *speak* in tongues that they had not previously learned.¹³⁷ Again, the tendency to regard this event as ‘supernatural’ (*i.e.* a-historical) perverts the reality of what is going on.

Once having been breathed into life by God, ‘baptized with the Holy Spirit’ was the way he put it (Acts 1:5), they would have the strength and energy to continue the God-breathed creation of heaven and earth and the God-breathed salvation of Jesus. ‘My witnesses’ was the term he used to designate their new identity.¹³⁸

It is thus not only conceivable to state that Jesus’ eschatological actualization was Trinitarian (of which the coming of the Spirit was an integral dimension), but it is in fact *necessary* to uphold this as it is unmasked for its everydayness.

The second ‘movement’ in the Trinitarian aspect of spirituality is an embrace of that which is beyond our intellectual capacity, which I have termed an ‘enigmatic’ movement. This refers to the community of God; God is one, yet three. Given that it is enigmatic, this discussion need not end in the seeming impasse between one and the many; it can in fact open before us such a tension that invites us into a relationship: “Trinitarian thinking suggests that in a successful world drama, unity and multiplicity must enjoy a complementary relationship.”¹³⁹ Further, the Trinitarian belief counters individualistic tendencies because it allows for a lush understanding of holiness. That is, ‘perfection’ is the fruit of an active relationship initiated by God.¹⁴⁰ Given this relational, Trinitarian nature, spirituality both engages and goes beyond our intellect. It provides a sense of wholeness which knits together the fragments of our lives.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ Bosch, *Spirituality*, 33.

¹³⁷ While largely beyond the scope of this work, the outpouring of the Spirit is indeed an integral dimension of spirituality and is not something which simply belongs to Pentecostal denominations. For a good overview and way forward see Simon LeSieur, *Still Burning: Exploring the Intersection of Pentecostal and Reformed Understandings of Baptism in the Holy Spirit*. MDiv thesis (Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch, 2006).

¹³⁸ Peterson, “Evangelical”, 234.

¹³⁹ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as Image of the Trinity*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 193.

¹⁴⁰ Phillip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and Theology: Christian Living and the Doctrine of God*. (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1998), 82.

¹⁴¹ Eugene H. Peterson, *Subversive Spirituality*. Ed by Jim Lyster, John Sharon and Peter Santucci. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 198.

Integral to this is the notion of *perichoresis*. The noun connotes “whirl or rotation,” whereas the verb implies “going from one to another, walking around... encircling, embracing or enclosing.”¹⁴² It is a word which is imbued with the notions of relationship, rhythm and dance. *Perichoresis* is employed to convey something of the mutual indwelling of the divine persons in one.¹⁴³ Thus it conveys something of God’s dazzling activity in the world, where there is always an extended hand inviting each of us to join. But *perichoresis* also implies a certain distance: without any distance the three persons would be a monochrome oneness. Therefore it is a vibrant concept which expresses the relational nature of God.

Without relationship we cannot have any real sense of God, and within relationship there is a place for, as well as a limit to, one’s intellect. “In dealing with God we are dealing in mystery, in what we do not know, what we cannot control or deal with on our terms.”¹⁴⁴ The church cannot rightly claim to delineate the trinity, but in Volf’s ecclesiology, the church is “an image of the triune God.”¹⁴⁵ To reflect something of the Creator God can only be done in a living, loving relationship. Relating people *and* the church to the Trinity, the Orthodox tradition sometimes refers to this ‘image’ as an icon of the Trinity.¹⁴⁶

And, without unfolding the various dimensions of pneumatology as they come to bear upon ecclesiology, it is possible to note that the church can only be understood in relationship between the Triune God. If the church proclaims only rigid doctrine and eliminates the mystery of God acting, creating, breathing, how can it expect the Creator God to continue his work of creating and redeeming among them? Mark McIntosh rightly argues that “the trinitarian rhythm of self-sharing abundance is far more deeply and graciously operative within Christian spirituality than can always be discerned.”¹⁴⁷

Concluding on these ‘movements’ of Trinitarian thought we must uphold that enigma is indeed aligned with the biblical precedent. Especially notable in John’s gospel

¹⁴² Jürgen Moltmann, “Perichoresis: An Old Magic Word fro a New Trinitarian Theology,” in *Trinity Community and Power: Mapping Trajectories in Wesleyan Theology*. Ed by M. Douglas Meeks. (Nashville: Abingdon, 2000), 113.

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, 114.

¹⁴⁴ Peterson, “Evangelical”, 243.

¹⁴⁵ Volf, *After*, 2.

¹⁴⁶ Kärkkäinen, *Introduction*, 19.

¹⁴⁷ Mark A. McIntosh, “Trinitarian Perspectives on Christian Spirituality” in *Blackwell’s Companion to Christian Spirituality*, edited by Arthur Holder. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 179.

is an invitation to the mysterious.¹⁴⁸ For example, Jesus tells his followers that he must leave them and that he will return and take them “to be with me that you also may be where I am.” (Jn 14:3) As we begin to grasp something about that which Scripture is repeatedly pointing to—the reality and contours of God among us—then we are able to cut free some of the webs which entangle us in our preoccupations of ‘figuring God out’, of pleasing God through our actions, of loving in order that we can be loved. Indeed, ‘Trinity’ “reveals the immense world of God creating, saving, and blessing in the names of Father, Son and Holy Spirit with immediate and lived implications for the way we live, for our spirituality.”¹⁴⁹

‘Marks’ of Spirituality

Introduction

The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (381) is one of the early documents which were essential in giving shape and coherence to Christianity. It is slightly longer than the (earlier) Apostle’s Creed and refers to the ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic church’. These are statements which “belong to the article about faith in the Holy Spirit and are only justified and comprehensible in the framework of the creative workings of the Spirit.”¹⁵⁰ Given that the connection between the Spirit and ecclesiology has existed from even the earliest stages of the church, I will continue to unfold four ‘marks’ of spirituality¹⁵¹ in connecting dialogue with the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic.

‘One’: God’s People

For the church to be one there must be an organic unity which is evident; a shared commonality which is integral to her existence. But throughout history we have witnessed various divisions, schisms and sects which have seriously hindered the witness of the church. And more recently the idea has surfaced that there can be many appropriations of both the church and spirituality. To the extent that unity does not mean

¹⁴⁸ For an excellent work here, see Jean Vanier, *Drawn into the Mystery of Jesus through the Gospel of John*. (Ottawa: Novalis, 2004).

¹⁴⁹ Peterson, “Evangelical”, 242.

¹⁵⁰ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit*. (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 337f.

¹⁵¹ Henri Nouwen speaks of four different aspects of spirituality in Eucharistic terms, which I find very helpful and am loosely following here. It is necessary to note that Bosch does not explicitly employ Eucharistic terminology for ecclesiology (as John Zizioulas does). Nevertheless, I do find great affinity with Nouwen’s employment of these terms and Bosch’s thought. Nouwen speaks of ‘spiritual living’ in terms of being: *chosen, blessed, broken, and given*. See Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Life of the Beloved: Spiritual Living in a Secular World*. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1993). See also John Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church*. (Crestwood, N.Y.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985); for a summary of Zizioulas’ ecclesiology, see Kärkkäinen, *Introduction*, 95-102.

uniformity we can uphold and embrace diversity within unity. However, the church as one is not a soft term that disregards doctrinal differences as unimportant.

The ecumenical movement which exists today, incited especially by missionaries who desired unity with other denominations, had its first concrete example in the West in the early eighteenth century.¹⁵² It has decisively affected the course of ecclesiology and also has come to bear upon spirituality. And while it is quite possible to see congruence with the creedal unity and the ecumenical movement, there does exist a gap between the two. The point is that the first mark of the church is that it is 'one'; our employment of this term must entail caution since it is something which cannot legitimately be *imposed* upon the church.

