

# Remembering Our Future

Explorations in Deep Church

Edited by  
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# Education, Discipleship and Community Formation

Mark Wakelin

## Introduction

Alan Kreider's essay explores directly Christian initiation or discipleship training, surveying different approaches to catechesis. By contrast, this essay is a reflection on the importance of love in Christian formation; love as a theological reality of Christian community where Christ is the centre of relationships; love as an educational necessity where our embrace of the other is the context and purpose of formation as we become formed in the image of Christ.

I start the essay with a discussion of some aspects of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*.<sup>1</sup> In his previous theological projects Bonhoeffer was concerned with the reality of God, a search for a real God revealed in concrete ways. In his doctoral thesis, *Sanctorum Communio* he was particularly interested in the God given reality of the church.<sup>2</sup> In *Life Together* we see that theory applied in the practice of a particular community at Finkenwalde of trainee pastors of the breakaway Confessing Church of 1930s Germany. I then suggest that Bonhoeffer has offered in a general way some solutions to what I understand to be some of our present challenges as church both in theological terms and in the terms of adult education and formation. These

problems are essentially concerned with epistemology on the one hand (what and how we know things and the status of that knowledge) and ontology on the other (how we are formed and become disciples of Christ). Finally I reflect on the implications of this for how we grow both as individuals and as communities into maturity in Christ.

In contrast to the other essays in this volume, this contribution is focused on a particular theologian and his context. The focus on Bonhoeffer provides a case study in how a deep church vision was articulated and developed in one particular time and place. Given its particular focus, I point out the limitations of trying to apply Bonhoeffer's approach to our own particular, contemporary contexts.

## Love is the Great Christian Reality for God is Love

Before looking at *Life Together* I want to say a few words about love for I believe this is the key to all our understanding of Christian catechesis, discipleship and nurture. John tells us that 'God is love' (1 Jn. 4:8, 16). Indeed a Christian Trinitarian understanding of God is fundamentally about the loving relationship that defines God's being, self-sending and giving, distinguishing us from the more straightforward monotheistic theologies, or what Jurgen Moltmann describes as 'radical monotheism'.<sup>3</sup> We talk of the relationship we are invited into with and through the triune God in terms of love.

It is the triune God who is the driving force of creation, and who sustains creation. Each quantum particle comes into being and continues in being only because God acts lovingly. The loving action that sustains creation is the same loving action, given with the same energy and power that brought all things from nothing in the first place. It is incomprehensible to believe that God has finished with creation, for creation without God returns from where it came. All is held in God's hand, a continual intense outpouring of love that holds back the emptiness of before from reclaiming all that is. Thus the statement: 'for God so loved the world' (Jn. 3:16) must not be

rewritten by worried Christians as, 'for God was so upset with, angry with, desperate about, distressed, or embarrassed by the world'. It was love alone that lies behind this mystery that the one who made all and sustains all has become part of it and subject to the aching and longing of the creation itself. The purpose of that self-sending is not to condemn but to restore and to heal.

It is, of course, loving relationship that is the final destiny of creation when all our aching and longing, our desperate needs for restoration and healing are brought into a communion of love in worship of God. It is in communion with others that we can be fully ourselves. Our individuality is not lost in relationship but fulfilled. Our true selves found, not by a journey inwards of selfish introspection, but by the movement outwards towards the other; towards God the Father who as creator made all, as Spirit sustains all, as Christ restores all and calls all to become fully alive. Our community now is a foretaste of what will be. As Charles Wesley wrote:

And if our fellowship below in Jesus be so sweet,  
what heights of rapture shall we know  
when round his throne we meet.

Formation in Christ is thus first and foremost, beginning middle and end about relationship and the central relationship is our relationship with the triune God. This relationship cannot be understood only in individualistic terms. Even on a desert island, a thousand miles from the next person, our relationship with God is about community with others. The discovery of God in us is the discovery of God in the other; of God in relation to all things. Augustine's discovery of 'the united testimony of thy whole creation' persuaded him of not only an individualistic assent to a theistic proposition, but a communion of belief in a loving God.<sup>4</sup> It may indeed happen the other way around. The discovery of God in relation to all things or God in the face of the other may become the moment when you realise that in a lonely world you are not alone. Either way, the one is impossible without the other; Christ is known in and for community.

Catechesis and discipleship must always be seen as part of the bigger picture of God's work of creation and salvation. It is God's purpose that we have, 'life in all its fullness' (Jn. 10:10); the glory of God as Irenaeus expressed it, is the 'human being fully alive!' Discipleship is bound up in God's generous, gracious, limitless love reaching out to a loved and precious creation that it may be healed and fulfil its destiny and purpose of creation in the image of the God restored, healed and forgiven. It follows then that it is important to avoid notions of discipleship that are simply functional, a means to an end; strategies that are focused on outcomes and light on process. As George Morris argues, love is the motive, the message and the method of our mission.<sup>5</sup>

## Life Together Under the Word

Bonhoeffer's short book, *Life Together*, offers a practical example of a Christian community for a particular time in the Western church's history. While I believe it helpful from both an adult learning and a theological point of view, it is important to note that it is what it is. He is writing for a particular place and time, with particular issues; what he says is necessarily provisional, partial and positioned. Bonhoeffer is in any case not offering a blueprint for discipleship training even for his time (on this see also Luke Bretherton's first essay for a critique of blueprint ecclesiologies). His concern is greater than that; it is with the concrete reality of God's involvement with the world through Christ. While this is not a simple 'how to' book it is also not a philosophical book speculating about the possibilities of Christianity, it is a book grounded in the living reality of God who is reconciling the world and calling disciples to follow. His concern for truth as a reality is also a concern with the location of knowledge; of where truth can be known. Here his interest in the concrete gets expressed in the practical, his high Christology argued out in terms of whether hymns should have a harmony line. It is his interest in general terms about the concrete nature of God's revelation and his sense of grounded practicality that draws my attention. While he does

not offer simple answers to our questions about the nature or process of Christian formation, he challenges us to take seriously the struggle for truth and to work out what it means in real places and with real people.

## A Struggle for Truth Over Fantasy

You can never read Bonhoeffer without realising that he is interested in the reality of God and not in abstractions. I found this hard to understand when I first read *Sanctorum Communio*, his doctoral thesis. I was used to reading theological books that seemed speculative, philosophical; they asked questions about the reasonableness of God's existence, or the logical basis of Christian theology. Like Anselm, they seemed to start with the phrase, 'putting God aside', and then proceeded to make what sense they could in the apparently neutral world of philosophical reflection. Bonhoeffer comes as a shock, he is not asking, 'is there a God?', or 'is the incarnation logical given what we know of God?' He is not arguing from first principles at all. He owns up to his faith and seems to be saying, 'Given that Christ is really in the world, what does that mean for us?' Thus in *Sanctorum Communio* he asks sociological questions of the theological construct, 'church', and theological questions of the sociological phenomena of the church. We may question both his sociological skills and his theological ones, but his project is fascinating. The initiative for knowing about God does not lie with human reflection but divine revelation. Theology has primacy over philosophy. The task of the theologian is not to speculate about the nature of God, but to engage with God who reveals himself in time and place. In discovering *sanctorum communio* (community of saints) through, in and despite the *peccatorum communio* (community of sinners); the truth of God's church despite the sinfulness of human beings, Bonhoeffer is pointing a way forwards for us in our own struggle after truth. *Life Together*, as a practical expression of his ecclesiology, is thus about truth; the truth of God revealed in Christ calling us to community.

The enemy of truth is fantasy, the human made fantasies about what community should be. We have to be rid of

fantasies about community before we can really begin to discover what God has given us in Christian community.

Christian community means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. There is no Christian community that is more than this, and none that is less than this.<sup>6</sup>

Belonging is not therefore about the effort to shape our fantasy and make it a reality; it is about letting go of unrealistic human made ideals of community and discovering relationships in Christ and Christ in relationships. The hope for the new disciple is that sooner rather than later we become disillusioned with our own expectations of community and can begin to grasp the realities of the community that God is calling into being. Warm feelings, emotions, idealised expectations of human relationships, natural kinships and agreements are all barriers to the only true form of Christian community which exists only in what Christ has done for all of us.

Community is therefore not a technique for Christian discipleship; it is the gracious gift of God which we are called to receive. The church is part of God's revelation, his gift to us, and it is our business to engage with that revelation and struggle to find the truth of it. Bonhoeffer qualifies the simple description of 'common life', or 'life together' with 'life together under the word'. Community arises where the word of God is present, and where it is not, the church has ceased to be. The boundary between church and the world is thus drawn around notions of truth and fantasy or falsehood.

Given the peril of the church at the time Bonhoeffer was writing such theological clarity carries huge significance. The Barmen declaration of 1934<sup>7</sup> and the setting up of the Confessing Church in Germany in response to Nazism offer a context that makes it clear that Bonhoeffer is very far from engaging in theological abstraction. The Lutheran Church in confessing mode, defining its boundaries in the clearest possible terms, declares the ancient warning, '*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*'; outside the church there is no salvation. The task of distinguishing between truth and fantasy is the task of choosing between salvation and damnation.

