

American Evangelicalism and Anglicanism

(The following is based on a talk I gave as part of a TSM panel, addressing the question “What is Evangelicalism?”)



I teach at “Trinity School for Ministry: An evangelical seminary in the Anglican tradition.” What does that word “Evangelical” mean? In what sense am I an Evangelical Anglican? There are at least three ways in which the word “Evangelical” could function in relationship to Anglicanism. First, it could simply be pointing to the Reformation heritage of Anglicanism. Like Lutheranism or the Reformed tradition, Anglicanism traces its roots to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century, including such definitive markers as the three (or five) *solas*: *sola scriptura*, *sola gratia*, *sola fide*, *solus Christus*, *solus Deo gloria*. The term could also refer to a particular movement within Anglicanism that focuses on Anglicanism’s Reformation identity. An extreme version of this kind of Evangelical Anglicanism would understand pristine Anglicanism to have existed for the short number of years during the reign of Edward VI between Cranmer’s second Prayer Book of 1552 (definitely not the 1549), and the beginning of the reign of Queen Mary. Definitive identity markers would include the 1552 BCP, the 39 Articles (1563) and the Book of Homilies (1547, 1562, and 1571). Much later Anglicanism (beginning with the Caroline Divines and perhaps Richard Hooker) would be interpreted as a “falling away” from these original pristine touchstones. I intend rather to use the term to refer to a more recent distinctly American phenomena –

North American Evangelicalism of the mid-20th and early 21st centuries. This is the context of my own upbringing, but also the church background of the majority of TSM's faculty and students. What might an orthodox 21st century North American Anglicanism have to offer this American version of Evangelicalism?

I will begin with a bit of autobiography. I was raised a Southern Baptist. During my high school years, I got involved for a short period of time in what was then called the "Jesus Movement," and attended a Friday night service every week where people raised their hands and sang in tongues. I was also involved in the youth group of a Southern Baptist megachurch. At the same time, I discovered the writings of C. S. Lewis and J. R. R. Tolkien, and in a two-year period read all of Lewis's major published writings.

I attended an Evangelical liberal arts college in Denver where I majored in philosophy. Evangelicals were not writing theology at this time, but they were interested in apologetics, and I thought that philosophy would be a handy tool for apologetics. I discovered Thomas Aquinas, but Aquinas at this time was being read primarily as a philosopher. During my senior year in college, I discovered the writing of Wolfhart Pannenberg, but I was interested in Pannenberg because of his value for apologetics. Pannenberg defended the historical verifiability of the resurrection of Jesus. Pannenberg was the first "real theologian" I ever read, and I called myself a "Pannenbergian" for awhile. I used terms like "proleptic anticipation of the eschaton."

Toward the end of my time in college, a number of theologians produced a document called *The Hartford Appeal*, a criticism primarily of trends in liberal Protestant theology. In the collection of essays that the participants entitled *Against the World For the World: The Hartford Appeal and the Future of American Religion*, Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus,

eds. (NY: Seabury, 1976), Richard Mouw of Fuller Seminary contributed the essay, "New Alignments: Hartford and the Future of Evangelicalism."

In that essay, Mouw identified three groups of American Evangelicals existing at the time.

1) Fundamentalism was a group that came into existence in the early twentieth century in opposition to and as a rejection of Liberal Protestantism in the mainline churches.

2) NeoEvangelicalism was identified with successors of Fundamentalism who broke with its narrowness in the mid-twentieth century: Billy Graham and the journal *Christianity Today* were two of its cultural identifiers.

3) In contradistinction from both Fundamentalism and NeoEvangelicalism was "Confessionalism," identified with members of historic Reformation denominations who did not trace their roots to American sources: Lutheran, Reformed, Episcopal, Mennonite. These groups sometimes formed an uneasy alliance with Evangelicalism although they did not share its historic roots, and each had its own distinctive confessional identity.

Mouw pointed to four new influences within Evangelicalism at the time

1) "Neo-Pietism" was a new face on the scene, sharing some characteristics of earlier "pietist" and "revivalist" movements: the "Jesus Movement" and the beginnings of charismatic renewal.

2) Neo-Orthodoxy was represented by theologians like Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Evangelicals were divided, with some repudiating Barth as a new form of "liberalism" and others embracing Barth as someone from whom Evangelicals could learn much.

3) Among some Evangelicals, there was a rise of "Political Consciousness," motivated by the anti-war movement, civil rights movement, and feminism. Journals such as *Sojourners* and *The Other Side* were associated with this movement.

4) Finally, Mouw identified a group he called "Progressive Evangelicals." Mouw clearly identified with this group and wrote: "[N]eo-evangelicals usually become 'progressive' by moving in the direction of confessionalism." (And, I would add, reading Karl Barth.)

Keep these identities in mind, as I will later ask "What of these identities continue in contemporary Evangelicalism?"

After college, I knew I was no longer a Southern Baptist, but I did not know what I was. I received my MA at a Roman Catholic seminary (St. Thomas Seminary, Denver). While there, I set myself the task of thinking through the differences between Roman Catholicism and Evangelicalism, focusing on Reformation distinctives such as justification by faith and the relationship between Scripture and tradition. I studied Roman Catholic theologians like Karl Rahner.

During this time, I read a book and an essay that influenced the direction of my thought:

The *Chicago Call* was another conference, this time led by Evangelicals, whose essays were published as *The Orthodox Evangelicals*, Robert Webber and Donald Bloesch, eds. (Thomas Nelson, 1978). This was a call for Evangelicals to rediscover their Pre-Reformation roots, and would lead to Webber's later career, writing about *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, and his *Ancient-Future* project. (TSM now hosts something called the "Robert E. Webber Center," which holds annual "Ancient Evangelical Future" conferences.) When I read the *Chicago Call*, I came across senior theologians saying the kinds of things that I was thinking at the time.

In an essay entitled "The Reformation in Recent Roman Catholic

Theology," *New Theology No 1*, Martin Marty, ed. (Macmillan, 1964), Per Erik Persson, a Lutheran, endorsed a new historiography that viewed the Protestant Reformation in terms of its continuity with Medieval theology rather than in contrast or discontinuity – which had been the traditional view of both Protestants and Catholics for four hundred years. This new historiography focused on the Reformation as a "reforming movement" within the Western Catholic Church rather than a radical break. Similar views would be argued by historians such as Heiko Oberman. This "new Reformation historiography" has been a major influence on my thinking. I wrote my master's thesis on Jacob Arminius, arguing that Arminius was influenced by Thomas Aquinas.

At the end of my time at St. Thomas, I became an Episcopalian for "theological reasons." I was confirmed by Bishop Bill Frey, who went on to become Dean/President of Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry. I did not view myself as abandoning my Evangelicalism, but as embracing a more Catholic view of the church.

After graduating from St. Thomas, I received my PhD at the University of Notre Dame, where I studied under both Roman Catholics and non-Catholic faculty. The theology faculty at Notre Dame was intentionally ecumenical during this period. Non-Catholics included Methodist Stanley Hauerwas (for one year), Jim White, a Methodist liturgist, and John Howard Yoder (a Mennonite). Visiting Anglican faculty included liturgists Kenneth Stevenson and Paul Bradshaw. Roman Catholics who influenced me included my dissertation director, David Burrell (an expert on Thomas Aquinas), and Edward Kilmartin, a liturgical theologian. (Hauerwas and Burrell were both "Yale" graduates, and influenced by George Lindbeck and the "post-liberal" Yale school.)

Burrell suggested to those of us who were his students that every theologian needed to have a historical mentor, whose writings we should know well. By this point I had two, Thomas

Aquinas and Karl Barth. I now read Aquinas as a theologian, not primarily a philosopher. During my time at Notre Dame, I also began to study my own Anglican heritage, Anglican writers such as Thomas Cranmer, John Jewel, Richard Hooker, Caroline Divines like George Herbert, John Donne, and Thomas Traherne. (I wrote my dissertation on Jacob Arminius, again.) One of my key theological concerns became the relationship between Medieval and Reformation theology, focusing on continuities rather than discontinuities.

Skipping forward to our current setting, I mention a final set of distinctions from George Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism* (Cambridge University Press, 2008). Hunsinger distinguishes between three contemporary approaches to theology:

1) In academic “liberal” theology, “modernist norms reign supreme.”

2) Hunsinger identifies “enclave” theology as “a theology based narrowly on a single tradition that seeks not to learn from other traditions and to enrich them, but instead to topple and defeat them, or at least to withstand them.” I would suggest that “enclave” theology is a dangerous temptation for “confessional” theologies. Evangelicals can become “progressive” by becoming “confessional” (as Mouw wrote), but they can also become reactive, pursuing the “pure” version of “Reformed” or “Lutheran” or “Roman Catholic,” or “Evangelical” or “Anglo-Catholic” Anglican theology.

