

Introduction To MA: A Collaborative On Ascension Christology Applied!! (e.g. Missional Ecclesiology)

Tomorrow is Ascension Day!

More than an under-valued/celebrated "holy-day" in the church calendar, it is an under-valued, under studied, under utilized aspect of Christ's *ordo histori* and with what negative implication relative to the *ordo salutis*?

Illustration:

By accenting the centrality of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (historia salutis), and by incorporating faith union with Christ into the deepest structure of soteriology (ordo salutis), Reformed theology in the tradition of John Calvin offers an expansively rich conception of salvation in Christ."

Lane Tipton (WTS), *Justified in Christ...*

What's missing of Christ's *historia salutis* such as to negate a vital element of *ordo salutis*?

About John's Gospel, Douglas Farrow notes how regarding John's *historia salutis*:

"The ascension becomes the climax of Jesus-history and the eschatological event fulfilling all the hopes of Israel."

Ascension Christology Applied to *ordo salutis*:

"the kind of ecclesiology we, wish to do is quite impossible, then, without careful attention to the ascension... the church is marked off from the world... by its mysterious union." ¹

The Word was made flesh, and dwelled among us; to that flesh is joined the church, and there is made total Christ, both head and body.

Then let us rejoice and give thanks that we are made not only Christians, but Christ. Do you understand, brothers, and apprehend the grace of God upon us? Marvel, be glad, we are made Christ. For if he is the head, we are the members: the whole man is he and we... The fullness of Christ, then, is head and members. Head and members, what is that? Christ and the Church.²

St. Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*

Edmund Clowney and the resultant "organic" nature of the church in relation to Christ:

The organic concept of the church that appears in the New Testament... presents a more theological, Christ-centered, spiritual view of the church as defined not by one earthly hierarchical center nor by many earthly congregational centers, but by a heavenly center that requires

¹ Douglas Farrow, *Ascension and Ecclesia: On The Significance Of The Doctrine Of The Ascension For Ecclesiology And Christian Cosmology*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1999). p. 11, 17 respectively.

² St. Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John*, In. Io. XXI.8).

*multiform earthly manifestations. Earthly assemblies do not define but manifest the nature and the center of the church.*³

Introduction to 2016 Annual Collaborative: Total Christ Catholicity in Missional Ecclesiology

As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

Clearly, Christ's vision for unity exceeds a mere "POM" or pragmatic basis for catholicity... even as it is grounded in the Trinitarian Unity itself as to be shared in by the church!

It is more along the lines of an ontological unity that define the us in Christ, that needs here to be explored, even as to be related to the *missio dei*. or the very missional nature of God himself—which is the basis of missional ecclesiology applied to Catholicity.

Three Parts:

- 1) "The Question" Of Catholicity *After* Modern Christendom and trends in Neo-Denominationalism**
- 2) The Response of Lesslie Newbiggin's Missional Ecclesiology and Catholicity Explored**
 - a) Ecumenical Amnesia and Newbiggin's Total Christ Catholicity**
 - b) An Excursus in Biblical Theology**
 - c) Newbiggin's High Church and High Gospel Catholicity**
- 4) Issues In Total Christ Catholicity Going Forward**

A) "The Question" Of Catholicity *After* Modern Evangelical Christendom and trends in Neo-Denominationalism

Robert Weber has suggested that the high point of modern era evangelicalism was 1947-1980 and that the '80's through 2000" represented "the last gasp of evangelicalism in the modern world" (*Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*).

He further notes that during this time, Christian spirituality became "increasingly pragmatic, corporate, entertainment oriented and need driven as per the therapeutic faith of modernity" wherein "the divide between theology and practice was complete."⁴

- Prior To Reformational Context:**

5th century era— Cyril (west) and Nestorius (East)

³ Edmund Clowney, *Distinctives of the Presbyterian Polity*

⁴ *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*, gen. ed. Robert Webber, contributors, Driscoll, Burke, Kimball, Pagitt, Ward (Grand Rapids, Mich. : Zondervan, 2007)p. 18

- Interestingly, unity was discovered in working it through John's temple theology of Christ... e.g.

The protagonists involved Bishop Nestorius of Constantinople and Bishop Cyril of Alexandria representing the East and West respectively. The former stressed two natures to preserve Christ's humanity. The latter stressed one nature to preserve Christ's divinity. And yet both conceded the absolute necessity of preserving a *dialectical understanding of the relationship of the human and divine in Christology*.⁵

The decisive reconciling moment came during the Ephesus Council in AD 433, when Cyril accepted a statement, by Nestorius that emphasized the distinctness of the two natures within the one Person of Christ. Relative to Augustine's subsequent use applied to Christ's ascension ministry, it is significant how Nestorius phrased his clarification:

In a statement that invoked the language of John's gospel (1:14) and say:

*"I did not say that the Son was one (person) and God the Word another; I said that God the Word was by nature one and the temple by nature another, one Son by conjunction."*⁶

The council of Chalcedon in AD 451 brought further clarity such as become widely accepted in the Greek, Roman and Protestant traditions. The Chalcedon creed reflected more of a synthesis of the original Nestorian and Cyril positions and codified the language the oft-used language *"Distinct but never separate."* More exactly, the council concluded:

"that one and the same Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son, must be acknowledged in two natures, without confusion or change, without division or separation."

And again, "the distinction between the natures was never abolished by their union but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one person."⁷

- Post-Calcedon (without going into the history)-- there emerged two major denominations (albeit with different sects, or denominations within), both utilizing names that boasts of their being only one ironically-thus "schism--
 - Roman Catholic—West
 - Orthodox Catholic—East
- **Reformation Denominationalism—*Confessionalism or Modernist Christendom??***
 - *The Rise of Modern Christendom and Christendom Oriented Denominationalism*
 - By Christendom it is meant the synthesis between the Gospel/church and culture." (albeit either Nation-State context of Separation of Nation and Religion)
 - And this Christendom was the background of all the Reformation theologies and the state informed denominations that emerged... wherein one form of the Church was being defining by their positions over against another within the context of the *corpus Christianum*.
 - Words like Catholic and Denomination—oxymorons by definition, but strangely

⁵ The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica, *Last Updated 4-23-2013*

⁶ Green.. Quote taken from a sermon Nestorius preached in 430 as quoted by Aloys Grillmeier, S.J., *Christ in Christian Tradition*, Vol. 1: *From the Apostolic Age to Chalcedon (451)*, 2nd revised edition, trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox

⁷ Green, p. 455

- Catholic—"universal" "Undivided" – and only be one definition
- Denomination—"a designation based on a value or size (denomination of money), a certain name for a particular category among other categories... can only be two or more definition...

Lesslie Newbiggin, *Foolishness to the Greeks: The Gospel and Western Culture*;

It is the common observation of sociologists of religion that denominationalism is the religious aspect of secularization. It is the form that religion takes in a culture controlled by the ideology of the Enlightenment. It is the social form in which the privatization of religion is expressed. As Thomas Luckman says, "Once religion is defined as a private affair the individual may choose from the assortment of ultimate meanings as he sees fit."

- By secularism here- it is meant the loss of a transcendent knowledge based on revelation as to be "catholic"—e.g. the concept of 'catholic' is lost by definition if the enlightenment based Cartesian epistemology is followed...
 - E.g. Fueled by the Cartesian premise of epistemic foundationalism, "metaphysics," according to Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, was limited to the "bounds of experience" as to redefine the limits of "pure reason." As noted by Carl Henry, "modern theology shared one decisive and controlling premise, that man does not and cannot have *cognitive* knowledge of God."⁸ Kant waxed poetic about the whole thing:
*This domain (within the bounds of experience) is an island, enclosed by nature itself within unalterable limits. It is the land of truth—enchanted name!—surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean, the native home of illusion, where many a fog bank and many a swiftly melting iceberg give the deceptive appearance of farther shores, deluding the adventurous seafarer ever anew with empty hopes, and engaging him in enterprises which he can never abandon and yet is unable to carry to completion.*⁹

Therefore, per Newbiggin:

*It follows that neither a denomination separately nor all the denominations linked together in some kind of federal unity or "reconciled diversity" can be the agents of a missionary confrontation with our culture, for the simple reason that they are themselves **the outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual surrender to the ideology of our culture...***

Note sacramental language of WCF applied to union with culture—very instructive of Newbiggin's thought

A study of the beginnings of the modern missionary movement shows how strongly this movement was still controlled by the old Christendom idea. Missions were conceived of as the extension of the frontiers of Christendom and the conveyance of the blessings of Christian civilization informed by one or another nation-state spirituality (colonization).

An Important Qualification:

⁸ Carl Henry, *Brink*, p. 10.

⁹ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan and Co., 1929), p. 326-327.

I take Newbigin to be referencing any one or another modernist informed denomination (within context of secularism), not "denominationalism" itself as related to that church that is defined by its common confessional denominator. We allow for other "denominations" who are true churches within the one holy catholic church as an act of both humility, realistic expectations this side of heaven, and Christian charity (see below and Rom 14 for instance).

Denominationalism is a concession to eschatology wherein the one holy catholic church is not (yet) glorified and perfected (infallible). As such, denominationalism avoids an absolute imperialism of one denomination over another.. There is an admission of the wheat and the tares and when final judgment is to be made-- thus the importance of defining what ARE the marks of a true apostolic church of Jesus Christ.

- **Modernism and the emergence of Liberal (anti-supernaturalist/secular) vs. Fundamental (supernaturalist) and the emergence of culture based denominators**

- fundamentalist orientation that is inherent to the moderns itself such as to be prone to an *either-or, nothingbuttery*, kind of spirituality albeit anti- modern.
- Whereas the fundamentalist and liberals came to very different conclusions from the foundationalist premise-- one demythologizing and the other supernaturalizing— they were both modernist in *praxis*.

In his *The Evangelical Mind and the New School Presbyterian Movement*¹⁰ Marsden pointed out how both evangelical "new school revivalism" and "mainline liberalism" were drinking from the same modernist waters. For instance, both were fundamentally historicist, even if in a polarizing reaction one to one another. We could recall at this point how the evangelical reaction to Hegels', Darwins', Marx's, Nietzsche's and Spener's anti-supernaturalist oriented historicism was to compile their own reductionist creed in the five *fundamentals* at the Bible Conference at Niagara in 1895. And again, notice very carefully the selection of "fundamentals" and what was left out if compared to any ancient creed:

- Plenary inspiration of inerrant scriptures (literalism)
- The Virgin Birth
- The Substitutionary Atonement
- Bodily resurrection
- Second and bodily return of Christ

Clearly, the late 19th century foundationalist premise that was oriented to historicism was as much determinative of the "fundamentalists" as any attempt at representing even the "fundamental" tenants of Christian orthodoxy classically understood. For if t compared to the pre-modern patristic articles of faith, where are the classic doctrines of Holy Trinity, Christology, and the Church for instance? Or if even compared to the early modern era of the 16th century reformation context, where is the *ordo salutis* doctrines related to Divine election, effectual calling-regeneration, repentance and faith, justification, sanctification, perseverance, glorification? Clearly, modernity set the agenda for anti-modern fundamentalism as much as modern liberalism—they were both committed to foundationalism if not also reductionist vis-à-vis anepistemic confidence in Christian faith and practice.

Evangelical Democratization and Populism:

¹⁰ For a more cursory synopsis, see George Marsden, "The New School Heritage and Presbyterian Fundamentalism," *Westminster Theological Review* (1970) 32, 2:129—47.

Populist Oriented Modern Evangelical Christendom: :

The acids of modern secularism that re-shaped the church in Western Christendom are:

- Market place pragmatism and supply-demand capitalism = “church growth movement”;
- The rising prestige of the natural sciences with its corresponding empiricist based sage of modern rationalism = Rationalist oriented (vs. participational oriented) apologetics (“Campus “Debates, Worldview conferences, etc)
- Democratically informed populism and modern subjective individualism = Bellah’s “Habits of the Heart” style Christian Spirituality
- And a desensitized spirituality formed out of an increasingly bureaucratized and techno-urban socialization that shielded us from the agrarian forces that at once made God more believable, if not more useful = The Christendom oriented “Executive/CEO Sr. Pastor led corporate church and power-point oriented sermon
- **Anti-Intellectual Subjectivism and Intellectual Rationalism ,at the same time**

Sociologist James Hunter:

“evangelical orientation toward the Bible” was a “trend at one level that involves an accommodation of varying degrees to modern epistemology—philosophical rationalism, even shades of positivism” on the one hand and yet simultaneously “de-objectified wherein in different terms, there is a shift from a concern with “what the Bible states” to a more subjectivist “what God is telling me.”¹¹

e.g.

Rationalistic:

- R. C. Sproul, John Gerstner and Arthur Lindsey, *A Rational Defense of the Christian Faith* by.
- Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands A Verdict*

Populist Oriented

- Historian Nathan Hatch

In America the principal mediator of God's voice has not been state, church, council, confession, ethnic group, university college or seminary; it has been quite simply, the people... the impulse to rework Christianity into forms that were unmistakably popular... and democratic in at least three respects: it was audience centered, intellectually open to all, and organizationally pluralistic and innovative... (about Alexis de Tocqueville's observation in 19th century America), expecting to find priests, he found politicians.¹²

Mark Noll: “evangelical interpretation assigned first place to popular approval...

Representative Trends:

- In the 80's it was the discipleship movement and seeker friendly services.
- The 90's were all about the restoration of men to God and family, men keeping promises and reaching Gen X.
- In the early 2000's we focused on non-corporate worship, prayer of Jabez and social justice. “

¹¹ James Hunter, *The Coming Generation*, p. 46-47

¹² Nathan Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity*

Post-Modernity—the Question:

So what does it look like to conceive of a Christianity in another way that's not modern? "Can you imagine what happens to the church, the whole Christian enterprise, when it has so thoroughly accommodated to modernity – so much so that it has no idea of any way Christianity could exist other than a modern way?"¹³

And

*Where did we get the twisted notion that orthodoxy is essentially a set of ideas rather than a living tradition of social experience? Our stereotype of orthodoxy is that of frozen dogma, rather than a warm continuity of human experience--of grandmothers teaching granddaughters, of feasts and stories, of rites and dancing. Orthodoxies are never best judged merely by their doctrinal ideas, but more so by their social products, the quality of their communities... They await being studied sociologically, not just theologically.*¹⁴

The Less than Compelling Answers Thus Far:

- **A Return to Ancient Pagan-Jewish Syncretism and the Anti-Organized search for Catholicity--** or the "under every leafy tree and every hill" kind of spirituality that was prominent in OT Jewish syncretism and ancient paganism (c.f. Ezekiel 20:27-39 compared to Dt. 12:1-10, 13; Dt. 28)

David Brooks:

"if the challenge for a *modern* evangelicals within a modern secular context was to defend the supernatural of God, the pre-modern amidst a post-propositional context, observes David Brooks, is "to defend the idea of a *personal* God, and explain why specific theologies are true guides for behavior day to day." In other words, "the real challenge is going to come from people who feel the existence of the sacred, but who think that particular religions are just cultural artifacts built on top of universal human traits. It's going to come from scientists whose beliefs overlap a bit with Buddhism."¹⁵

- E.g. "I consider myself a spiritual person, but not religious."