## Objectivity or Subjectivity

It helps, I think, to remember in broad terms the philosophical choices that Bonhoeffer is faced with as he emphasises the place of God's revelation in the human concern for knowledge. As National Socialism increasingly dominated the post-World War I Germany, what was true and what was fantasy became increasingly important. The choice was between existentialism and German philosophical idealism. The first located knowledge as personal experience, 'subjectivity is truth'. In this the other person is ultimately unknowable, the boundaries between individuals insurmountable. The second defined truth in objective terms where knowledge existed wholly outside and transcendent to the individual. Truth was a *form* to which all more or less conformed, and boundaries between individuals were absorbed into the whole. Neither of these philosophical positions are totally helpful in the pursuit of truth or community so vital in the face of the growing horror of Nazism. In the former, nothing is really true and the absolute nature of individuality prevents any form of community. In the latter, truth is set in such hard idealistic terms that there is no room left for individuality at all because all must conform to the one true way of being human and so communion is thus equally impossible because communion involves distinct persons being in relation rather than all being part of an undifferentiated mass.

Bonhoeffer is neither an idealist nor an existentialist; he is a Christian who believes that God has revealed the truth through his self-sending in Jesus Christ. The question is to find in what real and concrete ways we can engage with that truth. Relationships play a crucial role in this for he locates Christ at the boundaries of the human self-preserving individual reality and mediating those relationships. The other person becomes knowable because Christ makes it so. Christ becomes knowable as we reach out to the other person and find Christ there. This is not subjective for it is 'really out there', God is, for God is in Christ. It is however not simply objective, a truth existing all by itself in some ideal form, God is revealed in relationship. Truth is thus found within community and it is our business

not to invent community but to accept the gift and let go of the fantasies.

## Parallel Issues for Today

Our philosophical choices today offer some parallels. On the one hand, the postmodern battle cry is 'truth is discourse': all knowledge claims are lost in the language and culture of those who speak of it, if they are there at all. On the other hand, the positivist argues that such claims are unproblematic: what is true for me must be true for you in uncomplicated ways. Postmodernism is mirrored by fundamentalism, the complaint that language is 'violence to truth' matched by the equally dogmatic, 'only literal truth will do'. Though we may not always express it in this way, *epistemology* is the great divider of our church and indeed our world. It is not that we hold different views about *what* is true, though we do; it is that we hold different views about the *status* of truth itself. It is this that makes dialogue so challenging. We have nowhere to engage with others to discover truth and can only fall back on a respectful but resentful 'agree to differ'.

I find that Bonhoeffer's general direction in how we may understand knowledge and locate truth profoundly helpful. He suggests a direction in which the choice between the two extremes may be resolved. For him it was between subjectivism and objectivism, for us between the postmodern and positivist epistemologies. Bonhoeffer's belief that God is and God reveals, leads him to assume that God reveals himself in concrete ways such as the church. Knowledge is thus located in community and engaged with through relationship in that community. It is neither a subjective reality in which what is true is simply a private matter and the other person is unknowable and other, nor simply an objective reality that exists in some unproblematic way, as static truth in itself. Truth is found in Christ who mediates relationships; that is Christ makes our relationships possible. The movement towards the other person, the 'alien thou', is a movement made viable only by the Christ who mediates relationships. Without Christ the relationships are doomed, the

other person remains alien, the community a human structure and fantasy. As we engage in such relationships not only do we discover the other through Christ, we find Christ, and we become ourselves. The movement towards the other may be understood in ethical terms for it is essentially a movement of love in which we become formed in the image of Christ who stands at the boundary of self and the other. His theory of knowledge – his *epistemology* – is expressed in fundamentally *ethical* terms, and the outcome of knowing and discovery is seen in the formation of disciples, in their *ontology* – i.e. their being in and through relationship with others. Act, being and knowledge come together in the dynamic of Christ-mediated relationships of the Christian community. In losing ourselves, we find Christ, and find our new selves.

For us to learn from this approach is not to slavishly adopt his philosophical solutions let alone the more detailed outworking within *Life Together*. Rather, we are left with a challenge: if we instead saw truth located within relationships, mediated by Christ, then our approach to catechesis and discipleship would be shaped by love rather than correct dogma. This is not to say that all truths are equal. Rather, it is to hold that truth exists within communion and not in an abstract way. Christian formation, salvation even, would thus not be a process of assent to a series of theological propositions, but rather an act of faith in Christ the mediator in which we reach out to the other and claim the fellowship that he has won for us. Our search for what is really true would become the source of our unity rather than our division, for the direction of the search would be the concrete reality of a communion made possible by the risen Christ. To paraphrase John Wesley's sermon on the *Catholic Spirit*: 'I don't need to know at the moment what divides us as Christians (we'll come to that soon enough), but if your heart is right with my heart, give me your hand.'

This helps us, I believe, because it takes seriously both the postmodern criticism of the problematical nature of truth claims, and the positivist longing for truth to be more than simply an individual's opinion. By locating the struggle for knowledge within human community, relationship precedes and forms the context for our endeavour.

- The recognition that our search for truth is located within such relationships encourages caution from naïve and simplistic knowledge claims. The partiality of one person's view is a given, but one person's view is set within the wider community. We need each other with our different stories, backgrounds, assumptions and viewpoints in order to overcome the inherent difficulty of knowledge expressed from one person's point of view and not another. Catechesis and discipleship thus involves reaching out to others and understanding their position in order to contest our own limited and fallen perspectives. Our learning together becomes an adventure of broadening horizons and relationships as we discover the reality of what Christ has won for us and not simply defining church as what we think it is by where we are at a particular moment.
- The recognition that such relationships are only possible because of Christ who really stands at the boundaries of self-mediating that love, offers a notion of truth that is far more than simply subjective. Life together is to be understood as 'life together under the word', where the word is not just words about God, but the living word of the crucified and risen Christ. Our formation as Christians is thus a serious engagement not with abstract philosophical notions, but with the concrete reality of what God reveals to us in Scripture. For all flavour of Christian the gracious act of God to reveal can be taken seriously within the context of relationships defined by God's love.

## Signs of True Community

The community for which Bonhoeffer wrote *Life Together* was a real one really struggling to cope with the difficulties of the rise of National Socialism. It was a breakaway church, split from the mainstream Lutheran Church because it believed that the Lutheran Church had become hopelessly compromised by state intervention. It is easy to see such a breakaway as a political gesture, but it was in fact a profoundly theological reaction to the loss of integrity. God's word was compromised by the

state's words, and the church had to say, 'here we stand' and draw new boundaries. Integrity matters to such community under the word, expressing in a real time and place the declaration made at Barmen in 1932. As you read the text you become aware of some of the signs which mark its integrity, its longing for reality and willingness to let go of its longing for a human idealised community. It is still not a blueprint of what community should be, but rather an example of the features of what one community was, and what they struggled about.

Formation is a process in which knowledge, attitudes, character and habits are formed that express a new self. Christian community – that is, relationships not based upon fantasy or idealistic notions of how we might get on, but on the action of a risen Christ who mediates those relationships – is thus the centre of formation. Consequently, the fundamental aspect of such community is forgiveness. Bonhoeffer, for example, talks of the inevitable disillusionment that is felt by those who really seek to explore true community. The disillusionment occurs because their sentimental fantasy about what church is quickly comes up against the reality of imperfect human beings. Our business is to seek Christ in the other. Bonhoeffer encouraged his students to have public group confession. He felt that it was only through such vulnerability that they could cut through the sentimental attachments and human affections and get to the reality where Christ was. Forgiveness of each other makes real the forgiveness that we can so easily assume we have from God. Our formation as Christians is a real and concrete journey into communion with others and is marked in *Life Together* by a number of features which are helpful to note:

- It was a community under the word and he gives to the reading of Scripture and the preaching of sermons a sacramental distinction. Something real is happening as the word is read and preached, even when a student is practicing the skills of preaching, that is far beyond merely human interpretation. It would be easy to see this as simply a form of German piety or even tapping into older traditions of mysticism. I believe, however, that he is suggesting something

far more concrete than this. God's word is alive and speaks into the reality of the community's life.

- It is a community of worship and thankfulness that arises out of gratitude for what God is and has done, where singing together expresses the hope of a community under huge pressure. Pastors must not even complain about their congregations, for they are God's gift and something for which to be thankful.
- It is a community of costly discipleship, not because grace is earned, Bonhoeffer is too much of a Lutheran to go down that path, but because grace costs God much and our response is always going to be serious or it is no response at all.
- It is a community of bread and wine for which confession is a necessary preparation, and the Lord's Supper is a fulfilment of all.

The community of the Lord's Supper is above all the fulfilment of Christian community. Just as the members of the community of faith are united in body and blood at the table of the Lord, so they will be together in eternity. Here the community has reached its goal. Here joy in Christ and Christ's community is complete. The life together of Christians under the word has reached its fulfilment in the sacrament.<sup>8</sup>

I am sure that the experience of the students in this community with Bonhoeffer was in no way ideal. No doubt the vision of a group of serious minded men meekly following the guru-like teaching of this extraordinary theologian would have been confounded within days of spending time with them. However, I believe you get a glimpse of something hugely important when you read this story. A glimpse of a community that really believed in the reality of God among them; who expected '*his fullness to receive and grace to answer grace*'. They did not meet to study theology simply as an abstract academic exercise but neither did they sit around dewy eyed and think warm thoughts of fellowship with their heads empty of all but naïve piety. The deep learning of theology involved particular patterns of relationship. The struggle for truth involved reaching out in love to each other. They believed that

in loving each other they were really encountering Christ who made their loving safe and possible. They believed that in the Christ mediated relationships community was formed and that community was a concrete expression of Christ in and for the world.