3) Finally, “ecumenical” theology “presupposes that every tradition in the church has something valuable to contribute even if we cannot discern what it is.”

Where does American Evangelical theology stand today in terms of Mouw’s earlier categories? I would suggest the following:

1) The borders between fundamentalism and “popular Evangelicalism” are increasingly blurry. If, in an earlier

generation, Billy Graham was an “Evangelical” and Jerry Falwell a “Fundamentalist,” it is not clear today whether these distinctions would hold between Franklin Graham and Jerry Falwell, Jr. Are they Evangelicals or Fundamentalists?

2) The “renewal”/charismatic movement of the 1970’s seems to have “morphed” into what are now called “contemporary worship” and “seeker churches,” or (among Anglicans), the “charismatic stream.” (Is “contemporary worship” the dominant form of worship in Evangelical churches these days?)

3) Narrow confessionalism still exists within groups like the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, and “continuing Anglicans.”

3) Finally, “Progressive confessionalists” have been succeeded by ecumenically theological Evangelicals who read not only Karl Barth, but also the church fathers. (This would now seem to be the center of academic Evangelical theology.) Calvinists like James K. A. Smith write about the importance of liturgy; the late (Evangelical) Anglican theologian John Webster was not only an expert on Karl Barth, but was reading Thomas Aquinas; Kevin Vanhoozer discusses Roman Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar in his books, and is friends with Catholic theologian Matthew Levering; Methodist D. Stephen Long writes books on *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Preoccupation* (Fortress, 2014) in which he defends Roman Catholic von Balthasar’s interpretation of Barth over that of Presbyterian Bruce McCormack, and *The Perfectly Simple Triune God: Aquinas and his Legacy* (Fortress, 2016), in which he discusses Aquinas’s influence in Protestant Reformation theology. Evangelical biblical scholars are now the leading heirs of the earlier “biblical theology” movement formerly associated with figures such as Walther Eichrodt, Oscar Cullmann, or Joachim Jeremias.

Where do (American) Anglicans stand in the midst of the current American Evangelical setting? I think we have a unique

opportunity because of the historical nature of Anglicanism. Historically, Anglicans have embraced Reformation concerns such as the primacy and sufficiency of Scripture and justification by grace through faith, but also catholic liturgical worship, the historic creeds, the first four ecumenical councils, a (relatively high) sacramental theology (we're not Zwinglians!), and episcopacy. Our historical identity is found in a kind of "evangelical catholicism" or "catholic evangelicalism" that resonates with an Evangelical ecumenism. If more recent Evangelical Anglicans such as John Webster read not only Barth, but also (later) Aquinas, earlier Anglo-Catholics such as Michael Ramsey could also read Barth! And Anglicans have always read the church fathers!

At the same time, I have concerns about signs of a resurgence of "enclave" theologies among some Evangelicals. I do not know what to think about the reappearance (among both Catholics and Protestants) of an earlier historiography that emphasizes Reformation discontinuity with the Medieval church. (Is this a sign of retrenchment to earlier positions or simply the tendency of scholarship to move in "waves," with the need of each generation to "say something new," even if it just means saying something old again?) Among "conservative" Anglicans, I see some signs of a new "enclave" Anglicanism, a resurgence of nineteenth-century partisan conflicts, an embracing of either Protestant (or Anglo-Catholic) oppositional distinctives: To be Evangelical (or Catholic) is to be as unlike the opposite as possible!

In terms of popular American Evangelical culture as a whole, I also have concerns about a political "circling of the wagons," e.g., *The Benedict Option*, that at times seems to reflect more "sour grapes" about losing the "culture wars" than embracing a distinctively Christian identity.

Where do I myself stand? I'll conclude by repeating an answer I gave in a blog post about ten years ago:

When I am asked to identify my own theological stance, I usually call myself a “Barthian Thomist.” If I were asked to identify my churchmanship, I would call myself a “catholic evangelical” or a “Reforming Catholic,” in the tradition of movements like the Mercersburg Theology, Robert Jenson and Carl Braaten’s Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology, or figures like Thomas F. Torrance. If I am an Evangelical, I am an ecumenical Evangelical, who understands the Reformation as a reforming movement in the Western Catholic Church. If am an Anglo-Catholic, I am a post-Vatican II Anglican catholic, who understands catholicism as ressourcement, not as retrenchment. If asked to choose between an evangelical and a catholic understanding of the Reformation, I would refuse that choice as a false dilemma.

Yes, Virginia, There is Such a Thing as Fundamentalism or The Subject Matter of Christianity is the Subject Matter of Christianity



Much of what I have written on my blog

has been addressed against what is called either (depending on which side of the Reformation one hangs one's hat) Liberal Protestantism or Catholic Modernism. (One of the advantages of being Anglican is that one can embrace either heresy. When Anglican Evangelicals go bad they become liberal Protestants. When Anglo-Catholics go bad, they become Modernists.) Within the parameters of the church, I consider liberalism to be the greatest heresy today because it denies the central subject matter of the Christian faith as taught in the Scriptures, and summarized in the ecumenical creeds: the doctrines of the Trinity, the incarnation of God in Christ, the atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Numerous essays on my blog address this heresy in one way or another. Even the issue of same-sex sexual unions, which is the key issue of controversy dividing the Western churches these days, I regard as church dividing precisely because I see an inherent connection between affirming same-sex activity and denying key doctrines of Christian faith. It is not a coincidence that the leading advocates of SSUs have also been functional unitarians and/or panentheists. (I think of people like retired Bishop John Spong, the late Marcus Borg, and Sallie McFague. Despite a caginess that makes her hard to pin down, I think it clear that Episcopal Presiding Bishop Katherine Jefferts Schori is solidly in this camp.) There are, of course, exceptions, including some theologians whom I have admired and who have influenced me: Stanley Hauerwas and George Hunsinger, in particular. However, they really are exceptions. Precisely because Scripture is so clear on this issue and it is tied so closely to the doctrine of creation (and, I would add, even the doctrines of the Trinity and ecclesiology), where one stands on SSU's predictably indicates where one stands on creedal issues.

Advocates of theological liberalism/modernism in the church regularly refer to those who disagree with them as "fundamentalists," and I have been the recipient of this

accusation myself. John Spong's book *Rescuing the Bible From Fundamentalism* is a typical example. The joke is, that for theological progressives, a "fundamentalist" is anyone who believes more of the Christian faith than the one using the epithet. For Spong, Jerry Falwell and Billy Graham were "fundamentalists," but so was Karl Barth, and New Testament scholar N.T. Wright. If a fundamentalist is anyone who believes more than Bishop Spong, then the term is vacuous. To refer to N.T. Wright as a fundamentalist is just another way of saying that one disagrees with him, and, because he does not affirm one's views, he must be either evil or foolish or both. The fundamentalist accusation saves the time of actually having to address the arguments of someone like Wright. (I have used Wright as an example precisely because his position is ambiguous. Wright's "New Perspective" work on the apostle Paul has led him to be labeled a dangerous "liberal" by some advocates of a traditional Reformation reading of Paul.)

That a term can be misused does not mean that it cannot be used meaningfully at all. That Karl Barth and N.T. Wright are not fundamentalists does not mean that there are no such people. What is a fundamentalist? Historically, the term originated early in the twentieth century with the publications of a series of books entitled *The Fundamentals*, written by a number of conservative Protestant theologians in response to the rise of liberal Protestantism. With the separation of J. Gresham Machen from Princeton Seminary, the founding of Westminster Seminary and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, fundamentalism became associated with conservative separatist Protestantism. In the mid-twentieth century, the rising movement then known as Neo-Evangelicalism (associated with Billy Graham and institutions such as Fuller Seminary and *Christianity Today* magazine) distanced itself from fundamentalism as a conservative Protestant movement that was more academic, more ecumenical, and open to aspects of the civil rights movement of the 1960's. With the rise of the (political) religious right in the early 1980's and the social

and political division of the culture wars of the late twentieth century that divided not only political parties but also religious denominations, internal divisions over issues such as the inerrancy of scripture and women's ordination, clear-cut divisions between what were now called conservative Evangelicals and fundamentalists once again tended to blur.