Jesus according to William Young's *The Shack*

"I don't create institution—never have, never will... that's an occupation for those who want to play God. So no, I'm not too big on religion," ... and not very found of politics or economics either... they are the man made trinity of errors. ¹⁶

- George Barna's *Revolution*
- Herbert Hoefler's *Churchless Christianity*
- Frank Viola and George Barna, *Pagan Christianity*
- Lenard Sweet, *The Gospel according to Starbucks*,
- Brian Sanders, *Life After Church*,
- Jim Palmer, *Divine Nobodies*,
- Sara Cunningham, *Dear Church: Letters from a Disillusioned Generation*
- Julia Dunn, *Quitting Church*
- Jake Olson, *So You Don't Want to Go to Church Anymore*

¹³ Brian McLaren: *A New Kind of Christian: A Tale of Two Friends on a Spiritual Journey* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001), p. 16.

¹⁴ Thomas Oden, *After Modernity, What?*

¹⁵ DAVID BROOKS, *The Neural Buddhists* Published: May 13, 2008. www.nytimes.com/2008/05/13/opinion/13brooks.html

¹⁶ William P. Young, *The Shack*, (Newbury Park, CA: Windblown Media, 2007), p. 177-179.

- David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian*
- Dan Kimball, *They Like Jesus But Not the Church*
- **Reactionary search for Catholicity --** “re” clichés of emergent spirituality that is *already* becoming passé: e.g. **THE neo-denominational “re-contextualized” or “reaction” based new denominations—**
 - Tim Keller in *Our New Global Culture: Ministry in Urban Centers* summarizes the trends as represented in modernity and now post-modernity:
 - If *moderns* are rational and cognitive; *postmoderns* are more experiential and intuitive. If moderns are secular and anti-spiritual; postmoderns are more open to the spiritual and mystical. If moderns are more hard-line liberal or conservative; postmoderns are less ideologically rigid. If moderns are individualistic; postmoderns are more oriented to community and friendship.
 - Doug Pagitt's *Church Re-imagined...*, Driscoll's *“Reformation...”*, Chester and Timms *“Reshaping...”*, *Re-turn to ??*, *Retrieval of ??...* ALL absent a real “re-formation” that beginning with a Biblical theology transformed into a holistic Theological vision in favor of new or old forms less elements.
 - Eclectic theology in reaction to prior theology— ‘BOTH/AND’ ALBEIT IN WAYS INCONSISTENT ACTS 29—VESTIGES OF ALL DENOMINATIONS...
- The “Band Church” and “Band Leader Pastor” movement
 - The *New York Times* “Hip New Churches” that “pray to a different drummer.”

“These non-denominational churches are unlike anything before experienced in recent history according to the article—neither “traditional” *nor* “contemporary” the revival is marked by medieval liturgies and practices borrowed from Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox rituals that predate the enlightenment” coupled with progressive techniques and sounds.”¹⁷
 - ABC News, “Not Your Granddad's Church: Hillsong Church Mixes Sermons With Rock Concerts”

Every Sunday, thousands of people gather in New York City to get in line for a church service that is full of hand-raising, heart-thumping, hipster-style Christianity.
- Charlie Rose on ABC Good Morning America:

“Are they band leaders who pastor, or pastor's who are band leaders?”
- **Racial-Reconciliation/ Multi-Cultural search for Catholicity**
 - 1) Multi-Racial Church Plants vs. Mono-Racial Church Plants—e.g our general rule of thumb is that local church plants should reflect the racial-cultural demographic— as racially diverse as local context. How intentional then should we be to target multi-racial demographics, vs. contexts that are predominantly mono-racial for the advancement of racial reconciliation.. thus racial reconciliation “in-house” issues/ opportunities relative to single congregations, etc.
 - 2) Notwithstanding the positives of planting multi-racial congregations, how far can a single congregation go in terms of “blending” worship styles, leadership cultures, etc such that all cultures are genuinely reflected/respected vs. one culture absorbing another (majoritarianism)

¹⁷ NYT, February 18, 2004

within a congregation) n The issue of cultural hegemony in church and the “oppression” of any one culture by another dominant culture albeit within a church?? Should there be a strategy of planting mono-racial congregations, as to be more “pure” culturally in its worship, styles of leadership, etc (the historic reformed “vernacular” principles”) albeit within a strategy to plant multiple congregations to create an organically united multi-congregational church movement within a local context?? What are the issues of racial reconciliation congregation to congregation within a single organizational context? Sharing Budgets, government, Creed, albeit different “socio-cultural forms” etc.

- 3) And then there is the context like BOH in New Haven consisting of different denominations that reflect different racial constituencies. how then to pursue racial reconciliation in local contexts between denominations and her peoples and the challenges/opportunities— basically—the BOH experiment.

- **Paleo-Denominationalism by either *Return* or *Retrieval* Spirituality searches for new catholicity**

- a. *Return* Spirituality in protest to modernist denominationalism:

The new exodus of Protestants, most evangelicals, streaming to Rome” and especially among the so called “Gen X” and “millennial” generations

To Rome:.

- Brad Wilcox, *A River Runs to It: A New Exodus of Protestants Streams to Rome* (May, 1999)
- Peter Kreeft, Richard John Neuhaus, Deal Hudson, and Scott Hahn, Tom Howard, Steve Wood, Gerry Matatics, the Duchess of Kent, Bishop Graham Leonard,
- Three part series *Surprised by Truth* by Patrick Madrid where converts from Protestant contexts give so called “biblical and historical reasons for becoming Catholic” (Basilica Press).

To Constantinople

- American Peter Gillquist in "Becoming Orthodox" (Conciliar Press, 1990) and "Coming Home" (1992),
- British Michael Harper, "A Faith Fulfilled" (Conciliar Press, 1999).

- b. *Retrieval* Spirituality in protest to modernist denominationalism.

In Reformed Catholicity, Michael Allen and Scott Swain make note of no less than thirteen movements in search of catholicity by means of retrieval in spirituality.¹⁸ The assumption is that the further back in history, the closer one gets to apostolic faith in unity. A few examples:

- Thomas Oden’s “Paleo-Orthodoxy”—*argues that what underlies seemingly divergent denominational traditions stems from the roots of patristic theology, exegesis, and, ultimately, worship.*
- Robert Webber’s Ancient-Future Christianity—*an attempt to rediscover Comon roots” and the need for evangelicals to draw from the Christian past, again drawing upon the patristic heritage of the church for the sake of engaging postmodern culture in a profound way.*

¹⁸ Allen, Michael; Swain, Scott R. (2015-01-13). Reformed Catholicity: The Promise of Retrieval for Theology and Biblical Interpretation. Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition. All italic portions of the following descriptions are quotations.

- Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson's Evangelical Catholicism-- *calling the church into conversation with recent debates to focusing the church on the classical resources of the ecumenical tradition. They launched the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology, began a new journal Pro Ecclesia.*
- Theological Interpretation of Scripture-- *A major focus of this movement is retrieval of pre-modern modes of scriptural reasoning, suggesting that figural and spiritual hermeneutics as well as the creedally disciplined approach of the early church fathers has something to teach us today.*
- Radical Orthodoxy—*seeks to explain the decline of the church and to provide a counter-narrative by drawing on the heritage of Christian Platonism (which involved readings of Augustine, Aquinas, and others).*
- The Emerging or Emergent Church(es)-- *an intentional effort to minister to people in a purportedly new postmodern era... with a focus being the retrieval of various practices, texts, and ideas from the Christian past. it is noted how they fell prey to charges of picking and choosing as they wished and (at least in the more emboldened versions) a tendency tended toward revisionism.*

NOTE: At its best (from a "Reformation" Perspective") retrieval is in search of "another way" than modernist oriented Christendom:

Question?

Is reactions to modernity a sufficient framework for the discovery of a holistic and healthy spirituality and ecclesiology?

Allen, Michael; Swain, Scott R. Reformed Catholicity

Many critiques of Protestantism suggest that if one desires a churchly, sacramental, ancient faith, then one must turn from the Reformation toward Rome or the East. And many have taken to those paths, fleeing what they may perceive to be thin theologies of ministry and of the Christian life in the Reformational world. Others celebrate the Reformed church as decidedly un-catholic and seek to minimize any connection to the ancient shape of the Christian faith... But there is another Way!

What's right about this?

... that the principles of classical Reformed orthodox prolegomena, as well as the principles of classical Reformed ecclesiology, provide a salutary framework within which a Reformed dogmatics of retrieval might be developed.

What remains however? Better-- What's missing?

E.g. Can we envision a "reformation consistent that isn't necessarily "Reformed" (of one or another "Reformed Denomination") that is *semper reformanda* ("always reforming")?

A Good question stated differently (as will be qualified) by perhaps the surprising voice within emergent spirituality itself!

e.g. Brian McLaren's, in his *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix*, search for the "new" church ("new" relative to the emergent

“renewed” and poleo retrievals of “restored” churches)

“The *renewed church* is an old church that, after having lost touch with its people, goes through a process of change in order to relate to them and better meet their needs again. This is good. But renewal tends to be a temporary, or stopgap, measure... changes in style! “

“The *restored* church looks at problems in their churches today and says, “Aha! We’ve lost our way! We must go back to the New Testament to rediscover our original vibrancy. This is an intelligent realization. Unfortunately, what tends to happen next is that we latch onto some peripheral matter of early church life [forms) and prescribe it as the missing feature... the church of the “last detail”... the “magic pattern.”

“The *new church* can be of any age, any denomination. It goes through a process of peripheral change similar to the renewed and restored churches, a process of radical self-assessment, of going back to the roots, sources, and first things. ... “¹⁹

“if we have a new world, we will need a new church.. not a new religion per se, but a new framework for our theology. Not a new Spirit, but a new spirituality. Not a new Christ, but a new Christian. Not a new denomination, but a new kind of church in every denomination.” ²⁰

MA’s response—Yes and No!

- In search of a “new” Christian spirituality and church practice that can transcend western facing and modernist spirituality as the elemental level—Yes!
- In search of a “New” Christian spirituality and church practice that transcends a Christo-centric Biblical Theology and the “divine law” of Apostolic Spirituality—No!

Lesslie Newbigin’s Total Christ Catholicity Explored:

Awe came upon everyone... All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together with one accord in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And day by day the Lord added to them those who were being saved.

Acts 2:43-47

Such is the vision we get of the ascended ministry of Christ in the present redemptive era after Pentecost. It is the description of a Christo-centric, sacramentally formed, confessional, multi-cultural and organic kind of unity that was in, not of, and for the world to the “praise of God” and in “favor with all the people.” It perfectly illustrates Total Christ catholicity in *missional ecclesiology*! And according to Lesslie Newbigin, such a missional catholicity was prayed for by Christ, given at Pentecost by our conversion into the temple-church of Christ, then tragically lost

¹⁹ Brian McLaren *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix*, (2006)., pp. 26-27, 27-28, 28.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 18 and 14.

through history and in need of rediscovery for the sake of greater missional power and witness in today's global city.

*The truth is... that the unity of the Church is something given to it at its inception, and given by its Lord. That unity had its outward form, first in the fact that the first disciples were visibly grouped around one Lord, and then in the close-knit fellowship of the days immediately following Pentecost, in the sharing in a common baptism, a common tradition of teaching, a common Supper, and a common acknowledgment of the leadership of the Apostles.*²¹

Indeed, the description of a high church and gospel centered organic unity as capable of embracing every culture and nation has often eluded Christendom, and especially the post-enlightenment western church in decline. But then, there was Lesslie Newbigin's early missionary encounter with South India and the united "Church of South India," and his later missionary vision for the West concerning an "ecclesial hermeneutic" by means of a united Christian church that is still dedicated to the "conversion" of all nations to Christ-- what Michael Goheen has described as Newbigin's "missionary ecclesiology."²²

1) Ecumenical Amnesia and Newbigin's Total Christ Vision of Catholicity

The purpose then of this paper is to explore Lesslie Newbigin's "missionary ecclesiology," especially to discover both its Biblical validation and practical relevance concerning "The Gospel in Today's Global City."²³ In so doing, we will be introduced to a kind of epistemology of "Total Christ" ecclesiology and a Five Mark vision for High church (temple oriented) and High Gospel (covenant oriented) spirituality as the mediatorial presence of Christ as our prophet, priest and king in and missional ecclesiology—the bases for a missional catholicity.

Such a vision for ecumenism, contrary to common perceptions of one or the other side of contemporary Christendom, will espouse *neither* a movement of confessional compromise (the evangelical critique of mainline movements in denominational ecumenism) or missional pragmatism (the mainline critique of evangelical, non-denominational, missionally pragmatic based cooperatives). Quite the contrary, a Christo-centric vision for a multi-cultural, trans-national movement espoused by Lesslie Newbigin will view ecumenism as nothing short of essential for *both* a true confessional and missional ecclesiology! In the words of Lesslie Newbigin:

*I believe that true ecumenism is not something which is evading the question of truth. It is something which is facing at a deeper level the question "What is the truth?" Is the truth ultimately in the Name of Jesus and there alone, or is the truth only to be known by adding something else in the Name of Jesus? The real issue which this missionary encounter raises is the question, "What is the true confession?" What does it mean to confess Jesus today?*²⁴

The Christo-Centric Basis of Lesslie Newbigin's Missional Ecclesiology

As early as 1977, Jurgen Moltmann observed that "one of the strongest impulses towards the renewal of the theological concept of the church comes from the theology of mission."²⁵ And as Michael Goheen has observed, "few people have been as insistent in both writing and practice that the church is missionary by its very nature as

²¹ The Nature, p. 5.

²² Michael W. Goheen, 'As The Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You': Lesslie Newbigin's Missional Ecclesiology. *International Review of Mission* 91, 362 (2002): 345-369.