For our purpose there is again a clear and explicit challenge for catechises – that is, a serious and real journey into church, not simply as a human institution, but as objective expression of God's revelation. To learn not simply about our faith in our Christian formation, or simply develop as God centred and moral individuals, but rather to be formed as part of the Christian community, far broader than our own denomination.

## **Situated Learning**

We cannot and should not develop an approach to Christian formation and discipleship that copies the student experience in Finkenwalde. However, the emphasis on truth and community do give us, I believe, a real challenge in developing approaches for today as we seek to 'disciple all nations'. First, it emphasises that truth matters. We cannot therefore hunt around for forms of community and church that are simply effective tools of evangelism or discipleship as if they were theologically or morally neutral technologies. True community is not of our making but of God's and our response is to ask 'what is God blessing?' and do it, and not do something that we hope will work and ask God to bless it. Church is not a technique for making disciples: it is a reality for disciples to receive. Second, the emphasis on community as the place where knowledge and truth are known. Here, I believe, lies hope for real dialogue in the church between our different factions. We cannot, I suggest, adopt the secular patterns of either positivism or postmodernism, of dogmatism or relativism and hide in our separate corners shouting at each other. Such fractured communities are clearly formational of Christians, but not into Christlike maturity. That 'Christ is our peace' (Eph. 2:14) needs to be taken seriously: he is the one who breaks down walls of enmity. It is something that he does for us and

that we receive, and not something we strive for as a prelude to Christian community. If knowledge is located within relationships, expressed in Christ-given community under the word, then welcome and hospitality precede all else.

This emphasis on belonging to a community as a key aspect of formation is described in Lave and Wenger's book on situated learning.<sup>9</sup> Here they describe how the context of learning, a community of practice, is a key aspect of that learning. To some extent Lave and Wenger are simply restating a form of apprenticeship, where the values and attitudes as well as the practice and knowledge of a particular craft are gained through relationships. The learner becomes a legitimate but peripheral participant in a particular community. However, the importance of relationships, of acceptance, are emphasised more than a simple restatement of apprenticeship might imply. They explore, for example, the experience of learning for someone within an Alcoholics Anonymous group. An AA group is a useful model for church in any case, a gathering of those with a particular need rather than a club for people who have passed their qualifications in being good. The fellowship of the AA is all about the sharing of the strength of the community as they face together a day by day journey of sobriety; developing a trust within those relationships that enables new ways of understanding and living to become possible.

Post-Enlightenment thinking has played down the place of trust in learning. Empiricism demands that truth claims are legitimised entirely from observation, that truth is extracted from human relationship into an independent generalisable claim that exists all by itself. The postmodern critique of such claims tends to undermine the possibility of any form of generalisable claim, of the *grand narrative*. Truth existing independently of relationship is questioned because of the positioned nature of knowledge. It is time, I suggest, to question both the legitimacy of the Enlightenment's division of faith and reason, and the postmodern despair of knowledge trapped forever within a particular discourse. Ellen Charry makes a good case for such, arguing from the tradition of the church against the philosophical division of faith and reason.<sup>10</sup> She defends the legitimacy of trust as a reasonable part of

human knowing. In doing so she also challenges the postmodern despair of true knowledge ever being known. Trust is a product of relationship, a proper and reasonable thing for human beings to have, a natural outcome of belonging and thus an important aspect of community. Trust, however, has to be built on truth, real relationships and mutual pastoral care; it is not a technique of Christian teaching or evangelism.

## Some Practical Suggestions

Where does all this take us? *Life Together* is the working out of a particular approach to training at an extraordinary time in the church's life. The details of such a community cannot be applied directly, but I think we can learn much from some of the patterns, and indeed they have a contemporary feel.

First, it is important to *keep it real*. We are not to 'sell church' to people and allow Christian formation to become simply an aspect of Christian marketing. Our business is not to present the Gospel in the most favourable light in case those we teach are put off. The usual reason we give for struggling to have integrity as a church is that if you do not people will soon find you out. This is simply not true – people can and do believe the most awful lies (e.g. Nazi Germany) – but neither is it the point because integrity is not a methodology for Christian formation, a way of attracting people to our cause. The reason we must keep it real in our faith communities is because truth matters. It matters because falsehood destroys people's lives, bodies and souls. This, of course, begs the question, 'what is true?' and of all the things that keeping it real might imply, it certainly does not imply groups of Christians, high on integrity, shouting at each other with their fingers stuffed in their ears in case they get corrupted by the opposition.

It is neither enough to say, 'we will agree to differ', or 'I am right and you are wrong'. Keeping it real, is being honest about the fact that, we see through a glass darkly (1 Cor. 13:12), but we do see. We cannot avoid the postmodern criticism of the provisional and partial nature of what we can know, but neither can we surrender to their despair and say all truth is

equal or non-existent. Keeping it real is about the gospel without spin; it is about preaching what we know, not what we would like to know; it is about loving real people in their complicated reality, not about projected fantasies of what they ought to be like and trying to love that. As we teach our faith we are not offering a mild 'lifestyle choice', yet another in a consumer age. We are offering a choice between life and death. The urgency of the gospel, of the hard decision that following Christ must mean is the heart of keeping it real, it is making the age-old choice between idolatry and YHWH, between blessings and curses, life and death (Dt. 13:15).

Second, it is about *including* and not excluding. Christian formation is not a journey into a smaller and select group of the pure, doctrinally or morally. Rather, it is an introduction into a new Christ-mediated communion of real people. There is a bit of a stretch here when thinking about the Confessing Church and the church today. The Confessing Church was precisely about excluding, about drawing boundaries. This however, I believe, is the point. The Confessing Church is not the church as it should normally be. The normal function of church in the Lutheran tradition is proclamation not demarcation. It is the extraordinary circumstance of National Socialist intervention in church life that gave rise to the extreme measure of confession. This is the point; exclusion is an extreme form of church, not its starting point. Jesus' approach to people, his capacity to include-in needs to be taken seriously. However, we need to be careful here, too. Our motives need to be open to constant reflection under God's word. Befriending, creating relationships, is not a technique either. How humiliating it would be to be befriended in order to be evangelised: friendship and welcome can be relegated to a missiological method or a device for Christian nurture and discipleship. Our including-in has to be grounded in the reality that Christ is in the other, not a process of pushing Christ at the other. We love because God first loves us (1 Jn. 4:19). In such friendship we find what God has already been doing in this other person's precious, unique and God-loved life. We do not take God to them; in reaching out we find Christ and the Spirit there already. Our ministry of faith sharing is exactly that; not faith

giving or imposing, but of discovery and mutual learning. Relationships that have such integrity take time and are costly, both sides are vulnerable to change, and so the love requires courage.

Third, it is about *discovering communion* not creating it. As we are formed as Christians we are not called to support the local church and be part of its survival. Our formation, our learning as Christians is the discovery that the church as a God given reality is. Church as God given is there to find, and in finding it, find the Christ who loves the church and gave himself for it (Eph. 5:25) and in finding the Christ, find ourselves. The integrity of Christian community is about being real with each other about who we are and what we really do know and believe. The inclusiveness of community is about the discovery of the real Christ in the other; Christ who came into the world to save and not condemn (Jn. 3:17). Our longing for truth and clarity becomes tied into the challenge of discovering community under the word. Our individual vision seen only through a glass darkly enhanced by the other's similarly partial, provisional and positioned understanding. Knowledge is located in the community of Christ, the body of Christ, the living Word. Our business in accompanying others in Christian formation is thus not indoctrination, but exploration together; seeking the reality of Christ revealed as the living Word. To accompany others is a model of teaching that I believe is important. It implies a particular respect for the other, their existing learning and knowledge. It suggests a relationship in which the adult, rather than the child is elicited in them. It allows for the remarkable fact that as the church seeks to teach others we find we learn much in our place.

Fourth, it is about *worship and thanksgiving*. To be wholly in love with God is to be fully formed as a human being for thus we were made. Love is the great reality, the basis and only basis by which we can keep things real, include people in rather than exclude them out, and engage with the God-given reality of Christ's community under the word. The first command, however, is not, 'love your neighbour', or 'include in the outcast and difficult', it isn't even, 'love your enemy and do good to those that despitefully use you'. The first command is, 'Hear, O

Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength' (Mk. 12:29–30 NIV).

A loving relationship with God is the central relationship of Christian community. It is only through this love that all else becomes possible and we are invited as guests into the dance of the Trinity. Worship as an expression of the community's love becomes the distinctive feature of the church, it is evidence of the Spirit filling and inspiring a Christ-mediated community, the Spirit which allows us to call out 'abba'. It is all too easy to *lose* this because we have become a didactic community seeking to accompany people in their own self-discovery or a mutual desire to change the world. It is all too easy to *abuse* this because worship becomes something we do in order to please the congregation and encourage people into our church. Church is not another organisation primarily committed to individual or community development. It is a community of worship who express their love and gratitude to God. Worship is not a method for evangelism it is the sacrificial offering of the community in love with their redeemer and their creator; it is the spirit-filled response to a gracious invitation.