To describe fundamentalism by its history in this way could lead to the impression that fundamentalism is restricted to a particular historical phenomenon within a specific religious tradition – that of conservative Protestantism. To do so would be to fail to locate the theological nature of fundamentalism, and would view it as an isolated phenomenon – which would be a mistake. Fundamentalism is not so much a particular movement within the specific religious tradition of Protestantism as a type that has appeared not only within Protestantism, but in other Christian traditions as well.

Fundamentalism has at least two characteristics: first, it is a distinctly modern phenomenon. It appeared at a time when Christian identity was threatened by the rise of modern secularism that has its origins in the Enlightenment, and when secularism was perceived to have infiltrated even the Christian churches. And, second, fundamentalism is reactionary. Fundamentalism identifies itself in terms of that which it rejects as much as or more so than what actually defines it. Once one recognizes that fundamentalism is both modern in origin and reactionary, it becomes evident that fundamentalism is not simply identical with conservative or orthodox Christianity; one can also speak of fundamentalism outside of the narrow historical parameters of twentieth and twenty-first century American Protestantism.

How to identify fundamentalism? I have found the following three descriptions to be at least helpful. In the 1960's, E.J. Carnell, President of Fuller Seminary and one of the leaders of what was then called "Neo-Evangelicalism," described fundamentalism as "cultic orthodoxy." While theologically

orthodox in the creedal sense, fundamentalism differed from historic orthodoxy in being insular, in defining Christianity in terms of its own peculiar historical manifestation. When I was growing up, the denomination of which I was a member was presumed to be the only true church. In the public school I attended, I had many friends who were members of other Christian denominations, but I understood them to be “not” Christians. When Billy Graham held one of his evangelistic rallies in our city, there were those in my congregation who argued against our participating on the grounds that Graham did not tell people that they needed to join our denomination.

In the 1970’s, liberal Protestant biblical scholar James Barr wrote a book entitled *Fundamentalism*, in which he said that one of the characteristics of fundamentalism was “maximal conservatism.” If there were two options available on any question, the fundamentalist could be counted on to take the more conservative of the two positions. In the undergraduate college I attended, the Old Testament professor had as an essay question on the final exam: “How do we know that Moses wrote the entire Pentateuch, including the description of his own death at the end of Deuteronomy?” Barr was speaking about issues of biblical criticism, but the issue applies elsewhere as well. A friend of Roman Catholic Cardinal Manning once remarked that he would have loved nothing more than to have a papal encyclical delivered with his *London Times* at breakfast every morning.

In his recent book on *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*, George Hunsinger contrasted three kinds of theology: academic, ecumenical, and enclave. By “academic,” Hunsinger means basically the theology of “liberal Protestantism.” By “ecumenical,” he means a theology that is willing to reach across denominational boundaries to learn from the entire catholic tradition of the church. By “enclave,” he means a kind of denominational theology that defines itself in terms of its own denominational or confessional distinctives.

“Enclave” theology is then another characteristic of what I am calling fundamentalism. Enclave theology tends to place the center of its theology in its own confessional distinctives. In the church in which I grew up, the single most important doctrine was “believer’s baptism.” There are certain kinds of Lutheran theology where the proper understanding of the relationship between law and gospel is the most important concern, and where one stands on the “third use of the law” can lead to theological fisticuffs. There are Reformed theologians for whom the proper understanding of divine sovereignty and of the covenant or “federalism” simply is the most important issue. There are Anglicans for whom the loss of the 1928 Prayer Book is an overwhelming obsession; there are Evangelical Anglicans for whom Anglicanism is “Reformed” (in the Calvinist sense), is defined strictly by the views of the Anglican Reformers (especially a specific interpretation of the theology of Thomas Cranmer) and an adherence to a literal reading of the 39 Articles in every detail, and for whom the Caroline Divines mark the beginning of a period of decline; in contrast, there are Anglo-Catholic Anglicans for whom the proper understanding of apostolic succession is definitive, who view the Reformation as an almost unmitigated disaster, and have nothing good to say about the 39 Articles. There are Roman Catholics who embrace what has been called “creeping infallibility”; while not every statement of the pope is technically infallible, they should be treated (at least presumptively) as if they all are. I once engaged in an online discussion with some members of the Orthodox Church who argued with complete seriousness that the “Frankish takeover of the papacy” under Charlemagne was the point at which the Western church ceased to be a Christian church.

Fundamentalism tends to have certain other characteristics as well:

(1) A distrust of modern science expressed in suspicion of both evolutionary theory and global warming: both so-called

“creationism” and “Intelligent Design” express this distrust; this does not mean that there are no unbelieving scientists such as Richard Dawkins, but, in principle, it is quite possible to embrace both a positive respect for the methodological principles and findings of modern science and orthodox Christian theology as well. I think, for example, of scientists and theologians such as Owen Gingerich, Francis Collins, John Polkinghorne, E.L. Mascall, Thomas F. Torrance, and Alister McGrath.

(2) A distrust of historical-critical methodology in the study of the Bible as evidenced in concerns about such things as the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch or single authorship of the Book of Isaiah. Again, it is not that there are no liberal Protestant theologians, but it is quite possible to be critical of secularist biases among liberal Protestant biblical scholars while recognizing the positive results of biblical criticism; the list of critically orthodox biblical scholars is too lengthy to mention, but I think particularly of people who have influenced me, such as Brevard Childs, Richard Hays, and N.T. Wright.

(3) An alliance between “conservative” theology and what American culture calls “conservative” political views. In particular, American Evangelicals and conservative Roman Catholics have made common cause in supporting the politics of the Republican party because of its endorsement of “conservative social ethics” in regard to such issues as homosexuality and abortion. Here I am afraid, they have been taken advantage of by a party that really does not care about their concerns. I think of an example mentioned in Thomas Franks’ book *What’s the Matter with Kansas?* Social conservatives vote a certain way because they see Madonna and Britney Spears kiss in public, and those they elect then vote to give Madonna and Britney Spears a tax break. Again, this does not mean that the Democratic party reflects Christian morality any more than does the Republican party, but orthodox

Christians have been deluded to believe that either American political party cares about their concerns. The recent collapse of courage among Republicans in support of religious freedom bills (as, for the example, the Indiana RFRA) shows that conservative Christians have aligned themselves with an uncertain ally.

(4) Apologetic concerns that are disassociated from the central subject matter of Christian faith. Among both Roman Catholics and Evangelicals there has been the advocacy of a rationalist epistemology whose purpose is to dispel doubt by buttressing certitude in correspondingly recognized voices of authority. For Roman Catholics, the crucial argument concerns the infallibility of the papacy as a guarantee of epistemological certitude while simultaneously casting doubt on the epistemological claims of Protestantism by both challenging the clarity and sufficiency of Scripture and pointing to the conflicting truth claims of numerous Protestant denominations. For Protestants this has meant the mutually exclusive endorsement of either evidentialist or presuppositionalist apologetics combined with arguments to support biblical inerrancy while simultaneously challenging the certainty of Roman Catholic claims. In both cases, in order to work, the arguments must become increasingly sophisticated and complicated. I have seen Roman Catholics try to make arguments that church fathers such as Irenaeus or Medieval thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas held to understandings of church authority that did not exist until after the Reformation period. I have seen Roman Catholics argue that (apart from papal infallibility), the Bible has no internal coherence and can mean anything that the reader wants it to mean. Evangelical arguments about inerrancy have to introduce numerous qualifications to explain that only no longer existing original manuscripts are inerrant, and that any phenomena of Scripture that would seem to challenge the theory must be re-interpreted in order to make them fit. (At this point, of course, the argument becomes question-begging:

any troubling phenomena are either examples of copyists' errors or simply do not mean what a plain sense reading would indicate.)

An Alternative to Fundamentalism or the Subject Matter of Christianity is the Subject Matter of Christianity

If the point of the above were merely to criticize fundamentalism, it would be a wasted exercise. There is no secular advantage to orthodox Christians distancing themselves from fundamentalists, and proclaiming "Hey, we're not like those guys." For certain kinds of secularists, all Christians are simply "oppressors" – as evidenced in the recent political hostility to Christian educational institutions such as Gordon College or the University of Notre Dame. (Thus the secularist evaluation of Christians as summarized in the popular internet dictum "Haters gonna hate.") If I am opposed to fundamentalism, it is not because of apologetic concerns but for similar reasons to my opposition to liberal Protestantism. While I regard liberal Protestantism to be the greatest contemporary threat to the gospel (from within the church), I consider fundamentalism to be almost as equally problematic and for the same reason. If liberal Protestantism has abandoned the central subject matter of Christian faith, fundamentalism at least retains that subject matter, but relegates it to secondary importance in comparison to other "enclave" issues. In both cases, there is an idolatrous preference for some secondary human concern in place of the central subject matter of Christian faith.