²³ J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in Today's Global City*, Selly Oak Occasional Paper No. 16 (1997)

²⁴ J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, *Missions In An Ecumenical Perspective* 1962 p. 9

²⁵ Jurgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit: A Contribution to Messianic Ecclesiology*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1977), 7. Quoted in Goheen, p. 345.

Bishop J. E. Lesslie Newbigin.²⁶ For according to Newbigin, consistent with the formative days of the WCC, to be missionary was most essentially to “Christianize the world” as pertaining to the universality of Christ for all peoples.²⁷

*What I am pleading for is simple, but not, I hope, simplistic. It is simply for a recovery of confidence in the gospel, the truth, sufficiency, finality and universality of that which God has done for the whole human race in Jesus Christ. We cannot accept for him a place merely as one of the world's religious teachers. We are but learners and have to listen not only to our fellow Christians of other cultures, but also to our neighbors of other faiths, who may teach us much that we have not understood. But the crucial question is: Which is the real story? To that question...there is no neutrality. The answer has to be given in Paul's words - bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, manifests to the world his risen life, the life which is life indeed.*²⁸

The context of Newbigin's Christ-centered emphasis in missional ecclesiology begins with a curious providence that Newbigin was born in December 8, 1909, “within a year and less than a hundred miles from the Edinburgh 1910 world missionary conference, where the modern ecumenical movement was born.”²⁹ It would become one of Newbigin's most vocal refrains to call the ecumenical vision back to her Christo-centric missional roots consistent with the 1910 “Ecumenical Missionary Conference.” In 1994 for instance, he favorably recalled how the “modern ecumenical vision was born out of the vision of a whole world brought to Christ as Lord.” The observation was made out of his concern for the WCC's expansion of the “ecumenical perspective universally to all humanity.”

According to Newbigin, the WCC had formally adopted a revised platform in the Uppsala Assembly of 1968 that veered away from its original Christo-centric vision in Edinburgh. Instead, Newbigin advocated for the continuation of the famous “watchword that fired the ardor of the first pioneers” in Edinburgh, namely, “the evangelization of the world in this generation.” It was “a vision for all humanity or it was nothing” such that to negate this missionary impetus of the ecumenical movement was paramount to being afflicted with an “ecumenical amnesia.”³⁰

By evangelization, Newbigin did not mean “colonization,” or when one culture seeks to convert another culture to itself. (e.g 19th century westernization vis-à-vis missionary ventures from Europe and the United States). But rather, by evangelization Newbigin meant converting all peoples to Christ vis-à-vis a call to repentance and faith—which for Newbigin was not merely a moralistic exhortation to “turn away from your sins” but a call to whole life discipleship as a believer and follower of Christ-- “to see things in a wholly new way, to a radical paradigm shift” in relation to Christ.³¹

The theological context for the so called “ecumenical amnesia” of the WCC movement in 1968 was according to Newbigin related to a profound “paradigm shift” from “Christo-centric universalism” to the “Trinitarian model.”

Notwithstanding his general endorsement that a “full Trinitarian theology was needed for an adequate missiology” (c.f. his *Trinitarian Faith for Today's Mission*, 1963), Newbigin however sought to qualify the Trinitarian model in that “the Trinitarian perspective can be only an enlargement and development of a Christo-centric one, and not an

²⁶ Goheen, p. 345.

²⁷ Ecumenical Amnesia” (From the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, January 1994) in *The Best of Bishop Lesslie Newbigin*, (Overseas Ministries Study Center, New Haven, CT, 1998) p. 28.

²⁸ J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *Witnesses to the World* 1987 Christian (U.K.), no. 1 (May/June): 5-8. This is an edited version of a paper originally given at a conference on ‘His Mission, Our Task’, organised by the Parfor Mission and Unity in October 1986.

²⁹ Scot Sherman, “The Quest for the Visible Unity: The Ecclesiology of Lesslie Newbigin,” ed. John Vance, *The Assembling of Ourselves Together, Ecclesiology in the Twenty-First Century* (Westminster Church, 2005) p. 132-148. p. 133.

³⁰ Amnesia” p. 25 and 28 respectively.

³¹ Lesslie Newbigin, “Conversion, Colonies, and Culture, Lecture II of the Henry Martyn Lectures Delivered in the University of Cambridge (1986)” and published in *Lesslie Newbigin, Signs Amid the Rubble, The Purpose of God in Human History*, ed. Geoffrey Wainwright, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) p. 93.

alternative set over against it, for the doctrine of the Trinity is the theological articulation of what it means to say that Jesus is the unique Word of God incarnate in world history.”³² In other words, the “literally crucial matter” concerning the missionary nature of the church according to Newbigin was “the centrality of Jesus and his atoning work on the cross, that work by which he has won lordship over the church and the world.”³³

Newbigin often bemoaned how the Christo-centric basis of missional ecumenism had been supplanted wherein the “task of the church [was] no longer to Christianize the world but to change it.” Accordingly, the Trinitarian model of Uppsala “interprets all situation in terms of the oppressor and the oppressed and that tends to interpret the struggles of the oppressed as the instrument of redemption.”

Again, Newbigin complained how the recent trend sought to interpret the Christo-centric paradigm as giving “rise to a model of unity that is hierarchical and potentially oppressive” whereas the “model of the Trinity sought a wholly different kind of unity, one not accomplished by the conversion of the nations under the Lordship of Christ, but one which sought “the ecclesiastical form of conciliarity” by means of “the method of dialogue—not dialogue as a means to an end, but as a way of life—in fact “the sharing of life.”³⁴

This post-Uppsala reinterpretation of Christian mission is further explained by Michael Goheen as a “new view of mission” that featured a “shift in focus from God’s work through Christ in the church to His providential and salvific work by His Spirit in the world. The goal of mission was the humanization or shalom of society through the efforts of the laity in co-operation with other social institutions that aimed at the transformation of oppressive political, social, and economic structures.”³⁵ (A decidedly “culture-transformationist” shift in missional focus.) Accordingly, the Geneva Conference on Church and Society (1966) stated:

We start with the basic assumption that the triune God is the Lord of his world and at work within it, and that the Church’s task is to point to his acts, to respond to his demands, and to call mankind to this faith and obedience. . . . In this document, ‘mission’ and ‘missionary’ are used as shorthand for the responsibilities of the Church in the world.”³⁶

Newbigin would have none of it! The necessary corrective, argued Newbigin, was to reaffirm “one of the most important documents produced by the WCC in the past three decades” entitled “Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation.” Developed during the years 1976-81 and approved by the Central Committee in 1982, the document was said to have reaffirmed “Christ-centered universalism” which again, according to Newbigin, “insists not only that the lordship of Christ must relativize all denominational divisions and challenge the domestication of the church within Western society, but also that it must challenge the church as such to accept its worldwide missionary obligation and not to leave that task to other bodies.” He further warned, “to allow the worldwide missionary and evangelistic calling of the church to disappear from the agenda of the WCC... is much more than a paradigm shift.”³⁷

Again, by these words, Newbigin was clearly *not* endorsing what throughout his writings he lamented as the colonizing tendencies of western Christendom. (which is again to be culture and nation-state driven vs. gospel centered and to acquiesce to the cultural-transformationist agenda that Newbigin viewed as inherent to modern liberalism). Rather, Newbigin was warning that to lose the eschatological *telos* in relation to Christ and his atoning work of the cross in the church’s missionary focus was to lose the church altogether. For Newbigin, the church is missionary by its nature, even that mission that is Christo-centrally determined: *As the Father has sent*

³² Amnesia, p.26.

³³ Amnesia. P. 28.

³⁴ Amnesia. P. 26. These quotes are in response to Konrad Raiser’s *Ecumenism in Transition* (Geneva: WCC 1991).

³⁵ Goheen, p. 350.

³⁶ Quoted in Goheen, p. 350. *World Conference on Church and Society: Christians in the Technical and Social Revolutions of Our Time*. Geneva, July 12-16, 1966. The Official Report with a Description of the Conference by M. M. Thomas and Paul Albrecht. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1967), 179f.

³⁷ Amnesia, p.

me, so I send you' defines the very being of the Church as mission argued Newbigin. As such, Goheen affirms that for Newbigin, "mission is not one (even the most important) of the many tasks of the church. Mission is not secondary to its being nor does mission simply belong to the *bene esse* of the church. Rather, mission is essential to the church's being and of the *esse* of its nature." Accordingly, "without mission," Newbigin could say that "the Church simply falls to the ground. **We must say bluntly that when the Church ceases to be a mission, then she ceases to have any right to the titles by which she is adorned in the New Testament.**"³⁸

The biblical-theological justification for a missional ecclesiology (and the inter-relationship of missions to a temple-presence theology of the church) is nowhere more profoundly expressed than in his The Nature of the Unity that We Seek (1957) based on Christ's farewell prayer in John 17.

"the unity which Christians seek must necessarily be that for which our Lord prayed, and which it is his will to give us."³⁹

It was drafted "in order to justify the formation of the South India United Church (SIUC), a union church of Presbyterians and Congregationalists, and then later the Methodists and Anglicans in South India as to form the Church of South India (CSI), inaugurated in Madras on September 27, 1947.

[we see below how all four shared a fundamentally (elemental) confessional (gospel centered/covenantal) and sacramental (church/temple) spirituality. Organic Union necessarily required polity- and thus the great challenge that led to a multi-traditional, mono-confessional union- see below.]

Accordingly, Christian unity is based upon the a-priori *spiritual* union that already exists between all true believers by their baptism into the temple-church of Christ. In that "the name of God and the glory of God" have been given to believers, this in itself constitutes an act of "God's holy love in Jesus Christ by which his inner nature is revealed.

As God is one, so those who bear his name and the impress of his character must necessarily be one....the language of our Lord's prayer points to a unity which is not merely analogous to the unity of the divine nature ("as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee") but actually a participation in the being of the triune God ("I in them and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one").

Therefore, and crucial to Newbigin's understanding of the relation of Christian catholicity is a sacramental definition of the church unto missional power and witness:

The unity which we must seek is thus a unity which arises from Christ from their being in him. It is not simply a unity of organization, nor is it simply an agreement about doctrine. It is a total mutual interchange of being-Christ wholly given to us, we wholly given to him. This is a unity involving the whole being of all concerned in it. (under-line mine as to emphasis that as noted later, Newbigin did hold to the necessity of both confessional and organizational (polity) unity as the basis for true organic union).

Based then upon Christ's prayer in relation to Christ's ascension based mission today, an agenda for Christian catholicity can never be viewed as non-essential for Newbigin-- it is directly related the missional nature of the church by virtue of the church's mediated union with Christ patterned after the Trinitarian union—distinct but never separate. The essential nature of the church in mystic union with Christ is the very basis of a truly missionary ecclesiology.

Note: We discern this by observing how Christ's priestly prayer is but the penultimate climax of John's gospel, awaiting the post-resurrection and ascension focused commissioning of the apostles in John 20! Better yet, a biblical theology of John's Gospel reads like a "divine thesis" for missional ecclesiology! Stated succinctly, the thesis could read: "Missional ecclesiology is incarnational Christology applied! The

³⁸ Goheen, p. 349 quote from Lesslie Newbigin, *Household of God*, p. 163.

³⁹ J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, "The Nature of the Unity We Seek": 1. From the Church of South India (1957), *Religion in Life* 26, 2(1957): 181-190.

church, just being the church, is as much a topic of soteriology related to ascension (Just as justification is a topic of soteriology related to incarnation). This is because Christ's presence (and power, c.f. Eph 1:12-23) is directly related to the power that is bound and loosed on earth as it is in heaven (c.f. Mt 16), a power that is in, with and through the missional church. (Note the qualification this side of heaven "ordinarily" given that total Christ ecclesiology must be eschatologically qualified this side of heaven).

The soteriological nature of the church (albeit qualified) is perfectly illustrated by John 20 in context of John's temple focused Christology throughout (c.f. Addendum)

The extraordinary language that speaks to the mystery of Christology applied to Christ's present temple ministry on earth by the Holy Spirit even as he is with the Father in heaven in John 14-21 is tied then to an important caveat. This caveat is perfectly stated and illustrated by Lesslie Newbigin's missionary experience. Stated three times in John's gospel:

That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; so that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. (John 17:21 stated again in vs. 23)

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.' (Jn 13:34-35)

In so far as the spiritual unity of Christians in union with Christ was given to the church at her inception, all attempts at catholicity for Newbigin are essentially attempts at repentance unto "re-union." Notwithstanding Newbigin's vast critique of the acids of modernity working against catholicity, at its core all expressions of disunity were considered vestiges of original sin this side of glorification.

All disunity among Christians is a contradiction of that upon which their being Christians rests. It has the character of sin, being a repudiation of the God-given nature of the Church. The quest for unity must therefore be regarded not as an enterprise of men aimed at constructing something new, but as a penitent return to that which was originally given but subsequently denied.⁴⁰

Herein we discover what is arguably the greatest contribution to both mission and catholicity by Newbigin—namely, how they are both mutually interdependent as then to characterize his "missionary ecclesiology." That is to say that the unity in mission that existed between God the father and God the Son is now the same unity in mission that is between the Son and the Holy Spirit as mediated in, with and through the church. **The crucial importance of Christ's priestly prayer in John 17** cannot be over stated in relation to Newbigin's missional ecclesiology.

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me. (John 17:20-23)

The Trinitarian theology of co-participation is extended to the church, vis-à-vis Christ's ascension ministry by the Holy Spirit. The church as such, in so far as it is a participation in the Spirit of Christ, is a participation in the mission of Christ. And yet, this participation in Christ "relativizes" all denominational distinctions that exist between all true, gospel centered and Christ-centric churches. (What he will later described as consistent with a confessional, sacramental and communal based Christo-centric spirituality).

2) Excurses in Redemptive History

⁴⁰ The Nature, p. 3.

- **It can be argued that any theology in Missional Ecclesiology must begin with Eden**

That the Garden of Eden was a temple has been carefully documented.⁴¹ That “temple” therefore is an essential element of mission is also evident, even if by the very simple observation that there has never been a time in all of redemptive history wherein the temple was not an essential element of the gospel. Temple Eden, therefore, envelopes the whole globe by the time we get to the temple presence on earth in Rev. 20-21.

The inherent missional nature of temple-Eden from the beginning is also noted:

“And God blessed them ... Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that creeps on the surface.”