## Conclusion

There are positive and effective consequences for discipleship and Christian formation if we keep it real, are inclusive, and discover community, worship and thanksgiving. The important thing, however, is to understand that this is because God is real and constantly gracious in love towards us, they are not in themselves methods for formation. The challenge that I believe Bonhoeffer offers is that the truth and reality of God are what matters above all else, that we are called to faithfulness not to success. We are therefore called to love others, seeking Christ in them; to do so for the sake of Christ and out of genuine real love for the other. This love is disinterested in that it is not dependent on our success in shaping them into the image we might have of them. We are called to love God, first and foremost, and thus to know and understand. As Paul writes:

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

(Eph. 3:17–19 NIV)

There is not going to be one community of the church in a simple idealistic form in the foreseeable future. As Luke Bretherton argues, we cannot develop blueprint ecclesiologies. The future holds out an emerging church where there is greater variety, not less, more different ways of understanding and grasping the immeasurable love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. Our hope lies in love made possible in Christ, not in ecumenical compromise or theological conquest. The church is not just the proclaimer of good news; it is part of the good news. It is a place where we can find Christ as we find each other. In all our diversity in the future this love alone can be our unity. Before we can tolerate each other's viewpoints, or agree about the essentials, we need to show each other welcome. We need to eat together more, listen to each other more, sing together more; that is enjoy the precious gift of our Christ-given community before we find agreement. Such community is not something we must strive for, it is something that Christ has already won for us.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: Prayerbook of the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).
- <sup>2</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Sanctorum Communio: A Theological Study of the Sociology of the Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), p. 372.
- <sup>3</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology* (London: SCM Press, 1977).
- <sup>4</sup> Augustine, *The Confessions (The Works of Saint Augustine : A Translation for the 21st Century; pt. 1, vol. 1; New York: New City Press [for the] Augustinian Heritage Institute, 1997), ch. 8.*

- <sup>5</sup> H. Eddie Fox and George E. Morris, *Faith-Sharing: Dynamic Christian Witnessing by Invitation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Francis Asbury Press, 1987), pp. xii, 131.
- <sup>6</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, p. 30
- <sup>7</sup> The Barmen declaration begins with the words: 'In view of the errors of the "German Christians" and of the present Reich Church Administration, which are ravaging the Church and at the same time also shattering the unity of the German Evangelical Church, we confess the following evangelical truths.' It was written in the light of the National Socialist Government's increasing attempts to control the church in Germany. Karl Barth was a key player as were other members of the newly forming Confessing Church. For a version of the text of the declaration see [www.ucc.org/faith/barmen.htm](http://www.ucc.org/faith/barmen.htm).
- <sup>8</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, p. 118.
- <sup>9</sup> Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 138.
- <sup>10</sup> Ellen T. Charry, *By the Renewing of Your Minds: The Pastoral Function of Christian Doctrine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

# Mundane Holiness: The Theology and Spirituality of Everyday Life<sup>1</sup>

Luke Bretherton

## Introduction

This essay is a response to three dynamics within contemporary Christian spirituality. The first of these concerns is that the predominant Christian approaches to spirituality are either rural or monastic in origin and seem to have little purchase upon the reality of contemporary life which is urban in character. This is not to say that there have been no urban spiritualities: the early church was a predominantly urban movement, the mendicant orders, for example, the Franciscans, were focused around the urban centres of medieval Europe, the Protestant Reformation originated in and found its most developed expression in cities, and Methodism, the Salvation Army and Pentecostalism have all been urban-based renewal movements. However, it seems the urban context of much Christian spirituality is marginal to the current fashions which prefer, for example, the desert fathers, the Celts, Benedict or even the poetry of George Herbert over those resources that map more closely onto how the majority of the world's population actually live.

Secondly, there seems to be an ever increasing array of approaches to spirituality that denigrate bodily life, either by

seeing spirituality as an attempt to transcend the body to reach some higher realm or by paying no heed to the ordinary and mundane aspects of the embodied life (i.e. spirituality is thought to concern itself with practices that are exceptions to or set apart from the ordinary fabric of human life and relationships). Among Christians, such an approach to spirituality seems to be coupled with a Docetic Christology: that is, it goes along with a vision of Jesus Christ as a kind of Superman figure, whose human nature, like Superman's alter ego, Clark Kent, is merely a disguise that Jesus can whip off at a moment's notice, and not something that is basic to Jesus' very being. Yet, as Kathryn Tanner notes: 'The human shape of Jesus' life is not something alongside Jesus' divinity but the manifestation of that divinity as a human whole.'<sup>2</sup> A Docetic Christology inevitably downplays the incarnation and thereby diminishes the questions Jesus' life and ministry raise about our daily pattern of life and the social, economic and political conditions in which we live.<sup>3</sup>

Thirdly, much that passes for Christian spirituality seems to offer a series of techniques divorced from any theological content.<sup>4</sup> As such, it is shaped more by the instrumental rationality of the prevailing bureaucratic and capitalist context of late modernity than by the gospel of Jesus Christ. In short, practice has been decoupled from Christian belief so that effectiveness (rather than theology or the Bible) becomes the primary criterion for determining whether something is good or not. The result of this decoupling is that Christian spirituality comes to be viewed as one more consumer choice among the smorgasbord of contemporary spiritualities. As Gregory Jones summarises it:

Much contemporary spirituality is shaped by consumer impulses and captive to a therapeutic culture. It systematically avoids the disciplined practices necessary for engagement with God. Further, this literature separates spirituality both from theological convictions and practice on the one hand, and social and political realities and commitments on the other.<sup>5</sup>

To address these concerns I aim to set out a vision for a 'mundane holiness': that is, a constructive account of how the Spirit

enables true materiality, how spirituality is about regimes or patterns of life and how our transformative encounter with God occurs through the ordinary, ambiguous contingency of our everyday lives. Running through this constructive account of a mundane holiness is a critique of all attempts to describe Christian spirituality apart from Christian theology. Whether it is chanting with drums, bathing in mud, having an aromatherapy massage or simply walking on the Yorkshire Moors, it appears as if, in Western culture at least, anything can be a spiritual experience. However, for Christians, spirituality should have a particular shape. For Christians there can be no spirituality apart from the Holy Spirit, thus any definition of the term must take account of the particular role of the Spirit in relation to the shaping of human life.

It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to enjoy a new and good life. We do not have the power, skill, or ability to create for ourselves a genuinely new, good or eternal life. However ingenious and well intentioned, humans cannot save themselves from monstrous chaos and nothingness. Instead, our salvation must be received as a gratuitous, overabundant gift from God given in and through Jesus Christ. And it is the Spirit who makes it possible for us to receive and participate in this gift. It is the Spirit who draws us on in our journey into communion with God, and in communion with God enables us to live lives of loving servanthood towards our neighbour. Thus, spirituality, within a Trinitarian, Christian frame of reference, is the attempt to describe the shape and pattern of the Spirit-empowered, Christlike life.

This paper will seek to address some of the root causes of the three concerns outlined above and set out a theological vision that can act as a basis for developing a mundane holiness. In many ways it builds on and extends what was said in Alan Kreider's essay about catechesis. At the end I will not prescribe a one size fits all approach to spirituality, but set out some criteria of discernment or evaluation that may be used when making decisions about how to live out a Christian spirituality.

## Spirituality as True Materiality

Many contemporary theologians have noted the problematic influence of various dualistic visions of reality upon Christian belief and practice – notably those of Plato and the Gnostics. I use the term Gnostic to refer to those visions of reality that see the material world as bad.<sup>6</sup> Early Christian Gnostics seem to have thought the material world was created by a lesser god or evil demiurge (this god was understood to be the god of the Old Testament). A second god (the god of Christ and the New Testament) enables those who are truly spiritual or enlightened to escape the material world into a higher realm. Not everyone is capable of salvation, only an elect who possess a divine spark. By implication there is a hierarchy of humans, with the elect at its tip and the unspiritual, beastly mass at its base.<sup>7</sup> To the Gnostics, the earthly life was a prison from which we needed to escape or a dream we needed to wake up from. This release was achieved either through possession of secret or true knowledge (*gnosis*) or through rigorous spiritual exercises or asceticism.<sup>8</sup> Thus salvation was not by faith and not available to everyone; instead, it was revealed by esoteric knowledge or magical rites, both of which required special instruction and initiation.<sup>9</sup>

In the patristic period the influence of this view can be seen most negatively in Origen. In his arguments against various Gnostic groups, Origen drew on the work of Plato and taught that creation involved a two-stage process.<sup>10</sup> First God created a higher world of spiritual beings (angels and the like) whose fall provided the occasion for the second, material creation. This second creation was not good in and of itself, but only in so far as it enabled a return to an original spiritual, non-material state of being. Thus the material creation becomes merely a means to a non-material, ethereal end. Origen was very influential on the development of monasticism and we can see his influence in all spiritualities that view the body as means to a 'higher' goal or that place the ordinary and mundane bodily life as secondary to the 'religious' or 'spiritual' life. In effect, Origen's view of creation gave too much ground to the Gnostics and sanctioned a dualistic

account of reality whereby the material world of finitude, change and experience could not be trusted or valued as good in itself.