But it is helpful to look at oneness from a different stance. Jesus' concern was not to establish doctrinal formulas and expositions which ensured a mechanical unity. Rather, he brought with him the kingdom of God, established and flourishing (but not yet in its fullness) in his life and in the life of his followers. Oneness is a term which depicts the visibility of a shared existence: there is something so compelling behind this group of people which identifies them as one despite their individual differences. Thus the first mark of spirituality is *community*. It is a people who were formed on the day of Pentecost which is integrally linked to God's universal activity.¹⁵³ Spirituality thus includes the conglomeration of people throughout the ages who have been grafted into the church—chosen by God. The church as a body acknowledges that God has a distinct purpose and plan for the world and is comprised of people who affirm that God has decisively acted in Christ to reconcile the world to himself.

'Holy': A Blessed People

The second mark of spirituality nuances the first. It is a body which has been and is being *blessed* by God. 'Holy' (the second mark of the church) carries with it the connotation of being singled out by God, but is an attribute which only accurately depicts God. That is, people cannot, in and of themselves, be holy. Yet it is applied to the church as its second mark insofar as the church is 'in Christ'. For the church to be 'holy' implies a setting apart from other things; it does not mean that the church is a triumphant entity,

¹⁵² Bosch, *Transforming*, 457.

¹⁵³ C. Norman Kraus, *The Community of the Spirit: How the Church Is in the World*. (Waterloo, On: Herald Press, 1993), 58.

but rather quite the opposite. Blessedness is never a self-serving action. It is always for the sake of others.

As blessed the community consists of people, such as Paul, who are vulnerable. They don't have all the answers and furthermore recognize that a theology of answers results in an explainable god.¹⁵⁴ Nevertheless they are a people who humbly offer answers, situated within "the dialectic of an asking divinity and an answer-refusing, but nevertheless an answer-attempting humanity, the dialogue whose demand is an *eschaton*."¹⁵⁵ They are people who have been completely changed by the good news and are compelled to respond to the good news, some of which (like Paul) held positions of prestige and power.

'Catholic': A Broken People

Catholicity, while coming to be predominantly associated with Catholicism, actually refers to the universal church. The New Testament does not employ the term to depict the church and there are differing understandings of what catholicity means. While it is related to the concept of the church's unity, catholicity has come to describe how the church is related to the kingdom. Some have viewed it synonymously with 'orthodoxy'. Both Luther and Calvin viewed catholicity in terms of the church's connection with Christ.¹⁵⁶ Without engaging in discussion on the implications of catholicity for ecclesiology, it is legitimate to state that the catholicity of the church implies a consistency with and participation in Christ's rule.

The connection between this third mark of the church and the third mark of spirituality, the church as a *broken* community, is especially evident in the person of Christ. Throughout his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus endured much pain. He was afflicted and he suffered at the hands of people for the sake of the world. Christ took on himself the suffering of other people.

The church, too, is vulnerable. In its vulnerability the community which follows Christ endures the pain of those who are not yet part of the community. Embodied in a community, this message of good news is protected against the rigid legalism of the doctrinal and religious dimensions along which the first-century Jews interpreted the

¹⁵⁴ Bosch, *Spirituality*, 33.

¹⁵⁵ Quoted in Barry A. Harvey, *Another City: An Ecclesiological Primer for a Post-Christian World*. (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 54f.

¹⁵⁶ J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church*. (London: SCM, 1953), 49.

Torah. Jesus entrusts the message of salvation to broken, sinful people who have experienced the power of this salvation which Christ has begun.

In order to embrace such a radical message includes in fact dying to oneself, which includes having courage to be insignificant and embrace weakness. It is quite probable that honesty and humility (an important theme in Bosch's missiology) actually refer to the same thing. It's the same thing that John the Baptizer proclaims when he openly tells the truth that he is not the Messiah, but that Christ must increase and he must decrease (Jn 3:28,30). "The true missionary knows that, in one way or the other, Christ Himself has to become visible in [their] life and conduct."¹⁵⁷ This life Christ becoming evident is the reality of a person in the new community.

Spirituality does not blindly suffer without reason, but rather suffering is because of the fallen condition of humanity which means that brokenness exists deeply within each human being. Given the hope towards which the church presses, there must be an acceptance of suffering, not reluctance towards it. As Bosch says, "only the willingness to suffer can end suffering in the world."¹⁵⁸

Bosch's experience as a cross-cultural missionary formed him (a child of apartheid) and "taught him to *trust* people."¹⁵⁹ With a deep seeded animosity between indigenous South Africans ("blacks") and Afrikaners ("white") Bosch struggled through the challenges of what it meant to be the church. He came to see and condemn the heresy of apartheid and even was discredited by some of his own people for his love for all people.¹⁶⁰

Faith in Christ must take on the indelible marks of the cross, the identifying marks which the apostles' asked to see in order to verify that Jesus was raised from the dead. As Paul insists in 1 Cor 1:18, the cross is a *scandal*. And Christians in all ages face the same temptation which Jesus faced: seeking to satisfy the world's demands for a "popular Messiah."¹⁶¹ But Jesus is the antithesis of a marketing technique; his road is painful in every imaginable way.

'Apostolic': For the World

For the church to claim apostolicity, three broad—and contentious—points are referred to: the church is historically connected to the apostles (who walked with Christ),

¹⁵⁷ Bosch, *Spirituality*, 56.

¹⁵⁸ David J. Bosch, "The Church and the Liberation of Peoples?" *Missionalia* 5:2 (Aug 1977), 13.

¹⁵⁹ Livingston, *A Missiology*, 58 (emphasis original).

¹⁶⁰ Saayman and Kritzing, "David Bosch", 5.

¹⁶¹ Bosch, *Spirituality*, 32.

teaching which is faithful to that of the apostles, and the ministry of the church as apostolic in nature.¹⁶² Forming the fourth mark of the church, apostolicity is in relation to the New Testament understanding of an apostle.

The Greek *apostelloo* means ‘to send’, or, ‘to send away’. Thus the apostles were sent out, in consistency with the message of Christ, to be given to the world and to serve God in the world. Apostleship, as it comes to bear on ecclesiology thus implies that the church is for the world.

And so the fourth ‘mark’ of spirituality is that it is offered to the world. A ‘spirituality’ that is inward in focus—at the expense of risk and brokenness—is only another variation of the Jewish groups with human interpretation of the Old Testament; those whom Jesus came to save. If we are to follow Christ in this ‘cruciform’ way, we will need to develop a theology of the *other*. Jesus came to make people fully human, to save people from sin and the effects of sin. And so we must struggle for the goals of this new humanity, already achieved in Christ, aligning ourselves with the Messiah and allowing him to work through us. In light of this it is our place to “live, act and hope in ways that contribute to human well-being in all its dimensions, countering the dehumanizing and depersonalizing tendencies of bad religion, secularism and scientism.”¹⁶³

This is an outlook which does not pride itself on *itself*, but on God who is glorified in weakness. Bosch seriously doubts “whether we will be able to transmit... intimate experiences of the love and grace of God to other people in any other way than by walking this road with them.”¹⁶⁴ This is the community that Jesus invites (not coerces) people into; an invitation devoid of preconditions, distinctions or any agenda. Claiming Jesus as Lord is a radical commitment to be given to the other, even though the ‘other’ is the very one who brings persecution.

To live in such an other-centered community is to be dependant: to recognize one’s need of others in order to be who we are. “Being dependant ...usually does not manifest itself in the spectacular and the dramatic, but much rather in the ordinary encounters and events of every day.”¹⁶⁵ If we live at a ‘sanitary’ distance from the problems of the world we will become insensitive. But if we are caught up in the chaos

¹⁶² Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*. 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 504.