As the priestly “*imago dei*” (after the pattern of the priestly ephod of the OC), humanity was to rule over and subdue the earth (e.g. to extend God’s kingdom). The intent was to expand the geographical boundaries of God’s Kingdom presence Eden throughout the whole earth. (Rev. picks up this theme perfectly). In common temple description, “to fill” was to mediate the presence of God, which was in the beginning limited to Eden but to be extended throughout the whole earth. (not surprisingly, Paul’s description of the church as the body of Christ is that Christ might “fill all in all” (Eph 1:22-23, 2:19ff) Note to the image of God’s glory-presence hovering over and filling the temple, as also over Christ (the incarnate temple) during his baptism.

Note also:

Just as a river flowed out from Eden (Gen 2:10), so the postexilic temple and the eschatological temple in both Ezek 47:1-12 and Rev 21:1-2 have rivers flowing out from their center (and likewise Rev 7:15-17 and probably Zech 14:8-9). Indeed, Ezekiel generally depicts latter-day Mount Zion (and its temple) with descriptions of Eden in an attempt to show that the promises originally inherent in Eden would be realized in the fulfillment of his vision. Fertility and “rivers” are also descriptions of Israel’s temple in Ps 36:8-9:

- They drink their fill of the abundance of your house [temple];
- And You give them to drink of *the river of Your delights* [lit in Heb: “the river of your Edens”!].
- For with You is *the fountain of life*

- **Edenic Commission reiterated through Abrahamic covenant**

17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, **2** that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” **3** Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, **4** “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. **5** No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. **6** I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. **7** And I will establish my covenant between me and

⁴¹ M. G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue* (c.f. Gregory Beale, *Eden, Temple, and the Church’s Mission In The New Creation*, J. Ev. Theol. Soc. 48/1 (March 2005) 5-31.

you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

- **The Prophetic Vision of Ezekiel to extend temple throughout the world as to include the “re-union” of ISRAEL TO JUDAH together with the inclusion of the nations.**

E.g. Ezekiel's Vision for a Missional Ecclesiology and Catholicity was defined as the extension of God's Edenic temple throughout the globe in a multi-cultural/national unification of God's people, albeit requiring repentance and reconciliation between Israel and Judah—Ezekiel 37:19-22

Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am about to take the stick of Joseph (that is in the hand of Ephraim) and the tribes of Israel associated with him. And I will join with it the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, that they may be one in my hand. 20 When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, 21 then say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will take the people of Israel from the nations among which they have gone, and will gather them from all around, and bring them to their own land. 22 And I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel. And one king shall be king over them all, and they shall be no longer two nations, and no longer divided into two kingdoms.

Post-Maccabean Context (Sadducees vs. Pharisees) and John's Gospel to Sadducee Christians in context of the demise of Temple

AS noted by Mary Coloe,

The temple is not a peripheral image. It is used consistently throughout the text and moves beyond the life of Jesus into the life of the community, giving the community a clear sense of identity and a way of sustaining faith in the absence of Jesus.⁴²

NT-- John's Theology of Christ as Temple Applied to Ascension

John Begins his gospel: (Note schism between Pharisee and Sadducee (Sadducee temple focus (mediatorial presence), Pharisee covenant focused/law

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

That is, we are immediately taken back to the beginning of the world, and to Eden itself—wherein the very life giving WORD that what was powerful to create the world out of nothing was then present in Eden as the light of all humanity as to overcome the darkness of nothingness and even un-ordered/un-redeemed cosmos.

Important- anyone familiar with the Mosaic covenant would know, Eden is carefully described in terms of being God's temple, even as humanity, in the “image of God” as patterned by the ephod word by the Mosaic era priest is depicted as priests!!

⁴² Coloe, p. 3

This then sets into motion the beautiful if not profound gospel of John as to envision Christ as the power of life itself, even as to be God's divine presence in temple-Eden at the very beginning.. even the pre-existence of this "Word" as not only "with God" (Trinity) but "as God" (Divinity)

What a way to set up the story of Christ... what amazing story does John want to tell—how will it frame the meaning of Christ's incarnation ministry as to somehow be linked to the power of life creating/giving "Word" in temple Eden, and how would it speak to the meaning and power of Christ's live creating/giving ministry today, during his ascension????

John's Thesis: Jesus is the Temple Fulfilled

John 1:17: The word became flesh and temped among us...

3 Main Divisions:

1) John 1-12: Focus is on Christ's incarnation ministry

John in his gospel goes to great extremes to frame Christ in temple fulfillment: Christ is introduced by John as *the Word became flesh and temped among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (Jn 1:14).*

In the second chapter, we hear Jesus say "*destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.*" (John 2:19-20 speaking of His resurrection). John then carefully constructs his narrative in a way that draws attention to Christ self-revelation within the context of the great temple feasts. For instance, while celebrating the Passover, Jesus is proclaimed to be the true bread from heaven (6:35ff). While celebrating the feast of the tabernacles, Jesus is proclaimed to be the true light of the world (8:12ff). During the feast of temple dedication that celebrated the reconstruction of the temple in 164BC, Jesus is proclaimed as the consecrated one (10:36ff).

The purpose his incarnational ministry of temple fulfillment is illustrated by the first use of two of the word "anabaino" (I am ascending)

John 7:8 I am not ascending to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come."

e.g. "anabaino" is stated in the negative "I am not ascending" and is a rebuke to those whose expectations wanted him to skip over his incarnation ministry of humiliation and eventual death as to go directly to exaltation/ascension...

In other words, the focus of Christ's incarnational installment of "*Word became flesh and temped among us*" relates to Christ's incarnational ministry and his once and for all accomplishment of our salvation by satisfying the covenant by atonement sacrifice for our sins! That is, the "Word" is fulfilled by Christ our "covenant executor" vis-à-vis his incarnation and is the basis for our justification and assurance with God as received by faith alone-- the basis of a *Gospel-Centered Spirituality!* (*grace based and received by faith alone*)

E.g Whereas his once and for all fulfillment of the temple accomplish our justification by becoming our substitutionary sacrifice such as to satisfy the covenant on behalf of humanity—both satisfying all of its commands AND satisfying the curse against those who failed in the commands....

THIS IS WHAT WE UNIVERSALLY THINK ABOUT AS SOTERIOLOGY!

SO IS JOHN'S SOTERIOLOGY COMPLETE? E.G. IS THE *historia solutis* over as then to have no further *ordo salutis*?

2) John 13-17—Last Supper in Jerusalem the night before his crucifixion -- extensive record of the conversation between Jesus and the remaining 11 disciples known as the “Farewell discourse.”

The topic here is on Christ's Ascension Ministry: The Continued Mediated (temple) Presence of Christ

- “As far back as the first chapter of John at the occasion of Christ's baptism, there is the promise that Christ will baptize with the Holy Spirit (vs. 33).
“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

In the context of John's overall narrative, this clearly anticipates Christ's teachings in John 14-17 regarding his ascension ministry following of course his resurrection and ascension (e.g. For John, the climax of Christ's salvation work is his ascension—given its relevance to his church and us today who all live under this aspect of Christ's ministry, of course benefiting from the gospel of grace that was made possible by his incarnation ministry

About his ascension ministry,

- Christ explains to his disciples that they could expect to see **“greater things even... because I am going to the Father”** (John 14:12). As by subsequent teaching, the “greater things” anticipates John's version of the great commission with respect to Christ's ascension temple presences throughout the world in myriads of socio-geographical contexts and at the same time! He explains:

*“I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live (in you). On that day you will know that I am in my Father, **and you in me, and I in you**” (Jn. 14:18-20). (*
Hold on to that last phrase—as we will return to it shortly!!

Notice! He is not here talking about Christ's final, incarnational, return, but his mediated return by the Holy Spirit in the “house” (temple) of God's mediated presence by the Holy Spirit. For instance,

- Immediately after promising to make his “home with us” (vs. 14:23). He says,
“I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you (vs. 25-26).”

Ridderbos—“The Spirit “dwells with them and will be in them (14:17) in order to maintain their [temple] fellowship with their heavenly Lord.” (Ridderbos, p.483)
Again, **you in me, and I in you BY THE HS**

IN other words, as related to Christ Trinitarian unity with the Spirit, and then via the Spirit his Christological unity with believers, the work of the Spirit is envisioned NOT AS SOME addendum to the work of Christ. **THE HOLY SPIRIT, UNITED TO CHRIST, IS THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST IN THE MYSTERY OF TRINITARIAN UNITY...**

We cannot see the HS as more or less an independent sphere of activity that goes beyond or supplements what Christ has done. The Spirit's work is not a "bonus" added to the basic salvation secured by Christ.

Rather, the coming of the Spirit brings to light not only that Christ HAS lived, and HAS done certain things, but that He IS NOW the source of eschatological life NOW! It is essentially Christ making good His promise, "And behold, I am with you until the end of the age!" (Mt.28:2)

THIS IS THE MEANING OF TEMPLE PRESENCE OF CHRIST TODAY—

- INCARNATION TEMPLE—SATISFIED THE LAW FOR OUR JUSTIFICATION
- ASCENSION TEMPLE PRESENCE – IS CHRIST'S LIFE GIVING POWER TO PARTICIPATE IN JUSTIFICATION AND THE NEW LIFE THAT CHRIST ENVISIONED FOR US.

As affirmed as well by Theologian Richard Gaffin,

The gift of the Spirit is nothing less than the gift of Christ himself to the church, the Christ who has become what he is by virtue of his sufferings, death, and exaltation.

- In this sense the gift (baptism, outpouring) of the Spirit is the crowning achievement of **Christ's** work.
- It is his coming in exaltation to the church in the power of the Spirit.
- *IT completes the once-for-all accomplishment of salvation.*
- It is the apex thus far reached in the unfolding of redemptive history.
- Without it, the work that climaxes in Christ's death and resurrection would be unfinished, incomplete. (Gaffin, p.21.)

e.g. As carefully explained by Christ in his farewell discourse especially, Christ envisioned yet a second installment of "Word became flesh and temped among us, with an ever wider and greater impact than Christ's first incarnational installment – as by the mediatorial presence of Christ by the Holy Spirit in myriads of temple church throughout the globe and fleshed out as "Christ's body" in ever cultural flesh!

e.g. the "Missional Church" – more than a source of mission, a very locus of mission

**3) Which then perfectly sets up the 3rd and final section of John's gospel in Chapter 20-21—
Christ's Temple focused great commission and benediction!!**

- **Illustrated by the 2nd** use of "anabaino" this time it is used in the positive in contrast to the temptation to hold on to Christ's incarnation ministry...

John 20:17 "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending.'"

e.g.

- "I am ascending" Mary—so not cling to my incarnational presence, but rather embrace and pursue the "greater things that I have envisioned for my ascension ministry by the Holy Spirit (c.f. Jn 14ff)
... my incarnation ministry is accomplished—don't merely memorialize me for it though, don't hold on to my incarnation ministry as if that was the end of my ministry—rather go and tell the disciples— IT'S TIME-- everything we talked about the last night of my

incarnational ministry, the “greater things” wherein my temple presence is about to go global through multiple temples spread into every geography and ever culture context....

Upon reuniting with the disciples, and in context of their last night together prior to Christ's death and resurrection: Christ puts upon him a temple benediction and commission:

Temple Benediction: *Peace be with you.*”

Temple Commission: *As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.*”

Meaning—Just as the Father sent me as the fulfillment of the temple, I and you and you in me, you now go and temple among the people!!!! (c.f. 1:14)

Temple Power: 22 *And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. (c.f. 1:33)*

Temple Power as given to the church 23 *If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld.”*

This is extraordinary language that speaks to the mystery of Christology applied to Christ's present TEMPLE ministry on earth by the Holy Spirit even as he is with the Father in heaven!

Summary: Now remember how John's gospel began:

1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

- The WORD was with God and IS God
- The WORD was the life creating/giving power of God
- The WORD was in the world as light in the midst of uncreated/unredeemed darkness—
- EDEN!

NOW?

- Christ is ascended
- Christ's promised to come with life creating/giving power into the darkness of the world as we know it today as the disciples did in their day...
- Christ's promise to do greater things where temple-Eden is Going GLOBAL as to every geography and ever culture.
- And How so???? *As the father sent me, so I send you...*
 - GIVING temple benediction as mediated by the HS in temple church such as the power (mediated) to forgive and grant eternal life!!

But there is an important caveat, as to understand how all this works...

As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

THUS-- Christ's “Farewell Prayer” or sometimes, in keeping with the temple theme of John's gospel, the Christ's “Priestly Prayer”

WHAT is key here—John's Gospel is the good news that we are not without God's presence as mediated through the communion, even as this “Communion” that is the very essence of being a Christian is what

we have from the start—it's the gift that comes with salvation as patterned after the sacred communion of the Trinity

Throughout this Farewell discourse, over and over again, Jesus links the mission of temple building to his command for them to love one another—and most especially—its importance is argued as an expression of the unity of love between Jesus and his Father, in the Spirit, as it applies to his disciples in the [love of Christ](#), it is a key theme in the discourse, manifested by several reiterations of [the New Commandment](#): "love one another as I have loved you".

III. Christ's Farewell Prayer

1-5: Jesus Petition For The Fathers Glorification on the Basis of his Completed Work
e.g. "Father, the hour has come.... Glorify your son that your son may glorify you..."

11-19—Jesus Petition For the preservation and sanctification of the church in the world..
11-- Holy Father, keep them in your name,

15ff I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. **16** They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. **17** Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. **18** As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. **19** And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth.

20-26-- Our focus today—Trinitarian Unity extended to Church

Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one. **21** that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. **22** The glory that you have given me I have given to them, *that they may be one even as we are one*, **23** I in them and you in me, *that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me*. **24** Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world. **25** O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. **26** I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

Notice especially

A. It is a prayer for unity in love!!
that they may become perfectly one,

Glory = Love
to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world

26 I made known to them your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them."

B. It is a prayer that ASSUMES (a-priori) a three- fold union~ albeit "SPIRITUALITY" MEDIATED ALBEIT IN/WITH/THROUGH THE ORGANIC UNION (FLESH ON FLESH) OF THE CHURCH!
• Union of Father and Christ,

- that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me...
- that they may be one even as we are one,
- Union of Christ and believers,
I in them and you in me

C. The efficacy of the power of Christ acting in and through this temple church is tied to this prayer for unity of love!

2 X'S—21, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

Note: Catholicity is the very nature of the church in Union with Christ! Thus, an essential element of orthodox witness!