Origen's response to Gnosticism contrasts sharply with that of Irenaeus. Irenaeus taught that there was a single creation that was good in and of itself. For Irenaeus creation is imperfect, that is to say, it does not arrive in full bloom, but must grow up and mature in order that it might then receive its perfection in Christ. The fall constitutes a turn away from the path to maturity and results in humans walking backwards into chaos and nothingness. As Douglas Farrow puts it: 'In the fall man is "turned backwards". He does not grow up in the love of God as he is intended to. The course of his time, his so-called progress, is set in the wrong direction.'<sup>11</sup> Jesus Christ redeems creation by restoring creation to its original goodness and enabling creation, through the perfecting actions of the Spirit, to once more move into its fulfilment. Unlike Origen, there is no movement back to an original state, but a movement *forward* to perfection; a perfection that is inaugurated by Christ at the ascension wherein the material creation is taken into the life of God. In Irenaeus' eschatology the emphasis is not on *space* (that is, a move out and beyond creation) but on *time*: the advent of the kingdom of God involves a movement to a new time through the existing creation. Based on this theological vision Irenaeus understood asceticism, or the spiritual life, not as an escape from or overcoming of the bodily life, but as the life of God lived in all dimensions of the body.<sup>12</sup> The holy spiritual life for Irenaeus is the healed human life that anticipates its perfection now. As Olivier Clément notes, commenting on Cyril of Alexandria and Irenaeus' understanding of deification:

To be deified is therefore to become someone living with a life stronger than death, since the Word is life itself and the Spirit is the one who brings life. All human possibilities are brought into play. The structures of thought, feeling, friendship, creativity, while remaining only human structures, receive an infinite capacity for light and joy . . . Thus holiness is life in its fullness.<sup>13</sup>

As Clément points out, the implication of this is that it is not only great ascetics who are holy, but also those who are loving husbands or wives. On this account, the mother who knows how to console her child and how to bring them to spiritual birth is as holy as the monk who prays all night.

Irenaeus' approach is consistent with Scripture. The human body is part of God's good creation and has a future in the in-breaking new creation. Genesis holds that God beheld the work of his hands and it was good (Gen. 1:31). Consequently, as Kevin Vanhoozer notes:

The limitations and givens of human existence and the created order should not be rejected as constraints but accepted as enabling conditions for individual and social being. If human beings no longer feel at home in the world, it is not because the world is an inappropriate environment, but rather because they have polluted it, and themselves, by refusing the divine intention behind the created order.<sup>14</sup>

If the people of God, from Abraham onwards, are to bear witness to a pattern of human existence within the created order that lives out the vocation of being a person in communion with God and others, then it is in Jesus Christ that such a pattern is fulfilled.

In the life and ministry of Jesus we see the true pattern for created human life, a life that has been healed and reopened to its perfection. Jesus is the one who re-shapes the very fabric of social, economic and political life, healing that which is misshapen and re-directing to its perfection that which was oriented to death. This new pattern of life neither erases nor destroys nor abandons all previous patterns of life. Rather, existing patterns of Jewish life under Roman rule in first-century Palestine are transfigured through the actions of Jesus, empowered by the Spirit, so that they bear witness to the Kingdom or Shalom or Sabbath or Jubilee of God. The water from stone jars becomes the wine at the wedding feast through the transfiguring actions of Jesus Christ acting in the power of the Spirit, directing all things to the Father. It is just this dynamic that lies at the heart of the doctrine of the incarnation: the matter from

which the Spirit fashions a body for the Son is that same matter as that which constitutes the persons of other, fallen, human beings. And the perfect life of obedience to the Father that the Spirit enables the Son to live is a life lived within and through the fallen society of a particular social, political and economic context and the sinful relations therein. But this perfect life is not overcome by sin or the principalities and powers of this age; instead, Jesus redeems all that opposes or excludes true, good and beautiful life and enables, once more, the life directed to perfection to be lived again. Tanner points out that: 'The fully human life of Jesus exhibits the usual historical conflicts and historical processes of human life . . .'<sup>15</sup> The events, relationships and conflicts of Jesus' life, death and resurrection are part of the purifying, healing and perfecting way in which God assumes our humanity. Thus, the assumption of our humanity involves time, contingency and struggle with the sinful conditions of human existence. As Tanner puts it: 'The purification and elevation of the human in Christ is a historical process because the humanity assumed by the word is historical.'<sup>16</sup> Thus, the call to follow Jesus Christ, to become his disciples, is an invitation to become what Christ was; that is, we are to become truly human.<sup>17</sup>

Some snapshots from the gospels will, I hope, illustrate the point I am making. The birth narratives in Luke's Gospel are full of contingent, seemingly random human arrangements acting as the basis of God's self-disclosure and redemption of creation. For example, it is the repressive legislation of the Roman superpower that leads to Israel's Messiah being born in David's city: Bethlehem. Moreover, while virgin births and angelic hosts tend to occupy centre stage in our readings of the story, what is more extraordinary is the way in which God's glory is made manifest through the earthly and the mundane. In the midst of an obscure village, as they buy and sell, go out and return from work, meet for a drink, do the cleaning and prepare for a wedding, in the midst of this ordinary, un spectacular life the apocalypse is made manifest. We witness the cosmos being turned upside down as a young girl sits quietly. Where do you look if you want to see the healing of the nations? To a domestic drama played out between Mary and

Joseph. She obeys and he trusts and history is overturned. As Brendan Byrne notes:

These two threads – the marvellous and the ordinary – are woven together in the narrative in a way that is surely intentional on Luke's part. The divine intervention, in fulfilment of the promise, comes about in the ordinary dilemmas of life. But it does so in surprising and unexpected ways. The mistakes, the failures (Zechariah's unbelief, no room in Bethlehem) – the dropped stitches, so to speak – are eventually picked up and sewn back into a broader divine purpose.<sup>18</sup>

We find a similar pattern repeated throughout Jesus' ministry. A chance meeting with a woman at a well becomes the context of God's self-disclosure, a meal becomes the kingdom of God made manifest, folk tales become harbingers of revelation, an encounter with lepers signals the renewal of creation, and the death of a criminal initiates the redemption of the cosmos.

Paul develops the implications of the incarnation for the life of Christ's disciples. The Spirit-empowered Christlikeness that Paul speaks of in Galatians does not refer to a life lived apart from the ordinary concerns and trials of everyday bodily existence. Paul's advocacy of the spiritual life points to neither an ethereal, otherworldly life nor an interior realm of consciousness, but to a whole pattern of life which is truly material, truly itself, human life as part of creation healed and fulfilled. The Spirit is the One who brings creation into being, who enables God to be incarnate: that is to say, it is the Spirit who enables true materiality. For Paul, the fleshly life refers to that pattern of life which is oriented towards the death and disintegration of life because it is moving away from relationship with God. To borrow an analogy used by Tom Wright, for Paul, the difference between life in the flesh and life in the Spirit is the difference not between a wooden ship and a steel ship (i.e. two different kinds of vessels), but between a boat that is powered by wind rather than steam. Moreover, in Galatians 5 Paul's use of the term flesh unites both flesh as 'desire' (*epithymia*) and flesh as 'law' (*nomos*). Thus, the paradox is that legalism (ascetic, moral

or otherwise) and licence are two sides of the same coin. Both constitute a false valorisation of one's own flesh and a denial of the work of the Spirit. Both constitute a pattern of life directed to death and nothingness. By contrast, it is the Holy Spirit who empowers us to be Christlike by giving to men and women those gifts, and building up those character traits – the fruits of the Spirit – necessary to live out the generative and truly human life.

The converse of Paul's division between the fleshly life and the Spirit empowered life is that the bodily life can either be a witness to or a witness against God. For Paul, there is a battle over the shape and pattern of bodily life. It is a battle fought between the false authorities or principalities and powers of this age and the true and good lordship of Jesus Christ. Paul gives the Romans a choice between two forms of slavery: that is, a form of life they do not have the power to control (the disciplines and practices of which will determine what they do, whether they like or not). He asks them: 'Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?' (Rom. 6:16). Every aspect of the bodily life, eating, drinking, thinking, sexual, economic and political relations etc., are all to be conformed to Christ because, for Paul, our bodies are members of Christ (1 Cor. 6:15) and so, if we are to live according to the truth about ourselves, we must become Christlike. It is the structure of human life and not some architectural structure that is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Conversely, it is other patterns of life, and not pagan temples, that constitute the real threat to the Christian life. Thus for Paul, the spiritual battle is fought not in some ethereal, other worldly realm, but in the shaping and actions of our everyday life. Who eats at our table, what we eat, where our money is invested, how we conduct ourselves in relation to our spouse, or children or neighbour or enemy: this is the cosmic arena in which we play our part in God's will being done and the birthing of God's kingdom come. Likewise, it is in the mundane practicalities of life that the apocalypse is made manifest. For the most part, encounter with God and the bursting out of the new creation

occur not in some special spiritual time or zone but through and amid the vicissitudes, conflicts and contingency of our everyday life.