¹⁶³ John W. de Gruchy, *Being Human: Confessions of a Christian Humanist*, (London: SCM, 2006), 31.

¹⁶⁴ Bosch, *Spirituality*, 69.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

and depths of the pain we can overwork ourselves and become useless.¹⁶⁶ We will never become compassionate until we give wholeheartedly of ourselves. And if we do this, with keen awareness to Christ's leading we will avoid the dangers of over activity.

Conclusion

Bosch's ecclesiological insight proves very beneficial for considering Christian spirituality as embodied within the church. In contrast to the various first-century Jewish groups, Christ's message was unguarded and perennially for the benefit of the other. To the extent that Christians have ignored the humility of Christ and arrogantly have employed coercion, adopted hierarchical structures of ecclesiology or embodied an 'other-worldly' spirituality, we must be truly repentant—both to God, and to our fellow humanity. Insofar as this has happened, Jesus' humanity has been denied and, along with it, our clarifying clue to spirituality has been lost.

Perhaps one of the biggest dangers in this endeavour to understand more about spirituality is that it "adopts elitist postures"¹⁶⁷ and thus denies the very message of Christ. When this happens, we "ostensibly [exchange] the robe of the Pharisee for the tattered garment of the repentant publican and then start thanking God that we are not like the Pharisee."¹⁶⁸ The reality is that 'spirituality' does not refer to some secret knowledge, it is not dependent on human disposition, and it is not primarily about human beings: spirituality is about God.¹⁶⁹ It is not about how *I* can be more like God, nor how *I* can bring God to the world: it is about being continually confronted with the call to take up the way of suffering and follow Jesus into *life*.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. For an excellent example of this, see Fil Anderson, *Running on Empty: Contemplative Spirituality for Overachievers*. (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2004).

¹⁶⁷ Peterson, "Evangelical", 222.

¹⁶⁸ Bosch, *Spirituality*, 38-39.

¹⁶⁹ Peterson, "Evangelical", 228.

Chapter 4

Western Protestant Ecclesiology: an Impasse?

Introduction

Examination of the church in any historical era is a complex task. In fact, this complexity is such that any attempt to depict the situation of the church in a particular time is necessarily inadequate. Our task will not primarily be to trace the historical developments in Protestant ecclesiology and spirituality (although these are important and will be included) our focus is primarily on Bosch's depiction of various problems which exist within Protestant ecclesiology. To do this it is necessary to address the recent paradigm which has profoundly shaped and altered the course of ecclesiology, pointing to some of the areas of difficulty along with responses to those difficulties. In order to unfold the realities of contemporary ecclesiology, we must first make some introductory notes about worldview in general, and then attend to the worldviews within which the church is struggling.

In Wolters' definition, worldview is "the comprehensive framework of one's basic beliefs about things."¹⁷⁰ That is, it is the cohering system underlying the complete orientation of a person (or a group of people's) existence. Tom Wright unfolds the contours of worldview through five basic questions: "who are we, where are we, what's wrong, what's the solution—and what time is it?"¹⁷¹ However, a worldview is not necessarily something that is explicit or even evident; it may actually exist in disguise. But there is always a worldview which is in operation. Humans always, in one way or another, answer these basic questions.¹⁷²

With this understanding of worldview, we can now ask critical ecclesiological questions to the current Protestant church. How does the Protestant church understand itself, where does it view itself as being, what does it see as the problem, what does it

¹⁷⁰ Albert M. Wolters, *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 2.

¹⁷¹ N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 443.

¹⁷² Goheen and Bartholomew, in *The Drama of Scripture*, wrestle with these questions within the "comprehensive scope of God's redemptive work in creation" while simultaneously highlighting the centrality of mission in this grand story. Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding our Place in the Biblical Story*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 12f. Understanding the Bible as a grand story is incredibly beneficial for spirituality since we all have a beginning, plot, characters, and an end; but we must be careful that the narrative of Scripture does not impinge on the working of the Spirit. See Eugene H. Peterson, *Subversive Spirituality*. Ed by Jim Lyster, John Sharon and Peter Santucci. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 200.

present as the solution, and what time is it? Since our purposes here are to sketch an outline of current ecclesiology in Bosch's thought we will not endeavour to exhaust these topics. Instead they provide us with a background against which we can discuss spirituality in the Protestant church today.

Features of the Enlightenment Worldview

We begin by following Bosch through a sketch of the Enlightenment worldview; an era which did not arise in a vacuum, but developed in the context of the Medieval Paradigm. In this earlier period one can note significant shifts such as changes in the understanding of salvation and a subservience of the church under the state.¹⁷³ While the ecclesiological developments in earlier paradigms provide the necessary background of the Enlightenment, they are beyond the scope of this work. Suffice it to note that the worldview which was culturally held in the West was *understood* as being based on Christian principles. While reactionary movements (especially the Reformation¹⁷⁴) significantly challenged the validity of these claims, we must uphold that medieval society understood a structure of authority in operation which viewed God as its zenith.¹⁷⁵

In chapter 1 we noted that the Reformation did not so much challenge ecclesiology as it did papal authority. In the medieval period, a certain structure of authority was developed to which all people conformed. This structure was based on Christian ideals, but of course was manifest in a certain context and within a certain appropriation of Christianity. But Bosch notes that “through a whole series of events—the Renaissance, the Protestant Reformation (which destroyed the centuries-old unity and therefore power of the Western church), and the like—the *church* was gradually eliminated as a factor for validating the structure of society.”¹⁷⁶

Two connected revisions of societal authority occurred. Paradoxically they had their inception and sponsorship by Christians who understood these developments as glorifying to God while these discoveries, in due course, resulted in the denouncement of Christianity as a coherent and comprehensive claim on truth. The first was the denial of

¹⁷³ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 215-222. See also Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*. (London: SPCK, 1986), 95-102.

¹⁷⁴ See here Bosch's chapter “The Missionary Paradigm of the Protestant Reformation”; Bosch, *Transforming*, 239-261. For some implications of the Reformation for spirituality see Alister E. McGrath, *Spirituality in an Age of Change: Rediscovering the Spirit of the Reformers*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 31-58.

¹⁷⁵ Bosch, *Transforming*, 262f.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 263, emphasis original.

the validity of an external basis for truth.¹⁷⁷ What occurred was an individualization of authority which denied the rulers, the church and even God as being universally authoritative on their own—we might say that society’s answer to ‘who are we’ no longer included any derivation of existence from outside of a person. In terms of theology this meant, for example, that the Bible could not stand on any basis other than that which could be satisfactorily argued. The second revision of authority requires mentioning here: the view developed that objective truth exists *outside* of everyday reality, traditions, cultures and even history, which humans (men—for women were seen as ‘irrational’) could only uncover through science and make sense of through reason.¹⁷⁸ This development has its roots in the Platonic notion that a ‘perfect realm’ of ideals exists outside of physical embodiment which humans are constrained to. The intellect became man’s access to this ‘other realm’; in applying the scientific method and thorough reason, it was thought that this universal truth could be uncovered.

Bosch highlights seven important dimensions to this Enlightenment paradigm, I will engage these points insofar as they will fuel our dialogue with ecclesiology. The first is closely tied with the shift of authority just discussed. In the Enlightenment, “reason supplanted faith as point of departure.”¹⁷⁹ We could typify this shift by stating that Descartes’ adage *Cogito, ergo sum* (‘I think therefore I am’) displaced Anselm’s motto of *fides quaerens intellectum* (‘faith seeking understanding’). The point of departure for this emerging enterprise based itself on a different epistemological basis than anything up to that point: the notion of ‘enlightenment’ or ‘coming of age’.