Observations:

A. Our Catholicity is Based on An A-Priori Unity Given to the Church at Her inception!!

22 *The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, What does it mean that by definition, the temple is defined unity with one another, as that unity is to participate in the unity of the Holy Trinity!!!*

The truth is... that the unity of the Church is something given to it at its inception, and given by its Lord. That unity had its outward form, first in the fact that the first disciples were visibly grouped around one Lord, and then in the close-knit fellowship of the days immediately following Pentecost, in the sharing in a common baptism, a common tradition of teaching, a common Supper, and a common acknowledgment of the leadership of the Apostles.⁴³

- From Immediate bodily unity/fellowship (incarnation with disciples)
- To mediated bodily unity/fellowship (ascension union by the Spirit in the flesh of the local community of disciples today)
-

T. F. Torrance in *Royal Priesthood* explained it like this:

The Spirit operates by creating out of the word a body, which St. Paul calls the Body of Christ.... As such this body becomes matched to Christ as His vis-à-vis in history and as the instrument of His saving purpose in the Gospel. It is the sphere where through the presence of the Spirit the salvation-events of the birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension are operative here and now in history, the sphere where within the old creation the new creation has broken in with power.

B. UNITARIAN VS. TRINITARIAN UNITY

- *E.g. We see how the Trinitarian unity is fundamental to our unity with Christ by the Holy Spirit which is in turn fundamental to our unity with one another because we all share in our unity with Christ...*

⁴³ The Nature, p. 5.

21 that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

IN other words, whatever else kind of unity we have it is a unity that

- 1) is essential to glorifying Christ
- 2) **Is predicated upon the a Trinitarian conception of unity.**
- 3) It is transacted most fundamentally by the Spirit, at a spiritual level, even then as to transcend a corporeal/bodily/organizational unity, and also to transcend even a moral/ethical unity. It is a unity "IN SPIRIT" AS THE SPIRIT IS ONE WITH CHRIST AND THE FATHER!

JAMES TORRANCE: Two different views of catholicity

View One—Unitarian view: Something we do on Sunday.. we go to church, we sing, we intercede, we listen to sermons.. etc. to be sure, we talk about how we need God's help to do it... but it is still, we who do it!

"In theological language, this means that the only priesthood is our priesthood, the only offering our offering, the only intercessions our intercessions. Indeed this view of worship is in practice Unitarian, has no doctrine of htre mediator or sole priesthood of Christ, is human centered, has no proper doctrine of the Holy Spirit, is too often non-sacramental, and can engender weariness... we do our thing with the help of the minister... it is what our forefathers would have called "legal worship" and not "evangelical worship" – what the ancient church would have called Arian or Pelagian and not truly catholic... or trinitarian...

View two—Trinitarian view: "It is the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son's communion with the Father. It means participating in union with Christ, in what he has done for us once and for all, in his self-offering to the Father, in his life and death on the cross. It also means participating in what he is continuing to do for us in the presence of the Father and in his mission from the Father to the world." P.21

"there is only one true priest... only one Mediator between God and humanity... only one offering which is truly acceptable to God, and it is not ours. It is the offering by which he has sanctified for all time those who come to God by Him (Heb.2:11, 10:10, 14)." P.21

—"It takes seriously the NT teaching about the sole priesthood and headship of Christ, his self-offering for us to the Father and our life in union with Christ through the Spirit, with a vision of the Church as the Body of Christ. It is fundamentally sacramental, but in a way that enshrines the gospel of grace—that God our Father, in the gift of his Son and the gift of the Holy Spirit, gives us what he demands—the worship of our hearts and minds. He lifts us up out of ourselves to participate in the very life and communion of the Godhead, that life of communion for which we were created. This is the heart of our theology of the Eucharist, of Holy Communion. So we are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit, which confesses faith in the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and which worships the Father through the son in the Spirit. We are baptism into the life of communion." P.22

In sum—in John 17, according to Calvin, Christ
intends to teach that in him dwells all fullness of blessings, and that what was concealed in God is now manifested in him, that he may impart it to his people, as the water, flowing from the fountain by various channels, waters the fields on all sides.

3) Newbigin's High Gospel and High Church Catholicity:

During his childhood, Lesslie Newbigin was nurtured within a Presbyterian context. And yet having fallen away from the faith during his boarding school years, he later rediscovered the gospel as a student at Queens College Cambridge, mostly through the witness of the evangelical oriented "Student Christian Movement" that was there at the time. It was during a summer break especially, while on a student mission trip to miners in Wales, that Lesslie Newbigin encountered his Christo-centric "vision of the cross." In his words, it was "a vision of the cross spanning the space between heaven and earth, between ideals and present realities, and with arms that embraced the whole world" which in turn not only moved Lesslie Newbigin to profess his faith and be confirmed at St. Columbia's Presbyterian Church in Cambridge, but would also in the following year result in a calling to missions in 1930. This in turn led Newbigin to study theology at Westminster College in Cambridge leading to ordination within the Presbytery of Edinburgh and subsequently in 1936 being commissioned by the Church of Scotland for missionary service in India.⁴⁴

This brief summation of Newbigin's spiritual biography provides context in his early formation for what would later become his characteristic *conversionist* orientation from an evangelical point of view (a high gospel orientation) albeit with a confessional, sacramental and communal, or "high church" spirituality. *That the two "high church" and "high gospel" must be kept together became the essential mark of Newbigin's missional ecclesiology. He would later state unequivocally:*

***Just as we insist that a Church which has ceased to be a mission has lost the essential character of a Church, so must we also say that a mission which is not at the same time truly a Church is not a true expression of the divine apostolate. An unchurchly mission is as much a monstrosity as an unmissionary church.*"⁴⁵**

According to biographer Geoffrey Wainwright, "Newbigin's doctrine of the church would develop under the stimulus of his tasks as a negotiator in the final approach to the union of Anglicans, Methodists, and Reformed in the Church of South India (1947) and then as a bishop with the "care of all the churches."⁴⁶ First springing from Newbigin's defense of the South Indian model of union for the sake of missions (*The Reunion of the Church*, 1948), Wainwright notes how "Newbigin's treatise, *The Household of God* (1953) quickly became an ecumenical classic."⁴⁷

The important emphasis to the whole ecclesial scheme was driven by the missional impetus! When asked to

⁴⁴ Sherman, p.133-134, c.f. Geoffrey Wainwright, "J. E. Lesslie Newbigin," in *Biographical Dictionary of Evangelicals*, ed. Timothy Larson et. al. (Downers Grove, : InterVarsity Press, 2003). P. 472. Also, J. E. Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Updated Autobiography* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1993)

⁴⁵ *Household of God*, P. 147.

⁴⁶ Geoffrey Wainwright, "Editors Introduction" in *Lesslie Newbigin, Sings Amid the Rubble...* p.vii.

⁴⁷ Geoffrey Wainwright, "Editors Introduction" in *Lesslie Newbigin, Sings Amid the Rubble...* p. x.

state the essential basis of a true ecumenical ecclesiology, Newbigin responded:

For me, that basis when I am pressed to define it always lies in the actual experience of the missionary encounter, the encounter with the man, for instance, in the streets of an Indian city who challenges, you the foreigner, to say what right you have to bring the name of a foreign God, of a foreign religion into the land of India. One replies to such a challenge by trying to show him how the name of Jesus is not the name of the leader of one religion, is not the name that we in the west give to God but is the name of the One decisive and final revelation of God the man, the One who alone has brought reconciliation between man and God and thereby created the possibility of reconciliation between man and man. But when one replies that way, the answer always comes back: content with the Name of Jesus. You do not believe that the Name of Jesus is the all sufficient Name because all of you have to add something else to that Name before you are satisfied. We have to conclude that what you are bringing to us is not the one Name of which you speak; it is in... a whole series of names – the fragments of western European culture which have been projected into our world by the colonial expansion of the 19th century.⁴⁸

Perhaps influenced by his spiritual biography, but clearly argued theologically during and after his experience in missionary ecclesiology in South India, the two-- missional and *ecclesial*-- are inseparable for Newbigin.⁴⁹ As observed by Scot Sherman, "Newbigin gives equal ultimacy to the callings of the church to be the body of Christ and the mission of Christ, being a spirit-filled fellowship and a spirit-empowered instrument of salvation."

Throughout *The Household of God*, he argued from Ephesians that in and through the church, "God brings 'all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.(Eph.1:10). The missional calling is predicated upon the ecclesial reality of Christ being in the world vis-à-vis the church in history. There is, in other words, a clear missional understanding of the church for Newbigin as by her very being the mystical presence of Christ's body in union with the body of Christ. "Newbigin's reading of St. Paul is that this divine reality of foretaste and first-fruit is the key to understanding the church's power and relevance. The church is the new community that exists because of Jesus' saving work and the Holy Spirit's eschatological presence... She (the church) not only testifies... she *is* the living reality."⁵⁰ Newbigin thus spoke of the church in the New Testament as "one visible society, the new Israel, the holy temple in the Lord, in whom Christians are joined together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" after the pattern of Ephesians 2:19ff.⁵¹

a) Spiritual Union Consistent with Organic Union (or temple-ecclesial mediated union) -- HIGH CHURCH

To be clear, such spiritual re-union for Newbigin was necessarily organic, not to be confused with the "I'm spiritual but not religious" spirituality of what David Brooks has described as "Christian Buddhism," Newbigin addresses the question of organic union over against mere spiritual sentimentalism or voluntary evangelical pragmatism. His argument was to assume the organic, divinely constituted visible church as organized after the pattern of words handed down by the apostles with Christ as the cornerstone. One such points out that it was a sin against what Christ did historically in the first church in Jerusalem. Here again, Newbigin saw visible unity as a return to what the church was historically.

For this reason I think that the term (ecumenism) is sometimes objected to on the grounds that the churches concerned were never parts of one ecclesiastical structure. Behind this objection there seems to lie a desire to assure ourselves that we are not repairing something broken but creating something new. I believe that this is a misunderstanding of our task, and that both on historical grounds and on theological

⁴⁸ Recounted in J.E. Lesslie Newbigin "Missions In An Ecumenical Perspective," (1962) P. 9.

⁴⁹ c.f. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Reunion of the Church: A Defense of the South India Scheme*, rev. ed. (London: SCM Press, 1960) and *The Household of God* (London: SCM Press, 1953)

⁵⁰ Sherman, p. 144.

⁵¹ *The Reunion of the church*, P. 25

we must dispute it: historical, because every division among Christians today stems ultimately from some point in history where a failure in truth, or charity, [note regulative principle] or both, led to a breach of fellowship among those who had previously regarded themselves as members of one family; theological, because the healing of such breaches of fellowship is simply a return (in however small a measure) to the true nature of the Church as grounded in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.⁵²

For Newbigin therefore, ecclesial (organic) catholicity, as compared to individual (non-organized) catholicity was necessarily visible:

The unity we seek is a visible unity—visible to the world, a sign by which the world may be brought to faith in Christ as the Apostle of God and the Mediator of his love!”⁵³

It is therefore no surprise that in recalling the inaugural service of union in Madras on September 27, 1947 (wherein Newbigin at the age of 37 was consecrated as one of the first bishops), that Newbigin later remembers how “the climax of the service was, of course, the communion.” He further recalls,

That was the other moment when I found it hard, and I’m sure others did, to keep back tears. I believe about 2500 people took the communion. A great company of ministers of all three uniting Churches serving them. As one saw them moving about, men who yesterday could not have shared communion together, but now all fellow-members of one Church; and as one saw the great multitude of people, so absolutely rapt and intent, and their faces so full of joy; and the servers moving about to see that all were served; the thought uppermost in my mind was: Never again will I say that a thing which I believe is God’s will is impossible!⁵⁴

Such an organic vision for ecclesial catholicity remained Newbigin’s great passion throughout his ministry. In the famous New Delhi Statement of the WCC assembly in 1961 for instance (drafted by Lesslie Newbigin), it was affirmed:

We believe that the unity which is both God’s will and his gift to his church is one which brings all in each place who confess Christ Jesus as Lord into a fully committed fellowship with one another through one baptism into him, preaching the same gospel and breaking the one bread, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service.”

Newbigin would again espouse such visible unity in his later responses to a post-Uppsala “amnesia in ecumenism.” In response to Konrad Raiser’s *Ecumenism in Transition* (1991) espousing the unqualified Trinitarian model and a more humanitarian mandate for missions, Newbigin retorts, “at the heart of the church’s life is the Eucharist. And what does it mean to share in the Eucharist if not to function as both a memorial of Christ’s passion and as his action in making me a participant in that passion so that I may be a participant in his victory.” He further observed that Raiser “speaks often of the incarnation but not about atonement.” Newbigin thus laments “I miss this deep sense of that absolute sovereignty over my heart that Jesus has won, which makes it intolerable that I should be unable to share the Eucharist with everyone from whom Christ died. This is how I understand Christo-centric universalism.”⁵⁵

Here again, for Newbigin, to Christianize the world is to share in Christ as then to form the basis for visible catholicity. There is in short an integral relationship between catholicity and mission, as the visible unity at Christ’s table is the very means of doing evangelism, and evangelism is for the sake of a shared unity in Christ at the Lord’s Table wherein *the Son is glorified so that the Son may glorify the Father and that the world may know.*

⁵² The Nature, p. 2.

⁵³ The Nature, p. 5.

⁵⁴ Scot Sherman, p. 135. Quoted from J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *The Reunion of the Church: A Defense of the South India Scheme*, rev. ed (London: SCM Press, 1960), pp. 24-25.

⁵⁵ Amnesia, p. 26.

According then to the priestly prayer of Christ in John 17, the form of unity that transpired in South India was first and foremost a sacramentally derived unity for the sake of missions and the glory of God. Participation together in the sacraments was the first order of unity based on the spiritual reality of being in Christ. So the question that this often raised concerned the question of confessionalism in relation to a *missional ecclesiology*. (Interestingly, raised from both the “right” and the “left” in the church). And to be sure, Lesslie Newbigin himself acknowledged sympathetically

“when one makes these proposals one immediately raises the very profound and difficult issues of confessional loyalty, and confessional responsibility.”⁵⁶

The Covenantal Basis for Confessional Unity—High Gospel

Newbigin argued that to be truly confessional required that we not only take doctrines seriously, but to distinguish between the confessional ends (or practices) of certain doctrines in comparison to others, and that this was especially important in so far as forming a confessional ecclesiology. In other words, he argued that it is as much to ask the confessional question about beliefs, as then to ask the confessional question about the relationship of beliefs to other beliefs, especially in this case to those beliefs regarding ecclesial formation, the terms of communion and visible unity. He argues for instance concerning a theology of church union:

This means that the question of agreement in doctrine is not the only, or even the central question involved in discussions of church union. There is a basic agreement upon a doctrine which is essential to unity. Our participation in Christ depends on our hearing, believing, and accepting in common the message of God's saving act acts in him. Without this basic consensus of belief there can be no unity. But (if we understand Paul and Jesus right) this unity in question is not in essence an intellectual agreement about doctrine: it is a total mutual reconciliation which is the result of being born anew by the Spirit. It is a unity of mutual love given by God. This unity is compatible with a wide variety of force and emphasis in the statement of doctrine.⁵⁷

Herein it becomes clear that for Newbigin, while all beliefs taught in scripture are important, not all beliefs are necessary in order to form ecclesial union on the basis of a sacramental principle. Clearly some beliefs are needed to be confessed by all participating churches in order to truly partake together of the Lord's Table. But for Newbigin, a truly confessional ecumenism is formed recognizing that “it is of the essence of the matter that this brotherhood is *in Christ*, is in some recognizable sense one with the whole company of Christ's people of all places and generations.”