In emphasising the mundane and the ordinary as the primary arena of our transforming encounter with God I am not denigrating the importance of the ecstatic and euphoric intensity of God's presence that can be experienced in worship. I am seeking to locate such intense moments of corporate and personal encounter with God in their proper place. Such moments are only part (albeit a vital part) of the rhythm of the Christian life that, as the liturgical year teaches us, has three basic modes. There are the major seasons of fasting (notably, Advent and Lent) when we embody the cruciform pattern of discipleship as those who hunger and thirst for righteousness and who cry out with John of Patmos, 'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!' (Rev. 22:20). These are seasons of lament for the continued suffering and pain we see around us and longing for our Lord's return. But the Christian life also involves times of feasting. In the liturgical year this is marked by Sunday and feast days, notably the major feasts of Christmas Day and Easter Sunday. Such moments are wonderful anticipations of the messianic banquet or wedding feast. They are times when we are overwhelmed by the presence of the glory of God and find ourselves caught up in the heavenly realms. It is at the Eucharist that we celebrate and liturgically embody such times. However, a wisdom we would do well to contemplate is the temporal weighting given to fasting over feasting in the liturgical year: fasting is given months at a time, whereas feasting is given a day.

The third mode of the Christian life is ordinary time. In the liturgical year the period between the Lord's baptism and Ash Wednesday and between Pentecost and the beginning of Advent is 'ordinary time'; that is, it is time when we simply and faithfully embody and live out the Christian life. It is this ordinary time that is the focus of a mundane holiness and it is ordinary time that is, perhaps, the major key or predominant mode of the Christian life. Those, like Peter, who followed Jesus, experienced times of feasting and intimacy as well as times of trial and suffering, but for the most part, life with

Jesus, and the transformation of their life this involved, took place within the everyday and mundane context of their relations with each other, with their families, and how they lived the practicalities of life within the prevailing social, economic and political realities of the day. To refuse to live faithfully in ordinary time and constantly seek times of ecstasy (as some mystic, ritualistic, charismatic and Pentecostal Christians do)<sup>19</sup> or insist that all of life is a fast (as some over-ascetic and legalistic Christians do) is to refuse, as I have argued above, a definitive part of Christian discipleship.

## **A Life Together**

Since Cain, the founder of the city, humans have always attempted to create for themselves a form of life that ceases to respond to creation as creation and makes of it a means to live apart from God. Such forms of life are inherently alienated from creation as God's good gift: they are thus inherently at war with the created pattern of bodily life. Creation becomes both an object to be manipulated and controlled and an object of idolatry that distracts humans from their alienated relationship with God. Western modernity is a particularly intense form of such idolatrous patterns of life. However, like Israel in the midst of the nations, the church is called into a new relationship with the land and creation as a whole. We are to be priests and vice-regents of creation, enabling creation to flourish and voice its praise. How we live, praise and pray is central to this vocation. Fulfilling this vocation has a twofold aspect. Firstly, it will involve denouncing all attempts at self-salvation whether it be through economic, political or social techniques or through pseudo-spiritual techniques that merely accommodate us to our own oppression rather than truly healing and transforming us. But we must not stop at critique – we must also model a pattern of life that takes account of why people live as they do, does not seek to destroy or flee from modernity, but does seek to transfigure it so that modern (or postmodern) life ceases to be a pattern of life initiated by Cain and begins to echo one inaugurated by Christ.

It is at this point we must recover the place of ecclesiology in spirituality. The transfigured life, the life of the city of God, is necessarily a life lived in community with others.<sup>20</sup> If Christian spirituality is that pattern of bodily life animated by the Holy Spirit then it will be characterised by a particular kind of community. Christians may be pilgrims or sojourners, but we are not one of Baudelaire's *flâneur's*, wandering the city without aim, taking shelter in the solitude of the crowd. Nor are we tourists merely gazing upon the spectacle of late-modern life in either disgust or delight while we wait to be whisked off to a home above the clouds. Nor are we shoppers buying whatever takes our fancy or stimulates our desire.<sup>21</sup> No. We are part of a particular body, members of a household, and citizens of the New Jerusalem. As Ephesians 2:19–22 puts it:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling-place for God.

In Ephesians and elsewhere, the church is envisaged as a new kind of community; one that includes aspects of both the household (*oikos*) and the political realm (*polis*). The church or *ekklesia* is a hybrid of both: an *oikos-polis*. Being this kind of hybrid community had enormous implications: women, slaves and children, who were previously excluded from the political realm, are now addressed as citizens. Men, the only ones who had a political voice, and who in their homes were the paterfamilias, are now asked to identify themselves as brothers to slaves, women and children. As Galatians 3 suggests, ethnic, sexual, political and economic differences do not count when it comes to being included as a citizen in the city of God. And, as the Gospel of Matthew puts it, it is 'whoever does the will of my Father in heaven [who] is my brother and sister and mother' (Mt. 12:50). The re-arranging of social relations in this way was bound to cause problems. Bernd Wannewetsch states:

The inevitable public claim of Christian worship was soon recognized by the powers of the Roman empire. They clearly realized that the Christ worshipped by these new religious groups should not be seen alongside the various house-gods (and in that respect the Romans were extremely tolerant), but in an irreconcilable opposition to the civil gods of the empire.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, the pattern of social life that Christians embodied posed a direct challenge to the Greco-Roman pattern of life.<sup>23</sup> To reduce Christian spirituality and worship to the realm of private or individual interior experience is to deny the witness of the early Christian martyrs who died precisely because who they prayed to and how they met together to worship posed a threat to the prevailing status quo.

The Christian spiritual life is one in which drawing close to God simultaneously involves being drawn into just and generous fellowship with other humans (Acts 2:44; 2 Cor:13 – 14). Indeed, a central feature of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early church is the establishment of *koinonia* or fellowship. However, the pattern of this *koinonia* is different to other forms of human fellowship. It is not homogeneous or monolithic. Each member is given a gift to bring. All will contribute to the ongoing work of Christ. There are, therefore, no grounds for certain members of the community – ordained or otherwise – to act as autocrats or claim superiority of status. All are equal in the Spirit and all are equipped to take a part in the purposes of God. But we should not mistake this equality for a homogenising egalitarianism. As at Pentecost, the Spirit acts precisely not to erase differences and make everyone the same, but to enable unique and particular persons to build up each other through sharing their particular gifts. Furthermore, the fellowship which the Spirit creates is not a club, network, voluntary society, or special interest group. According to the New Testament, the Spirit of God breaks down the barriers that have divided people and establishes a reconciled people: a pattern and gift we celebrate and mark in our Eucharistic communion. When the church falls short of this pattern of forgiveness and mutual hospitality, the kiss of peace we share

before the Eucharist becomes the kiss of Judas. As Michael Welker puts it:

The Spirit gives rise to a unity in which the prophetic witness of women is no less important than that of men, that of the young is no less significant than that of the old, that of the socially disadvantaged is no less relevant than that of the privileged. The promised Spirit of God is effective in that differentiated community which is sensitive to differences, and in which the differences that stand in opposition to justice, mercy, and knowledge of God are being steadily reduced.<sup>24</sup>

A dramatic example of this is witnessed in the origin of the Pentecostal movement. Harvey Cox notes that one of the 'miracles' about what happened at Azusa Street was the interracial character of the congregation:

It was, after all, 1906, a time of growing, not diminishing, racial separation everywhere else. But many visitors reported that in the Azusa Street revival blacks and whites and Asians and Mexicans sang and prayed together . . . There were both black and white deacons, and both black and white women . . . were exhorters and healers. What seemed to impress – or disgust – visitors most, however, was not the interracial leadership but the fact that blacks and whites, men and women, embraced each other at the tiny altar as they wept and prayed. A southern white preacher later jotted in his diary that he was first offended and startled, then inspired, by the fact that, as he put it, 'the color line was washed away by the blood'.<sup>25</sup>

A Christian spirituality must be one that can encompass this kind of reconciled and differentiated community in which young and old, black and white, able and disabled, men and women can gather together in *koinoinia* in anticipation of that day when all peoples and nations will gather together in worship around the Lamb of God (Rev. 7:9–12).

## **Regimes of Life: Theological Anthropology and Christian Asceticism**

Where, but in worship, do we receive the Spirit that empowers the truly human life and see, set out for us, patterns of what such a life should consist of? Let me illustrate this in relation to the Sabbath.