What then is the orthodox Christian alternative to fundamentalism? It is not unique to any one denominational or confessional tradition. Various labels could be used to describe it: critical orthodoxy, evangelical catholicism or catholic evangelicalism, ecumenical theology. It affirms the following:

(1) The formal sufficiency, clarity and primacy of canonical

Scripture: In the second-century battle with the gnostic heresy, the church affirmed the full canon of a two-testament Bible as containing the definitive witness to what Christians believed about God, creation, Christ, and salvation. Scripture was read in the worship of the church, it was the subject of homilies, and expositied by theologians. Theologians such as Irenaeus, Hilary of Poitiers, and Augustine assumed in their reading of Scripture that it had a formal sufficiency and clarity in its literal sense. (T.F. Torrance has used the expression "intrinsic intelligibility" as a shorthand description of this understanding. Torrance's book *Divine Meaning: Studies in Patristic Hermeneutics* provides one of the best studies of how the fathers read Scripture. It is, unfortunately, out of print, and used copies are ridiculously expensive.) Patristic theologians have sometimes been accused of an arbitrary allegorism, but it was actually the gnostics who embraced arbitrary methods of biblical interpretation. Patristic theologians often interpreted the Old Testament typologically, but this meant that the Old Testament pointed to Jesus Christ as its fulfillment, not that the reader imposed his or her own meaning on the passage. Later, Thomas Aquinas would speak of the priority of the "literal sense," and anticipated the views of the Reformers. (Few people are aware that Thomas's primary theological task was that of an expositor of Scripture; his commentaries are only recently being translated.) Later, the Reformers would insist on the primacy and sufficiency of Scripture, but they were not being original here.

One of the happy ecumenical convergences of the twentieth and early twenty-first century has been the renewed appreciation for a theological reading of Scripture – as typified by what has been called the "biblical theology" movement. Biblical theology peaked in the mid-twentieth century, and there were worries about its collapse in the 1960's and 70's but, as with Mark Twain, the rumors of its demise were greatly exaggerated. As in any other discipline, there are different schools, who

disagree with each other on various issues – the controversy about the “new perspective on Paul” would be an example – yet among orthodox Christians, there is a common agreement about the importance of a theological reading of Scripture in its “plain sense.” This is as true of Roman Catholics as of Protestants, and the methods used are the same. (Since even before Vatican II, Roman Catholic scholars have been committed to careful, critical, theological reading of Scripture. I received my graduate training in Roman Catholic institutions and I was pleasantly surprised to discover that Roman Catholics took Scripture seriously. I remember one Catholic professor saying, “Of course, Paul believed in justification by faith and regarded it as forensic.”) The best theological commentaries of the Bible these days are as likely to have been written by Catholics as by Protestants. Three recent commentary series display the current ecumenical convergence: IVP’s *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* is a multivolume collection of patristic commentary on each book of the Bible distributed by an Evangelical publisher. Roman Catholic (former Episcopalian) Rusty Reno is editor of the *Brazos Theological Commentary on Scripture* with volumes written by Roman Catholics, various flavors of Protestants and Anglicans, and Orthodox authors. Evangelical publisher Baker Academic is currently the publisher of the multivolume *Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture*.

I would add here that a doctrine *of* Scripture is not the same thing as a doctrine *about* Scripture. The shared commitment to the primacy and formal sufficiency of Scripture as found in writers from Irenaeus to Thomas Aquinas to the Protestant Reformers to the more recent advocates of “biblical theology” is that of a concern with the theological “subject matter” of Scripture, what Athanasius called its “scope” (*skopos*). Modern conservative Protestant concern about issues such as the “inerrancy” of Scripture is a doctrine *about* Scripture, a shorthand label for a particular theological understanding of Scripture’s origin (verbal plenary inspiration) that presumes

commitments to specific notions of the relation between divine sovereignty and human instrumentality in the writing of Scripture, and has as little relation to the theological subject matter of Scripture as does the competing Roman Catholic doctrine of papal infallibility. Both are primarily tools of a modern rationalist apologetics, which, even if tenable, would have little value in understanding the "scope" of Scripture.

(2) In referring to the "scope" or "subject matter" of Scripture, I am assuming (as did Athanasius), that Scripture has both a center and a periphery. The center can be found in the "Rule of Faith" appealed to by second-century theologians such as Irenaeus and the ecumenical creeds of the patristic era. The "Rule of Faith" is not an addition to Scripture, but is a hermeneutical tool to identify the heart of Scripture and assist in its interpretation. From the earliest discussions of Christian faith by the church fathers, this subject matter or "scope" of Scripture has been summarized in the following doctrines: the nature of the Triune God; creation; fall; covenant (with the nation of Israel); the incarnation, life, atoning death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; soteriology; the mission of the Holy Spirit, grace, ecclesiology; eschatology.

(3) There are numerous theologians who have focused on this central subject matter of Christian faith in their writings, and it is important that Christians of all theological traditions know them well. Among the fathers, I would mention particularly, Irenaeus, Athanasius, Cyril of Alexandria, the Cappadocians, and Augustine. In the Medieval church, I would consider Thomas Aquinas to be the most important figure. (In the mid-twentieth century, "Thomism" was a philosophical movement, and Catholic philosophers valued Thomas primarily for his apologetic value. In the last several decades, theologians have recognized that Thomas was actually a theologian; numerous recent studies have focused on his

doctrines of the Trinity, creation, Christology, soteriology, grace, and the sacraments.) There has been a resurgence of patristic theology among Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Evangelicals in recent decades. This is all to the good, but the Medieval church should not be neglected. The Reformation is a late Medieval movement, and cannot be understood without understanding its historical precedents. It is also important that those of us in Reformation churches should know well the key writers in our own tradition. For Lutherans that means Martin Luther, and for the Reformed, John Calvin. For Anglicans, Thomas Cranmer is important, but, even more important for the theological understanding of Anglicanism, I would argue, is Richard Hooker.

(4) A key issue in the divide between ecumenical Christians and enclave Christians has to do with their understanding of the nature of the Reformation: Was the Reformation a reforming movement in the Western Catholic Church, or, was it, rather, a complete break with an apostate Rome? The self-understanding of historic Anglicanism, as well as the continental Reformers, was the former, while enclave theologians, whether Protestant or Tridentine Roman Catholics, tend to view the Reformation as a complete break with that which had gone before. I would say that this is as much an issue of methodology and theology as of the reading of texts. Historically, polemics between Catholics and Protestants has tended to emphasize discontinuity; in the mid-twentieth century, both Catholic and Protestant scholars began to emphasize continuity, and this was the school of historiography that influenced me in my doctoral studies and dissertation. In recent years, resurgence of polemics has led to a renewed focus on discontinuity among some scholars. As an apologetic concern, Anglican Reformers such as Thomas Cranmer and John Jewel insisted on the catholicity of their views, but at the same time did not hesitate to criticize the post-Reformation Roman Catholic Church insofar as they argued that Rome had departed either from the plain reading of Scripture or from the faith of the

patristic church. However, they insisted that Rome was in discontinuity, not themselves. It is this tension between continuity and discontinuity that can provide ammunition for both ecumenists and enclave Christians to claim that they are being faithful readers of the Reformers or the Catholic tradition.

(5) There are a number of modern (chronologically not methodologically) theologians who have continued to focus on the central subject matter of Christian faith in their writings. The Reformed theologian Karl Barth is, I think, the most significant modern figure. Barth initiated the modern trinitarian revival in his *Church Dogmatics* 1.1. Barth has been influential for both Protestants and Catholics. For example, Reformed theologian Thomas F. Torrance and Roman Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar could both be claimed as disciples of Barth. His influence can be seen in their respective theologies of atonement. Torrance was a Reformed theologian working in a tradition that had focused almost exclusively on the death of Christ as the center of atonement theology. Torrance insisted that the cross only made sense within the light of the incarnation and the ontology of the person of Jesus Christ as God become human – that is, the hypostatic union. And, of course, the cross could not be understood apart from the resurrection. The crucified Christ is God become human, who has conquered death. Conversely, von Balthasar was a Catholic theologian working in a tradition that had (under the influence of theologians like Karl Rahner) focused almost exclusively on the incarnation as the whole point of Christology. Von Balthasar insisted that the incarnation and resurrection needed to be read within the light of their center, the cross. The incarnation of Jesus Christ was oriented toward the cross, and the resurrection cannot be understood except in light of the cross.