For this to happen visibly according to Newbigin, there would have to be a confessional consensus that would include “the acceptance of the Holy Scriptures as the supreme and decisive standard of faith, of the ecumenical creeds as witnessing to and safeguarding the Scriptural revelation, and of the dominical sacraments as providing the visible signs, means and seals of our incorporation in Christ. They must also include a ministry which—in the measure which is possible—carries the authority of the whole Christian fellowship.”⁵⁸

These were in short, the doctrines that Newbigin believed formed the basis of an ecumenical consensus sufficient for visible unity. One can notice especially how these doctrines deemed essential toward visible unity consist of three categories corresponding to the so-called “three marks of the church.” In other words, as per Christ being mediated as prophet, priest and king by the Holy Spirit there is, respectively,

- 1) the confessional category (The authority of scripture as preserved minimally in the ecumenical creeds),
- 2) the sacramental category (two dominical sacraments of Baptism and Lord's Supper viewed as sign, seals and means of grace) and

⁵⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *Missions In An Ecumenical Perspective*, (1962) P. 9.

⁵⁷ *The Nature*, p. 4.

⁵⁸ *The Nature*, p. 7.

3) the category of pastoral care (an apostolic ministry).

Clearly then, the genius of Newbigin's system was to maintain that Christ centered "missions" and a ecumenical "ecclesiology" must necessarily be kept together lest either be severely compromised—again, a high gospel and high church vision. He adamantly argued that "the separation of these two things [missions and church] which God has joined together must be judged one of the great calamities of missionary history, and the healing of this division one of the greatest tasks of our time."⁵⁹ And in effect, this is exactly what has happened according to Newbigin in *both* evangelical and mainline attempts at ecumenism, even if for the sake of missions in the form of *undenominationalism* and *interdenominationalism* respectively.

By "undenominational," Newbigin meant a kind of Christianity which is not interested in the particular witness which the individual confessions have sought to bare."⁶⁰ As per the recent history of the WCC movement, Newbigin apposed that kind of visible unity that was the result of making confessional compromises at the expense of confessional histories, the effect of which was to dilute and compromise the nature of belief. And yet perhaps ironically to some, this kind of *undenominationalism* relative to the WCC was clearly considered no different than the kind of undenominationalism under the guise of inter-denominationalism within the evangelical context.

Newbigin was likewise very clearly concerned about the various evangelical cooperatives that are non-ecclesial in nature. He explains how for instance "A great many bodies which call themselves interdenominational have no right to that name because they are not seriously interested in the particular witness of the separate confessions; they are in truth undenominational."⁶¹ About the spirituality of these sorts of evangelical bodies, Newbigin once complained how

*Much-called spirituality is really an attempt to escape from [God's] method of dealing with us into a mystical and private type of experience which, being purely private, is wholly self-centered. The gospel does not come to each of us in isolation. It comes to us through a particular book and through a particular fellowship... and that fellowship.. has maintained its existence in history as a visible organization with visible tests of membership, with officers, rules and ceremonies. It is a false spirituality, divorced from the teaching of the Bible, which regards this visible and continuing Church as of subordinate importance for the life in Christ.*⁶²

In sum, Newbigin was concerned for what he perceived as the theological compromises in both the WCC movement, if for the sake of organic union, and the evangelical movement, if for the sake of missions. Both were viewed as trending toward "undenominationalism" which is in effect no true ecumenism at all. They were considered as being pragmatically driven and "low church." And of course, both were viewed as failing the true sacramental vision for missional ecumenism as per John 17.

Too many meetings which are in fact simply interdenominational or even undenominational are referred to quite wrongly as ecumenical. And that has given the word ecumenism sometimes a bad flavour. There is a kind of activity which is sometimes referred to as ecumenical in which the real concern for truth out of which our confessional differences have arisen is simply sidestepped, in which there is a concern rather for large numbers or for efficiency in a worldly sense but the real issue concerning the truth as it is in

⁵⁹ Quoted in Goheen, p.12, Lesslie Newbigin, *One Body, One Gospel, One World: The Christian Mission Today*. (London and New York: International Missionary Council, 1958), 26.

⁶⁰ Missions in an Ecumenical Perspective. P. 9.

⁶¹ Missions in an Ecumenical Perspective, p. 9.

⁶² The Reunion of the Church p. 29. c.f. in Household of God, Newbigin also states unequivocally how, "Just as we insist that a Church which has ceased to be a mission has lost the essential character of a Church, so must we also say that a mission which is not at the same time truly a Church is not a true expression of the divine apostolate. An unchurchly mission is as much a monstrosity as an unmissionary church." P. 147.

*Jesus is ignored. With that kind of pseudo-ecumenism we can obviously have nothing to do.*⁶³

If then Newbigin unequivocally distinguishes his vision from both recent mainline and evangelical forms of “undenominationalism,” Newbigin was more favorable to a true multi-traditional type of *organic* union for the confessional advantage that “each of the different confessions are invited to participate, bringing the full truth of that confession as it people understand it without compromise or dilution.”⁶⁴

A multi-traditional type of visible unity, was clearly distinguished by Newbigin from a mere “reconciled diversity”—which involved inter-denominational cooperatives without visible union organically realized at the level of the Lord’s Table and some form of shared government. For to carry the title “catholicity”, the churches most at the very least form a visible unity that is “for the whole world” according to Newbigin, rather than one or another religious sect or culture within the world.⁶⁵ Based then on the above three orders of ecumenical confessions Newbigin envisioned a visible unity after the model accomplished in South India wherein, for the sake even of true confessionalism, each tradition was maintained while at the same time submitting to one another under a conciliar form of organization based upon sacramental theology of the church in mission. It was described this way: ,

*For the perfecting of the life of the whole body, the Church of South India needs the heritage of each of the uniting Churches, and each of those Churches will, it is hoped, not lose the continuity of its own life, but preserve that life enriched by the union with itself of the other two Churches. The Church of South India is thus formed by a combination of different elements each bringing its contribution to the whole, and not by the absorption of any one by any other. It is, therefore, also a comprehensive Church; and its members, firmly holding the fundamentals of the faith and order of the Church Universal, are allowed wide freedom of opinion in all other matters, and wide freedom of action in such differences of practice as are consistent with the general framework of the Church as one organized body.*⁶⁶

Reformed, Episcopal, Congregational church remained as such in terms of their confessional standards and histories, but united together under a common conciliar form of government such as to be “one church” sharing one baptism and one Lord’s Supper visibly. Moreover, as noted by Scot Sherman, “the CSI was Episcopal in structure but none of the ministers of the uniting non-Episcopal denominations were re-ordained by bishop.”⁶⁷ Many years later, Newbigin would describe the South India vision for a missional ecclesiology as standing between a “full organic union” (The WCC vision by virtue of theological compromise) and “reconciled diversity” (the evangelical vision through pragmatic cooperatives without sacramental unity). He once explained, for instance,

*There is need for fresh thinking in the field of structure. In this matter we are polarized between the advocates of full ‘organic union’ and the advocates of ‘reconciled diversity’. The latter slogan often seems to be a polite way of agreeing to do nothing. The former arouses understandable fears of ‘monolithic structures’. This fear is understandable when one contemplates the structures to which we have become accustomed. I think that there is room for more vigorous exploration of the middle ground between these extremes, looking to visible forms of ecclesial life which would combine the variety of different forms of discipleship and spirituality manifest in our divided churches with a degree of mutual commitment and shared ecclesial life much greater than is provided in our existing councils of churches.*⁶⁸

A Total Christ Proposal Inspired by Newbigin :

⁶³ Missions in an Ecumenical Context p. 9

⁶⁴ Missions in an Ecumenical Perspective, p. 9.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 9.

⁶⁶ The Nature, p. 2.

⁶⁷ Sherman, p. 135.

⁶⁸ Lesslie Newbigin on “What is the Ecumenical Agenda” (1986 Unpublished) A Two-page response to a letter from Thaddeus Horgan, Managing Editor of “Ecumenical Trends”, asking Newbigin to write on the topic of an Ecumenical Agenda for Today’s Global City.

As Newbigin acknowledged, “the apostolic Church was launched into a religiously plural world, a world where as St. Paul puts it there were many gods and Lords (1Cor.8:5).” And “this pluralism was tolerated only on one condition, that the supreme lordship was ascribed to the emperor!”⁶⁹

Enter then the post-pentecostal church—one born out of the multiplicity of the nations all clothed in their unique cultures and languages, even worldviews— but a church united by one Lord, one faith, one baptism... (Eph.4:5). And we are told that they were “filled with awe... and the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved” (Acts 2:43-47).

Quite simply then, Newbigin advocated a kind of missional ecclesiology that was very much akin to the spirituality of Acts 2. In so far as there emerged the temptation to make Christian faith yet another sectarian religion among many—Paul would have nothing of it, nor would Lesslie Newbigin. And thankfully, the testimony of Lesslie Newbigin comes with the , well, limited, success of the South Indian re-union church. About the “re-union” Newbigin said, “Never again will I say that a thing which I believe is God’s will is impossible!”⁷⁰

Upon Newbigin’s return to England and the Christendom West, he lamented the “disappointed at the slow progress towards unity among the home denominations.”⁷¹ This disappointment would remain, even though he continued during his last years of life to advocate for Visser’t Hooft’s “Christ centered universalism” such as to insist that the lordship of Christ “must relativize all denominational divisions as to challenge the domestication of the churches within Western society.”⁷²

What then would it look like to apply a Total Christ vision to the question of catholicity.. how might it “relativize” the vestiges of modernity without relativizing the elements of the Five Marks of a total Christ church?

To illustrate a propose solution, by logical use of the so called “Potter Box” (google it ☺) consider the paradigms of spirituality ina “High Church” and High Gospel” analysis applied then to Total Christ Catholicity as follows: (Generalizations not-with-standing!)

A Fourth Way

Paradigms in Ecumenism

Low Church, Low Gospel <i>Compromise</i> (WCC) Mono-Traditional/Blended Ecumenical	Low Church, High Gospel <i>Pragmatic</i> (Modern Evangelical) Non-Traditional/Non-Ecumenical Cooperatives/Networks
High Church, Low Gospel <i>Imperial</i> (RC) Mono-Traditional/Schismatic	High Church, High Gospel <i>Classical Evangelical</i> (Newbigin) Multi-Traditional/Missional

⁶⁹ J.E. Lesslie Newbigin “Religious Pluralism: A Missiological Approach” (1993) *Theology of Religions: Christianity and Other Religions* (Roma: Pontifical Gregorian University): 227-244.

⁷⁰ The unfinished Agenda, p. 97.

⁷¹ Editor’s Introduction. P. xi.

⁷² Goheen, p.29

The Fourth Way Illustrated:

- Organic/Councilar (Communal) vs. Invisible
- Multi-Traditional (Confessional) vs. compromise
- Sacramental Jurisdiction (Sacramental) vs. pragmatic
- Missional Gospel vs. socio-political gospel \
-

Missional Ecclesiology for Today's Global City

After Lesslie Newbiggin's retirement from India in 1974, he began a new stage of life most noted for targeting his missionary ecclesiology toward the West. After South India, Lesslie Newbiggin began a five year professorship at Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham. In 1979, he accepted the call to a pastorate in an inner-city, interracial congregation in Winson Green, Birmingham. It was in this context and for the rest of his life that he encountered what he described as "a paganism born out of the rejection of Christianity." He further noted how this post-Christian "paganism" was "far tougher and more resistant to the Gospel than the pre-Christian paganism with which foreign missionaries have been in contact during the past 200 years."⁷³ This notwithstanding, Newbiggin sought to apply his cross-cultural expertise that had been gained in the East to the missionary challenges of the West.

Concerning his missionary analysis of Western culture, Newbiggin said it this way in 1987.

If one were to look on the world's scene from a missionary point of view, surely the most striking fact is that, while in great areas of Asia and Africa the church is growing, often growing rapidly, in the lands which were once called "Christendom" it is in decline, and moreover, wherever the culture of the West under the name of "modernization" penetrates, it carries with it what Lippmann called "the acids of modernity" dissolving the most enduring of religious beliefs of Christians.⁷⁴

More specifically, Newbiggin first called for the rediscovery of "evangelism." He recognized that "evangelism," in the context of the modern privatization of Christian faith is often confused with "proselytism," noting that if Christian beliefs "can only be held as a private notion", then all evangelism is "shunned" as "proselytism... as imposing my view on another as a power encounter."⁷⁵ And yet because of the uniqueness of Christ, and especially the cross of Christ as an "event in history, the mighty act of God by which at infinite cost he reconciled the fallen world to himself and rescued it from perdition," Newbiggin taught that "the Church must tell the story which has been entrusted to her." He continues, "there is no substitute for this story. It is necessary to say this because it is sometimes said that "Christian presence" rather than "evangelization" is the proper form of Christian response to religious pluralism." Newbiggin concludes, "this is" at best "a confusing half truth."⁷⁶

His point was that the church must continue to publically evangelize by telling the story as witness to the universality of Christ. And yet this verbal "telling" is incomplete apart from its being embodied in, with and through the church wherein Christ is present, albeit as mediated by the Holy Spirit, in the world. The importance of the local congregation was for Newbiggin the final **"hermeneutic" of the truth and validity of the gospel for today's global city.** He explains:

⁷³ Quoted in "A Presbyterian Bishop in India, The Missionary Career of J. E. Lesslie Newbiggin, in *The Best of Bishop Lesslie Newbiggin from the International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (January 1987), 1998, p. 3.