We live in a culture in which time is increasingly organised around the demands of the business cycle and the possibilities opened up by technology. This has led to the development of the 24/7 society, with, for example, twenty-four hour supermarkets open seven days a week. The way we think about time and space has changed profoundly: they are now viewed as either commodities to be bought and sold, or limits to be overcome by faster travel and communication.<sup>26</sup> However, the conflict over time spent or invested with God and on the things of God and time spent on mammon is not new. Most obviously, Christ draws a sharp conflict between serving God and mammon. In contrast to the 24/7 society, keeping the Sabbath gives rise to a pattern of life not determined by the business cycle, the need for greater productivity, or the possibilities of technology (especially telecommunications). Keeping the Sabbath reminds us that we are not in control of time, rather, time is part of God's good creation and already fulfilled in Christ, the Lord of time. Observing the Sabbath – itself an act of worship – interrupts our attempts to control our destinies, our anxieties about not having enough time, and our worries about how to spend our time usefully and calls us to participate in activities that appear useless to the world but are timely if creation is a gift whose time is fulfilled. These are activities which are acts of trust that time and space are fulfilled in Christ. Such kingdom-timely activities teach us to see the time-rich – the unemployed, the retired – and the time-demanding – the physically and mentally disabled, children, addicts, refugees etc. – not as useless or unproductive or a drain on our time but as God's children in need of as much care and attention as the time-poor – the overworked elites.<sup>27</sup> In keeping the Sabbath we learn that time is a gift and a gift we can enjoy with those who do not promise to make the world a

better place or with people who do not contribute to conventional ideas of status. As Sam Wells puts it: 'It is easy to slip into old ways, and treat time and people as commodities for one's own advancement. But gathering together in worship, Sunday by Sunday and many times besides, is a constant reminder to the Church that it is living in God's time, not its own.'<sup>28</sup>

What I hope the example of the Sabbath has demonstrated is that worship and liturgy are about enacting patterns of life transformed by being properly ordered in relation to God and that such patterns of life bring into being new social realities: that is, new ways of being human that image Christ and are not shaped by death and sin.<sup>29</sup> I could have used the dynamics of gathering to worship, feasting and fasting, Baptism, or the Eucharist just as well. Each of these encapsulates a vision of the transfigured life in its Christlike shape.<sup>30</sup> The point at issue here is that in this age, before the Lord's return, it is practices such as Baptism and the Eucharist that provide Christians with a map or paradigm of what faithful witness to Jesus Christ is like. Yet we await that time when such practices will no longer be necessary because, as the vision of Revelation portrays it, there will be no need of a temple or consecrated times and spaces since God will be all in all (Rev. 21:22-27). In this age, however, the map for the good life is given in times of gathered worship and their liturgical ordering. It is in such times of worship and the sacraments that we learn how the ordinary life may be ordered so that it can echo its healed and fulfilled condition, a condition that is already established in the risen and ascended Lord, a condition that may be anticipated now in the power of the Spirit. One of the fruits of going to church should be that we learn how to be truly human, that is human in a Christlike way. In doing so, we have what we conceive of as reality re-framed in relation to God so that we may be sent out in the power of the Spirit to live and work to God's praise and glory. Or as Mark McIntosh puts it:

The believing community comes to know God precisely by being baptismally re-created and eucharistically re-membered as the Body of Christ. This is not an isolated liturgical event

but a daily struggle sacramentalised in the liturgy; it is the discovery of one's *personhood* in living out the concrete manifestations of the paschal mystery in the daily details of one's existence.<sup>31</sup>

While worship and liturgy may provide the paradigm for the Spirit-empowered, Christlike life, people need to be able to understand how and why they do. As Alan Kreider has already outlined in his essay, catechesis, or training in discipleship, is a key task that churches, for the most part, have ignored at their peril. As Jones comments: 'Too many churches have failed to help shape a specifically Christian understanding of God, and in particular to recognise that learning to know God involves the transformation of desires as well as struggles to unlearn patterns of sin and self-deception.'<sup>32</sup> The result is that many who claim Christ is their Lord have little understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what, in practice, Christ's Lordship might mean. Consequently they lead lives shaped by death and sin: that is, their lives are riddled with anxiety about the future (such as the need to ensure financial security) and the need to justify oneself here and now (such as the need to achieve celebrity or distinction or secure one's identity through the work of one's hands). By contrast, a truly Christian spirituality is shaped by the reception of one's life, work, future and identity as a gift and habitation already established in and through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ: that is, we are already justified in Christ and do not have to justify our existence to either God, our peers, or the political, economic or social authorities of the day. Thus, all that one does should be a free response to a prior gift and not born out of necessity or fear (Mt. 6:24–33). Teaching congregations what it means to inhabit God's economy of blessing and leave behind Mammon's economy of works, debt and self-interest is a vital task in education for discipleship.<sup>33</sup>

The church – in its worship and practices – must act as an arena in which bodily life is shaped and disciplined so as to show forth the glory of God. In the early church such discipline meant training people to obey, first and foremost, the Lordship of Christ as opposed to the lordship of Caesar. Debates in the

first centuries of Christianity about the kinds of occupations suitable for a Christian to undertake,<sup>34</sup> or about whether Christians should make sacrifices to celebrate Rome's millennium, or the nature of Christian hospitality,<sup>35</sup> were all debates about the proper shape of the Christian life in relation to worldly powers that would seek to use a Christian's body for their own purposes. As William Cavanaugh notes in relation to Cyprian: 'For Cyprian the body of the Christian is a microcosm of the church body which is under constant threat from the *saeculum*. Christian discipline is the antidote to the world's attempt to discipline the body.'<sup>36</sup> How one's personhood is shaped at the inter-personal, structural/institutional and historical/cultural level is the battleground of faithful witness and the arena of engagement with the principalities and powers opposed to the Lordship of Christ. In our day, Christian disciplines and practices must act as antidotes to the attempt to shape our personhood through consumerism, technology (whether it be genetics or IT), and the myriad of Panoptican-like institutions of the corporation-state. In the contemporary context there is no desert or rocky outcrop to retreat to in order to mount a counter-regime of life as the desert fathers and Celtic monks did. Today, the Christian life is always-already situated within a social, political and economic power nexus that, as Michel Foucault argues, reaches into 'the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, their learning processes and everyday lives'.<sup>37</sup> The all pervasiveness of this modern nexus of power relations is such that it constitutes 'a synaptic regime of power' exercised 'from *within* the social body, rather than from *above* it'.<sup>38</sup> In other words, a trip to Ikea or Wal-Mart or the hospital – all of which seek to shape and determine the pattern of our life and which we willingly participate in as somehow necessary to our flourishing – may be as problematic spiritually as living under a dictatorship or participating in a séance. The challenge is to develop patterns of asceticism, whether it be pilgrimages, cycles of feasting and fasting, observing the liturgical year, or whatever, that train us to live as faithful witnesses to the truly human Christlike life and inoculate us against those lifestyles that lay a false claim to our

humanity. As in 1 Timothy 4, we are to avoid a false asceticism that denies the goodness of creation while at the same time undertaking training in righteousness in order that we might be faithful witnesses to the truth we have received.

## Conclusions: What Does a Christian Spirituality Look Like?

Following on the points made in my first essay in this volume, there is no blueprint or one-size-fits-all ecclesiology or spirituality. We can, however, try to discern the marks or notes that should be present – tacitly or explicitly – in order for a particular pattern or regime of life to be considered Christian. Hence, by way of conclusion, I set out a series of annotated questions. These questions both summarise the points made so far and suggest criteria for evaluating whether the patterns of devotional and spiritual life we practice constitutes a pattern of Spirit-empowered Christlikeness.

*First we must ask whether what we are doing is consistent with a Trinitarian understanding of divine-human relations.* Any spirituality can only be defined in relation to that spirit which informs or inspires it. Christian spirituality must be primarily focused not on spiritual exercises or experiences or techniques, but on relationship with the Father, through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit. In short, Christian spirituality is first and foremost about responding, in praise and worship, to the prior gifting of God received as and in the Holy Spirit. Basil of Caesarea explains in his treatise *On the Holy Spirit* all God's gifts reach us from the Father through the Son in the Holy Spirit, and correspondingly our thanks are addressed in the Spirit through the Son to the Father. Thus Christian spirituality should have a Trinitarian and doxological dynamic.<sup>39</sup>

*Second, we must ask whether our spirituality has an ecclesial dimension.* A Christian spirituality can never be either individualistic or simply therapeutic. Instead, its fruit should be people drawn into communion with God and others who are not like them. Thus a mark of Christian spirituality is the turn away from prideful self-concern to loving concern for others.

*Third, we must ask how time, place and the created order are responded to.* While it is not possible to be prescriptive about the exact form of the Christian community, being followers of the triune Creator who was incarnate in Jesus Christ, the categories of time and place (and thus the particularities of culture and history) must not be seen as enemies to overcome or escape or transcend. Any culture may direct us to sin and idolatry; however, that we are geographically, historical and culturally located persons is not a problem, but a created and providential limit that, while not being determinative of, should properly inform the Christian life. Thus, what was appropriate for a rural pre-industrial context might not be appropriate for an urbanised late-modern one.

*The fourth question follows on from the third: we must ask whether the healing and renewal of Creation is shown forth.* According to John's Gospel the Spirit bears witness to Christ and enables his disciples to continue Christ's work. Christian spirituality should echo the pattern of Christ's life and ministry, a pattern set out in his 'declaration of intent' in Luke 4:18-19, a pattern that manifests itself in solidarity with the oppressed, telling truth to power, healing the afflicted, exorcising creation and breaking forth God's hospitality to sinners and the socially, politically and economically excluded. Where this pattern is continued, we witness the presence of the Spirit of God. A spirituality that involves no concern for ecological, political, economic and social justice can hardly be said to be Christian.

*Fifth, we must ask whether the eschatological tension is maintained.* Before the *eschaton* humans are always on the way towards finding their fulfilment in communion with God. Humans are on the way towards a goal which they cannot bring about by their own powers. We are therefore incapable of perfecting ourselves but must wait for the perfecting Spirit to enable our fulfilment in communion with God in the coming kingdom. Moreover, while God's kingdom has been inaugurated through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it has yet to be fulfilled.<sup>40</sup> Between this age and the age to come human fulfilment is necessarily limited and finite. We can anticipate the joys of heaven on earth, but we cannot

expect such joy to be a permanent condition until Christ's return. All claims to offer ultimate enlightenment, or health and wealth, or satisfaction right here, right now should be treated with great suspicion. Longing is a necessary part of the human condition prior to Christ's return. A truly Christian spirituality encompasses celebration, lament and the hallowing of ordinary time.