The second distinctive feature is a division which placed things which are ‘subjective’ (*i.e.* subjects which can be empirically studied and about which arbitrary conclusions can be made) underneath that which is ‘objective’ (‘neutral’, ‘value-free’ reason). Humans, it was thought, could make sense of all reality (including humanity) under rational analysis. “The emphasis was no longer on the whole, but on the parts, which were assigned priority over the whole.”¹⁸⁰

A third dimension of the Enlightenment is what Bosch states as “the *elimination of purpose* from science and the replacement of purpose by *direct causality*.”¹⁸¹ Thus, cause

¹⁷⁷ See Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*. Revised and Expanded ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 71-72.

¹⁷⁸ Bosch, *Transforming*, 266.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 269.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 264.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 271, emphasis original.

and effect came to dominate and even monopolize the discussion of purpose; any purpose outside of this process was doubted.

Fourthly, the Enlightenment can be characterized with a new trust in progress. This belief saw that all cultures consist of uniform categories, which envisioned colonialism as a worthy method of embodying that development. Here arose the idea that humans “had both the ability and the will to remake the world in their own image” which especially abounded in the project of colonialization.¹⁸²

The fifth of Bosch’s points is especially significant for us; it is the division that was placed between ‘fact’ and ‘value’. That which was objectively and rationally ‘true’ became understood as factual. Things such as values and morality were understood as values, and therefore could not be claimed as universal.

In the physics classroom the student learns what the “facts” are and is expected at the end to believe the truth of what he has learned. In the religious education classroom he is invited to choose what he likes best.¹⁸³

Furthermore, ‘facts’ belong to the public domain, since they were viewed as those things which were not circumstantial. ‘Values’, on the other hand, could not have any place in the public domain and therefore are both private and personal.

Sixth, the Enlightenment pronounced that all of reality was explainable, eradicating all mystery. That which could not yet be fully explained became a scientific problem awaiting a solution. People began to view all of reality in terms of science, and, partnered with reason, the gospel that is foolishness to the Greeks lost any explicit influence on society.

And lastly, humans were envisioned as being “emancipated, autonomous individuals.”¹⁸⁴ Not only did interest in individuals displace importance of both God and others, but faith came to rest in humanity (through human effort we will create a better world). “The individual experienced himself or herself as liberated from the tutelage of God and the church, who were no longer needed to legitimize specific titles, classes, and prerogatives.”¹⁸⁵

With these main premises operative, the Enlightenment worldview has prevailed for many centuries. This pervasive worldview has gone unchallenged until only recently.¹⁸⁶ But dovetailing onto this Western worldview is the current—and still

¹⁸² Ibid., 265.

¹⁸³ Newbiggin, *Foolishness*, 39.

¹⁸⁴ Bosch, *Transforming*, 267.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 267.

¹⁸⁶ Bosch views the ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘modernity’ as synonyms depicting the same epoch. See, e.g., Ibid., 349.

emerging—paradigm which many label as ‘postmodernity’.¹⁸⁷ This latest movement has been a topic of extensive study and theories, one of which views postmodernity as “incredulity toward metanarratives.”¹⁸⁸ It is in the tension between these two broad movements that the church now finds itself, and it is here that we now turn our attention to ecclesiology: what is the self-understanding of the Protestant church?

The Church and Western Culture

Building upon this understanding of worldview, we can now ask critical ecclesiological questions to the current Protestant church. In this section I will, in very broad strokes, unfold what it means that the church has ‘reached an impasse’ in terms of these worldview considerations; especially as both the Enlightenment and postmodern paradigms seem to be merging as two oceans and the church seems to be caught in the middle. I will do this by returning to Wright’s worldview questions: how does the Protestant church understand itself, where does it view itself as being, what does it see as the problem, what does it present as the solution, and what time is it? Since our purposes here are to sketch an outline of current ecclesiology in Bosch’s thought we will not endeavour to labour the issues. Rather, they provide us with a historical orientation from which Bosch’s insistence of the church as an alternative community can materialize.

Furthermore, as Bosch surveys ecclesiology, he is primarily focused on the missionary idea which shaped and even formed the Christian identity.¹⁸⁹ Indeed recent study has offered much in terms of unfolding the missional mindset of the Enlightenment era and, increasingly, the postmodern influence on ecclesiology. My focus is not explicitly on the missionary identity of the church—although this necessarily underlies the church—but rather on what ecclesiology actually looks like since the in breaking of the Enlightenment worldview. The Protestant church, in various ways, has subjected itself to this modern worldview; especially discernable in the conceptualizations of *mission* and *church*; areas which are central to spirituality.

Enlightened Ecclesiology

‘Who’ is the church? While the answer to this question is not entirely new in the Enlightenment era, it is new in its nuance. Here ecclesiology is demarcated in its

¹⁸⁷ I will follow Bosch in employing this term, even though some scholars are not convinced that this terminology is accurate.

¹⁸⁸ Quoted in Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, “Story and Biblical Theology” in *Out of Egypt: Biblical Theology and Biblical Interpretation*. Scripture and Hermeneutics Series, vol 5. Edited by Craig Bartholomew, Mary Healy, Karl Möller and Robin Parry. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 144.

¹⁸⁹ Bosch, *Transforming*, 349.

relationship with the Enlightenment worldview; working with its basic tenants. Its identity has become determined by the Enlightenment. Admittedly, Protestant responses to the Enlightenment project are varied, yet it is fruitful to focus our attention on the elevation of reason, the shift of authority, the perception of humans as autonomous and the ‘fact’-‘value’ division as they have come to bear on the ‘who’ question of ecclesiology.

As the Enlightenment breathed reason into society as the final arbiter of truth, the church was forced to respond and take a stand with regards to reason. And so Bosch notes five different stances which the Christian church has taken, especially during the twentieth century: “Christianity was propagated as a unique religious experience; as something for private life alone; as more rational than science; as a rule for all of society; and as humanity’s liberator from every redundant religious attachment.”¹⁹⁰ Each of these avenues has a similar stance as did the four Jewish groups (Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots and Essenes) which we discussed in chapter 2: in one way or another, these responses all seek to uphold or deny rationalism as a paradigm, working synchronically with it. The identity of the church thus works within the rational structure which is adhered to by society.

A perennial challenge to ecclesiology is the tendency to establish a close partnership with, and sponsorship of, the structures of power and authority in any given culture. Clapp terms this tendency as ‘retrenchment’.¹⁹¹ When this tendency is conceded to, the mission of the church becomes determined more by its context than by God. Retrenchment in the Enlightenment paradigm meant specifically that the church submitted itself to the construct of societies’ rationalistic emphasis.

Similar to the retrenchment notable in the Constantinian paradigm,¹⁹² it is errant to take up a blindly critical stance toward the church’s failure. Indeed the notion that the world could be interacted with in greater depth and detail, characterized and understood through reason need not be an endeavor which is antagonistic to Christianity. The

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 352.

¹⁹¹ Rodney Clapp, *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 20.

¹⁹² In this earlier shift which can be classified as ‘retrenchment’ Christians responded to the opportunity wherein the governing systems finally bowed their knee to the God witnessed to by the faithful martyrs, whose weapons proved more powerful than those employed by the empire. “The thing which no earlier Christian could have dreamed of happened. The Emperor bowed his head to the yoke of Christ.” J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984: Questions for the Churches* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1983), 33f.

detrimental effects of the Enlightenment on ecclesiology were a result of the Enlightenment rather than an initial project thereof.