Protestants and Catholics need to know each others' theologians. If Catholics need to know Barth and Torrance,

Protestants need to know Balthasar and, I would add, such figures as Henri de Lubac, whose writings on grace have been significant in their challenge of Tridentine Catholic limitations – if not identical to, at least in the same ballpark as Protestant concerns about post-Reformation Roman Catholic theology.

(6) This likely reflects Anglican prejudice, but I would also point out that historically there has been a pattern to the worship of the church that can be traced to the earliest fathers. The same church that recognized and handed on the canon of Scripture worshiped in a certain way – a worship that began every Sunday with the liturgical reading of the canonical Scriptures and concluded with the eucharistic meal. The worship of this church included a liturgical year that through its organizational structure annually summarized the “scope” of Christian faith. The most crucial celebration of the Christian year was Holy Week, with its retelling of the events of Palm Sunday, the establishment of the eucharist (Maundy Thursday), the crucifixion (Good Friday) and the resurrection of Christ (Easter Sunday). Unfortunately, many Reformation churches have neglected or abandoned this liturgical structure of worship, but, in recent decades, Protestant theologians such as Geoffrey Wainwright and James K.A. Smith have reminded us of its importance. In recent years, there has been a revival of liturgical worship even among some historically “low church” Protestant denominations; this is all to the good. At the same time, unfortunately, there can be a liturgical enclave theology that is the “funhouse mirror” image of low church rejection of liturgical worship as “vain repetition.” Among Roman Catholics, this manifests itself as a nostalgia for the Latin mass and a rejection of the *Novus Ordo*; among some Anglicans, the 1662 Prayer Book (or the American 1928) is considered the “gold standard,” and Prayer Books reflecting the work of the 20th century liturgical movement (such as the 1979 American BCP) are viewed with suspicion.

(7) There is a close relationship between doctrine and practices, between faith and spirituality, ethics, and politics. How could this not be the case if Christian faith is concerned with salvation? The basic Christian claim is that through the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Christians are united to the risen Christ and participate in the life of the triune God. If, as Christians affirm, Jesus Christ is Lord, then the implication is that Christ is Lord over every area of culture.

A generation ago, Evangelical David Moberg complained in his book *The Great Reversal*, that Evangelicals had lost a concern about social justice that had characterized the Evangelicals of the nineteenth century, and that there was now a division between liberal Protestants who were concerned with social justice and Evangelicals who focused exclusively on evangelism. If it was the case that Evangelicals of a former generation avoided politics, that would certainly not be the case of the generation of Evangelicals following in the wake of the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980. Beginning with the rise of the so-called Moral Majority, continuing with groups like the Christian Coalition, and overwhelming support for President George W. Bush by "values voters" in the early 2000's, Evangelicals regularly embraced an identifiable political philosophy. Unfortunately, it is precisely the identification of Evangelicalism with this particular political philosophy that has led to the alienation of the "Millennial" generation from the church.

Dissatisfaction with the alliance between conservative Christianity and conservative politics does not mean endorsement of the political left. Both sides of the current American political divide have the following in common: (1) both are variations of the individualist liberalism that originated with John Locke. This is illustrated by the focus on "rights talk" that both sides share. For so-called political conservatives, the rhetoric is of "right to life" or

freedom from excessive taxation – thus the rhetoric of the “Tea Party”; for the political left, the rhetoric is about the “right to choose” or the right to express one’s “true” sexual identity; (2) both sides view politics as a direct confrontation between the individual and the state; thus, neither side recognizes the significance of mediating social structures such as families, churches, workplaces, schools.

There are alternatives. The anabaptist ethics of those influenced by Stanley Hauerwas rightly focuses on the church as a community of discipleship distinct from the culture. Reformed sphere sovereignty and Catholic subsidiarity both recognize the significance of mediating social structures between the individual and the state: the family, the church, work places, schools, voluntary organizations such as food pantries or clubs. Eastern Orthodox writer Rod Dreher has written much recently about the Benedict Option – in the light of the defeat of the culture wars, Christians need to focus on forming distinct communities of virtue rather than continuing to follow failed ineffective political policies. Pope Francis’s politics of “mercy” corrects the church’s tendency to articulate cultural war opposition in terms of a simple “no” by emphasizing the church’s primary message to the culture is one of mercy and forgiveness, not condemnation

Karl Barth’s insistence that in every interaction with the culture, the gospel speaks both a “Yes” and a “No” is helpful. On the one hand, every individual whom the Christian encounters has been created in the image of God, is fallen and sinful, and is redeemed by Christ – whether he or she recognizes or acknowledges it or not – and must be treated as such. On the other hand, Jesus Christ alone is Lord, and, as the Barmen Declaration made clear, any attempt by a state or culture to claim Jesus Christ’s Lordship for itself is idolatrous, and must be resisted.

(8) Christians of different confessional traditions need to get to know one another and cooperate in shared ventures.

Evangelical author John Armstrong has coined the term "missional ecumenism" to refer to this. To a large extent, ecumenical encounters between Christians have taken place at the highest levels of organizational ecclesial structures, e.g., in official ecumenical dialogues. In my own experience, academia has been the setting for these relationships. I received my doctorate at the Catholic University of Notre Dame, but the faculty included not only Catholics, but also Methodists, Anglicans, Lutherans, and even a Mennonite. There were more non-Catholic than Catholic graduate students in the doctoral program: Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Orthodox, even a Baptist. The focus of theological study was deliberately ecumenical.

At the Anglican seminary where I teach, we revised our curriculum a few years ago, and decided that we needed to include in each syllabus a description of how the particular course emphasized Anglican distinctives. Shortly afterwards, Lutherans approached us and we found ourselves entering into a joint agreement. We are now not only an Anglican seminary, but also the official site of the North American Lutheran Seminary. Most recently, we were approached in a similar way by Presbyterians, and we are beginning a Presbyterian track. Life is full of surprises.

Armstrong's point, however, is that ecumenical interaction is too important to be left to denominational bureaucrats, or, I would add, even seminaries. The average town has several different churches of different denominations. We all read the same Bible, affirm the same ecumenical creeds, and yet do not really know or interact with one another. I am an Anglican, and there are several churches of different confessional traditions that are much closer to where I live than the Anglican church I attend. I have never set foot in the local Roman Catholic Church or the Methodist Church, which are only a few blocks from my house. Some of the students at my seminary attend the local Presbyterian Church, which I have

visited only once, for a musical concert. If we take seriously our Lord's prayer that his church would be one, if we acknowledge that the source of Christian unity is not our denominational confessions but unity with the crucified and risen Christ who enables us to participate in the life of the triune God; if we worship God as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit each Sunday morning through the reading of Scripture, the preaching of the Word, the reciting of the Creed, and the breaking of sacramental bread; if we believe that we die with and are risen with Christ in baptism; if we believe that the church is the body of Christ, which is united to his crucified and risen body as we share in the sacramental eucharistic bread and wine of which he spoke the words "This is my body," "This is my blood," then our living our Christian lives each day as if Christians outside our own denominational structures did not exist is a contradiction of what we claim to believe. We need to do better.

(9) Finally, the most interesting and exciting theological work being done these days is being done by theologians and biblical scholars from different confessional traditions who focus on what I have called the theological center: the doctrines of the Trinity, incarnation, Christology, soteriology, etc. However, insisting that there is a center and a periphery to Christian faith – and that the center lies in the affirmations of the rule of faith and the ecumenical creeds – does not mean that confessional differences do not exist or that they are not important. (I have written about such issues as the relation between Scripture and tradition, episcopacy, justification by faith, infant baptism, eucharistic theology.) However, it does mean that even discussion of theological differences needs to re-examine those differences in light of the creedal center. Doing so makes a difference.

For example, division between Protestants and Catholics on justification has hinged on disagreements about whether

justification is an "imputation" or an "infusion." Stated baldly, the disagreement is intractable. However, referring justification to Christology can lead to progress in understanding. Both Protestants and Catholics affirm that salvation consists in being united to Christ. Luther himself did not use the language of "imputation," but he did speak of "alien righteousness." His point was that our standing before God does not depend on any good works that we have accomplished, but on Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross, which he accomplished independently of, and "outside us," entirely without our contribution: Jesus saves us; we do not save ourselves. The Catholic affirms that in justification we are forgiven, and there is nothing we can do to earn that forgiveness. But the Catholic also wants to affirm that God's forgiveness is effective. Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we really are united to the crucified and risen Jesus Christ, and Christ really shares his life with us, resulting in a genuine change and transformation. The Catholic wants to take seriously the language of Anglican Thomas Cranmer's eucharistic rite: we really do dwell in Christ and he dwells in us: Jesus saves us; we do not save ourselves. But Jesus really does save us in such a way that we become more and more like him. There is progression in holiness.