These questions are not exhaustive. However, they are basic to what a Christian spirituality that encompasses a mundane holiness, or transfigured fleshiness, or apocalyptic ordinariness or whatever we call that pattern or regime of life that is seeking to embody the Spirit-empowered, Christlike shape of the truly human life within our contemporary context.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Douglas Knight, Jeremy Worthen, all the participants in the Deep Church seminar, and the Institute for Systematic Theology at King's College London for their helpful comments and insights on earlier drafts.
- <sup>2</sup> Kathryn Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), p. 19.
- <sup>3</sup> The irony here is that many who emphasise the incarnation and the social, political and economic dimension of Christian engagement fall into the equal and opposite problem of 'Ebionitism': that is, like Spiderman, Jesus is just a human who, by a mysterious process, gains special powers. For latter day Ebionites, Jesus is a moral example who either teaches an abstract, ahistorical set of truths that can be extracted from the Bible; or Jesus becomes a primitive precursor for the latest ideological trends. The result is that Jesus' concrete humanity and history has a minimal role in shaping actual practice.
- <sup>4</sup> For a systematic treatment of this problem see M. McIntosh, *Mystical Theology: The Integrity of Spirituality and Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), part I. McIntosh makes the important point that the decoupling impoverishes both spirituality and theology.

- <sup>5</sup> L.G. Jones, 'A Thirst for God or Consumer Spirituality? Cultivating Disciplined Practices of Being Engaged by God', *Modern Theology* 13.1 (1997), p. 4.
- <sup>6</sup> Gnosticism can be seen as the primal heresy because in it we meet the question: 'what is the world?' And the answer given in Gnostic-type beliefs deny the fundamental premises of Christianity: that God is the creator who creates a good world which has ontological homogeneity (i.e. light and a locust have the same status and substance in relation to the goodness of creation), and that creation is other than God (i.e. it is not an emanation or part of God as in pantheistic accounts of creation). Humans are part of creation, we are of the same status and substance as the rest of creation, but organised in a particular way in relation to God. Thus our difference from the rest of creation resides in how we are related to God and not in any capacity or power (e.g. rationality) we possess. On this see Colin E. Gunton, *The Triune Creator: A Historical and Systematic Study* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).
- <sup>7</sup> On the one hand, modernity could be understood as Gnosticism writ large, since it offers salvation through knowledge and involves the attempt to escape the limits of materiality (whether through technology, philosophy or politics), from one another and to rise above the 'vulgar' crowd. On the other, modernity can be identified with materialism (whether economic or philosophical) and the erasing of a transcendent or 'enchanted' dimension to life. But in a sense, the problem with modernity is that it is not materialistic enough: we are too easily satisfied with a simulacrum of the Gospel that keeps promising us material benefits and a good life, but cannot deliver the lasting materialism and all encompassing good life of God's new creation.
- <sup>8</sup> By way of illustration, many contemporary films set out just such a Gnostic vision: see, for example, *The Matrix*, *The Truman Show*, *Total Recall*, *Dark Star* and *Existenz*.
- <sup>9</sup> For an account of how much of Protestantism (whether liberal or conservative) manifests itself as a form of Gnosticism see Philip J. Lee, *Against the Protestant Gnostics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). For a critique of Lee and inaccurate uses of the term 'Gnostic' see Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking 'Gnosticism': A Case for the Dismantling of a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

- <sup>10</sup> Origen was anti-Gnostic, but his apologetic strategy involved conceding to part of their case.
- <sup>11</sup> D. Farrow, 'St Irenaeus of Lyons. The Church and the World', *Pro Ecclesia* 4 (1995), p. 348.
- <sup>12</sup> John Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 209.
- <sup>13</sup> Olivier Clément, *The Roots of Christian Mysticism: Text and Commentary* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.; trans. T. Berkeley, London: New City, 1997), pp. 264–65.
- <sup>14</sup> Kevin Vanhoozer, 'Human being, individual and social', in C.E. Gunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 164.
- <sup>15</sup> Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity*, p. 27.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup> Vanhoozer, 'Human being, individual and social', p. 165.
- <sup>18</sup> Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), p. 38.
- <sup>19</sup> Each of these tendencies emphasises different dimensions of the ecstatic: the mystic or contemplative focuses on the epistemic (even if apophatic) dimension of ecstasy, for those for whom liturgy and ritual are sources of ecstasy, it is the aesthetic dimension of the ecstatic that is central, and for charismatic and Pentecostal Christians, it is the somatic or physical manifestations of ecstasy that receive primary attention.
- <sup>20</sup> This is not to say that the Christian life only involves companionship and community. For if maturing in the Christian life involves the interaction between seasons of feasting, fasting and ordinary time, we must also remember that it also involves a rhythm of solitude and fellowship (on this see Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together/Prayerbook of the Bible* [trans. D. Bloesch and J. Burtness; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996]). However, while solitude and withdrawal are proper parts of the Christian life, they are always situated within an ecclesial and Trinitarian context: even the hermit is a member of the body of Christ and in fellowship with the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit (on this see Mark Wakelin's essay in this volume).
- <sup>21</sup> As Jones notes: 'Contemporary spirituality plays into an increasingly prevalent consumer mentality. People in capitalist societies who are trained to think of things as commodities subject to

individual, consumer preferences are easily tempted to think of religious commitments in similar terms. This contributes to the temptation to see everything – at its most extreme, even God – in instrumental terms, as things to be used rather than enjoyed . . . This consumer mentality also suggests a levelling of diverse religious traditions: they become brand names selling essentially the same product with slightly different packaging.’ Jones, ‘A Thirst for God or Consumer Spirituality?’, p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> B. Wannewetsch, ‘The Political Worship of the Church: A Critical and Empowering Practice’, *Modern Theology* 12. 3 (1996), pp. 281–82.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. Porphyry, who provided philosophical legitimation to the Emperor Diocletian’s policy of repressing Christianity in the work now known as *Against the Christians* states: ‘[The Christians] would bring us a society without law. They would teach us to have no fear of the gods.’ J. Hoffmann (ed.), *Porphyry’s Against the Christians: the Literary Remains* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1994), p. 81.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Welker, *God the Spirit* (trans. J.F. Hoffmeyer; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), pp. 22–23.

<sup>25</sup> Harvey Cox, *Fire from Heaven: the Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the Twenty-first Century* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995), p. 58.

<sup>26</sup> On this see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

<sup>27</sup> Samuel Wells, *Transforming Fate into Destiny: The Theological Ethics of Stanley Hauerwas* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), p. 149.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> In using the Sabbath as an example I am not advocating a legalistic Sabbatarianism. Right use and enjoyment of Sunday as a day of rest comes as a fruit of mature Christian discipleship. The same applies to any Christian practice. As Bonhoeffer argued, Christ liberates us for responsibility, and responsible action excludes both legalism and licence, or as Bonhoeffer put it, ‘radicalism’ and ‘compromise’. Responsible action is that which is in accordance with reality. Bonhoeffer states: ‘Action which is in accordance with Christ is in accordance with reality because it allows the world to be the world; it reckons with the world as the world; and yet it

never forgets that in Jesus Christ the world is loved, condemned and reconciled by God.' D. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (ed. E. Bethge; trans. Neville Horton Smith; London: SCM Press, 1993), p. 200. Legalism and license (or radicalism and compromise) both constitute a denial of reality and are thus irresponsible and marks of immaturity.

- <sup>30</sup> On this see Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine, and Life - A Systematic Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 399–434; and *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Ethics* (eds. S. Hauerwas and S. Wells; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).
- <sup>31</sup> McIntosh, *Mystical Theology*, p. 75.
- <sup>32</sup> Jones, 'A Thirst for God or Consumer Spirituality?', p. 21.
- <sup>33</sup> For an account of our participation in God's economy of gifts or blessing and how it shapes human life see Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity*, pp. 77–95. See also John Milbank, *Being Reconciled: Ontology and Pardon* (London: Routledge, 2003).
- <sup>34</sup> See, e.g. the lists of unsuitable occupations set out in the *Didache* or the *Apostolic Traditions*.
- <sup>35</sup> See, e.g. John Chrysostom, 'Homily 20 on 1 Corinthians', *Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (First series, 14 vols.; trans. by T. Chambers; ed. by P. Schaff; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), XII, p. 117.
- <sup>36</sup> William T. Cavanaugh, *Torture and Eucharist: Theology, Politics, and the Body of Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), p. 237.
- <sup>37</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (ed. C. Gordon; trans. C. Gordon et al.; New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 39.
- <sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> For a 'Trinitarian dogmatics of holiness' in relation to God, the church and the individual Christian see John Webster, *Holiness* (London: SCM Press, 2003).
- <sup>40</sup> In this age, before Christ's return, we are left with the two apocalyptic questions: why do injustice and suffering continue? And, when will Christ return? We must remember that neither of these questions was answered even for Christ: we are exhorted to 'Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour' of the bridegroom's return (Mt. 25:13) and Jesus cries out on the cross 'Why have you forsaken me?' These are questions that can only be

answered by the Father. They are apocalyptic questions because they are the central focus of apocalyptic literature in the Bible. This point is drawn from a lecture by Jürgen Moltmann, 'Christian Hope, Globalisation and Terrorism', Hugh Price Hughes Memorial Lecture, Hinde Street Methodist Church, 11 February 2003.