With the rational developments of the Enlightenment, along with the tendency of retrenchment, Christians experienced the benefits of science and reason and deemed these as legitimate means to make sense of their existence. Reason became an orientation point and even a pillar of the church's identity. But this retrenchment is manifested various ways: ranging from an outright condemnation of science and reason to an embrace thereof. These varied responses in fact share the basic premises of working within the reigning structures. Regardless of the specific response, the church's identity has been closely intertwined with the Enlightenment worldview. Complicating things even further, it must be upheld that retrenchment cannot be easily written off; for we must remember that "the 'light' in the Enlightenment was real light and should not simply be discarded."¹⁹³

Another feature of ecclesiology in the Enlightenment concerns the Enlightenment conception of people as autonomous individuals. This meant, *inter alia*, that the church came to be viewed as merely a conglomeration of disconnected parts. As parts, they can be dissected from other 'parts', holding no significant dependence on one another. In this view, the church resembles more of a haphazard collection of dissected (and even dead fragments) than it does an organic, living body. The Christian idea of freedom, under this banner of autonomy, was no longer freedom from sin; it became freedom from all authority and control.

Adding even more to this ecclesiological complexity is the Enlightenment distinction between facts and values. On the one hand, to embrace this dichotomy meant limiting the scope of ecclesiology to the 'private' aspects of life; as though God's authoritative claim does not rest on all of creation, but only on certain 'subjective' areas of human existence. 'Church', in many instances, lost its integral place in the life of communities and became limited to a Sunday activity. But on the other hand, it also meant that theology became subject to the Enlightenment worldviews and was restricted by its binding commitments.¹⁹⁴ Removed from its foundation in God, theologians attempted to reconstruct ecclesiology to fit within the reigning worldview of the Enlightenment.

¹⁹³ Bosch, *Transforming*, 274.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 359.

Fuelled by this fact/value, public/private dichotomy, divergent opinions abounded as to the role of the church as well as the place of (autonomous) individuals within the church. Unfortunately, for the church to be viewed as ‘enlightened’ has largely been understood as adopting the worldview—the basic truth claims—of rationalism and scientism.

Ecclesiology and Nature

‘Where’ is the church? Shifting our concern to the Enlightenment understanding of reality as it has been manifested in the church provides insight into the church’s perception of its place in the cosmos.

With regards to the subject-object divide, ecclesiology was distorted and the church became another ‘object’ which, in its final evaluation, is submitted to the peril of human deliberation. The church, in this objectification, ceased to encourage all people to view the world and themselves in terms of their createdness. Instead the church even participated in the degradation of the world and other humans who came to be viewed as closed units; even machines, whose purpose is derived from ‘nature’. But Bosch states that “the church’s missionary existence in the world... implies that nature and especially people may not be viewed as mere objects, manipulable and exploitable by others.”¹⁹⁵ Under the pressure of the subject-object divide, the church lost part of its missionary identity and began to objectify creation.

Another ecclesiological consequence of this subject-object bifurcation was a large scale expropriation of spirituality from an all-encompassing and integral position in ecclesiology. Whereas the Medieval church held a high place of holiness (they preferred other terminology than ‘spirituality’) which reached all areas of life, the Enlightenment paradigm imposed new distinctions onto spirituality at this point.¹⁹⁶ Spirituality was approached as a subject which could be contained neatly within ecclesiological boundaries; *limited* to things such as how to pray, how to meditate, how to employ spiritual disciplines etc (all of which were at the mercy of the god ‘reason’). In this divergence of spirituality from ecclesiology, ‘spirituality’ also becomes disconnected from other parts of life. This divergence has meant that, “in effect, the Cartesian project

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 355.

¹⁹⁶ Ulrike Wiethaus, “Christian Spirituality in the Medieval West (600-1450)” in *Blackwell’s Companion to Christian Spirituality*, edited by Arthur Holder. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 106.

transformed Christian piety into a kind of personalized ‘diet plan’ for the soul, complete with ‘before’ and ‘after’ testimonies.”¹⁹⁷

Ecclesiology, when basked in this message of the subject-object divide, is disabled from providing the lush grounds in which spirituality can be addressed. Since spirituality escapes the confines of the Enlightenment’s constructs, it cannot be adequately dealt with under ‘pure scientific study’. To view ecclesiology through the subject-object split whose message is that of ‘natural consequence’ leaves life and faith in the church both contorted and devoid of its potential.

Sin and Redemption in Ecclesiology

‘What’s wrong with the world and what’s the church’s solution?’ In dealing with the Enlightenment idea that, in principle, all problems are solvable, we note a significant ecclesiological failure. In practice, the church altered the biblical view of the problem of humanity as being directly linked to sin, which has influenced all of reality, to a view which held that the problem with the world is that it has not yet fully developed. The remedy to such a quandary is simply that humanity needs to apply and export the treasures afforded by Western accomplishments.

Adopting an ‘enlightened’ trust in progress affected teleological convictions (as we will address in the next section). With this idea came the impetus for humanity to bring the kingdom of God more fully to earth. How was this to be done? In the 1960’s, which can be termed the “decade of the secular”, musings held that “development was going to solve the problems of the Third World!”¹⁹⁸ Some strands of ecclesiology drank from the contaminated well of optimism and embraced development as a miracle drug, while others blatantly denounced this optimism outright; a stance which was so estranged from the Enlightenment that it was unable even to challenge it accurately.

Missionary activity provides a good example of this optimism. In some circles, missionaries operated with the notion that, through providing the world with Western commodities and advancements along with the gospel message that coheres within such a framework, the world’s problems would be solved. But this project has and continues to fail on a large scale: “the dream of a unified world in which all would enjoy peace, liberty, and justice, has turned into a nightmare of conflict, bondage, and injustice.”¹⁹⁹ Consensus now abounds that this is an unachievable dream and a misinterpretation of sin;

¹⁹⁷ Barry A. Harvey, *Another City: An Ecclesiological Primer for a Post-Christian World*. (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 130.

¹⁹⁸ Bosch, *Transforming*, 356.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 361.

in fact, “the disappointment is so fundamental and pervasive that it cannot possibly be ignored or suppressed.”²⁰⁰ The church needs to be continually asking questions as to the message it is embodying and proclaiming.

These questions and answers have always funded eschatological views (necessarily linked with missiological convictions) which have not only caused problems from within the church, but have added again to the world’s discrediting of the church. Instead of being a place of healing, the church has caused more hurt to an already broken world.

The ‘Hour’ of Ecclesiology

‘What time is it?’ The Enlightenment concept which witnessed causality eclipse purpose has become manifest within the life of the church. Partly this meant that a long argument arose regarding the origin and destination of that which exists, but more specifically it has caused the church to reconsider the age in which we exist. Originally this was manifested in a non-eschatological view which denied that God would act in the future. But in response to this, various views of eschatology have arisen and been promoted.²⁰¹ With regards to missional thought, the church became conceived of in its various ways which we see still exist around us: from ardent premillennialism²⁰² to variations of postmillennialism²⁰³ and derivatives thereof.

The electric tension between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’ has been neutralized by a preoccupation with only one of the two polarities. Some ecclesiological views hold that the current age is simply a time wherein all available efforts must be employed to ‘save souls for heaven’ while other views doubt that God will again decisively act and that the onus is on humanity to bring the present age into its near and harmonious future.

A Way Beyond the Impasse

If it is possible that the church continues to exist with integrity in the future, the worldview espoused by the church must constantly and persistently ask questions as to what and who is shaping it. Before concluding this chapter it will be beneficial to draw a further line of connection between the church and its identity which was touched on in chapter 2 of this study: the notion of the church as the alternative community or as an *altera civitas* (alternative city).

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 356.

²⁰² *i.e.* holding that salvation means “being saved *from* the world.” Ibid., 318, emphasis original.

²⁰³ *i.e.* the view that the fullness of the coming kingdom will in direct continuity with the present. Ibid., 321.