⁷⁴ Lesslie Newbiggin, "Can the West Be Converted?" in *The Best of Bishop Lesslie Newbiggin from the International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (January 1987), 1998, p. 11.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Religious Pluralism: A Missiological Approach

"If I am pressed to give reasons for being a Christian, I can only reply by speaking of the calling of Jesus Christ which has come to me through his Church and is authenticated by the working of the Holy Spirit as mediated to me through the word and sacraments of the Gospel and the life of the believing community."⁷⁷

And of course, if the church is to signify the universality of Christ for the world, it cannot then "balkanize" into as many plurality of sects as there are in the post-modern world!

In so far as denominationalism itself is the product of the privatization of religion against the universality doctrine of Christ; is a capitulation to the Western idol of religious privatization. Newbigin, noticed how "sociologists have rightly pointed out that the denomination (essentially the product of North American religious experience in the past 200 years) is simply the institutional form of a privatized religion." He further confessed, using language often descriptive of the Lord's table, that "the denomination is the outward and visible form of an inward and spiritual surrender to the ideology of our culture. Neither separately nor together can the denominations become the base for a genuinely missionary encounter with our culture." And so not surprisingly, Newbigin called for a "radical break with that form of Christianity which is called the denomination."⁷⁸ No doubt, for Newbigin, this would look something like the union of South India, albeit a multi-traditional, sacramental based organic union according to the sacramental theology Christ's final prayer!

So then by a recommitment to evangelism and the necessity of a holistic Christian conversion of people of every nation, and the "reunion" of the church, Newbigin's agenda for the church in today's global city was nothing short of compelling, if not radical. Here again,

What I am pleading for is a genuinely missionary encounter with post-Enlightenment culture. We have too long accepted the position of a privileged option for the private sector. We have been tempted either to withdraw into an intellectual ghetto, seeking to preserve a kind of piety in church and home while leaving the public world to be governed by another ideology. Or we have been tempted to regard the "modern scientific world-view" as though it were simply a transcript of reality which we must—willy-nilly—accept as true. We then try to adjust our Christian beliefs to the requirements of "modern thought" and to find some room for ideas, sentiments and policies which are suggested to us by the Christian tradition – but always within the framework of the "modern scientific world-view". A truly missionary approach would reject both of these strategies; would recognize frankly the fact that the Christian dogma offers a "fiduciary framework" quite different from and (in some respects) incompatible with the framework within which modern European culture has developed; and would be quite bold and uncompromising in setting forth the Christian "dogma", but also very humble and teachable in engaging in dialogue with those who live by other fundamental beliefs⁷⁹.

Missional Catholicity Summarized and Applied:

The unity which we must seek is thus a unity which arises from Christ from their being in him. It is not simply a unity of organization, nor is it simply an agreement about doctrine. It is a total mutual interchange of being-Christ wholly given to us, we wholly given to him. This is a unity involving the whole being of all concerned in it.

Faux Unity Revealed and Corrected

- **Sentimental Unity**

⁷⁷ Religious Pluralism: A Missiological Approach

⁷⁸ Can the West Be Converted? P.17.

⁷⁹ *The Other Side* of 1984 quoted by Newbigin in "Missions In An Ecumenical Perspective" p. 19.

- **Personality Unity**
- **Christian Political Unity**
- **POM Unity**
- **Retrieval Unity**
- **Form Unity**

Vs.

- **Christocentric Unity by the Holy Spirit**

e.g. Neo-Denominational?

What I am pleading for is simple, but not, I hope, simplistic. It is simply for a recovery of confidence in the gospel, the truth, sufficiency, finality and universality of that which God has done for the whole human race in Jesus Christ. We cannot accept for him a place merely as one of the world's religious teachers. We are but learners and have to listen not only to our fellow Christians of other cultures, but also to our neighbors of other faiths, who may teach us much that we have not understood. But the crucial question is: Which is the real story? To that question our whole life is our answer. There is no neutrality. The answer has to be given not only in the words of the Church, but in a life which follows the way Christ went, and so - in Paul's words - bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, manifests to the world his risen life, the life which is life indeed.⁸⁰

LN- The Unity That We Seek

- A reevaluation of denomination

The denominational barriers that seemed so resistant to change when H. Richard Niebuhr wrote his now classic "Social Sources of Denominationalism" now show signs of significant weakening. In increasing numbers, Americans are switching denominations and/or re-imagining denominations as to transcend modern denominational lines of demarcation

- Not "no-denominational" but "neo-denominational"

- Option 1: Spiritual imperialism—Roman Catholic
- Option 2: Spiritual Reductionism/compromise—WCC
- Option 3: Spiritual Pragmatism—Evangelical (para-church church)
- Option 4: Culture War Spirituality—Robert Wuthnow's sad conclusion.
- Option 5- Neo-Confessional Denominationalism—wherein accepting that no church/creed is infallible, wanting to be united in beliefs that span the whole counsel of God's word...distinguishing the confessional 'elements (global) from the temple forms (Local) , etc.

- Reunions?

- Rid of confusing socio-cultural 'Forms' from confessional "elements"—reunion of reformational churches via use of multi-forms of unity.
- Reevaluation of East vs West (without the polarizing extremes as a result of politicization of theology???)
- Distinguishing the spirituality of the church in cultural engagement from cultural wars... a post socio-political "conservative vs. liberal" to a orthodox conservative and liberal?

⁸⁰ J.E. Lesslie Newbigin, *Witnesses to the World* 1987 Christian (U.K.), no. 1 (May/June): 5-8. This is an edited version of a paper originally given at a conference on 'His Mission, Our Task', organized by the Parlor Mission and Unity in October 1986.

Illustration: East and West?

If the East might benefit from a more 'high-gospel' spirituality that derives from legal-covenant theology that leads to substitutionary atonement and salvation by objective grace through faith alone, might the west benefit by a more "high-church" spirituality that derives from a presence-temple theology that leads to a *participational* full experience of Christ as mediated through the covenant defined church.

East-West Union? (notwithstanding other issues vis-à-vis high gospel, the temple spirituality is something we might can share???)

Representative of a reunion of eastern and western Christian spirituality, at least in general terms. Myk Habets, for instance, has noted how Thomas Torrance in *Theological Science* argues:

To know this God, who both condescends to share all that we are and makes us share in all that he is in Jesus Christ, is to be lifted upon his Spirit to share in God's own self-knowing and self-loving until we are enabled to apprehend him in some real measure in himself beyond anything that we are capable of in ourselves. It is to be lifted out of ourselves as it were into God until we know him and love him and enjoy him in his eternal Reality as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in such a way that the Trinity enters into the fundamental fabric of our thinking of him and constitutes the basic grammar of our worship and knowledge of the One God.⁸¹

Habets then explains, "in the person of Jesus Christ, we see true humanity partaking of true divinity by nature, in such a way that by union, communion and *theosis* with Christ by the Spirit we too, by grace, can participate in the divine nature."⁸² Now, by nature here it is not meant substantive nature or essence in the western sense. It is meant communal and effectual nature in the eastern since *theosis* itself seeks to preserve the Chalcedon "distinct but not separate" in all of this. Again, Habets quotes Eastern orthodox H.K. Yeung's *Being and Knowing* as explaining:

When God became man He was no less God, for He was not diminished by the development of the Godly, but rather "deified" the body and rendered it immortal. 'Deification' did not mean any change of human essence, but that without being less human we are by grace made to participate in divine Sonship.⁸³

In other words, and as Ken Wilber from an Eastern Orthodox context explains, "the way to know God is neither through philosophy or through experimental science (what he perceives a western leaning modernity) but through spiritual practice that can open us up to the grace of the Holy Spirit. Only then can we taste the divine, a firsthand knowledge of the Creator."

We will of course want to challenge the "nothing-but" assumption in this per the history of east-west partisanship itself. But it further explains something of what we are after in the "temple" orientation as expressed throughout redemptive history, albeit in dialogical relationship to the covenantal. "Theosis" as such is the participation not in the nature or substance of God (a western way of thinking), but in his personal existence or communion. It involves an 'epistemology of presence' contrasted with an epistemology of reason.

Accordingly, John Zizioulas has noted about theosis that it is less "hypostasis of individual existence as a

⁸¹ Thomas F. Torrance, *Theological Science* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 155 quoted in Myk Habets, *Theosis in the Theology of Thomas Torrance: Not Yet in the Now*, p. 62

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Quoted in "*Theological Science*" p. 63 taken from Yeung, H.K. *Being and Knowing* London Univ. (United Kingdom). 113

hypostasis of ecclesial (communal) existence.” It is accordingly less “constituted by man’s biological conception” as it is “constituted by the new birth through baptism into the communion of God as participated in through the church.” Notwithstanding perhaps his understanding of the western position, he will apply this in much the same way we will as to emphasize ecclesial “praxis” in terms of its epistemic value (what we would want to emphasize as well albeit in dialogical tension with “proposition” formation and confession.)⁸⁴

According to John Zizioulas therefore, the great differences between the history of the eastern and western spirituality is “the west trends toward an ontology of *logos*, or “being in ideology” wherein the east trends toward an ontology of *koinonia* or “being in community.” Again, our point is to advocate for their respective reunions, at least in their more moderate expressions if per chance we really are moving into a post-partisan era where *Totus Christus is the Total Church*.

Application:

A) Catholicity within Denomination???- a oxymoron and concession this side of heaven.

Irony—Aren’t those who describe themselves as “the catholic church” or “the orthodox” church declaring other churches non-churches... is this schism...?

Imperialism vs. Denominationalism Freedom of Conscience

▪ On the Sin of *Unnecessary Schism* (denominations) AND the Necessity of Denominationalism

1Cor. 1:10 Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.

- vs. 10: "divisions" the word also translated "schism" or "renting", "separation..."
- Same word used in chapter 11:18 in the context of Paul's explanations about the meaning of the Lord's Table in chapt 10-11.

1Cor. 11:18 For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it.

As related then to 1Cor. 10:16-17,

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

- Paul is exhorting the church to resist "schism" as to fulfill the meaning of their sacred spiritual union with Christ per John 17!
 - Paul's later exhortation that they examine themselves is clearly related to this sin of schism.
- #### ▪ All of this raises the question as to whether there is ever a time for Christian's to “divide” and in what sense—is denominations necessarily schism? Yes and No!

E.g. Must distinguish biblical separation and unbiblical schism.

⁸⁴ John Zizioulas, *Being As Communion, Studies in Personhood and the Church* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: Crestwood, NY, 1985). P. 49, 55.

Paul's point in 1Cor.1:10 is that they had "differences amongst themselves about unnecessary things." (Owens)

- In the immediate context, things that were related to the various personalities/styles associated with Paul vs. Apollos vs. Peter... etc.
11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. 12 What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." 13 Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?
- We know from Chapters 12-14-- that it was related to a false understanding and application of spiritual gifts in the body of Christ.
E.g. The word "schism/division" is used again in the context of Paul's description of the church as the organic union of the body of Christ such that each member/role ought to respect and benefit from the other and not look down or despise one another as each important in their distinct roles. I.e.. Organic unity vs. role/gift sameness.
1Cor. 12:24 whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, 25 that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another.
- We also know of Paul's concern for Christian unity as related to matters of private conscience as distinguishable from grounds for division in 1 Cor. 8 .
1Cor. 1:2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:
- **Romans 14**
 - *R 14:4, It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand.*

E.g. 5One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. 6 The one who observes the day, observes it in honor of the Lord. (can't both worship on same day!!)
12So then each of us will give an account of himself to God.
13 Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother.
A concession this side of our glorification as to concede in humility that we are not perfected – thus the fallible church as one holy catholic church, not the infallible denotation as one holy catholic church...
BUT that beings said, we scripture wants us to 'pursue peace' ...albeit in levels of grade starting with spirituality union in Christ (Jn 17) through gospel centered, missional, confessional, sacramental, communal (order), more on this... Friday

B) Owens "Four" types of Unity plus a proposed 5th

1. Spiritual Unity (e.g. temple/sacramental)—

I.e. those who are effectually called as to be "new creatures" in Christ-- thus a unity that is based upon being "spiritually and savingly united to Christ..." (p.107) Against then nominalism/sacerdotalism as was believed to be true in the RC-- that required union with the pope in order to have true union, less union with Christ... He is clearly speaking about that unity that is had by the work of the Spirit in effectual calling in the "participation of and quickening by the same Spirit that is in Christ Jesus whereby they become his body or members of it" (Eph.4:3-4,15-16, John17:21-22, 1Cor.12:12-13,)

- What are the "elements" – Apostolic foundation that must be affirmed in
- What are the forms" (vestiges of political, national, racial, culture (pre-modern, modernist, post-modern cultures))
- What "forms" of confessions would suffice in multi-congregational/denominational catholicity as to express unity about the elements with albeit expressed in different forms

2. Unity of Faith (e.g. covenantal/confessional)—

As related to an express believe and profession of the same divine truth as applied to the "fundamental articles of Christian religion" and with good and sincere conscience as "every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" and "walking according to what he hath attained do allow peace and love with those who are otherwise persuaded than he is ... (Rom14:5, Phil.3:16, Eph.)-- for the unity of faith did never consist in the same precise conceptions of all revealed objects, neither the nature of man nor the means of revelation will allow such a unity to be morally possible." (p.108)

- **Christian unity is to be preserved up until it violates our essential union with Christ—as to undermine that which is essential to any one of the Five Marks of a Total Christ spirituality/ecclesiology.**
 - So important is Christian unity to true spirituality, that there are many things that Christians ought to be willing to tolerate in order to achieve it-- "things" that are perhaps related to style, personalities and preferences. Even "things" that might be related to principle-- but in the grand scheme of things is not a principle that warrants a strain against the "communion of the saints" and a demise of the Christian witness in the world. I.e. Before we "separate" we ought to always count the cost as related to a "love" (e.12-14) and related to the meaning of our most sacred rite (1Cor.10-11) and as related to our Christian witness.(1Cor.6:6) It is never something we do lightly and without a self-conscious process aimed at finding resolution and reconciliation for the sake of Christian Unity. (John 17)

Calvin:

"The church is not to be forsaken for trifling differences, wherein the doctrine (of the gospel) is retained safe and sound, wherein the integrity of godliness doth abide and the use of the sacraments appointed of the Lord is preserved." (Institutes, Lib.iv.cap.1, n.12)

"Some fault may creep into the administration of either doctrine or sacraments, but this ought not to estrange us from communion with the church. For not all the articles of true doctrine are of the same sort. Some are so necessary to know that they should be certain and unquestioned by all men as the proper principles of religion... a difference of opinion over these nonessential matters should in no wise be the basis of schism among Christians. First and foremost we should agree

on all points. But since all men are somewhat beclouded with ignorance, either we must leave no church remaining, or we must condone delusion in those matters which can go unknown without harm to the sum of religion and without loss of salvation." ... I say we must not thoughtlessly forsake the church because of any petty dissensions... in the meantime, if we try to correct what displeases us, we do so out of duty."