Similarly, there has been disagreement between Protestants and Catholics on the notion of eucharistic sacrifice. The Protestant point is that Jesus Christ has died once for all, and his sacrifice on the cross cannot be repeated. Our salvation depends entirely on his finished work, and there is nothing that we as a church can offer to God to contribute to that. Jesus is not sacrificed again in the eucharist, and all we can offer to God as a sacrifice is the living sacrifice of "our selves, our souls, and our bodies." Careless use of language by Catholics can suggest exactly the kind of repetition of Christ's sacrifice to which Protestants object. Again, however, focusing on the creedal center can lead to progress in understanding. Certainly Jesus Christ's death on

the cross is once for all, and cannot be repeated. At the same time, the church affirms that in the eucharist, the risen Christ gives himself fully to his church and is present to the worshiping community in his full humanity and deity. (We do not worship an absent Savior.) If in our eucharistic worship, Jesus is fully present (through the mediation of the Holy Spirit) in the body in which he died once for all for our sins, then his once for all sacrifice is present to the church in its full effectiveness, and when we receive the sanctified elements of bread and wine in faith, we receive the full benefits of Jesus' sacrifice. It is not that Jesus is sacrificed again, but when the church speaks of the eucharist as a sacrifice, it is insisting not that we have something of our own worthiness to offer to God – we don't – but that the only offering we can present to God the Father is the offering of Christ's once for all finished work upon the cross. The whole point of language of eucharistic sacrifice then is not to say that the church has something of its own to offer to God, but precisely the opposite – to make plain that our salvation depends on Christ's finished work – his once for all sacrifice – and not our own.

Ecumenical dialogue that proceeds through the trinitarian, incarnational, and soteriological center will not resolve every theological disagreement, but it certainly makes such disagreements less intractable.

The Trinitarian Unity of the Church: A Sermon on Ecumenism

Ephesians 4:1-16

John 17:11-26



The epistle reading from Ephesians and the reading from John's gospel are perhaps the two single most frequently cited biblical passages about the unity of the church. Certainly unity is a central theme in both passages: Ephesians 4 rings the changes on the word "one": There is one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all (Eph. 4:4-6). John has what is sometimes called Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, where he prays that his followers will be one even as he and the Father are one (John 17:11,22). And, of course, unity is one of the four classic marks of the church: The church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

What is the nature of the church's unity that is such a major theme in these passages? There have been numerous answers to this question given in the history of theology. The 39 Articles and the Lutheran confessions speak of that unity in terms of activities that the church performs: The church is where the word is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered. The Roman Catholic Church has historically placed that unity institutionally: The church consists of all those who are in communion with the pope, the bishop of Rome. Anglo-Catholics have focused on historical continuity. The church is rightly found in those churches who can trace their succession through a series of bishops to the apostles. In the last century or so, many of the Orthodox have focused on *Sobornost*, a notion of the church as a community or fellowship

based in freedom and love. In the last several decades, Christian ethicists such as Stanley Hauerwas have focused on the understanding of the church as a community of character, of Christian discipleship as a path of virtue whose primary focus is following the way of Jesus in the non-violent way of the cross.

What all of these descriptions have in common is that they are descriptions of the church from our point of view, from the ground up, as it were. Sometimes it helps to look at things from a different point of view. What is different about the way in which Ephesians and the Gospel of John look at the unity of the church is that they look at things from the opposite point of view, not from the ground up, but from the top down, from a God's-eye point of view, as it were.

Both Ephesians and the Gospel of John point to the unity of the church first in the unity of the Trinitarian persons. The church is one because God is one. But God is not simply one as a monad. God is a unity of love between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians, Paul writes: "There is one body and one Spirit . . . one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:4-6). John records Jesus' prayer "that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us . . ." (John 17:21). We might read John's approach as binitarian rather than trinitarian, except that in Jesus' Last Supper discourse in John, he had already talked at great length about the Comforter, the paraklete, whom Jesus says, he will "send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father." (John 15:26). So the church's unity originates first in the unity of the Trinitarian persons. Again, the church is one because the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one.

Second, the church shares in the unity of the Trinitarian persons through the person, the work, and the presence of the incarnate, crucified and risen Jesus Christ. It is because the

church is one with the risen Christ that we can be one with the Trinitarian persons. The church is Christ's body as it dwells in Christ and shares in the love between the Father and the Son and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Paul writes: "Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love." (Eph. 4:15-16). In John's gospel, Jesus prays: "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 also may be in us . . ." (John 17:22). And earlier, in John chapter 15, Jesus had said: "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15: 5).

Third, this union between Christ and the church that, in turn, leads to a union with the Trinitarian persons, has a moral dimension. A real moral transformation and change takes place as the church that is united to Christ comes to be like Christ. So Paul writes, "I . . . urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3). Humility, gentleness, patience, love, peace: this is virtue language, and Paul says that these are the kinds of virtues that follow necessarily from what he calls the "unity of the Spirit." In John, Jesus prays: "Sanctify them in the truth" (John 17:17). Again, earlier in John, Jesus had said: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15) and "Whoever abides in me . . . will bear much fruit" (John 15:5). Union with Christ and with the Trinity means that the church will live as Jesus lived.

Fourth, there are two primary ways in which both Ephesians and

John speak of this fruit of union with Christ being manifested in the lives of Christians in the church: Truth and love. And both are equally important. Paul brings both of them together: "Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph. 4:15). In John, Jesus prays "Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth" (John 17:17). Earlier in the chapter Jesus had prayed: "This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (v. 3). At the end of the prayer, Jesus draws the connection between knowing this true God and love: "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" (v. 26).

In contemporary culture, people talk about truth and love as if they are mutually incompatible. Those who claim to be concerned about truth are criticized for being arrogant or intolerant. Love, on the other hand, is identified with tolerance, inclusiveness, and pluralism, which, by definition, means to embrace pluriform or multiple versions of the truth. On the other hand, those who claim to know the truth only too often live up to the stereotype of being arrogant and intolerant, and accuse those who talk about love of being relativists. Within the church, predictable divisions line up between so-called progressive or liberal Christians who claim to follow Jesus's example to "love your neighbor" (Mark 12:31) and not to judge (Matt. 7:1), and so-called conservative Christians who demonstrate their concern for theological orthodoxy by turning not only on liberals but all too often on one another.

However, in the Bible, truth and love are intimately connected because both are rooted in the nature of the one true God who so loved the world that he gave his only Son (John 3:16). The same Jesus who proclaims in John's gospel, "You will know the truth and the truth shall set you free" (John 8:32) also says to his disciples "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved

you. Abide in my love" (John 15:9). The same apostle who writes of "speaking the truth in love" in our epistle reading also prays a prayer that brings together the Trinitarian relation between truth and love: "I bow my knees before the Father from whom every family in earth and heaven is named . . . that he may grant you to be strengthened with power through the Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith – that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have the strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:14-18). That prayer is a rather concise definition of the unity of the church.

There is also a sacramental, and even an institutional dimension to the church's unity. Paul specifically connects the trinitarian unity of the church to the sacrament of baptism: "There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:5). Paul also writes: "he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ"(Eph. 4:12). In Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, he speaks of the distinctive role that has been given to the apostles and their successors: "As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). Jesus also prays, "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word" (v. 20). If all that talk about truth and love speaks to the Evangelical dimension of the church, then truth and love are embodied concretely in the church in its catholic dimensions. There is no church without sacraments and gathered worship. There is no church without an ordered ministry that continues the task of the apostles.

And, finally, the unity of the church has a missional purpose. The church is distinct from the world, and yet has a mission to the world. In the concluding words of Jesus' prayer, he

states the purpose of the church's unity. On the one hand, the church is distinct from those who are not the church. Jesus says: "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am of the world" (John 17:14). At the same time, Jesus also prays that the church may be one for the sake of the world: "that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me" (v. 23). The church's call is to let the world know of the love with which the Father and the Son love each other, the love that dwells in the church because the church is one with Christ, and the church is the body of Christ, the body whose head is Christ, the body that grows so that "it builds itself up in love" (Eph. 4:16). And the world will not know of this love if the church is not one, and if the members of the church do not love one another.