At its inception the church took the audacious stance which resisted a definition of it being a private group, ultimately under the authority of the state. Early Christians could have avoided much abuse, persecution and even martyrdom had they acted as though Christ was another god among the multitudes which people worshipped. Instead, they claimed that Jesus was Lord when they were required to profess Caesar as Lord. Their communities were not private and secluded, but rather they formed an *ekklesia*—a city! A city defined as thus is consistent with the claim of Christ’s lordship which was originally a political statement against the empire: theirs was not under the jurisdiction of the god Caesar. Early Christians intentionally employed imperial language which implied that Jesus is “the alternative or real emperor of the world, the head of an anti-imperial international alternative society.”²⁰⁴ Their convictions were so strong that many people called the early Christians atheists.

The suggestion is not, however, that today’s church revert to an early-church ‘model’ (I discussed the dangers of this in chapter two of this study), but rather it is helpful to listen with a keen ear to what the church as an *ekklesia* can offer us today when ecclesiology seems to be suffering from a long history of retrenchment. Audaciously the early church risked making all activities: from family business to child-rearing, all under the affect of Jesus’ Lordship. It didn’t mean that all Christians were forced to live in a small prescribed area as we would conceive of a city, but rather it employed *ekklesia* as a term with which everyone could identify and subverted it with different connotations.

This is quite difficult for us to understand today. In the Enlightenment’s wake a significant desire came about which saw people moving to cities. And while this movement was not heeded by everyone, (not everyone lives in the city), it is unquestionable that the city has become dominate for virtually all people in the world. Not only is the city a place of commerce, but it is now the place from which the world is defined and controlled. It is not, however, simply the case that the principles of the Enlightenment which we have described directly translate into the contours of life in the city. Somehow the city has taken on its own ethos which watches over human existence in the world; an existence of its own which exercises authority. “The groove of the City is decisive, making its inhabitants believe they can do what they want and get away with it.”²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 134.

²⁰⁵ Harvey, *Another*, 2.

We find ourselves in an environment where the concept of a 'city' has drastically changed. It still can be an excellent reference point for the future of ecclesiology, but will need to remain wary of the ideas of domination and power which are currently associated with cities.

Furthermore, in the dialogue between the church and the city today, there are ecclesiological difficulties which come to bear and impinge on the church's ability to critically reflect and engage in this discussion. In much of its existence the church has been abused. While it was never intended to be a successful entity, the church was originally composed of ardent believers who devoted their entire lives to following the radical rabbi, Jesus. Throughout the ages, being interpreted and appropriated through a wide range of lenses, the church has suffered from internal abuse: Christians have whored after other gods and rendered to other gods the things that are Christ's. In the confusion of priorities the church has often ceased to be an alternative community and has become instead a private enclave within a larger city, subjected to its agenda and authority.

It is along these lines that Bosch conceives of the church as an alternative community: it is a community that is distinct from, yet exists within, the broader society. With this stance the church can gain enough distance from the Enlightenment paradigm such that it can be perpetually attentive to its Lord, and persistently relevant to the world in which it exists. Bosch further states that "the church has tremendous significance for society precisely because it is a uniquely separate community."²⁰⁶ Bosch's call is one to more authentic and humble reflection on the implications for this community; in renewing the church as an alternative community, society too will see renewal.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ David J. Bosch, "How My Mind has Changed: Mission and the Alternative Community," *JTSA* 41 (Dec. 1982), 8.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

Chapter 5

Spirituality and Ecclesiology: New Avenues

Introduction

In chapter two and four of this study we have examined ecclesiology from different angles, keeping a special attentiveness to mission. And in the third chapter, as with the current chapter, our main concern is with this thing we are calling ‘spirituality’. In chapter three we unfolded contours of spirituality in light of Bosch’s ecclesiology. Now, with a framework of the recent history of ecclesiology and the realities facing the church today, along with the foundation provided of both Bosch’s ecclesiology and its implications for spirituality, we can provide some suggestions for the church and ways to exist within this ‘impasse’. I will do this first by discussing divergent understandings of salvation, both historically and contemporarily, then turn to Jesus’ birth, death and resurrection as they are important for navigating spirituality today, and finally conclude in a discussion of the concept and term ‘spirituality’.

We could aptly say that one prominent characteristic of postmodernity is that it is the ‘age of spirituality’. Burgeoning interest in mysticism and contemplation is a direct result of the Enlightenment’s failure to deliver on its promises. Not only does this mean that Christianity is being challenged from within (Christians who have been taught to naïvely believe certain things in order to maintain the status quo²⁰⁸ are becoming hesitant and even reluctant to give their support to Western Christianity as it has become established) but also it is being challenged on another, and incredibly significant area. Religions which intentionally and decisively worship and serve gods other than the God of Israel, as a result of globalization, present a plethora of alternatives to the failing Enlightenment version of Christianity. In our discussion of spirituality we cannot help but address this issue.

The church must carefully seek to discern and sever unhealthy ties with the Enlightenment and postmodern worldviews without cutting the jugular vein of its influence on society. Rather than shunning this new movement of ‘spirituality’ outright, we must truly listen to the voice of the living God and ask how we, the church, are to respond to this new interest in ‘spirituality’. It is an ideal opportunity for Christianity to uncover the richness of its tradition as refurbished versions of Christian spirituality and its

²⁰⁸ See Mark A Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 3-5.

teachings have become popular and even in demand. But we must be keenly aware of the dual dangers of syncretism and irrelevance. Spirituality, being the thorny topic it is to discuss, can be incredibly convoluted for the Christian who has been shaped by the influence of the Enlightenment and now postmodernity. This chapter seeks to give both clarity and direction to spirituality within the living organism which we call ‘church’.

Salvation through History

In order to focus our lens through which we look at spirituality, we will briefly discuss three main understandings of salvation that are typical of various historical epochs. These serve us well in steering our discussion of spirituality since they expose some of the assumptions which are common in discussing spirituality. We do this with recognition of the importance of salvation for Christianity and affirm with Bosch: “For Christians, the conviction that God has decisively wrought salvation for all in and through Jesus Christ stands at the very centre of their lives.”²⁰⁹ Bosch goes on to apply these understandings explicitly to *mission*, stating that it would “be correct to say that the scope of salvation—however we define salvation—determines the scope of the missionary enterprise.”²¹⁰ With our focus on ecclesiology and spirituality we can conclude that it would be legitimate to extend this also to the study of spirituality: in our delineation and understanding of salvation will provide the scope of our understanding, as well as participation in, spirituality.

Yet the New Testament does not seem to have a precise and unanimous definition for the word ‘salvation’ and so it is difficult to ‘objectively’ judge between varying understandings. Luke’s emphasis appears to be that salvation is something for the present, manifested in tangible ways. Paul seems to understand salvation as having only its inception in the present reality, the effects and the fullness of which extend into the future. Thus, for Paul, salvation gains momentum in its eschatological expectation.²¹¹

Continuing with the definition of salvation into the Greek Patristic period of history, there is a shift away from the eschatological emphasis which predominated earlier. Salvation came to denote the gradual “uplift” of believers as they became more

²⁰⁹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1991), 393.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 393f.

holy. And so it is that in this paradigm, Jesus' pre-existence and incarnation takes the limelight.²¹²

But this mystical understanding of salvation would not last indefinitely. As the Western church developed, it espoused a view of salvation which emphasized the reality and all-pervasiveness of sin. This led to a nuanced understanding of salvation which emphasized Christ's death on the cross (whereby sin was defeated). "Salvation was the redemption of individual souls in the hereafter, which would take effect at the occasion of the miniature apocalypse of the death of the individual believer."²¹³ With this emphasis, it became possible—even beneficial—to distinguish between 'salvation of souls' and 'providence in earthy reality'. In other words, redemption meant one thing for human souls and quite another for the rest of creation. Therefore the present became viewed as primarily for the purpose of the future.