Book 4, Chapt. 1, #12

- What are the "elements" – Apostolic foundation (
- What are the forms" (vestiges of modern nation-state)
- What "forms" of confessions would suffice in multi-congregational/denominational catholicity as to express unity about the elementals with albeit expressed in different forms...

3. Unity of orders (e.g. Kingdom/governmental)

"orders for rule and ordinances for worship" as instituted by Christ by his kingly authority." (Mt.28:19-20, Eph.4:8-13, 1Tim., etc.) "to this end, he communicates supplies of spiritual ability and wisdom or the gifts of his Spirit unto the guides and rulers of his churches, for their administration unto edification...i.e. The three marks of the church as authorized by Christ in Scriptures expressed through ministry word (confessionalism), sacraments/prayer and discipline/pastoral care-- Prophet, Priest and King in it's authorized mediated ways.

- What are the "elements" – Apostolic foundation
- What are the forms" (vestiges of modern nation-state)
- What "forms" of order would suffice in multi-congregational/denominational catholicity as to express unity about the elementals with albeit expressed in different forms...

4. Unity of love (e.g. Ecclesial "one-anothering" by every Christian) –

as related to the "contribution of supplies of grace and light and helps of obedience unto other members of the body" and secondly "by forbearance and condescension towards the infirmities, mistakes and faults of others wherein of what singular use it is for the preservation of church peace and order, the apostle at large declares 1Cor.13." (Rom. 12, 1Cor.12-14, etc) (p.110)

- ***Union of Believers to Believers as after the pattern of their union with Christ and Christ's with the Father.***

We emphasize a local-oriented ministry where community in the sacramental flesh of the neighborhood really matters. This community formation is manifest by an emphasis on life on life "one anothering" and holistic empowerment under the shepherding care of Christ's under-shepherds and servant leaders. (Jn 13:34, Gal. 6:2, 1 Peter 5:1-5)!

Christ the Lord is always himself present with his church... truly and actually... for the Lord is never absent from his church, but is always personally present... through the ministry of his word which he does outwardly and tangibly through his ministers and shepherds.

Martin Bucer

It is our duty to let the benefit and fruit of the Lord's Supper become manifest, and we ought to show that we have received it with profit. ... that even as we have eaten and drunk the body and blood of Christ the Lord...these we must take, and repeat them to our neighbor, not by the mouth alone, but by our actions.

Martin Luther

e.g.

- A communal, rather than individual, approach to everything – such as to change the way we think about our possessions, time, decisions, ethics – everything in relation to one-anothering!

In the language of Richard Hayes, a sacramental spirituality means that *The conception of salvation as an individual matter between man and God is utterly foreign to Paul's preaching. To be in Christ, in the Lord, in the Spirit means to be in the community of Christ, the Lord, and the Spirit. Hence, the will of God is always to be discerned by and for the community, not by individuals in isolation. This communal context of the believer's life is of the greatest importance for Paul's understanding of how the Christian is able to know what he ought to and ought not to do. The believer's life and action are always in, with, and for "the brethren" in Christ. For him, moral action is never a matter of an isolated actor choosing from among a variety of abstract ideas on the basis of how inherently "good" or "evil" each may be. Instead it is always a matter of choosing and doing what is good for the brother and what will build up the whole community of brethren.*⁸⁵

- A community that shares its burdens with one another.
 - A communal consciousness that feels the relation of the part to the whole, both in flourishing as each member flourishes and in suffering as one member suffers.
- A Community that puts peace and purity ahead of personal needs and favored projects/issues

Rom. 14:19 Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.

Question 144: What are the duties required in the ninth commandment?

Answer: The duties required in the ninth commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, ... , (doing and thinking) Whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for, and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocency; a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report, concerning them; discouraging talebearers, flatterers, and slanderers; love and care of our own good name, and defending it when need requires; keeping of lawful promises; studying and practicing of: Whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of good report.

5) Witness of Unity (Missional)

⁸⁵ Richard Hayes, *Ecclesiology and Ethics in 1 Corinthians* located on the web. See also Victor P. Furnish, *Theology and Ethics in Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1968) and

Are their levels of "participation" consistent with the exclusive Lordship of Christ over conscience that allows for "grades/degrees" of Christian unity and participation

e.g. at the least, can Christian who share Christ-Centric, Gospel centered unity (but not unity of order, some important aspects of faith and worship, participate together for the sake of witness in "love"—e.g. BOH

That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, *that the world may believe that You sent Me.* (John 17:21 stated again in vs. 23)

Also:

John 13:34-35 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

1Cor. 6:6 But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers

For me, that basis when I am pressed to define it always lies in the actual experience of the missionary encounter, the encounter with the man, for instance, in the streets of an Indian city who challenges, you the foreigner, to say what right you have to bring the name of a foreign God, of a foreign religion into the land of India. One replies to such a challenge by trying to show him how the name of Jesus is not the name of the leader of one religion, is not the name that we in the west give to God but is the name of the One decisive and final revelation of God the man, the One who alone has brought reconciliation between man and God and thereby created the possibility of reconciliation between man and man. But when one replies that way, the answer always comes back: content with the Name of Jesus. You do not believe that the Name of Jesus is the all sufficient Name because all of you have to add something else to that Name before you are satisfied. We have to conclude that what you are bringing to us is not the one Name of which you speak; it is in... a whole series of names – the fragments of western European culture which have been projected into our world by the colonial expansion of the 19th century.⁸⁶

C. The Issue of Organic Union—e.g. New Way of Thinking about "Denomination"

Practical Observations:

1. Denominationalism is a *good* thing in so far as it acknowledge that this side of heaven, not any one tradition or person is infallible. Denominationalism is in fact an attempt to pursue "evangelical unity" (as Owen's called it) such as to that unity of "one faith, one lord, one spirit" etc. Denominationalism preserved true Christian unity even as it ought to demonstrate and practice unity at those levels mentioned by Owens that is truly had by God's grace. Therefore, by way of some applications

- a. A communion table that respects the unity we have with other denominations with respect to spiritual unity of faith (as related to the Christian fundamentals), etc. E.g. a communion table that practices unity "as wide as the gospel is wide"
- b. Church membership that respects the "process" whereby those who are judged "in Christ" have all the benefits of being members of the household of God, even when some of the principles of "order and worship" that largely determine evangelical denominationalism are not agreed upon, in so far as the Christian is willing

⁸⁶ Recounted in J.E. Lesslie Newbigin "Missions In An Ecumenical Perspective," (1962) P. 9.

to submit to the church position and or the church is willing not to bind the conscience of a Christian on matters judged to be allowable.

How then would this effect our relation and posture toward other denominations?

B. Practical Aspects of Keeping Unity In the Church

1. A Proper respect for the Means of Grace in ministry of Word and Prayer!

Owen's affirms that "the ways and means whereby this unity may be obtained and preserved amongst Christians are evident from the nature of it: for whereas it is spiritual, none other are suited thereunto, nor hath the Lord Christ appointed any other but his Spirit and his word..." (in contrast here to subjection to the pope) p.110-111.

2. A Process for Humble Study and Discernment while liberty of Conscience is honored.

Thus for Owen, a "good cause" for division is when all process has been exhausted such as to preserve such biblical unity. Thus for Owen, the "fundamental cause of our divisions" is in that it was NOT taken out of the way to "leave believers or professors of the gospel unto their duty in seeking after evangelical unity in the use of the other means instituted and blessed unto that end."

Owens further elaborates that the church ought to "impose nothing on their consciences or practice under that name which indeed belongs not thereunto" and then, in the meantime under these terms Owens enjoins for the sake of preserving unity that "there may for a season remain some divisions among them, yet there will be a way of healing continually ready for them and agreed upon by them as such." (p.113)

3. To "leave a church" is a "BIG DEAL" and ought to be treated seriously.

"IN the meantime, were Christians duly instructed how many lesser differences, in mind and judgment and practice, are really consistent with the nature, ends and genuine fruit of the unity that Christ requires among them, it would undoubtedly prevail with them so to manage themselves in their differences, by mutual forbearance and condescension in love, as not to contract the guilt of being disturbers or breakers of it; for suppose the minds of any of them to be invincibly prepossessed with the principles wherein they differ from others, yet all who are sincere in their profession cannot but rejoice to be directed unto such a managery of them as to be preserved from the guilt of dissolving the unity appointed by Christ to be observed. And to speak plainly among all the churches in the world which are free from idolatry and persecution, it is not different opinions or a difference in judgment about revealed truths, nor a different practice in sacred administrations, but pride, self-interest, love of honor, reputation and dominion... that are the true cause of that defect of evangelical unity that is at this day amongst them; for set them aside and the real differences which would remain may be so managed in love, gentleness and meekness as not to interfere with that unity which Christ requireth them to preserve."

Addendum:

AS for the Biblical justification of Newbigin's multi-traditional organic union, Newbigin would turn to the Pauline epistles, most especially Paul's concern in 1 Corinthians. According to Newbigin, Paul's concern against the "carnal" in Corinth (1 Cor.3:1-4) was a reference to those who were content to be separated from one another. He wrote, "when St. Paul calls the Corinthians carnal his meaning is that they have fallen away from dependence solely on God and His grace... dependence upon the one Holy Spirit would have produced the visible unity of the one Body. Their divisions were an outward sign of their carnality."⁸⁷

Upon closer review of Paul's first letter to Corinth, clearly, there was a division in Corinth that warranted Paul's rebuke, and that this division was directly impacting their sharing in a common sacramentally based visible unity. For in 1Cor. 1:10, Paul writes:

Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.

Not surprisingly, this condition is contrasted with the verse immediately before when Paul reminds the Corinthian believers that they were "called into the fellowship (koinonia) of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord." The word for "fellowship" is of course the word "koinonia" as was later applied to a sacramental participation with Christ and one another at the Lord's supper in 1Cor. 10

6 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.

Moreover, the same word translated above "divisions" according to Paul's rebuke is the same word for "schism" or the condition of being splintered apart and is again directly related to an *improper* participation in the Lord's Supper in 1Cor.

For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it.

Here again, whatever else was wrong in the Corinthian church, of the utmost concern for Paul was that there had been a "schism" which whereby there was a visible split in the church of God in Corinth, and that this was a direct violation of the inherent sacramental identity of the church *in Christ*. One could even argue that Paul is directly applying the last prayer of Christ in John 17 to the Corinth situation. But more to the present point regarding the nature of a truly confessional unity, the question must be raised, What then was the cause of this church split? In chapter 1 vs. 11-13, we read:

For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters. What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

Evidently then the church had splintered into factions that were distinguished by the teachings of Paul vs. the teachings of Apollos. There were "quarrels" such that the body of Christ was visibly rent asunder as to compromise even their sharing together in a common sacramental meal. We even know something about the theological nature of these disputes from 1Corinthians 10 as pertaining to the question of meats offered to idols.

The interesting thing however is that Paul's method is *not* to demand a consensus concerning the issue of meats in order to receive one another in sacramental *koinonia*! Rather, he admonishes them *not* to demand absolute

⁸⁷ The Reunion of the Church pp. 49-50.

unanimity in theological conscience in order to share in the *koinonia* of visible union around Christ's table! He says for instance, that "All things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial. All things are lawful, but not all things build up. Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the others." (10:23).

In the context of Corinth, and *for the sake of true confessionality*, Paul first of all concedes that some teachings are arguably more or less orthodox as per a more mature theological conviction than others. He in effect shows his hand when he argues that "all things are lawful" when evidently this was the point of contention (we can notice as well that in Romans 14 about the same issue, Paul clearly distinguishes one view as "strong" in comparison to the "weaker" view). And yet, Paul argues that for the sake of a higher confession, namely, the unity of the church sacramentally *in* Christ, He privileges some teachings over others for the sake of mutual edification. In other words, while all confessions are either true or false and worth debating, not all confessions are of equal value relative to the grand scheme of redemption. And clearly for Paul, there is no higher order of confession than that proclaimed at the Lord's Table. Vis-à-vis the unity of the church in Christ.

There was, in short, a way to maintain freedom of conscience (confessionality) while also maintaining visible unity, assuming that one distinguished between those confessions that are inherent to the essential identity of the church vs. other doctrines, while still important and worth debating, are preserved by allowing for a full expression of the liberty of conscience albeit in visible and sacramental fellowship with those who differ. As such, there was to be a kind of theological tolerance, and even deference, on those matters that are not inherently Christo-centric relative to the terms of communion, if for the sake of a visible unity that *is* inherent to the essence of the churches identity in Christ at the sacramental table. Paul says it this way:

If someone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, out of consideration for the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience— 29 I mean the other's conscience, not your own. For why should my liberty be subject to the judgment of someone else's conscience? 30 If I partake with thankfulness, why should I be denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

Paul's point in Corinth is that one ought not to establish so narrow a view of the terms of communion as to push away some who are "in Christ" but who are still theologically "weak" (from the vantage point of Paul's "stronger" theology on meats offered to idols). The 1Corinthians situation is further clarified in Romans, where some of the exact same language is expanded upon in the Romans context.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ In Romans 14, Paul exhorts the different factions to "receive one another" (14:1)—which in the greater context was most likely related to receiving one another in Christian *koinonia* or membership in the visible church of Christ. And this "receiving" is clearly not be means of reaching a theological consensus on everything. As pertaining to the different teachings concerning the "eating of meats" and the practice of various holy days, Paul will say "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore,... 3 Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats" and " 5 One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind." In brief, Paul was advocating for a multi-traditional type of visible unity! And why? Because while all doctrines are important, not all doctrines are as important as other doctrines relative to the witness of Christ and the inherent identity of the church in union with Christ at the Lord's Table. He therefore speaks of his concern that these differing "traditions" not cause believers to "put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our fellow believers way." Contrary to a popular privatized reading of "stumbling"—it is clearly in this context a reference to Paul's concerned in vs. 20 that they not *destroy the work of God for the sake of food*. (vs. 20). And the "work of God" that Paul is referencing is defined in vs. 18-19 as a concern for "peace and joy in the Holy Spirit... and the things by which one may edify another."