That is a very brief outline of the theology of the church that we find in the readings in Ephesians and John's gospel. This outline has a lot in common with the different understandings of the church that I mentioned earlier. A church whose unity is grounded in the truth and love of the Trinity will be a church where the word is rightly preached and the sacraments rightly administered. A church whose unity is grounded in the truth and love of the Trinity will be a church with historical continuity with the apostolic church, and an institutional unity: sacraments and church orders are important. A church whose unity is grounded in the truth and love of the Trinity will be a church of *Sobornost*, a community or fellowship based in truth and love. And, finally, a church whose unity is grounded in the truth and love of the Trinity will be a community of character, a band of Christian disciples who practice the virtue of following the way of Jesus in the non-violent path of the cross.

However, this also leaves us with a problem. The church is not one. All of us who are members of modern Christian churches

belong to churches that are, in some sense, broken. The Eastern and Western churches have not been one for a thousand years. All of us who are Western Christians have lived with our own divisions for half a millennium. But even the Eastern churches have their divisions. Ambridge, Pennsylvania, probably has more iconostases per capita than any town in North America. When my wife Jennie and I first moved here we went on the Ambridge church tour in which we visited the Byzantine Catholic, the Ukranian Catholic, the Russian Orthodox, and the Coptic churches in Ambridge. The priests of these various churches each reminded us of how their church was the one true church founded by Christ. However, our favorite was the guide at the Coptic Church who simply said: "We're an ancient Catholic church. We've had some important members, like St. Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria." If the church's unity speaks to the world of the love the Triune God, then what message does our disunity speak?

I cannot come up with a definitive solution to this problem of disunity in the last few minutes of this homily. I would make two suggestions, however. First, I don't think we do much to help the problem of disunity when we view the problem of the division of the church as someone else's problem. It is easy to think that the problem of church unity would be solved if everyone in all those other churches would just come around to realizing that my church is right and their church is wrong. And, of course, if they think the same thing about me we're back where we started from. The irony is that this attitude reflects a lack of the very kind of love that Jesus claims is the essential sign of the unity of the church. If I simply assume that the church's lack of unity is the other guy's fault, then I have missed the point of the church's unity.

Second, while I think that moves toward institutional unity and ecumenism are good things, I think that there is a fundamental task that all Christians need to undertake right where they are, while we are waiting for ecumenical

commissions and dialogue groups to cross their t's and dot their i's. Ephesians and John tell us that the unity of the church starts from the top down, from the unity of the Trinity. The church is composed of those people who are one with one another because they are first one with the Triune God, because they dwell in Christ, and Christ's Spirit dwells in them. It is through that indwelling that truth and love come to fruition. As Paul writes, "speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ . . . when each part is working properly," the "body [will] grow so that it builds itself up in love" (Eph. 4:15-16). What that means practically is that there will be no church unity unless we first love Jesus, and unless we also love our brothers and sisters in Christ, right where we are, certainly beginning with those Christians who are in our own churches – and sometimes they are the hardest to love – but also going out of our way to get to know and love those of our brothers and sisters in Christ from whom we are now divided. That in itself is a tall order, and it is a good place to start.

New Article on Justification by Faith



I regularly teach a course entitled *The Anglican Way of Theology* at an “Evangelical seminary in the Anglican tradition.” We begin the course with the English Reformation, and I am repeatedly surprised when I discover every year as I grade student papers that the Reformation doctrine of “justification by grace alone through faith alone” is frequently misunderstood and causes no end of trouble for my students to get their heads around. There seems to be a lot of confusion about just what the doctrine is, and I find that, in their papers, students either regularly defend, or criticize as troublesome or incoherent, something that they call “justification by faith alone” which is not the Reformation doctrine.

The above is the beginning of a rather lengthy article I have just written about the doctrine of “justification by faith.” The rest of the article can be found in my Pages Section to the left and is entitled [“Anglican Reflections on Justification by Faith”](#).

Evangelical or Catholic? A

Bibliography

I want to thank all those who read my post on “Evangelical or Catholic?” In a month, this has received over 1,100 hits, more than any single blog post I have written. I am usually happy if what I write gets 100 reads. Clearly there is sympathy (or at least interest) in getting beyond the old polemics between Evangelicals and Catholics. At the same time, many of the public comments I have received have been negative, both from Protestants and from Catholics (and some Orthodox), who seem quite happy to keep the old polemics alive. Oh, well. This is discouraging, but I am more heartened by the numbers than discouraged by the occasional sniping.

Anyway, I promised at the end of that post to include a bibliography and here it is. These are books that I have found helpful. Some of them are old, and they influenced me in my own path from free church Evangelical to Anglican. Some are quite new. All are good.

Readers will notice that the ecclesial identities of the authors cover a lot of ground, including not only Anglicans, but also Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, and even the odd Baptist. That is as it should be. Denominational loyalty has never been the primary concern in my own theological studies. Nor should it be, if the choice between Evangelical and Catholic is a false one.

Abraham William, et al. *Canonical Theism: A Proposal for Theology and the Church*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008.

William Abraham is a Methodist theologian whose “canonical theism” project is about moving away from the modern focus on epistemological criteria to a focus on the primacy of ontology, and particularly on the historic doctrines and practices of the undivided church, which he and his group refer to as canons: not only Scripture, but also creeds,

doctrine, episcopacy, saints, councils, icons. Canonical theism is thus about embracing this "canonical heritage" of the church.

Allison, C. Fitzsimmon. *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter*. Regent College Publishing. 2003.

Fitz Allison's book might be considered an example of "enclave" theology, since Allison is a self-identified Evangelical theologian, and the book is a study of "justification by faith," in which Allison clearly identifies with the Protestant theology. However, ecumenical theology also demands that we be honest about what the issues actually are, so as not to reach superficial agreements that are not really agreements. Allison documents that the Reformation issue of justification by faith boiled down to the question of "formal cause": specifically, is the ground of my justification Christ's finished work apart from my own efforts, which I appropriate by faith alone, or is the ground of my justification my own appropriation of Christ's work? Allison documents that all the Anglican Reformers, including Richard Hooker and later Caroline Divines like Lancelot Andrewes held to the first. However, with some of the Caroline Divines, especially Jeremy Taylor, justification by faith becomes understood to mean justification based on the sincerity of my faith rather than Christ's finished work: justification by sincerity. The result is a corresponding moralism and scrupulosity.

Ayris, Paul and Selwyn, David. *Thomas Cranmer: Churchman and Scholar*. Boydell Press, 1999.

A more recent book on Thomas Cranmer that provides an alternative to the revived view of Cranmer (and the Anglican Reformers) as radical Protestants that is represented by recent works like Diarmaid McCulloch's popular biography.

Balthasar, Hans Urs von. *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*. Ignatius Press, 1992.

A sympathetic discussion of Barth by the twentieth century's greatest Roman Catholic theologian (in my humble opinion). Balthasar's book is not only a good study of Barth, but an example of ecumenical theology in the best sense, especially in clarifying misunderstandings of the Catholic tradition by Protestants.

Beasley-Murray, G. K. *Baptism in the New Testament*. Wipf & Stock, 2006.

This is a "biblical theology" of baptism by a British "sacramental" Baptist. The book was instrumental in my own conviction that the Bible really does teach that baptism is a sacrament that effects what it symbolizes.

Booty, John. *John Jewel as Apologist of the Church of England*. London: SPCK, 1963.

Unfortunately nothing substantial has been written on Jewel in the last forty years, with the single exception of an anti-Anglican polemic written by a former Anglo-Catholic convert (to Orthodoxy?) that portrays Jewel as a radical Protestant. It is interesting that the view of the Reformation as a radical break with Catholicism that was being repudiated by Roman Catholic scholars forty years ago is currently being revived. Booty presents a sympathetic reading of Jewel as a "Reformed Catholic."

Braaten, Carl E. and Jenson, Robert W., eds. *The Catholicity of the Reformation*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996.

Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson are two of the most important American Lutheran theologians of the late twentieth century, now reaching retirement age. They are the founders of *The Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology*, and its journal, *Pro-Ecclesia*. This is a series of essays by Lutherans arguing

for an “evangelical catholic” interpretation of the Reformation.

Bromiley, Geoffrey. *Thomas Cranmer, Theologian*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956.

Brooks, Peter. *Thomas Cranmer's Doctrine of the Eucharist: An Essay in Historical Development*. NY: Seabury Press; Macmillan,, 1965.

It is interesting how the most catholic interpretations of the English Reformers come from Evangelical authors. Here are two.

Clark, Francis. *Eucharistic Sacrifice and the Reformation*. Basil Blackwell, 1967.