The view which separated salvation from cosmic reality was altered by the Enlightenment because authority came to be something that only existed within individuals, not in an abstract notion of 'God'. Also noteworthy is that, during the Enlightenment, the Western understanding of salvation split into different models. One of these saw salvation as freedom from the shackles of religious superstition; people could be 'saved' from Christianity. Put differently this first view held that moral, societal and human improvements (defined of course in Enlightenment terms) were all synonymous with salvation. The other understanding of salvation which emerged insisted that "humans were active and responsible agents who utilized science and technology in order to effect material improvements and induce socio-political change in the present."²¹⁴ In this view, the earthly work and teachings of Jesus received the emphasis. It differs from the previously discussed understanding in that the conviction here does not hold up Christianity as the source of oppression.

The church had two main reactions to these modern challenges: in some instances it attempted to ignore the Enlightenment's difficulties and maintain the long-held understanding of salvation, whereas in other situations it tried to mesh salvation with these new developments of the Enlightenment.²¹⁵ Both of these approaches have significant problems: the first operates with a deep animosity toward the world, and the

²¹² Ibid., 394.

²¹³ Ibid.

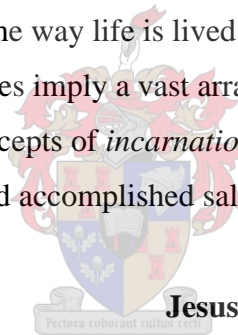
²¹⁴ Ibid., 395.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

second largely supported the world. In so doing, the tension between embracing the world *and* simultaneously rejecting the evil therein was flattened out.

Following this discussion, it is prudent to conclude that salvation is something that is larger than any one of these differing understandings: the first which emphasizes the incarnation, another, the life of Jesus and still another, the cross and resurrection. Reducing salvation to only one of these dimensions seriously truncates God’s message of redemption. Instead of only one of these, salvation can be seen as something that God is the primary actor of: it includes the mystery of God-becoming-man, it encompasses the totality of Christ’s person and work, and it also involves the suffering, death *and* resurrection of Christ. In Bosch’s words, “Salvation in Christ is salvation in the context of human society en route to a whole and healed world.”²¹⁶

The connection between salvation and spirituality is necessary to reiterate. In speaking of salvation, we are attempting a human articulation of what it means that God has and is establishing restoration in the redemption of the world. And how the transitive verb ‘save’ is employed affects the way life is lived before God, humanity and creation. As discussed above, salvation does imply a vast array of things; especially noticeable when articulated through the concepts of *incarnation* (and life), *death*, and *resurrection* of Jesus Christ—through which God accomplished salvation.



In chapter three I discussed Jesus with regards to spirituality especially as it pertained to the various Jewish groups in the first-century. Later I discussed four ‘marks’ of spirituality which provide guidance and orientation for our understanding and embodiment of it. Here the discussion will focus primarily on the implications of Jesus’ birth, death and resurrection as they come to bear on our current situation and in light of this discussion. And while there are some similarities with the previous material, this articulation attempts to highlight a Christocentric focus, and therefore provide a rich connection between salvation, spirituality, and our lives today. Furthermore, if the Spirit is seen as one with Christ, then the life of Christ provides rich insight into the source of spirituality.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 399.

Birth

The world in which we live, work and sleep is a place that is welcoming of the esoteric and incredulous toward comprehensive truth claims. It is a time when theories abound regarding the origins of the world. Elaborate concepts of Evolution and star-dust are being constructed, modified and honed. With these attempts, there is a shared belief that, so long as these theories are subjugated to science and reason, these theories can be satisfactorily accepted as 'true' for society. There exists an overall desire within all of us to know something of our origins so that we can live truly to who we are and where we have come from. But all theories, Christian and non-Christian, are just that: theoretical.

It is in this context that I want to pose the audacious statement which confronts the main tenants of our time: the esoteric is welcomed and total truth claims are skeptically avoided. The statement is simply thus: Jesus' birth is our entry point into the mysterious, pre-existent God, and, in the particularity of his person, universal truth exists. The conundrum of *how* the world was created has become a scientific task, which, given the Enlightenment paradigm, assumes the answer to this question will make reality much more manageable and therefore provide us with the necessary insight for life within the world. But we are not given the answer to this question, and the scientific method is incapable of providing us with the sufficient answer. But in the person of Christ, we are shown the results which the scientific project is looking for: what to make of creation and how to live in it. Put differently, the fruit of theology can provide different answers to the basic questions of humanity because it approaches from a different angle and with alternate priorities. After several volumes of work, Karl Barth states that "We have established that from every angle Jesus Christ is the key to the secret of creation."²¹⁷

Jesus' birth is significant especially in that the world is affirmed in a certain way. It is affirmed for its goodness, not for its sinfulness. All through his life he exists as both man and God, demonstrating a profound love which surpasses the entire domain of sin. "Jesus shows us that the creation is something to be lived, not just looked at, and the way he did it becomes the way we do it."²¹⁸ We have been given a vast array of particular accounts regarding Jesus' spirituality; from which we learn the spiritual life. As Jesus brought God's clarity to the meanings of 'sin' and 'creation', we are called to follow in

²¹⁷ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics III/1*. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1958), 28.

²¹⁸ Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places: a Conversation in Spiritual Theology*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 137.

his light and also go about our daily lives seeking out and pointing to God's inculcation there.

Death

Jesus' death is our assurance that God's history is actually the same as our history; it evidences that they are not two separable entities. Rather, they are two different viewpoints for the same reality. And this is critical for our spirituality. Jesus' death assures us that God is unreservedly committed to the world which he has created. The more this is understood, the further we are propelled to learn of and experience creation's goodness.

But Jesus' death connects us with God in another way as well. Death is something that, for all of humanity, is inevitable. At some point, in some way, we are all going to die. The point of accepting our fate brings liberation from the fear of manipulating our lives so to preserve ourselves. And so the brutal death of Christ is something with which we can all, in some way, identify and grieve. It is in the conjunction of deaths--Jesus' and ours—is where we “begin to understand salvation.”²¹⁹ Alternative entry points into ‘salvation’ are invalid, for they diverge from the biblical witness of God's salvation.²²⁰

Lesslie Newbigin says that in the person of Jesus “We are not offered something which might be described as the best among the religions; we are offered something which, if it is true, is the *clue* to all history – the history of the world, and the history of my own soul.”²²¹ Because God altered the course of history in the person of Jesus, apart from this hermeneutical key or ‘clue’, there is only speculation. History is not something which is overwhelmingly glorious: wars, massacres, disasters, pain, persecution, and the like surround us as a swarm of mosquitoes. In our interaction with the world we experience these powers of death and destruction—a broken arm or headache quickly reminds us that something is wrong.

This is the same message which drove Jesus to the cross: the world is not as it should be. His undeniable embrace of, and participation in, the world which is plagued by sin allowed him to defeat sin. Jesus denies that the problem with the world is simply that we need better education, more devout religion, or any other human behaviour or

²¹⁹ Ibid., 143.

²²⁰ See Calvin E. Shenk, *Who Do You Say That I Am?: Christians Encounter Other Religions*. (Scottsdale: Herald, 1997), 34-52.

²²¹ J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Finality of Christ*. (London: SCM, 1969), 62; emphasis added.

ability. He faces the reality with the entirety of his humanity. The problem with the world is that sin exists. And for this conviction he suffers pain and death.

Resurrection

All four gospel accounts emphasize that Jesus was to be betrayed and then was to rise from the dead. It is a central concept to the Christian faith, and rightfully so. Without the resurrection, Jesus' message loses its potency and veracity. But with the resurrection, the Spirit (also referred to as the Paraclete or Advocate) is promised to come to the believers (*e.g.* Jn 16:7). The resurrection was a concrete event: foretold, but surprising, fear-instilling, yet empowering. And it was more than a one-time event. The resurrection became a way of life; a characteristic of time, even a continuous event. "Resurrection is the work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus, raising him from the dead and presenting him before the disciples; resurrection is also the work of the Holy Spirit in those of us who believe in and follow Jesus."²²²

Resurrection demonstrates the extent of God's power and ability as reaching far beyond that of humanity. It is not something that humans can control, or even scientifically understand. But this does not detract from its reality. Instead, it makes the reality of the resurrection all the more profound. It extends *beyond* the intellect and description, but its veracity is ensured by the concrete demonstration of the marks on Jesus' hands and side (Jn 20:27).

Thus resurrection life is really the same thing as spirituality. It is life in the Spirit. It is also the continuation of Jesus' message and work in the lives of the followers of Jesus. Therefore community is an essential part of resurrection life. And, in community, words such as 'autonomous' or 'independent' have no home, divisions between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' are weightless and invalid. Spirituality is allowing the breath of Christ to penetrate throughout the entirety of our reality.

Spirituality isn't something that is achieved by human work. And this makes it difficult for us to believe—we are forced to trust someone else *instead of* ourselves. Spirituality, at its pinnacle, invites us out of ourselves (Jesus called it 'losing one's life' Mt 10:39) into a communal relationship with Christ and his followers where we can be formed into a people who are constantly aware of God.

Without abandoning ourselves to others, and ultimately to God, we in some way hold some of the crucial reigns on our lives. Monks have known this for ages. Many

²²² Peterson, *Christ*, 232.

African cultures provide rich insight for us here as well. This is conveyed especially well in the Xhosa term *Umntu Ngumntu Ngabantu* (or *Ubuntu*), which essentially means that we derive our existence through one another; not through ourselves.²²³ It isn't always a glorious path to follow, in fact living for others often results in imprisonment and death, but originally the symbol of the cross meant for early Christians the same thing that it meant for Christ: a willingness to endure all hardships for the sake of others. In this community we have the opportunity "of living in a gentle tension between giving ourselves in full surrender to our fellowman, yet at the same time enjoying the peace of the Lord."²²⁴

Is Everything 'Spirituality'?²²⁵

In chapter one of our discussion we noted that 'spirituality' cannot sufficiently be demarcated by a definition. Many warnings exist which emphasize that we must have some sort of a definition of spirituality or else everything is spirituality and therefore nothing is spirituality: "it must be capable of definition... [or else] it effectually means nothing."²²⁶ If spirituality is such an encompassing endeavour that it cannot be legitimately spoken of, then it is a useless word that should be disposed of. But the problem with defining it is that *definitions*, as we know them, require a certain backing from Enlightenment thought, which is impossible to impose upon spirituality. Whenever spirituality is articulated on human terms, it is subject to misinterpretation and misrepresentation. We cannot resolve ourselves to flee from it, for spirituality is a gift from God. Spirituality pervades all of life, but does not constitute all of life.

Furthermore, writing about spirituality could perhaps be compared to taking a snapshot of a sports game: if the quality is good, the image is in focus and so forth, it may be possible to determine something of what is going on, perhaps the score board is included in the photo. From the picture it may be possible to discern who is playing, and even gather important clues regarding the environment and conditions of the game. But from the photo it is incredibly difficult to get a real sense of the game: the ethos of that particular event, let alone any sense of the rules and strategy of the game; for these are fluid concepts which can be described, but when disconnected from the event, are useless.

²²³ John W. de Gruchy, *Being Human: Confessions of a Christian Humanist*. (London: SCM, 2006), 42.

²²⁴ David J. Bosch, *A Spirituality of the Road*. (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1979), 23.

²²⁵ I am following Bosch in that he concludes his *Transforming Mission* with a discussion titled "Is Everything Mission?" (p. 511)

²²⁶ Phillip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History*. New ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 40.

The attempt to define 'spirituality' is essentially a desire to construct our understanding of it with a basis of framework of humanity: where humans and human existence set the stage, as it were, for God to act. We write manuscripts for spirituality with which people can relate simply because of a shared humanity, and not necessarily because of a shared God. New technology and research provides excellent data which can elicit various emotional responses. And indeed, splendid performances precipitate from these projects which tickle our interest and enthrall us. But if we step back from the entertained crowd and examine what is actually going on here, this all implies that God has everything to do with us and only along the lines with which we define, describe and understand ourselves. This results in a drama where God's activity is *limited* to human concerns.

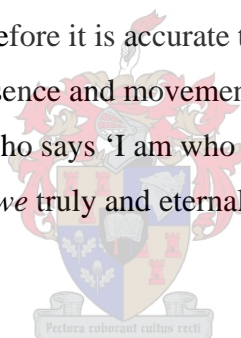
Spirituality is not something of which humans are the main topic. Neither is the mode of our experience of God (forms of prayer, spiritual disciplines, etc.) the purpose of the relationship. But so often we make the means out to be the ends. With our cause and effect mentality, we do not sufficiently delineate between tools and task, which leaves us confused as to the placement of our faith. Spirituality has everything to do with God; not in an anti-material sense, but in a way that is consistent with the Christian and Hebrew sense of reverence for the Holy God.

This said we must reciprocate the point by stating that spirituality is not something which we seek outside of human existence. If transcendental meditation is for the purpose of escaping reality, then we must retell the story of God-becoming-man; incarnation is the antithesis of escapism, rather it is the fulfilment of the invitation of God to embrace this broken world. Spirituality, since humans are whole beings, can only occur within the stuff of human lives. This includes daily activities such as eating and drinking, as smiling and crying, emotions and responsibilities. Once we acknowledge that God does not want us to exit reality in order to engage us, we can intentionally invite, and watch for, his presence and activity in our daily lives.

'Spirituality', as we have dealt with it, requires us to make distinctions in other places and ways than society and other religions make. It is both a very everyday thing, as well as being something enigmatic (as we discussed in chapter 3); two concepts which are better viewed in creative tension rather than as paradoxical. But it also means that we have the opportunity to invite others into a fuller understanding and experience of spirituality under the tutelage of Christ. Without sufficient grounding in the community of believers, spirituality is dislodged from its home.

In the community of faith we are all beginners in this thing that is called ‘spirituality’, and yet we are all, as Christians, involved in it. To progress from ‘beginner’ to ‘intermediate’ and to ‘advanced’ is to return to the articulation of spirituality which developed in the seventeenth through mid-twentieth century in Roman Catholicism. This referred to “the life of perfection” which developed as an interesting mix of Enlightenment ideas and monasticism. Such an approach to spirituality leads to unhealthy divisions and creates a sort of caste system with the message that not all Christians are called to life in its fullness.²²⁷ But the art of being a beginner in this involves pursuit of both humility and boldness which opens up a tension that is charged with potential: recognizing that we do not fully understand God and do not ‘possess’ the truth, and also recognizing that the finality of the person of Jesus Christ is a legitimate basis upon which we base our faith.

Spirituality is embedded deeply within the Christian tradition and becomes visible only in the lives of ordinary people and communities. It cannot so much be *recovered* as *uncovered* and discovered. Therefore it is accurate to see spiritual life as that which discerns and endorses God’s presence and movement.²²⁸ In the words of Margaret Silf: “it is in our *search* for the God who says ‘I am who I am’, that we do our growing and becoming, and discovering who *we* truly and eternally are.”²²⁹



²²⁷ Sandra M. Schneiders, “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality” in *Blackwell’s Companion to Christian Spirituality*, edited by Arthur Holder. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 23.

²²⁸ David J. Bosch, *The Lord’s Prayer: Paradigm for a Christian lifestyle*. (Pretoria: Christian Medical Fellowship, 1985), 21.

²²⁹ Margaret Silf, *Companions of Christ: Ignatian Spirituality for Everyday Living*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 22, emphasis original.

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