This is an important work by a Roman Catholic, who documents the understanding of eucharistic sacrifice among late Medieval Catholics at the time of the Reformation. Clark establishes that the standard Protestant (and Anglican) rhetoric against eucharistic sacrifice did not address the doctrine Catholics actually held. Late Medieval and Tridentine Roman Catholics did not believe that Christ was re-sacrificed, in the mass, but that Christ's atoning death on the cross was the once sufficient sacrifice. What Clark does not get quite right was the reason for Protestant objections to eucharistic sacrifice. Hunsinger (below) is good on this.

Cullmann, Oscar. *Early Christian Worship*. SCM Press, 1966.

This is the book that convinced me that the Eucharist was at the center of early Christian worship.

Cullmann, Oscar. “The Tradition,” *The Early Church*. London. SCM Press, 1956.

This article is the definitive discussion of the relation between Scripture and tradition, arguing for the significance of the canonizing of Scripture, and the relation between canon and tradition.

Dugmore, Clifford. *The Mass and the English Reformers*. London: Macmillan, 1958.

A sympathetic reading of the English Reformers as Reformed Catholics.

Fairweather, Eugene R. "Christianity and the Supernatural," *New Theology No. 1*. Martin Marty and Dean G. Peerman, eds. NY: Macmillan, 1967.

This article assesses the significance of a proper Christian ontology rooted in the relation between God and creation. The constant temptation for theologians is to imagine the relation between Creator and creature as that between two competing created realities. God is thus viewed as the most powerful thing around, but not as genuinely transcendent. Whenever Creator and creature are misconstrued in this way, theologians will venture either into "naturalism" (panentheism, monism) or into "anti-supernaturalism" (voluntarism). Fairweather traces examples of "anti-naturalism," "naturalism," and "supernaturalism" in the history of the church.

Hunsinger, George. *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

This is one of the most helpful contemporary discussions of eucharistic theology, written by a Reformed theologian, entering into dialogue with Roman Catholic, Orthodox, and Anglican theologians, as well as his own Reformed heritage.

Jenson, Robert. *Canon and Creed*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2010.

A recent book on the relation between canon, creed, (episcopacy, worship, and the ecumenical councils). Although Jenson is a Lutheran, this book could well have been written by an Anglican. See above about Jenson and Braaten.

MacIntyre, Alasdair. *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry:*

Encyclopaedia, Genealogy, and Tradition. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.

Alasdair MacIntyre is one of the most important contemporary Roman Catholic philosophers. He writes about ethics, but his main focus of discussion is that all knowledge takes place within the context of tradition and traditions.

Mascall, Eric L. *Christ, the Christian, and the Church: A Study of the Incarnation and its Consequences*. London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1946.

Mascall, Eric L. *The Openness of Being: Natural Theology Today*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971.

Mascall, Eric L. *Via Media: An Essay in Theological Synthesis*. Greenwich, CT: Seabury Press, 1957.

Mascall was an Anglo-Catholic theologian (and a Thomist), who wrote from an ecumenical perspective. He not only addressed Roman Catholicism and Orthodoxy, but also continental Protestantism, as well as more Evangelical understandings of Anglicanism. He argued for Anglicanism as Reformed Catholicism. The above are just three of the numerous books he wrote. They were extremely helpful to me in making the transition from free church Evangelical to Anglican "Reformed Catholic."

McSorley, Harry. *Luther: Right or Wrong? An Ecumenical Study of Luther's Major Work, The Bondage of the Will*. NY: Newman Press & Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1969.

An ecumenical discussion of Luther's "bondage of the will," written from an ecumenical Roman Catholic perspective.

Moeller, C. and Phillips, G. *The Theology of Grace and the Oecumenical Movement*, London: A. R. Mowbray & Co., 1961.

I discovered this short little book from a reference by E. L. Mascall. It is an ecumenical discussion between Roman

Catholics, Orthodox, and Reformed on the doctrine of grace. It is the book that first drew my attention to the significance of the permanent humanity of Christ for eucharistic theology.

Newbigin, Leslie. *The Household of God: Lectures on the Nature of the Church*. London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1953; Wipf & Stock, 2009.

One of the best books around on ecumenism and ecclesiology. Newbigin was a Reformed missionary who became one of the first bishops in the Church of South India, after that church was formed by a union of Anglicans, Reformed, and several other denominations.

Oberman, Heiko. *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963; Baker Academic, 2001.

Oberman wrote many books on late Medieval theology and the Reformation. This is a helpful reading of the late Medieval Roman Catholic Church, showing the significance of Nominalism.

Persson, Per Erik. "The Reformation in Recent Roman Catholic Theology," *New Theology No. 1*, Martin Marty and Dean G. Peerman, eds. NY: Macmillan, 1964.

An article about the newer more balanced and ecumenical approach to church history that arose mid-twentieth century, particularly the history of the Reformation, written from a Roman Catholic perspective. It was a major factor in my own becoming interested in the relation between Medieval Catholicism and the post-Reformation church. Unfortunately, there seems to be a return to the old polemics among some more contemporary church historians.

Michael Ramsey. *The Gospel and the Catholic Church*. Hendrickson Reissue, 2009.

Michael Ramsey was one of the most important modern Archbishops of Canterbury. This is his case for Anglicanism as "Reformed Catholicism." Ramsey was an "Anglo-Catholic" who read Karl Barth, and it shows.

Schaff, Philip. *The Principle of Protestantism*. Wipf & Stock, 2004.

Philip Schaff and John Williamson Nevin (Reformed theologians) were the leaders of the Mercersburg Theology, a reading of the Reformation as a reforming movement in the Catholic Church. Nevin's corresponding text was entitled, *The Mystical Presence*, arguing for an objective presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper.

Sykes, Stephen *The Integrity of Anglicanism*. NY: Seabury Press, 1978.

Sykes, Stephen. *Unashamed Anglicanism*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.

Stephen Sykes' book, *The Integrity of Anglicanism*, was instrumental in my deciding to pursue systematic theology rather than philosophy. Sykes's book is largely an attack on some of the fuzzy thinking of a lot of twentieth century Anglican theologians, particularly in the easy acceptance of Liberal Protestantism as just one more ecclesial party within Anglicanism.

Southgate, Wyndham. *John Jewel and the Problem of Doctrinal Authority*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962.

The other book on Jewel, representing him as a "Reformed Catholic."

Thornton, Martin. *English Spirituality: An Outline of Ascetical Theology According to the English Pastoral Tradition*. SPCK, 1963.

A good overview, not simply of Anglican, but also of pre-

Reformation English spirituality. Thornton's book is good in that it focuses on theology, rather than psychology, as do too many modern books on spirituality.

Torrance, Thomas F. *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays toward Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976; Wipf & Stock, 1996.

Torrance was a student of Karl Barth, who discovered the church fathers. He wrote on the Trinity, Christology, ecclesiology, and the relation between science and theology. This is one of the best books around on ecumenism.

Tugwell, Simon. *Ways of Imperfection: An Exploration of Christian Spirituality*. Springfield, ILL: Templegate Publishers, 1985.

I discovered Tugwell when I picked up one his books in a "used book" barn when I was on vacation in rural Maine. Tugwell is an English Dominican, and writes on the history of spirituality, particularly Dominican spirituality, which, I would argue, has a lot of affinities to Anglicanism. This is his history of spirituality.

Wainwright, Geoffrey. *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life A Systematic Theology*. NY: Oxford University Press, 1984.

Geoffrey Wainwright is a Methodist theologian, who is interested in liturgy. This is an entire Systematic Theology written from the perspective of worship.

Webber, Robert E.. *Common Roots: The Original Call to an Ancient-Future Faith*. Zondervan, 1978, revised edition, 2009.

Webber, Robert E. *The Divine Embrace: Recovering the Passionate Spiritual Life*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006.

Webber, Robert E. *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail: Why Evangelicals are Attracted to the Liturgical Church*. Morehouse

Publishing, 1989.

Webber, Robert E. *The Orthodox Evangelicals: Who they are and what they are saying*. NY, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1978.

Robert Webber was a free church Evangelical who converted to the Episcopal Church. He was the organizer and one of the authors of something called the "Chicago Call," a call for Evangelicals to recover the sacramental and pre-Reformation roots of the church. Webber's *Common Roots* came out shortly afterwards, followed shortly by *Evangelicals on the Canterbury Trail*, a book about Evangelicals converting to Anglicanism. *The Divine Embrace* was his last book, a call for Evangelicals to recover the patristic roots of Christian spirituality.

Williams, A. N. *The Ground of Union: Deification in Aquinas and Palamas*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Most ecumenical discussion is between Roman Catholics and Protestants. This is a comparison of the theology of grace in two of the most important Catholic and Orthodox theologians.

Even as I prepare to send this off, more titles come to mind, but this is already too long. Enjoy.